



South Essex Reserves

Newsletter VIII

1st November 2007

This is the eighth of a series of regular newsletters on progress at the RSPB's South Essex Reserve network.

The water levels across the South Essex reserves continued to recede through the late summer, early autumn months. Although May and some of June were unusually wet there has been little rain since the early summer. This has made water management across the region difficult at times. This being said there has been a good amount of wet muddy fringe full of invertebrates to entice wading birds.

Species records

Many bird species have taken advantage of these conditions. A number of waders have been seen on Vange Marsh. These include green sandpiper (9 on the 5th of September), greenshank, spotted redshank (5 on the 16th September), snipe (6 on the 13th October) and black-tailed godwit. Other birds included kingfisher, grey wagtail, wigeon, shoveler, teal, stonechat (6 on the 22nd October), and large numbers of meadow pipit with up to 30 recorded in mid October. A common buzzard was seen flying over Vange Marsh on the 5th of September and a male bearded tit was a welcome visitor to the reedbed on the 22nd of October. The butterfly monitoring program drew to a close for the year at the end of September. There was a second brood of small heaths and green-veined whites on the reserve. Twelve small heaths were recorded on the 3rd of September and the last of the small skippers were seen on the same date.

Reserves habitat management

Vange Marsh has had eight and a half tonnes of concrete, metal fence posts and wire fence post removed from it. This was part of a 500-metre fence line that used to run across the eastern half of the reserve but had been lying in the grass for many years. Whilst the machinery was on site carrying out this works, a trench was excavated on the eastern part of the freshwater marsh to allow greater control of water distribution and levels on the marsh.

The second phase of the West Canvey consultation has already begun, with more detailed proposals for the Canvey reserve now entering the public domain. These proposals have addressed many of the issues raised by the first part of the consultation, such as access and rights of way. The aim of this consultation will be to provide a nature reserve that not only benefits wildlife but also caters for the needs of the local people.

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