

Lakenheath Fen news March 2017

Hello and welcome to news from Lakenheath Fen! I hope everyone is enjoying the sun that Spring has brought with it!

Reserve Management

It's been all go here over the past few months, finishing off the winter work programme in time for Spring and the arrival of the breeding birds. Our volunteers have been pivotal and fantastic in our management of the reedbeds, which included cutting and burning 5ha of reed in New Fen North. This area was subsequently flooded with cattle and ponies due to be introduced shortly to graze the area. This combination will help knock back the older reed and allow for new growth to come through, regenerating the reedbed with stronger stems and increased seed densities.

The team have also undertaken scrub management, thinning out some of the willow in Joist Fen South and Norfolk Fen. The natural succession of a reedbed is into scrub, so in order to preserve the reedbed it is a necessity to manage the willow. We do always leave a mixture of mature and some young willow, to provide a bit of diversity for the benefit of Cetti's Warblers and marsh harriers.

The team have also been working alongside a contractor (Paul) and his excavator and dumper to carry out a range of jobs including:

- Levelling off vegetation in New Fen North to open up the view for visitors between the hard track and the interior path that runs along the southern edge of the reedbed.
- Opening up the area around the new dragonfly platform in New Fen North to improve the habitat for dragonflies and other insects
- Removing water flow connective pipes between different compartments at 3 locations and replacing them with open channels, installing three wooden bridges for crossing points. This is to help improve fish connectivity around the site.
- Installing a new sluice in Norfolk Fen (lots of filling of sandbags with concrete!) which should improve fish movement around the area – lots of food for our lovely bitterns!
- Paul has also improved and added to our rill network in Brandon fen, improving the habitat for passage wading birds.



Image details by Dave Rogers: Infilling and levelling concrete for the bridge base (left), finished bridge with open channel running beneath, opening up access for fish connectivity between the two sites (right)

As always, a massive thank you to all those that helped out with the above work (and more!), we couldn't do it all without you!

Reserve events

All of our up and coming events for 2017 can now be found on our website, with the next couple being:

Bats that go bump in the night

Friday 5 May

7.45pm-10pm

Price: Adult £10, Children £5 (Non-Members) Adults £8, Children £4 (Members)

Booking essential

Dawn chorus walk

Sunday 7 May

4.45am-7.45am

Price: Adults £12, Children £6 (Non-Members) Adults £10, Children £5 (Members) Payment in advance via www.wegotickets.com/lakenheath; or by cheque. Booking

essential

Wildlife Sightings

All seven **cranes** were back on territory on 3 February but both pairs subsequently kicked out their young in preparation for the breeding season. I am pleased to say that our **bitterns** have now started making some noise. There were at least two birds “grunting” in Joist Fen North and New Fen North on 2 March. The first booms of the year were heard from New Fen viewpoint on 8 March with our first bittern survey scheduled for 29/03/2017. The beginning of this year has also been fantastic for **bearded tit** sightings, especially on the approach to Mere Hide.



Image credits: Martin Peake

Up to four **great white egrets** have been present over the last couple of months so hopefully we will finally have a nesting attempt on the reserve this year! There have been more than usual records of **Bewick's swans** on the reserve in the last couple of months and parties of **whooper swans** have dropped in from time to time. A flock of up to 11 **white fronted geese** have been hanging around the reserve intermittently. With Spring now upon us, it is great to see the bumblebees and butterflies all starting to emerge, giving the Reserve a nice buzz.

For more sightings or information about our events and the Reserve, including our blog, please check out our website www.rspb.org.uk/lakenheathfen

Hope to see you around the Reserve soon,

Thanks

Alan Kell (Warden)

27/03/2017