

## Lakenheath Fen newsletter August 2019

Hello, and welcome to the latest news from Lakenheath Fen. We've all been a little warm the last couple of weeks! Our thermometer by the dipping pond hit a sweltering 37.8°C last Thursday, which would have been lovely had we had our feet in the sea and an ice-cream in hand. As it was, the boardwalk leading to the hide required freeing from the reed which had been threatening to take it over, so we spent the morning strimming instead!! Very, very hot!

### Staff and events

David White, our Visitor Experience Officer for the past 10 years has left us to take up a role with the BTO. We're very sorry to see him leave (his blogs are being missed already!), but wish him all the best with his new role. We have recruited a replacement, Heidi Jones, who will join us in mid August.

The rain a few weekends ago was very welcome in general but the timing was not great as it was due to be the Big Wild Sleepout! We decided to postpone in the end, and held it the following weekend. About 16 happy campers were able to rearrange and had a great time sleeping out on the reserve. Highlights were probably the bird ringing, pond dipping and moths, and at least the weather stayed good for the whole weekend!

### Reserve management

As always, most of our work at this time of year entails keeping on top of rapid grass growth along the visitor trails and at viewpoints. This year has been no exception, and despite the dry conditions, we seem to have been strimming some areas more than we ever have!! We finally feel we've caught up, and there will be a little lull before we start doing the annual cuts on the fen pools, Botany Bay sedge and clearing the reeds at the viewpoints! We've also been out pulling ragwort, one of our most favourite jobs (not really, but we do see some good wildlife – see below!).

### Breeding birds

Our resident pair of **cranes** hatched a single chick, though at the moment, we are unsure if it has fledged yet! It seemed to have some similar issues to the runt chick from last year, being a bit small compared to what it should be by this point. We had been seeing it on a trail camera fairly regularly until recently, but we've not seen it for a week or two, so we're not quite sure what's going on! As last year, **bittern** surveys have proved inconclusive so far, with only one probable nest being located so far, though there have been some possible sightings of fledged young. The lack of nest flights is likely to be due to there being a good fish population and therefore the adults don't need to go too far to find lots of fish – why fly when you can walk?! **Marsh harriers** look like they've had a better year with about 10 nests recorded. Total fledging has yet to be confirmed! **Barn owls** have definitely had a better year, with three pairs producing 12 chicks between them, including one which had a brood of six! Last year, no barn owls fledged from the reserve.

### Other wildlife

With the washland water levels still fairly low, there haven't been so many sightings from there recently. In June, the highlights were **osprey** over on 5<sup>th</sup>, two **Med gulls** flew over on 13<sup>th</sup>, drake **garganey** and **black-tailed godwit** on 16<sup>th</sup>, and a **green sandpiper** 23<sup>rd</sup>. July was even worse with only a handful of green sandpipers and a few oystercatchers being seen.

**Scarce chaser** dragonflies are still on the wing, with **southern hawkers** just starting to emerge. **Emperor, brown hawker** and **willow emerald** damselflies are also being seen regularly. A **hummingbird hawkmoth** nectaring on toadflax in the middle of a grazing marsh was a nice treat for those pulling ragwort on 16 July.

Regular moth trapping near the vc has been good with puss moth, cream spot tiger and Dewicks plusia (pictured below in order) being some of the less common ones so far.



Photo credits: Katherine Puttick

Unusual mammal sighting came from Suzanne, our administrator, who saw a **hedgehog** by the dipping pond at the end of May. As far as I know, this is the first record of hedgehog here!

For more information about the reserve including up-to-date sightings and forthcoming events (our next big event is the Race for Wildlife on 13 October!), please look on the website at [www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/lakenheath-fen/](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/lakenheath-fen/), email us at [lakenheath@rspb.org.uk](mailto:lakenheath@rspb.org.uk) or phone the office on 01842 863400.

Hope to see you on the reserve soon!

Cheers,

Katherine      Warden      7 August 2019