

## Lakenheath Fen news December 2017

Hello and welcome to news from Lakenheath Fen!

### Reserve Management

Further work has been undertaken on the grazing marsh. Since the first cut in July, we have carried out some targeted weed wiping to reduce the coverage of nettles and juncus (rush). A final cut was then carried out across our grazing marsh at the end of September to coincide with the end of the growing season, with the aim to achieve low and open conditions to benefit next year's breeding and passage waders. Several compartments were left as a hay crop for our local grazier.

The team of staff and volunteers have been busy improving the views for visitors from both of our viewpoints and hide by clearing the reed around the ponds and pools, which has

subsequently increased the bittern sightings in these areas. We have also cut several 'landing strips' in favourable habitat locations within our compartments to encourage cranes to nest.

In the reedbeds we have lowered the water levels in the eastern and western cells to enable us to carry out essential management work over the winter. This has allowed us to access Norfolk Fen in the west, where we have started our scrub control. In the eastern section in New Fen North we are planning to undertake the final section of restoration management in this compartment with a 360 excavator cutting up to 5 hectares of reed, which will subsequently be burnt. This is dependent on the contractors but we are hoping this work will be completed late December/early January.

We have completed the sedge cutting in Botany Bay using brush-cutters. Each year we cut approximately 20% of the southern compartment to create both structural and botanical diversity. This is also part of a trial on management techniques, as the 2 northern cells are managed via grazing only. Botanical surveys planned for next year will help determine the most effective management for creating the targeted botanical diversity. The cut sedge is then burnt up on tins to enable us to remove the ash to prevent nutrient enrichment in the SSSI.

Work has begun on the installation of a new photography station/feeding area, approximately 400m away from the visitor centre, heading along the grass track to New Fen Viewpoint. Our aim is to create a natural looking feeding area within a cut bay, where our visitors will be able to enjoy the wildlife from behind the viewing screen. This station is being constructed to enhance photography opportunities of our wildlife by accommodating camera tripods and providing a range of angles, including ground shots. We are hoping to complete and open this feature in early January.



*Figure 1: Sedge cutting burning in Botany Bay*



*Figure 2: Credit Dave Rogers - Photography station in the process of being built*

## Wildlife Sightings

Our raptor species have started returning to the Reserve over the past couple of months. 25 Marsh harriers were recorded going into roost on 29/11/17. Whilst both a male and female hen harrier have been sighted. Peregrine, merlin and sparrowhawk sightings have also increased in frequency and can often be witnessed terrorising flocks of starlings.

Bitterns and bearded tits are still showing well around the reserve and we currently have three great white egrets back with us. Our winter birds have also returned, where regular flocks of redwing and fieldfare can frequently be seen along the access track. A peak count of 460 whooper swans were recorded on the washland on the 13/11, where they tend to roost each night. Our 2 regular breeding pairs of cranes have also been sighted and were part of a count of 9 cranes recorded on the 5/12, which is promising for next year's breeding season.

## Events

In October, we held our largest event of the year, the Race for Wildlife. This involved a record 133 participants descending on the Reserve to partake in either a 5k or 10k run. A huge thank you to all of our amazing volunteers who helped marshal the event as well as cheering on all the runners, creating a fantastic atmosphere. An amazing £1600 was raised, which goes directly back into the management of the Reserve.

All of our up and coming events until end of March 2018 can now be found on our website, but please find a selection of these below:

### Raptor watch

#### Sunday 14 January

2pm-5pm

Price: Adult £8 Children £4 (Non-Members) Adults £6 Children £3 (Members) Price includes car parking.

### Winter ramble in the Fens

#### Sunday 4 February

9.30am-3pm

Price: Adult £15 Children £7.50 (Non-Members) Adults £12 Children £6 (Members)  
PAYMENT TAKEN AT TIME OF BOOKING via [www.wegotickets.com/lakenheath](http://www.wegotickets.com/lakenheath); or by cheque. Price includes car parking.

### Early signs of spring at RSPB Lakenheath Fen

#### Wednesday 14 February

11am-12.30pm

Price: Free event (Facilities charge of £4 per car applies for non-members of the RSPB.)

We hope you all have a fantastic Christmas and New Year!

Thanks

Alan Kell (Warden)

13/12/2017



Figure 3: Credit Cat Serpant-barrett - Runners enjoying the Race for Wildlife