

Lakenheath Fen news July 2018

Hello and welcome to the latest news from a very hot, dry and sunny Lakenheath Fen! We are really feeling the effects of a hot dry summer. It must be at least eight weeks since we've had any meaningful rainfall, and water levels across the reserve are dropping quite drastically. The reserve is currently full of fish, and it's hard not to notice all the tiny fry around the sluices – no wonder grebes and bitterns are doing well (see breeding birds)! Hopefully the low water levels won't affect them, but if this dry weather keeps up for much longer, we could end up losing a lot of fish. We need some rain!!!

Reserve management

As always, it's a constant battle with vegetation at this time of year. Even with it being so dry, the grass keeps growing, paths still need mowing and viewpoints need strimming. We've kept on top of it much better this year though, particularly as we have several very keen volunteers who love nothing better than heading out either with a brushcutter or the quad and mower and doing a bit of vegetation bashing! It all looks good now, though if we do get some much needed rain, everything will take off again!!

It's not just the visitor trails that need attention though. We've also started the annual battle with ragwort, some of which, despite our best efforts, is still quite dense! We are using a combination of spot spraying rosettes in early spring and pulling mature flowering plants now. Hopefully we'll see a reduction in the yellow menace next year!

Our dedicated photography station, mentioned in the last newsletter, is finally finished! It is being well used by keen photographers, but still causes a bit of confusion for some non-photographers who wonder why the seats are so low and un-movable!

Other tasks have involved replacing and installing some new benches, improving kids activities around Brandon Fen, and lots of fencing.

Breeding birds – Cranes – It has been a bit of a mixed year for cranes. One pair have nested and have fledged one chick. However, they also have a second chick, which is quite a bit smaller than its sibling and still not on the wing. We're not quite sure why this has happened or what the outcome will be, but currently the family is still sticking together, so watch this space!!



Bitterns – It has definitely been a bumper year for bitterns here, with ten boomers and at least six nests, most of which have now fledged. One nest was conveniently quite close to Mere hide, and the two youngsters have been entertaining visitors to the hide for the last few weeks (see photo!)

