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Dungeness Nature Reserve Bulletin

7 July 2012

Bird news (June)

June was a wet month with some very stormy interludes, but there was also some calm which revealed the reserve at its most colourful. The viper's bugloss was out along the track,



Viper's bugloss

interspersed with yellow-horned poppies, weld and Nottingham catchfly, making a very striking picture.

As would be expected there were no major bird movements during June. However, the breeding season was in full swing and by the end of the month a number of fledglings were seen for the first time. A female was seen making feeding flights in the Denge Marsh/Hooker's pits area and juvenile peregrines and marsh harriers were being 'shown the ropes' by their parents. The first common tern chicks hatched on the rafts at Denge Marsh on 19th. There are about 20 nesting pairs, although we think some nests have been abandoned due to the rafts being thrown around by large waves in the stormier parts of the month. Over thirty long-tailed tits, including many juveniles, were seen at the ARC pit on 19th, which is a reserve record, and a couple of young ravens were spotted.



Marsh harrier

One of the highlights of the month was the sighting of a first-summer purple heron in the Denge Marsh area. It was first spotted on 5th and

stayed until the 13th when it was seen flying off high to the east.

There was a good mix of raptors during the month, including a female hen harrier (3rd), red kite (5th), merlin (2nd) and two buzzards (17th). Hobbies were regularly seen all over the reserve, with a maximum of 16 on 11th.

Wader sightings included avocet, little ringed plover, grey plover, dunlin, black-tailed godwit (18 flew over on 25th), whimbrel and curlew (seven on 11th). A spotted redshank and three green sandpipers were seen on 20th.

An elusive red-crested pochard was seen on four occasions, and a bar-headed goose tagged along with a group of greylag geese.

Management news

We currently have 20 cows, 11 heifers, 16 calves and a bull on site, keeping the fields in good condition to provide flowers for bumblebees and other insects right through to the end of the season. Some fields or parts of fields have been left ungrazed this year and have really come to fruition with clover and vetches as far as the eye can see. Even walking through these fields can be difficult with red clover up to the knees! Sheep are doing a good job with follow-up grazing in one field which should bring the sward into better condition, free from fleabane, ragwort and horsetail.

We have been working hard over the past few weeks to remove ragwort from across the reserve. Whilst the plant can be good for insects, too much of it can cause a problem for livestock, hay-cutting and neighbouring arable farmers. We have also been cutting tall vegetation along the predator fence line to prevent plants shorting-out the electric fence.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no.SC037654