

RSPB Langford Lowfields – February 2019

Shore Larks

Langford recently played host to the first shore larks seen in Nottinghamshire since 1994, when 3 of them were found feeding around the edge of the reserve's new Phase 3 area. This area is normally off-limits to the public (but can be easily seen from the perimeter footpath) and so with the help of our volunteer team we opened it up for a week to let visitors see the larks. These shore lark are ones that potentially breed in Scandinavia and would normally be found in small numbers on the British East Coast during the winter, hopping about looking for seeds amongst the sand dunes. It's unusual for them to be seen so far inland. They arrived at Langford at the same time as the cold weather at the start of February. As the size of Langford continues to increase so too will the number of unusual birds turning up on the reserve. About 100 visitors came to see the shore larks and some of these visitors were also lucky enough to see other exciting species including peregrine, great white egret, bittern, bearded tit, brambling, water pipit, pintail and jack snipe.



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Bird seed

The bird seed spread by the car park has been drawing in large numbers of finches and buntings. With a mixed flock of over 50 goldfinches and chaffinches being seen on a daily basis. Look careful and you can pick out the odd robin, dunnoek, reed bunting or even brambling amongst them. The bird feeders near the

Beach Hut are currently looking very bright and colourful because of the 16+ yellowhammers making use of them.

Woodland work

Winter is the time when we carry out our tree and scrub management. We get a lot of questions about this every year. Trees are special and so it's good to know that the ones we cut down are being felled or coppiced for good ecological reasons. The woodland is dominated by a lot of sycamore trees of various sizes and we are trying to switch this around to give the native oaks and elms more space to allow them to spread out and mature. Every year we take down a number of large elm trees and pull up literally 1000's of saplings. It will take time, but bit by bit the dominance of the sycamores will lessen. Whilst doing this, holes are opened up in the canopy and this allows us, again over time, to improve the understorey in the woodland, encouraging the growth of more woodland flowers, bramble patches and scrubby areas. Some trees are also felled for health and safety reasons, with a number of the larger trees alongside the footpath being infected with a fungus that's rotting them from the ground up.

Branches over-hanging the entrance track to the car park have been cut back to improve access for larger vehicles and to also help improve the pothole situation by allowing more wind and sunlight to dry the track out. A few trees have also been felled alongside this track as we want to give this small woodland block a better structure, giving some of the trees more space to spread out, creating more opportunity for an understorey to develop and at the same time giving the plantation planting a more natural look.

An area of blackthorn scrub on the western side of the reserve has been coppiced to create an ideal secluded habitat for grasshopper warblers, who like isolated, low, scrubby bushes in an area of long rank grass and a stand of ash trees near the Beach Hut has been pushed right back to allow the development of a wildflower and insect rich area that will border the scrubby woodland area behind the hut. This will provide a good step in the ecological gradient between the footpath and trees and will be great for butterflies and bees, which in turn will provide a great food source for the birds that nest in the thicker blackthorn patches nearby.

Bird boxes & refreshments

We continue to offer birdboxes for a donation of £10. There are still opportunities to volunteer with us, on the Beach Hut, in a meet and greet role. Get in touch if you feel you could offer a few hours a week for this – 01636 893611. Food and drink is available on site – see the volunteer at the Beach Hut!

Guided Walk – May 2019

Our next guided walk is the 'Dawn Chorus' and will be held on Sunday 12 May 2019 at 7-10am. Please call us on 01636 893611 to book a place. Prices are: Adult Non Member £10.00; Adult Member £8.00 / Child Non Member £5.00; Child Member £4.00.

Wider RSPB News: Pin Badge boxes

Our community fundraising volunteers are the local face of the RSPB. Last year, in the Midlands, the team raised an incredible £101,000 in donations from our pin badge and collection boxes, and almost £1.3 million nationally. Could you help us raise even more for nature?

The Community Fundraiser Volunteer role is suitable for those with little expendable time but a passion to do their bit for wildlife. We will support you to place 1 or more pin badge boxes in your local area, the donations from your boxes will need banking every 4-6 weeks, and the pin badges will need topping up. You will then report the income on our user friendly online system and place an order for any additional stock you may need. This can all be done in a time to suit your other commitments. Simple!

If you are interested in finding out more about the role get in touch with Harriet Dufficy, Community Fundraising Officer, harriet.dufficy@rspb.org.uk