

RSPB Langford Lowfields – July 2018

The north end of the reserve is currently closed as some remediation work needs to be carried out on the recently installed outfall sluice. High water levels during the winter put the structure to the test and some repairs and upgrading works need to be carried out on it. At the moment we are keeping visitors away from what is effectively a building site, but hope to have the whole reserve open again by the end of July.

We had a glossy ibis on site at the end of May. These are very nomadic birds which tend to wander a lot, particularly the juveniles. They are most often found in southern Europe, but are becoming more frequent visitors to the UK, this was however possibly only the 4th to ever turn up at Langford. With its distinctive curlew-like bill and glossy feathers, it brought a touch of the exotic to the site for the few days it was here, feeding close to the viewing screen, looking for insects, frogs and toads in our amphibian pools. Other unusual birds to have turned up recently include an Arctic skua, a common scoter, black terns and a once common but now threatened turtle dove, that perched for a few weeks in a patch of scrub on the reserve boundary.



The wild bird crop near the car park has been re-sown with a combination of seeds including linseed, millet, kale and sunflower. These are all seed-heavy plants and looking ahead to the winter, they should provide a good source of food for seed-loving species such as finches and buntings, when the cold weather sets in and food in the wider countryside is harder to come by. A new wild bird area was also cultivated and sown near the large pylon that also sits close to the car park.

Our volunteers have created a new bug hotel up by the Beach Hut. This is already luring in a good range of insects, which will make a home in the logs, leaves and sticks that are in the hotel. These are simple but effective structures to build and provide an excellent home for nature, you could even have a go at building a smaller version in your back garden. Sticking with insects, lots of butterflies are on the wing at Langford now, pick a sunny day and amongst the wildflowers and alongside the public footpath you should see a good range of species, including, if you're lucky, a painted lady, a long-distance migrant that makes its way to the UK every summer.



Common Blue



Reed Warbler

Photos taken at Langford Lowfields, © Steve Cotton

There are lots of six-spot burnet moths on the wing at the moment. Their larval food plant is birds-foot trefoil, which probably explains why there are so many of them on the reserve!



Water levels are being dropped in Phase 1 at the moment, this in turn is drawing water out of the High Level Water Carrier and Phase 3. We want to lower water levels in Phase 3 to make it easier for the new water control sluice to be installed later this summer and also to allow access to the islands for reed planting in September.

There still appears to be otter activity around the Silt Lagoons (where two were recently filmed mating) with otter-munched freshwater mussel shells and fresh scat being found in the vicinity.

There are lots of chicks around at the moment, with young lapwing, young black-headed gulls and cootlings all wandering around on the newly exposed muddy areas of Phase 1.

Keep your eyes on the big ash tree near the car park for purple hairstreak butterflies.

The common spotted orchids that were transplanted last year from the restoration area and moved up close to our storage containers have settled in well and have flowered already this year. In other exciting

orchid news, southern marsh orchids have been found for the first time growing on the edges of the nectar-rich flower area next to the car park.

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.