

RSPB Langford Lowfields – October 2018

Winter wildlife is starting to arrive at Langford with whooper swans, redwing, fieldfare, pintail and goldeneye already having been seen. As the daily temperatures start dropping so more and more of these birds will be seen at Langford, joined by the large flocks of wigeon and teal which spend the winter months with us.

An otter has been seen a few times recently during the day, most recently on Friday 5th October, on the footpath between the woodland and the Beach Hut. Keep your eyes open and let us know if you're lucky enough to see one.

The top part of reserve is still closed unfortunately whilst the grass seed around the outfall sluice establishes, if we open it at this time of year, the bare muddy area will soon turn into a quagmire. The sluice is (in theory) now fully operational and will be put to the test as river levels increase during the winter period.

The big reed planting project started on the newly restored Phase 3 area at Langford on Monday 8th October 2018. A large excavator is digging up established reed from the perimeter of the Phase 2 part of the site and this is being taken down to Phase 3 to be buried in wide, pre-dug trenches. The project is scheduled to last 2 weeks and we're aiming to get over 600m of trench dug and filled with reed along the 'spines' of the accessible islands. The reed being transplanted is strong, mature reed and so will establish well on Phase 3, giving a perfect kick-start to the establishment of an expansive reedbed across this new part of the reserve. It will take 20-30 years before we have full reed coverage on the Phase 3 islands, providing perfect habitat for reedbed specialists including marsh harriers, bitterns, bearded tits and as time goes on maybe even species like purple heron and great white egret, however throughout this whole establishment process, Phase 3 will attract in all sorts of amazing wildlife. Highlights so far have included white-winged black tern, Arctic skua, glossy ibis, common scoter, water pipit and a Langford record of 31 oystercatchers. A sluice with an eel pass fitted has also recently been installed, linking Phase 3 to the rest of the site. This sluice allows us to control water levels in Phase 3 (mimicking natural fluctuations, high water in winter, low water in summer) and will also allow eels to start colonising this part of the reserve. Eels are critically endangered and love reedbeds, so we hope that Langford will play host to an increasing population of happy, smiling eels.

Trench waiting for reed.



Reed collecting.



Reed being dumped into trench.



We continue to offer birdboxes for a donation of £10, plus a selection of snacks and bottled water from the Beach Hut. 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.