

RSPB Langford Lowfields – July 2019

Sightings at Langford Lowfields

We are really pleased to be able to report that we have had 3 booming bitterns. This is a new site record, and we are the only boomers in Nottinghamshire. Langford has also seen:

- Long-staying Caspian gull
- 14 black-tailed godwits
- 2 whimbrel
- Black redstart
- 2 families of pochard ducklings
- Whooper swan
- Cuckoo
- Mediterranean gull
- Yellow-legged gulls
- Goldeneyes
- 7 sandwich terns
- Grasshopper warblers
- Great white egret
- Hobbies.

There are lots of butterflies about at the moment, including painted ladies, which are pretty amazing as they winter in sub-Saharan Africa, but during the spring they migrate across the Sahara and head north to the UK and other European countries, right up to the Arctic Circle. They then do the journey in reverse during the Autumn. It is the longest migration of any butterfly, however it is not the same individual painted ladies that make the whole trip, with up to 6 successive generations being involved to complete the circle. Painted ladies lay eggs throughout their travels, these hatch and develop quickly so that there are constantly more painted ladies adding themselves to the migration routes.

Butterflies and Wildflowers Guided Walk

We hosted another butterfly and wildflower guided walk on the 6th July 2019. Although it was raining, everyone arrived in good spirits, eager to see what Langford was offering. Luckily there was a break in the rain, and the group got to see some butterflies – ringlets, meadow browns, large and Essex skippers (looks like a female Essex skipper in the photo). They also saw some nice plants in flower and everyone said they enjoyed the walk.



Essex Skipper



Yellow Wort

New Pond Dipping unit

We are very pleased to have been able to build a permanent pond dipping unit on our platform at Langford following money being raised by Waitrose as part of their green token initiative. This unit will stay permanently available, housing trays, magnifiers and nets along with an identification chart viewable by all. A contribution of £2.00 per child is payable into the 'bird box' alongside the unit. This allows us to maintain the equipment and purchase replacements as necessary. We look forward to welcoming many children over the summer holidays!



Also, next to the pond dipping area, we have provided some cut flat slabs of tree. We hope that different bugs will make these their home. If you come to the reserve, lift each one up to see who is at home.



Work Party News

As ever the work parties have been working very hard to maintain the infrastructure and the vistas of Langford. In particular, since the last newsletter, they have been tackling:

- Vegetation which is growing quickly at this time of year so lots of work goes into keeping the footpaths, benches and boardwalk clear, cutting grass, chopping back brambles, and mowing alongside the access track to the car park. It's a constant job to stay on top of it.
- Some volunteers have been helping with monitoring the bitterns on site. We are trying to build up a picture of what they're up to. The males make a very distinctive 'booming' noise during the breeding season, which is said to be the loudest noise made by any bird in the UK, with the sound apparently carrying up to 2 km. There were fewer than 20 bitterns in the UK in the 1990s, however last year 188 were recorded across the country. Bitterns in the UK at least are reedbed specialists and the recent increase in numbers has been driven by the creation of new reedbed sites and the revival of ones that needed some TLC. They are still rare birds however, especially during the breeding season and so we were very pleased to hear 3 boomers on site this year. This is the highest number recorded at Langford and a massive seal of approval from the bitterns that we're doing the right things.
- Painting of benches, waymakers and the 360° viewing area.
- Work at this year is programmed to avoid anything that will cause disturbance to nesting birds, hence why we tend to focus on mending and maintaining things... Fences have been mended.
- Ragwort has been pulled from the hay cut area on Phase 1. We make sure the ragwort is removed as it is a toxic plant, which is normally avoided by cows and horses, but which they can inadvertently eat when it's dried and mixed in with hay.
- Planting of reed turves on Phase 2, to keep pushing forward the establishment of the reedbed areas. Turves were dug from mature areas of reed and then transplanted into protective caged areas in reed-less parts of Phase 2.
- Repairing the polytunnel, which has been ravaged and is under constant assault from rats and rabbits, wanting to get to the tender young reed seedlings.

Can you help?

Do you have a few hours over a weekend that you could spend at Langford? We would love to hear from you if you would like to volunteer with us at the RSPB – we continue to search for Visitor Welcome Team Members who are happy to spend some time at the Beach Hut meeting and greeting visitors, but also enjoying the reserve. Give us a call on 01636 893611.