

Hambrook Marshes

Bird Report for March 2014

March was a very quiet period for birds. Winter visitors, such as little grebes, redwings and meadow pipits, which had in any case been very thinly represented due to the mild weather, have all departed, and there is little sign yet of summer migrants, apart from the hard-to-miss song of the chiffchaff. Even the black-headed gulls, which featured so heavily here during the amazing floods, have dispersed, the last 50 being seen on 3rd.



Black-headed gulls by Dave Smith

Of note, up to six greylag geese were seen flying along the valley most mornings, and wood pigeon numbers feeding in the fields increased to 43, after being largely absent, for obvious reasons, during the floods.

Definite signs of spring included grey wagtails regularly “tissicking” along the river, and reed buntings took up territory once more, though they have temporarily lost a home in the corner near the level crossing, as all the young willows there have been coppiced by the volunteers. Sale of the wands brings in some welcome income, but also ensures that the interesting young stage of regeneration is perpetuated. Snake’s-head fritillaries, originally planted by Kate and the volunteers, are flowering earlier than last year, but so far I have only found 15, compared to 29 in 2013. Formerly abundant in damp meadows in the South and Midlands, these gorgeous little plants with their drooping pixie-lantern flowers, have become one of the country’s scarcer species as fields were ploughed, drained and fertilised.

