



# Friends of Hambrook Marshes

## February 2015

### Bird Report

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It may have been feeling cold of late, but as the sun strengthens and days lengthen there are definite signs of spring to be seen and heard. Black-headed gulls are acquiring their smart chocolate-brown hoods, and on 10<sup>th</sup> the embankment hosted a singing tree creeper (left) as well as a drumming great spotted woodpecker (far left) – not bad going for such a small and rather isolated clump of trees. Although these are both woodland species, they often seem quite content with just a scattering of trees. The tree creeper, which I usually encounter in the tall willows on the far bank of the river, may

simply have been making a brief foray into a less familiar area to check out whether it was an improvement on where it normally spent all its time. But the woodpecker has been drumming on the embankment every morning I've passed that way in recent weeks, so he (for it is the males that advertise their springtime presence in this way) may well end up nesting nearby.

Discounting the moorhens (right) always to be found on the river and on the opposite bank (especially in the field that is variously occupied by chickens, guinea fowl, donkeys, sheep and sheepdogs, the 15 birds I've seen actually on the reserve this month constitutes the highest count ever. They are largely vegetarian, and some were grazing on the riverbank, while most of the others were in the wet area beside the A2 embankment or near the boardwalk.



Despite all the evidence of spring being not too far away, there are still a few indications of winter, and a flock of 18 meadow pipits, which is very strictly a winter visitor to the Marshes, was the highest count of the season.

This month I've had another buzzard sighting, as well as good views of a kestrel, a bird that is only seen intermittently on the marshes. There was also a single common gull, and the first jay since September.

*Bird photos by Dave Smith*