



# Friends of Hambrook Marshes

## March 2016

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### Bird Report

March is very much an in-between month, neither truly winter, nor yet the long-awaited spring. The teal that have been on Tonford Field since late February certainly believe it is still winter and, with up to eleven present, have made no effort to depart for their breeding grounds. The same wet area is also still supporting as many as 18 snipe, though they will doubtless be dispersing shortly. On 15<sup>th</sup> the same wet field hosted 32 black-headed gulls, three common gulls, 39 herring gulls, and 35 jackdaws (right).



Although there were a number of frosty mornings, and often a keen wind, portents of a new breeding season were all around; male birds of many species, in their brightest plumage, are singing loudly to proclaim territory. Up to three Cetti's warblers have been erupting into song at various points around the edge of the reserve this month, so there must be the possibility of at least one pair remaining to breed. Chiffchaffs (left) definitely

believe summer has arrived, and can be heard uttering their cheerfully monotonous song, mainly just off the reserve, but sometimes on the disused railway embankment. The pair of great crested grebes on Tonford Lake declined to one bird at the end of the month; paradoxically, this is actually a good sign, as it suggests that the female is now sitting tight on a clutch of eggs at the lake edge.

Kingfisher sightings (right) have been extremely rare since last summer, and a blue dart along the river on 8<sup>th</sup> was in fact my first for nearly three months.



*All the above bird photos are courtesy of Dave Smith*