

## Cockaynes Wood Newsletter No. 28 April 2014

*A newsletter of recent wildlife sightings and events at Cockaynes Wood and the adjoining countryside.*

### **Bird Notes**

The clutch of **Tawny Owl** eggs mentioned in last month's newsletter has now morphed into 4 owlets, due to fledge end April to early May. Migrant birds seem to have been pouring in with the first 2 **Nightingales** on 11<sup>th</sup> April in Villa Wood, still there on 21<sup>st</sup> with an additional one in Cockaynes Wood. **Reed** and **Willow Warblers** have been heard singing since 21<sup>st</sup>; there was also a **Cetti's Warbler** on the same date singing around the small fishing lake (but Cetti's is not a migrant but an all-year resident, unlike most warblers). It has a loud, explosive song which to some ears sounds like "you can do it if you B&Q it".



*Cetti's Warbler by Glyn Evans*

The scratchy warble of **Common Whitethroats** can also be heard in the scrubby areas, with the jingle of **Reed Buntings** in the background. **Yellowhammers** are back on their territories. Slightly further afield a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers** seems to be settling in on the gravel workings at Sunnymead Farm. It's not too much to hope that they might visit our scrape from time to time? On the water, a pair of **Mute Swans** has started a nest on the island and several pairs of **Little Grebes** (AKA **Dabchicks**) are also busy. As reported last month, waders are generally rather few, but there have been

some **Redshank** sightings and yesterday 2 **Lapwings** flew over, one of them doing a display flight, so maybe there's yet time for a pair to settle.

Thanks to David, Mo and Glyn for their records and pictures.



*Yellowhammer by Glyn Evans*

## **Insignificant little creature of the month**

The unusually warm and sunny first weeks of March, with an outburst of flowers and pollen, brought forth many pollinating insects, including one which caught the attention of David Barnard – a bee slightly smaller than a honeybee, which was attracted in large numbers to the remains of the old sand heap in the quarry yard and could be seen entering holes in the eroded sand faces. Without any reason to think the find was anything special, we relayed the information to David Scott who quickly identified the bee as *Colletes cunicularius*, the only spring-flying species of the genus *Colletes*. The only snag? This species is supposed to be only found in the UK along the NW coast of England and South Wales, in large sand dune systems, with a few outlying inland records. It had never before been recorded from Essex or anywhere else in Eastern England. The identification now confirmed by other experts, it has caused great excitement and is yet another very special addition to our biodiversity.

*C.cunicularius* feeds on pollen of various willow species flowers – there are of course large numbers of willow in Villa Wood, and also in and around the former silt lagoon, so there appears to be no shortage of food supplies for this bee. The

nesting area appears big enough to support a reasonable colony though we will have to make sure it remains open to sunlight and does not get too vegetated.



*Colletes cunicularius* by David Barnard.

## Coming Events

We will be running **Bluebell Walks** at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, with one walk starting from the Cockaynes Lane end of the footpath into Cockaynes Wood, and the other starting from the former quarry yard which we use as a car park. This can be reached via the track just north of the railway bridge on Alresford Road, Wivenhoe (entrance will be signposted).

We'll also be putting on a special event for **National Insect Week** on Saturday June 28<sup>th</sup> – programme to be decided and announced but will include some fascinating stuff.

**Colchester Natural History Society** will visit from 9.45 a.m. on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July and while this is not open to the general public our volunteers and helpers are welcome to attend.

Our **Open Day** this year will be on Sunday July 6<sup>th</sup> with the usual guided walks and other attractions.

Any offers of help with these events will be most gratefully received.

## Work Party News

Counting down :The boardwalk in Villa Wood is now only about 3m short of completion!

Next Work Party is **Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup>** meeting at 10.00 a.m. at the former quarry yard.  
Other upcoming dates are:

**Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup>**

New volunteers are always welcome. Please remember you don't have to have any special expertise to join us, or to stay for the whole session. If you have any queries about the work parties please phone Robin on 01206 826418.

This monthly newsletter is available on request to anyone interested. All contributions of wildlife observations will be welcomed by the Editor Robin Cottrill ([robin.cottrill@gmail.com](mailto:robin.cottrill@gmail.com)) (tel 01206 826418). These can be from the Cockaynes Wood site or surrounding area (Alresford, Wivenhoe or Elmstead). Please keep me supplied with your wildlife observations!

For those with a particular interest in birds, the excellent website <http://www.wivenhoeforum.co.uk/discussion/1062/birds-of-wivenhoe> will provide recent bird news, discussion and pictures.