

January - Wetlands and Wetland Birds



The tidal estuaries and flood plains of the major rivers that cut through the Downs provide a rich habitat for wildlife. In many places the flood plains have been drained and ditches that fringe the grazing marshes are rich in aquatic and marginal plants and invertebrates. This includes uncommon species such as the Hairy dragonfly. In winter months as the tide falls on the estuaries the exposed mudflats provide a rich feeding ground for wading birds. Birds such as dunlin and grey plover that breed in the arctic return each winter to make use of the dense populations of small molluscs and worms in the silt as high energy food to sustain them through the winter months. Further upstream areas of water lie on the flood meadows providing another rich wintering ground for ducks, geese and the Bewick's swan. This small swan with a yellow beak breeds in Siberia and migrates to our milder winters where it feeds on grass and roots. In summer the flood meadows and their wet ditches provide a breeding area for other birds including the redshank and the reed warbler which arrives in April having spent the winter in Africa.

For more information on the UK partnership supporting the International Year of Biodiversity: www.biodiversityislife.net