

Harriers nest for 2010 season

Two marsh harrier females sit tight. See one on the webcam



Two marsh harrier nests are currently active at Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve, Norfolk, where Hawk and Owl Trust conservationists hope that once again chicks from this endangered species will be raised successfully.

One of the two brooding females has been returning to Sculthorpe for the last four breeding seasons and for the past two has been featured on BBC TV's Springwatch.

But the harriers were not the first visiting birds of prey to return to the reserve this year, as warden Nigel Middleton points out: "The first of the non-resident birds of prey to be recorded at the reserve was a male goshawk, followed a few days later by a female. Since 2005 these birds have been regular visitors, arriving at the end of February and hanging around till mid March, although people still confuse them with sparrowhawks.

"Their disappearance usually coincides with the arrival of our breeding marsh harriers, this species being the main reason that the Hawk and Owl Trust took on the lease of Sculthorpe Moor with the vision of preserving the reedbed and fen habitat.

"For the last five years the male marsh harrier has arrived on site on the 19th March. This year, true to form, he arrived as predicted, but was pipped to the post by our resident female who arrived the day before.



"This bird has been coming back for at least four years, if not longer, and the last two years she has been a star of BBC Springwatch. If everything goes according to plan we should have cameras at the nest again this year.

" A few days later, another pair of harriers arrived and a single female although she now seems to have disappeared. At the 29th April we have two nests. Both females are sitting tight – watch this space for further updates."