

Glossy ibis returns to Wildspace

In a column for the News, ecologist Dr Mark Welch talks about a surprise visitor to Ely Wildspace which drew plenty of attention



ELY Wildspace
BIG YEAR 2017



WELCOME SURPRISE: A glossy ibis caused plenty of interest when it was spotted at the Ely Wildspace area. Left picture, Mark Grooms, below, Ben Green

An exotic-looking egret-sized bird, a glossy ibis, with dark cinnamon-coloured plumage and a long down-curved bill was found last week in the Ely Wildspace area.

While glossy ibis is no longer the UK rarity that it was 20 years ago, finding a local bird in February on the water meadows bordering the riverside path was a welcome surprise and attracted birders from far afield in the UK to come and add it to their "year lists".

The Ely ibis may be the same bird as that seen here in November last year and that stayed in the Wildspace for two weeks before heading off to Barway.

Since 2003, when an influx into the UK of more than 20 birds occurred, glossy ibis has become a regular visitor to the UK, with at least a dozen birds recorded each year, sometimes in small groups.

Evidence from ringing studies reveals that these birds come from Spain and southern France, both of which have established breeding populations that are spreading rapidly northwards.

This expansion of the range of glossy ibis echoes that of little egret back in the 1990s. Little egret is a white heron with black legs and yellow feet that is now commonly seen in the Ely area in ditches, by the river and on the water meadows.

Grey heron and little egret are some of our earliest breeding birds. The Ely herony is already active this year, with three nests currently occupied.

As February ends, we look forward to a renewal of insect life in March as the sallows and blackthorns come in to bloom and attract early bees, butterflies and hoverflies.

Records for the Ely Wildspace Big Year project (elywildspace.org.uk) are accumulating and the pace is starting to quicken as spring approaches.

Those interested in knowing more about the Big Year project and participating in wildlife surveys in the Ely area should contact Mark Welch (mdw@nhm.ac.uk).



HEALTH

Care home is rated good by inspectors

A SHELTERED housing scheme with 65 flats has been rated as providing "good" care.

Beech Court, in Parsons Lane, Littleport, was recently inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

Owned and managed by Axiom Housing Association, Beech Court was rated as "good" for providing a service that is safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

CQC inspector Andy Green said in his report: "People's privacy, dignity and independence were respected and their care and support was provided in a caring and patient way."

Stuart Fort, executive director at Axiom, said: "Providing good quality care is fundamental.

"The staff have done a great job in ensuring our service is compliant and measures up to CQC standards.

"We're delighted with the result; it's a real endorsement of our care service."

Last April, Beech Court, which provides 65 ground, first and second floor flats for vulnerable and elderly people, benefited from a £1.2m makeover including new kitchens and bathrooms, and a landscaped courtyard.

For more information call (01733) 347135.

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