

# the Brenne Naturally

The annual newsletter from the Brenne for naturalists

N°4, January 2008

*It is intended that this free newsletter be sent out every January to inform any visitors from abroad of the year's major events within the area, either natural or otherwise. If you should know of anyone else who would care to receive a copy just let us know and we'll be sure their copy is sent rapidly. If for some reason you prefer not to be on our mailing list (that is used for no other purpose than to send the newsletter) just let us know and we'll do the necessary.*

*We wish all our readers a very happy and interesting New Year.*



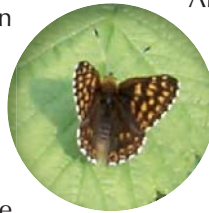
## Two new acquisitions

Two of Brenne's larger wildlife-rich lakes have recently been purchased for conservation.

One, the **Sous lake** and surrounding land (60 ha in all), adjoins the present Chérine national nature reserve. Bought with funds from various sources including the Indre Conseil Général it will now be managed especially for wildlife. It is hoped that Musk rat and Coypu control will help the aquatic vegetation to develop and the existing reedbed expand so that it will in the future attract Bittern, Whiskered tern and Black-necked grebe; three of the Brenne's special bird species.

The other, **Purais lake**, was bought with money from the LPO and WWF – France. Very close to the existing La Touche reserve of the LPO, this 60 ha lake will now also be managed by them. It is one of the few lakes in the area still covered with white water lilies and each year is home to one of France's largest Whiskered tern colonies – 304 pairs in 2007, and of course there are many other rare species.

Both will be dotted with public hides in the future, but probably not before autumn 2008.



## Another butterfly species for the Brenne

After having been informed of the presence of the Duke of Burgundy in Lancosme forest in 2006 by Nigel Spring (leading a British group), a search in the same area in late April 2007 in less than ideal weather nonetheless produced sightings of two imagos. Cowslips, the larval food plant is widespread and often numerous in the forest, so a good look during sunny weather at the right time of year in 2008 may show that it's not particularly rare there.

## What's new at Foucault Reserve ?

The Foucault lake, one of the lakes of the Parcs Foucault reserve, has been empty for the last two years but will once again be full in 2008 and will probably attract many birds – it's visible from the main Foucault hide (accessible from the D15 car park) and is best visited in the morning. However, the Bénisme lake next to it will be dry (for conservation work).

## Good numbers of whiskered terns produce less young due to the bad weather

As in Britain, after a hot and sunny April the Brenne witnessed its coolest and wettest spring for a long time. Although we have no precise details it would appear that many species of birds had a poor breeding season. The number of Whiskered terns was high, with 1199 breeding pairs the best year ever except for 2006. However most nests that could be seen clearly only produced 1 or 2 chicks to the flying stage; in good years there are usually 2 or 3 chicks, sometimes even four.

*Grace Dalter from Essex, seen here in the centre of the photo, during a visit to the Maison de la Nature with her family on 9th June last year.*

*At a very lively 98 she must be one of our most senior visitors this year (maybe ever). When asked if she was enjoying her trip to Brenne, she replied she was and had "particularly enjoyed her recent close encounter with one of the local Black kites".*



## Why not come and practice your French whilst enjoying five days in the field with an expert!

Next year will be the fourth that the Centre for environmental education (CPIE) will be running field courses for adults. Some 23 different residential courses are proposed for 2007, all concern the environment in some way but two may be of particular interest to British visitors as they will be led by an English person (Tony Williams).

### ■ "Papillons" The Brenne's butterflies 25th to 29th June

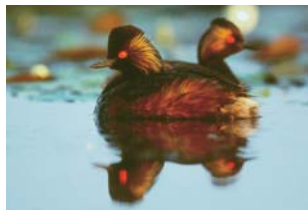
More than 50 species were watched and identified during the same period in 2007 (including swallowtail, large blue, large copper, woodland brown, large tortoiseshell, Camberwell beauty...).

### ■ "Oiseaux de Brenne" The Brenne's birds 3rd to 7th September

During 2007 there were good sightings of many of the Brenne's specialities (whiskered tern, black-necked grebe, short-toed eagle, red-backed shrike...) and good migrants (osprey, black stork...).

### ■ "Oiseaux de Brenne" The Brenne's birds 8th to 12th December

The first year this course has been proposed. We will be looking for some of the Brenne's winter specialities – Smew, Common Crane, Great White Egret... as well as resident species that are rare or absent from Britain - Crested Lark, Black Redstart, Ferruginous duck... We'll visit reserves and private estates to ensure that we see as much as possible.



Both courses are based at the newly revamped education centre in Azay-le-Ferron to the north-west of the Brenne and last 5 days/4 nights – an extension is possible. All rooms are en-suite with 2 persons per room (single room possible) and all meals are included. There are outings every day, transport being in shared private car, but it's possible to arrange a pick up from Poitiers airport or railway station.

Price 490 €. For more information contact T. Williams/LPO Brenne 00 33 (0)2 54 28 11 04 or [lpo.brenne@tiscali.fr](mailto:lpo.brenne@tiscali.fr)



## EuCAN comes to Brenne

2007 saw the launch of an exciting new initiative (the European Conservation Action Network) thanks to funds from a Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Grant. Its aim to establish Europe-wide links with conservation organisations through volunteer work. Each participant pays little and learns much, participates in very useful conservation work and, hopefully, has a good time.

The group in the photo (of 15 British and 9 French volunteers + paid staff) worked on scrub clearance at various sites in Brenne, 13th to 20th October. EuCAN will be back in Brenne in 2008, 29th February to 15th March and 10th to 25th October.

If you are over 18 and not in full-time education and are interested in finding out more, contact: Nigel Spring, 346 Munden's Lane, Alwinston, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 5HU Tel: 01963.23559 Mobile: 07981.776767 Email: [nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk)

## Help in English

■ **Before coming:** contact the Nature information centre 00 44 (0)2 54 28 11 04. Leave a message in English, giving the best times to telephone; and we'll call you back.

■ **When here:** If you have any questions, in English, of where to go or what's about in the Brenne during a visit here, then come to the Cistude hide at the "Maison de la Nature" Tony Williams (an English naturalist who's lived here for more than twenty years) will be available to answers ques-

tions most Monday mornings, during April, May, June and September.

■ **Guided visits in English** Tony Williams also guides most of the LPO outings, in English (see the leaflet Brenne Nature in English for dates).

Cécil Danel (Chérine reserve guide who speaks English) will be in the Cistude hide on Fridays from 10 o'clock to 12h30, during April, May, June and September – the best birding months in Brenne.

## Tourist information

The Parc produces various leaflets incorporating information the visitor in English:

### ■ Guide pratique:

detailed information on where to stay and where to eat...

### ■ Coming to Brenne:

specially produced to help the British traveller better organize their visit here.

### ■ Birds & Wildlife in Regional Nature Parks of France:

combine your visit here with that of another French Park!

■ **A new book "Les plus belles balades du Parc naturel régional de la Brenne"** is now available, and although in French, it's easy to read and the clear maps of the 20 different interesting walks are easy to follow. It's available from most bookshops in the area of from the Parc centre or the Maison de la Nature, in Brenne. 160 pages, price 12,80 €.

To receive these leaflets, the book or for information, please contact:

**Parc visitor centre – Le Bouchet – 36300 ROSNAY (France)**  
[www.parc-naturel-brenne.fr](http://www.parc-naturel-brenne.fr) - E-mail: [tourisme@parc-naturel-brenne.fr](mailto:tourisme@parc-naturel-brenne.fr)

## The 2008 Birdwatching Fair, 15th, 16th and 17th August



Once again, we'll be there. A representative of the Brenne Parc naturel régional (Tony Williams) will be at the Birdfair for the eighth consecutive year. Look out for us at the French Parcs Stand – probably Marquee 5 – and come and taste some French produce on any of the three afternoons at about 4 o'clock.

The happy winners of one of the daily prize draws, a hamper of French produce (from different parcs) at the 2007 Birdwatching Fair.