

the Brenne Naturally

The annual newsletter from the Brenne for naturalists

N°7, April 2011

It is intended that this free newsletter be sent out every February to inform any visitors from abroad of the year's major events within the area – either natural or otherwise.



New Large Copper site

After the sighting of a few male Large Copper butterflies next to the Maison de la Nature in 2009, water docks were planted on the site, on the side of the étang Cistude during spring 2010 with the hope that the species would breed there. The Large Copper has seriously declined in Brenne since the Coypu colonised the area in the 1980s and caused the quasi-disappearance of the butterfly's food plant, the water dock. The discovery of characteristic holes in some of the plants' leaves (photo) lets us suppose that the species has colonised the site and encourages us to plant more docks during 2011. If you want to see Large Copper, the Maison de la Nature in late May is probably as good a site as any.



Another new species for the Brenne

An Iberian Chiffchaff was found next to the road on the eastern side of the Chérine national nature reserve. First seen on 5th April, it could be watched easily every day at close range as it sang from the same small clump of trees until at least the 19th.



Visits in English

Once again there will be guided visits in English of **Chérine national nature Reserve** every Thursday (16h00 to 18h00) during April, May and June and every Thursday in July (17h00 to 19h00); these visits are guided by Cecile who speaks good English; there are many other visits during the year but the guide may not be English speaking.

For more information see cherine.reserve-naturel.org (participants are advised to book a place). Email rncherine@wanadoo.fr (indicating visit Cécile Danel) or telephone 00 33 (0)2 54 28 11 02.

The **LPO** (French equivalent of the RSPB) also organises visits on various natural history themes (birds, butterflies, orchids...): those listed below are guided by English speaking Tony Williams. 15, 19, 22 and 26/04; 6, 13, 20 and 27/05; 3, 11 and 26/06; 7, 10, 13 and 15/07; 4/08; 14, 16 and 21/09.

In order to avoid waste the 2011 Newsletter will only be sent to those who have specifically asked to receive it. It will be sent free of charge either by e-mail or through the post, so please let us know if you would like to receive it (or of anyone else who might like a copy) and in what form by contacting Tony Williams at lpo.brenne@aliceadsl.fr or by writing (send the following form if you care to).

I should like to receive "The Brenne Naturally"

by e-mail a paper copy by normal post

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Please return to: lpo.brenne@aliceadsl.fr
or LPO Brenne, Maison de la Nature,
36290 St.-Michel-en-Brenne, FRANCE

The 2011 Birdwatching Fair,
19th, 20th and 21st August

Once again, we'll be there. A representative of the Brenne Parc naturel régional (Tony Williams) will be at the Birdfair for the twelfth 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.

New hides

Two new hides were opened to the public during the spring.

– The first overlooking the **Cistude lake** became operational in March and is now open during "Maison de la Nature" opening hours.

– The second, a large hide overlooking the newly acquired **Sous lake** is reached from the car park on the D44 St.-Michel-en-Brenne to Rosnay road, a little to the south-east of St.-Michel.

The Sous hide was particularly good during the spring. There were close views to be had of many of the Brenne's specialities with a colony of Whiskered terns and Black-necked Grebes close to the hide and Little Bittern, Purple Heron, Marsh harrier and Great Reed Warbler regularly observed. The Bittern below was often seen during October and November.



An Osprey from the new Cistude hide.



The **Purais hide** will open next spring. It is a large hide overlooking the newly acquired Purais lake. It is reached from the car park on the D32 near Lingé (direction Rosnay). A naturalist guide will be on hand in the hide between 1st April and 24th June every Thursday from 10h00 to 12h00.

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

This year will be the fifth that the Centre for environmental education (CPIE) will be running field courses for adults. Some 40 different residential courses are proposed for 2011, all concern the environment in some way but three may be of particular interest to British visitors as they will be led by an English person (Tony Williams).

■ Papillons "The Brenne's butterflies" 20th to 24th June.

More than 50 species were watched and identified during the same period in 2010 (including swallowtail, large blue, large copper, woodland brown, large chequered skipper, sooty copper...).

■ Oiseaux de Brenne "The Brenne's birds" 29th August to 2nd September

During 2010 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 d'hiver de Brenne "The Brenne's winter birds" 5th to 9th December

The third 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.

All three 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 is by shared private car. There's the possibility of arranging a pick up from Poitiers airport or railway station.

Price 568€. For more information contact T. Williams/LPO Brenne 00 33 (0)2 54 28 11 04 or lpo.brenne@tiscalix.fr

New site guides

The Brenne is one of several French Parcs to have edited a new site guide in English.

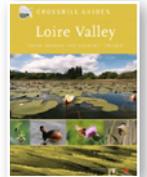
"Where to watch birds (and other wildlife) in the Brenne Parc naturel regional – France" it one of the first of what is hoped will be an ever increasing series designed to be updated regularly.

The paper version of 16 pages is available free of charge; contact Tony Williams lpo.brenne@aliceadsl.fr, Maison de la Nature, 36290 St.-Michel-en-Brenne, France. But better still it can be downloaded, along with those of the other parcs (Brière, Forêt d'Orient, Marais du Cotentin et du Bessin, haute Languedoc, Lande de Gascogne/Loire/Anjou/Touraine, Perche) from the Fédération des Parcs web site. Type Where to watch in the "recherche" box and click.



The Crossbill Guides series, "The Loire Valley (Loire, Brenne and Sologne) France" will be available in late January

It is in English with the same format as the other titles in the series is covers all aspects of the where, how and whys of central France's natural history. 208 pages, full colour, it will cost £18.95 in the UK and can be ordered from most of the wildlife specialist book stores.



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 **Maison de la Nature** nature information centre). Tony Williams (an English naturalist who's lived here for more than twenty

years) will be available to answers questions most Monday mornings, (Cécile Danel a Chérine reserve guide is bilingual and will be present during his few absences), 10 o'clock to 12h30, during April, May, June and September (the best birding months in Brenne). Cecile will also be present, during April, May and June, at the Cistude hide on Friday mornings 10h-12h30 and the Ricot hide (close to Cistude) Thursday mornings 10h-12h.

Tourist information

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

■ **Guide pratique:** detailed practical information on where to stay, where to eat, where to go, what to see...

■ **Carte Touristique:** a tourist map of the Brenne

■ **Coming to Brenne:** specially produced to help the British traveller better organize their visit to France.

■ **Birds & Wildlife in Regional Nature Parks of France:** combine your visit here with that of another French Park!

■ **Les plus belles balades du Parc naturel regional de la Brenne** although in French, is 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 12.99€

To receive these leaflets, the book or for further information, please contact: Parc visiter centre – Le Bouchet – 36300 ROSNAY (France) www.parc-naturel-brenne.fr - E-mail: tourisme@parc-naturel-brenne.fr



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