

Westbere Marsh

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Sunday 13th March 2011

Due to the resounding success of our February work party we are looking for more volunteers who can assist, this time with the specific goal of improving two areas suited to bird surveys. This will give you the opportunity to get right into the centre of the marsh and learn about the huge amount of work that has already been completed, along with the ongoing and future plans for this critical wetland habitat.

In total the Wild Spaces Fund controls 11% of reedbeds in Kent, making a major contribution to safeguarding this fragile and scarce habitat. Westbere Marshes form an integral part of the Stodmarsh SSSI, and make an important contribution to the nearby Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve.

The ultimate aim is to restore the marsh to an important wetland habitat, providing the perfect environment for amongst others, the rare Bittern. In 1997 there were only eleven known male Bitterns in the UK. Today we can already see the fruits of our labour with regular sightings of Bitterns and Marsh Harriers around the marsh.

This is a major undertaking, and will take many years to complete. In addition to our volunteer weekends we have secured funding from Natural England in the form of a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement, which will ensure that major works such as re-profiling and digging new ditches along with pond construction and the clearance of large trees can also take place.

After years without management, reedbeds naturally dry out as invasive willow and alder slowly suck the lifeblood from a marsh. Dykes become clogged and left to nature's own devices, woodland would prevail. Carefully applied actions such as reed cutting, scrub and tree clearance, along with a program of ditch work and water level control will, over time, reverse the damage.

www.wildspacesfund.org.uk



If you can spare some time we will be meeting on the south side of the railway crossing, at the bottom of Walnut Tree Lane, next to the Wild Spaces Fund Map, for a 10.00am start.

Please contact paul.mara@wildspacesfund.org.uk he will email joining instructions.

*Please note we will be burning felled willow so please wear old clothes that will not be venerable to heat and sparks. Wellingtons and a pair of gardening gloves would also be useful.