

## Pevensy Marshes

PERMIT-ONLY ACCESS

A large area of grazing marsh with numerous ditches and pools

A thousand years ago the entire area of the Pevensy Levels was saltmarsh, inundated by the sea at high tide. However, the land has since been reclaimed, drained by a huge network of dykes, and used as low-lying pasture. Nevertheless, the Levels remained marshy into the spring each year and were used by many wetland birds, while the ditches had become important habitats for many unusual plants and insects. In past decades much of the Levels have been drained further to improve conditions for agriculture, much to the detriment of wildlife – there are now few wetland birds breeding here, but recent changes in policy have increased the level of water in the ditches.

### Highlights

Rare wetland insects and molluscs, the fen raft spider, unusual wetland plants, some breeding waders, many passage and wintering wetland birds.



fen raft spider

Alice Parfitt



marsh harrier

Damian Waters

The nature reserve is one of the few areas left which is not pump-drained, and careful management ensures that wildlife abounds. Many different plants occur in the ditches, such as flowering rush, greater spearwort, arrowhead, and several rare ones including the sharp-leaved pondweed. There are invertebrates too, such as the variable damselfly, many rare snails and other molluscs, and Pevensy is the most important site in the United Kingdom for our biggest, and one of the rarest, spiders — the fen raft spider. Where possible we keep the fields damp into the spring, and we have also created some wet scrapes that have proved irresistible to birds. Lapwing, redshank and yellow wagtail breed here, hobbys swoop over the water catching dragonflies, and in winter the scrapes provide refuge for hundreds of teal, wigeon, gadwall and snipe, and are visited by birds of prey such as marsh harriers, peregrines and short-eared owls. The 147 hectare Trust reserve forms part of the National Nature Reserve, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and is an internationally recognised wetland as a Ramsar site.