

HADDENHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY

WINTER 2022

The Committee for 2022/23 is:

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Ann Biggs	740810
John Burgess	749441
Sheila Dickerson	749443
Susan Everitt, Treas.	740352
Elver Langley	740583
Wendy Lanman	741138
Robert Norman	740473
Chris Prescott	749038

All numbers are 01353

Please feel free to get in touch with any committee member with questions or information you might have. If you have any specific records of flora and fauna send them to Sheila Dickerson on hadconsoc@gmail.com

Send articles or photos for the newsletter to Sally on hadconsoc@gmail.com

HCS website:
www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk

Membership information

Subscription rates

1 Jan to 31 Dec 2022

Individual: £8 Family: £12

If you wish to join the Society, send your cheque, made out to Haddenham Conservation Society, with your name, address and telephone number, to: Susan Everitt, 21 Twenty Pence Road, Wilburton, Ely CB6 3RM

This will entitle you to receive our regular newsletter and will give you free entry to the 7 winter talks, a saving of £2.50 per person per session.

Eunice Carnage

Contributed by John Burgess

Whenever I hear a Christian name, I always subliminally associate it with other people I know of the same name. Sometimes this is a memory aid; other times I associate character traits. In my youth, I knew a dear little lady called Eunice – there could not have been a greater contrast between her and the violent beast that ripped through the country on 18 February.

It was with some trepidation that I cycled down to Nine Acre Wood, wondering what sort of carnage had ensued.

Along Church Fen Drove a large Alder (*right*) had succumbed to the relentless force; it lay unceremoniously across the field edge, roots exposed to the sunlight denying any possibility of recovery.

As I entered the wood it seemed unusually sparse. Normally, even at this time of year, there is a certain amount of leafage visible, but today there was none. This may well have been fortuitous. During the 1987 gale, the subsequent destruction was amplified by the fact that it was autumn and the leaf cover acted like a sail capturing the wind's energy.

The path was punctuated by a variety of twigs, some of



which had speared into the ground as they fell from height. None of the twigs were very large; notwithstanding that, it was obviously not the place to be during the gales.

The Wood was planted with several Robusta Poplars, which are prone to snapping in high winds. Evidence of earlier wind damage can be seen throughout the area, so my confidence was not high. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the lack of trauma. Throughout the wood there are several trees at a somewhat jaunty angle, not all as a result of last week's blast although some are clearly very recent. Those which have partially uprooted are supported by their neighbours, a bonus of the original planting density, they will continue to either flourish or die back creating alternative habitats.

This type of destruction is a natural phenomenon. If all was left to its own devices, the trees would eventually die and fall or, as in this case, be prematurely uprooted. Thereafter the hole in the leaf canopy stimulates diverse growth at low level and the rotting trunk provides the base for the food chain, followed by a myriad of bacteria, fungi, insects, birds and mammals, all part of life's rich pattern.

Having completed an inner, then outer lap of the wood and having had a chat with a very pleasant couple enjoying an afternoon stroll along the pathway, all in all, everything seems very satisfactory. They both commented on the large crow-style nest, which had withstood Eunice without any apparent effect and is a testament to its builders. I suspect it's a Buzzard nest, on account of its size and structure.

As the days lengthen and the weather warms, everything now is primed to burst into life. The skeletal limbs overhead will soon grow a myriad of green appendages, shutting out the light and the wind alike. It's an amazing contrast and welcome shelter as the nesting season kicks into gear. Long may it continue.



A True Story

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

Storm Eunice had been raging all night. Brian came in from the garden after checking for damage and announced that he had found a dead baby owl on the balcony. The conversation went like this:

W: Oh dear, poor little thing. It must have been blown out of the nest. (Thinking, 'isn't it a bit early in the year?'.) Was it still downy?

B: Sort of, I think so.

W: Did it have some flight feathers?

B: Maybe – I'm not sure.

W: Where did you find it exactly?

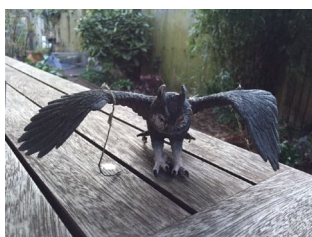
B: On the left side of the balcony.

W: How did it get there? The wind was coming from the other direction!

B: Would you like to see it?

W: Well, yes. I could add that to my newsletter article, but I need to know what I'm writing about.

Brian returns holding a plastic bag out of which he gingerly picks – with gloved hand – the little plastic owl I had hung up to deter the pigeons from flying into the bedrooms when the windows are open!



Create a Green Heart

The Climate Coalition have joined with The Great British Sewing Bee's Patrick Grant to call on MPs to take action for nature and climate. They are calling on people to create a green heart – either at home or with others in your community – and use it to ask your MP to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor calling for leadership and action on climate and nature. Go to <https://rb.gy/q1unnr> for ideas on crafting hearts, baking hearts and creating digital hearts. There are links to resources and a post card you can download.



Renew Your Subs

Subscriptions were due on 1 January. If you haven't done so already, please pay promptly. It really does help. Thank you!

Onwards and Upwards

Contributed by Lorraine Jenkins, SECBG

The South East Cambridgeshire Badger Group (SECBG) was formed at the end of 2019 with just three members and has since grown to become a fully affiliated Badger Trust group with over twenty members. We have grown our database from one sett to fifty setts, with new setts being reported to us regularly. We are now on social media and you can find us on Facebook and Instagram.

The aim of the group is to monitor and protect setts and Badgers, give advice to the public and promote Badgers in our area. In 2021 we were awarded a grant from the Badger Trust which has enabled us to set up a Badger rescue service, with five members covering SE Cambs and beyond. A neighbouring Badger group kindly provided us with some training and then we were ready to get out and rescue Badgers! In 2021 we were able to help one adult badger and three cubs, with two of the cubs being successfully released in autumn after being rehabilitated. This year we have already helped one adult badger involved in an RTA and expect to start receiving calls about cubs in the coming months.

Despite Covid 19 restrictions, last year we were able to take our promotional stall to Ely Green Fair and the Gransden Show, which gave us an opportunity to speak to members of the public and raise some much needed funds for the group. This year we will be at the Thriplow Daffodil Weekend, The Mad Hatters Festival and Ely Green Fair. We are also taking part in the New Life on the Old West project and will be at the 'Open for Nature'



event on 18 June in Haddenham – please do come and see us at our stall if you are interested in Badgers.

For 2022 we hope to expand our sett database and gain new members to help us with our aims. We welcome members from all backgrounds, whether they have experience of Badgers or are complete beginners. We also hope to be able to rescue more Badgers and promote Badgers as a species to more people across South East Cambridgeshire. For more information see www.cambsbadgers.co.uk.

Winter Sounds from the Gallery Garden

Contributed by Ann Biggs

An icy winter night shudders to lonely cries from a vixen seeking a lover before dawn, jealous of the duet of Tawnies in mated bliss, while below others fear the coming light.

I wake to chuckling Blackbirds greeting the morning, mocking a Robin who sings with hopes of spring while snow flurries settle on his puffed red chest.

Day begins with the first rain of New Year lashing my studio window. Cold wind whips remaining leaves into a whirling dervish dance, silencing songsters, all but one who sends a challenge from swaying treetops, a bird well named to cry defiance to winter's fury.

Visitors driven indoors sample our café cakes and light lunches, sitting out the storm looking at our extensive programme of workshops, taking the chance to book while waiting for the sun to return.

By afternoon, sun filters through the now leafless branches, Goldfinch squabble in sing-song voice over seeds and fat balls until a child's voice, high in temper, scares the flock, to be replaced by a bold squirrel, who clings, head down, and chatters to keep small birds at bay.



All too soon, darkness creeps back across the short winter day, a Muntjac echoes the dawn with harsh rhythmic barks of love, silenced abruptly by screams from night hunters seeking sparks of life hidden in last autumn's fallen leaves for supper.

A question now hangs for all to answer: 'Are we prepared for a future dawning of a silent spring?'.

News from Guppy's Pond

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

It has been lovely to see the resident swans all through this winter. So, fingers crossed that they will be successful in raising a family this year.

Coots, Moorhens, Mallards and Kingfishers have all been visible too. As for garden birds there are so many flitting around at high speed that I gave up trying to count them for the RSPB. Blue Tits and Long-tailed Tits are the most numerous, followed by Great Tits and Goldfinch. I have seen Dunnocks, Blackbirds, Chaffinch, Pied Wagtail, a cock Pheasant and two hens, Starlings, Wood Pigeons, Collared Doves, and Robins. All very active and healthy looking.

A Muntjac has been munching his way around the garden, decapitating Tulip and



Hemerocallis plants, not worried in the slightest if we gesticulate from within the house but disappearing swiftly if we go outside.

Now I'm waiting for the frogs to start singing.



New Life ON THE OLD WEST

You may have heard of the 'New Life on the Old West' project, whose mission is 'helping wildlife thrive in the Fens'. This involves various projects in and around the Fens, in collaboration with local organisations, including Cambridgeshire ACRE.

The Conservation Society and New Life volunteers got together on 27 November, with a working morning at the Closed Cemetery in Church Lane to sow and plant wildflowers. The main area was scarified first, while another area towards the far end was sowed without scarifying. It will be interesting to compare growth in the two areas over the coming years. A variety of seeds was sown, notably Yellow Rattle and White Clover. It is hoped the Yellow Rattle will help to overcome the grass and make the area more wildflower friendly. A wildflower count will be undertaken annually so that progress can be monitored.

You can find out more about the New Life on the Old West project here: <https://www.newlifeoldwest.org.uk/>. They will be running a Haddenham event on Saturday 18 June in Fairchild's Meadow in which the Conservation Society expects to be involved.



New Life
ON THE OLD WEST

OPEN FOR NATURE DAY

Let's help wildlife thrive!



Saturday 18th June 2022
Fairchild's Meadow, Haddenham

A day to discover local wildlife and find out how you can support our much loved species

Free event!

Get in touch with us WWW.NEWLIFEOLDWEST.ORG.UK

Made possible with
 **Heritage Fund**

The event will run from 11am to 2pm and is free. Everyone welcome! Come along to speak to local wildlife experts and take part in activities to discover local wildlife.

Tree Planting at Fairchild's Field and Meadow

Contributed by Erika Wedgwood, 1st Haddenham Cub Scouts

On the last Saturday of January, it was sunny but blustery when a group of Haddenham Parish Councillors, Cub Scouts and associates gathered at Fairchild's Meadow to plant three English Oak (*Quercus robur*) trees. They were to be in memory of David Fairchild, and also part of the wider 'New Life on the Old West' project set up by ACRE with local landowners and communities. According to their plant passports (coded PFATHAUPR GB-1233) the 125-cm trees had been grown in Britain by the company Frank Matthews, and were supplied bare root.

The first tree was planted on the entrance side of some existing trees on the slope looking down across the pond of the sheep field. A small 'time capsule' was placed in the hole containing a Cub woggle, an Ely District badge, a 1st Haddenham name tape and a black and yellow wool friendship bracelet. The other two trees were planted either



Cutting off turves.



Putting the tree in the hole.

side of the top of the long meadow field, looking out toward Ely Cathedral.

To plant the trees, the thick turf was removed from a square approximately 40cm wide. The three Cub Scouts then took turns with a couple of adults to dig out the soil to over a spade's depth. There was a lot of excitement when the Cubs saw the number of large earthworms in the moist sandy-loamy soil. A post was banged into the base of the hole. Robert Norman said to put the tree stem a boot's toe width from the post. One Cub then held the tree to keep the top of the tree roots just below ground level while the hole was filled with soil around the roots. The Cubs stamped down the soil. Finally, as all the trees were on a slope, the grass turves were pushed down around the downhill side of each planting to hold rainwater run-off. To protect each tree from deer browsing, the Cubs held in the small branches as double-walled plastic tree guards were placed over the entire tree. A wooden fence is destined to be fixed around them later against damage by livestock.

At the end all the participants chatted for a while and were pleased to have been part of a memorable occasion. When future Cubs and other villagers visit the Meadow, we hope that they will be able to sit and enjoy the view from under the shade of some mighty oaks.



Replacing the turves.



Memorial Post: Between Life and Death

Contributed by Jez Reeve

Between the seasons is a good time to contemplate the balance between life and death. The cold has kept all the plants hiding away, at rest, waiting for the emergence of the sunny days of spring. We always seem to stop and chat at the edges of fields; it is where dogs and people gather to exchange a few words before going our separate ways. Between the wildflower field and the pond field in Fairchild's Meadow a memorial post has been erected to which small plaques can be affixed, remembering friends and family who have died. More conversations and contemplation will follow.

The Fairchild's Meadow working group will attach individual plaques (4 x 2in) for anyone who



wants to add a memorial to their loved one. (Contact the Parish Clerk for details: clerk@haddenham-pc.gov.uk). Memorials to pets will be placed on the corral fence at the top of the bonfire field.



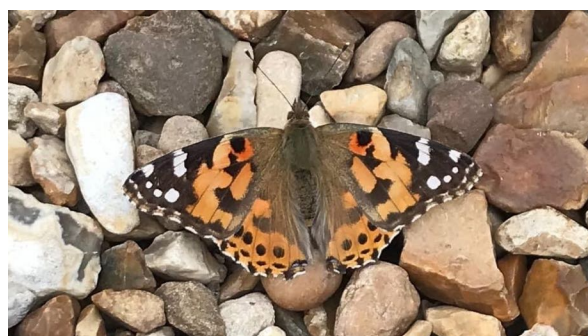
*Memorial post © Andrea Chambers.
Fence © Jez Reeve*

HCS Facebook

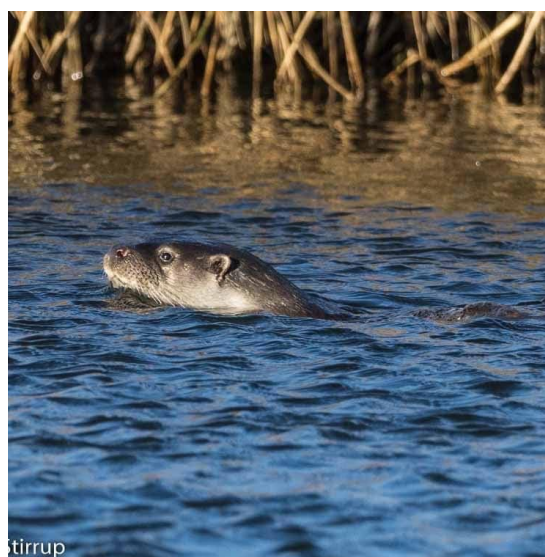
Contributed by Rachel Burgess

Wildlife sightings around Haddenham & Aldreth from mid-October to mid-January reported on the Haddenham Conservation Society Facebook page. Please join the page and share sightings and photographs for us all to enjoy.

Painted Lady 10 October Aldreth. JB
 Badger 16 October Aldreth. SS
 22 Whooper & 2 Mute Swans 17 October Long Drove. SS
 Green Sandpiper & 2 Stonechat 25 October Long Drove. SS
 6 Glossy Ibis 25 October Little Fen. SS
 Otter 25 October New Bedford River. SS
 550+ Whooper Swans 1 December Long Drove. SS
 4 Redshank, Snipe, Jay, Little Egret & Brambling 1 December Aldreth. SS
 40+ Skylark, 5 Corn Bunting & 5 Yellowhammer 11 December Aldreth. SS
 1000 Lapwing & 25 Golden Plover 11 December North Fen. SS
 Otter 11 December New Bedford River. SS
 Barn Owl 11 January Haddenham. HJ
 Heron 13 January Haddenham. CF
 2 Little Egrets, 1 Green Sandpiper & Great White Egret 15 January along A1123. SS
 700 Whooper Swans 15 January Long Drove. SS
 Jay 16 January Aldreth. LB



Painted Lady © John Burgess

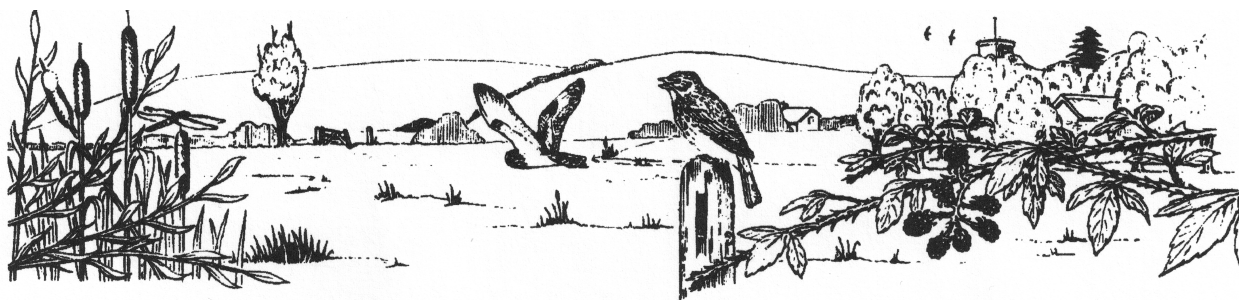


Otter © Simon Stirrup



*Whooper Swans
 © Simon Stirrup*

© Simon Stirrup



WINTER TALKS

Indoor meetings are held at the Arkenstall Centre, Haddenham on the second Tuesday of each month at 8.00 pm. There will be no talk in January.

Members free. Non-members welcome for a nominal fee. All are welcome to stay for a (free) drink and a chat after each talk

8 March

The Biodiversity of Kings Dyke Nature Reserve

Phil Parker tells us how this area changed from clay pits to reserve to benefit nature and the local community.

12 April

Fauna and Flora and Livestock of Wicken Fen

Warden Ajay Tegula is a very knowledgeable and experienced speaker and presenter.

10 May

Spring in the Cairngorms

Geof Lee will tell us about the wildlife and scenery of the Cairngorms, including RSPB Nature reserves, the Highlands wildlife park and the Rothiemurchus estate.

Bring and Buy Plant Sale

The Green. Saturday 30 April 9:30-11:30am

We are hoping to hold our usual yearly plant sale at last. We shall also try to have a selection of cakes and other produce but that will depend on what people bring.

Our plants are often unusual perennials and some vegetables from well-stocked local gardens. The money raised goes towards paying for the winter talks.

So, bring what you can, plants, produce or cake, and head back home with new plants and something to go with that cup of tea.

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