

# Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 37, April 2014

[www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

Please forward or print out and pass on to anyone else who may be interested.

## Litter pick: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014

Many thanks to the 15 volunteers who helped clean up the stretch of the brook between Sainsbury's on Coldham's Lane and Burnside. We recovered about 15 bags of rubbish from in and around the water, noticeably less than in previous clean-ups.

Sue Wells, our chair, said: "We have seen a very positive change since we started the group. Sainsbury's is now keeping their stretch of the stream much cleaner and this is making a big difference. We also hope that as people experience a cleaner, better environment they will be moved to put their litter in the bin and start to take more care of the brook and its banks."

The event was supported by RiverCare, who provided us with equipment. RiverCare is an Anglian Water project run in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy to encourage local groups to tackle litter, carry out wildlife surveys and habitat improvements in a safe and rewarding way. Photos: top © Jane Phillips; middle & bottom: © Sue Wells



## AGM: Monday 9 June 2014

Put the date in your diary! Our AGM this year will include a talk on swifts and nest boxes as well as an update on the activities of Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook, and on progress of work through the Mill Road Local History Project as it relates to the brook and lakes. The AGM will be at 7.30 at St Martin's Church Hall, 127 Suez Road, Cambridge.

## Help us publicise our group

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook will have a display at Cambridge Natural History Society's Annual Exhibition on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June in the Department of Zoology, off Downing Street, Cambridge. See [www.cnhs.org.uk](http://www.cnhs.org.uk) for more information. If you have time to help with our display and talk to visitors about our activities that would be much appreciated. Please contact Sue Wells via [chairman2012@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:chairman2012@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) (Monica Frisch)

## Local Plan update

The proposed submission (which includes that sent in by Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook) has been sent to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The planning inspector will consider the 'soundness' of the local plan and the comments received by the council. For further details see [www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-examination](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-examination). Copies of all representations can be viewed at <http://cambridge.jdi-consult.net/ldf/>. Hard copies are also available to view at Mandela House. People will be invited to attend hearing sessions during summer and autumn 2014 to respond to matters raised. (Holly Anderson)

## Woodpecker wars and other bird news

Greater spotted woodpeckers have been very noisy during March in Burnside. A pair has been seen flying around the willows, checking out suitable nesting sights. Both male (with a red nape and red vent) and female (with a black nape and red vent) drum on the tree trunks, not just to excavate a nest but to form a bond and to advertise they are claiming the territory. The more noise the better; they even used the TV aerials to make a loud metallic sound that echoed along the road causing cyclists to stop and look up. However they made so much noise they attracted another female who clearly wanted the male and the territory herself. All three birds chased each other along the road, through the trees and over into the gardens for several days until one female gave up the fight, leaving the pair to mate and nest. Woodpeckers nested in Burnside successfully a few years ago, so we are hoping this union will also be successful. Greater spotted woodpeckers (about the size of a blackbird) are becoming a more common sight on garden bird-feeders whereas lesser spotted woodpeckers (the size of a sparrow) are now quite scarce in the UK. The third UK woodpecker, the green woodpecker, is the largest of all and its laughing call (yaffle) can be heard along the brook as it gets grubs and insects on the open grassland by the TA lake and on St Bede's School playing field.

The warblers are returning from the south. Chiffchaffs have been heard since early March in the trees along the Brook and have been joined by blackcaps in the first week of April. The last to arrive will be the sedge and reed warblers who will nest in the vegetation by the lakes. Nine ducklings seen swimming along the brook in the first week of April – has spring arrived? (*Holly Anderson*)

## Learning about our voles

Nationally numbers of water voles declined dramatically between 1989-90 and 1996-97 while more recent work shows that the decline continues, in most places. But the fens remain a stronghold for water voles, as a result of the extensive network of drainage ditches providing a large amount of suitable habitat, and water vole populations in Cambridge appear to have undergone a recovery with recent sightings from Cherry Hinton Brook, Coldham's Brook, East Main Drain, Ditton Meadows, Garrett Hostel Lane drain, Trumpington Fen, and Bin Brook.

We know there are water voles along Cherry Hinton Brook as several of us have been lucky enough to see one. But how many are there? Whereabouts do they live? Is the population thriving or merely surviving? Please help us find out – report sightings to [editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk).

Now is a good time: the water voles are active and the bankside vegetation is not too tall, so they can be seen. Keep your eyes open, if you hear something go 'plop' see what you can see – a duck or moorhen is usually obvious – and look out for ripples and what may be causing them. The more information we have the easier it will be to gauge how our water voles are doing.

We need to know when (date and time) and where water voles have been seen. On Snakey Path the lamp-posts are numbered so sightings can be located as between two lamp-posts. A description of what was seen is helpful. Here's my latest report. Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April about 6.50pm between lamp-posts 12 and 13 on Snakey Path, by the school playing fields. I heard a plop, peered down the near bank, saw a water vole which swam upstream towards Cherry Hinton Hall. A minute or two later I saw another one slightly nearer Burnside (nearer lamp-post 12) which also swam upstream. Other things that should be reported, if you can confidently identify them, are latrines – water voles mark their territories with their droppings in piles in places obvious to other water voles – and signs of feeding.

There are also rats along the Brook. But rats have pointed noses, obvious ears and longer hairless tails, while water voles have blunt noses and their ears are almost invisible. There's plenty of information available on the internet, for example [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_water\\_vole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_water_vole) and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/European\\_Water\\_Vole](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/European_Water_Vole) (with videos). (*Monica Frisch*)

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To be taken off this email list, please email [membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

**Monica Frisch** ([editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)) 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014