

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 38, July 2014

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

Sainsbury's supports wildlife

The newly-refurbished Sainsbury's opened on 2nd July, with a Cherry Hinton Brook interpretation board placed by the store entrance and "homes" installed for various animals in the car park. Sainsbury's had asked Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook to advise on the installation of nest boxes and, with support from Guy Belcher (City Wildlife Officer), there are now bat, butterfly and bee boxes around the far car park over the brook from the store. Nest boxes for blue and great tits will be put up in the trees along the brook by the store and will be visible from the bridge across the car parks next to the store. In addition, Dick Newell (Swift Action Group) has put up swift boxes on the store roof overlooking Brooks Road.



Our new interpretation board near Sainsbury's entrance
Photo © Stuart Newbold

The Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook Committee were invited to the store opening, and John Summers and his baby Audrey, Stuart Newbold and Holly Anderson (above), went along. We had a tour of the store and Audrey became the first customer, having some bananas bought for her by her dad!



The new store manager, the deputy manager and the national manager for refits made it clear that they want to work with us to keep the brook clean and pleasant and to develop the area so that it supports wildlife. They are keen to get as many of their staff as possible involved. Several have a keen interest in wildlife; for example one has owl boxes and bats at his home and was instrumental in getting Sainsbury's agreement to install bat boxes by buying his own bat detector to prove there really were bats present along the brook.

Sainsbury's are hoping to organise a litter pick day of their own later this year, which we will support, and have also said that they would like to contribute to the work we are planning with the Wildlife Trust and City Council on restoration of the brook (more on this in future newsletters). We have been delighted with the very positive liaison with Sainsbury's and are looking forward to continuing to work with them to make the part of the stream that flows past the store and through the car park a wildlife haven. *(Holly Anderson)*

Bee hotel at Sainsbury's (left) Photo © Stuart Newbold

Voles on video

At the end of May, RiverCare lent us a video camera with a movement and heat sensor. After a few false starts (which resulted in pictures of twigs floating downstream!), Nicola Fawcett and Darren Gillings worked out how to position the camera and have been rewarded with excellent 20 second videos of water voles scuttling about at the edge of the brook. We will shortly put the best up on YouTube, with links from our website. There are some still photos on the RiverCare Facebook page: www.facebook.com/RiverCare?ref=profile.

We still need your sightings to build up a picture of where the water voles are most active. Just email us date, time and what you saw and where, using the numbered lamp posts on Snakey Path. We had two dozen sightings, excluding video footage, in June! (*Monica Frisch*)



Photo © Darren Gillings

Bird life along the brook

The excitement of the ever-increasing vole population has rather eclipsed any news of the birds along the brook this spring. But plenty has been happening. In mid-June, chiff-chaffs (in the hedgerows) and sedge warblers (in the reed beds of the lakes) were still singing. These summer migrants breed here before heading back south in the autumn. Because it has been so mild, most species have successfully raised their families. Goldfinches, chaffinches, young robins (with speckled breasts, the red colouring comes later), wrens, blue and great tits, starlings and blackbirds have all bred along or near the brook. House sparrows, which are sadly declining in the UK, have had several broods along Burnside thanks to the shelter of the ivy on number 71. The swift boxes kindly installed by Dick Newell on three houses along Burnside have yet to be occupied. Swifts can regularly be seen flying over the lakes so though it may take a year or two we think they will eventually use the new boxes. The recordings of swifts that have been playing to attract them have certainly caught the attention of passers by!

In the brook itself, mallard and moorhen have had young, although as usual the mallard chicks tend not to survive. This is may be because the moorhen chicks are raised by the whole family (male, female and older siblings, a very unusual practice in birds) so they are more able to see off predators such as rats and magpies. The female mallard copes alone with a brood of up to 13 ducklings.

The stars of the spring though have been the jackdaws. These birds live and breed in flocks (as do other corvids, such as rooks) and over 100 fledgling jackdaws have been seen and heard squawking loudly for food along the trees and the playing fields of St Bedes School. These beautiful matt black birds with grey heads are a delight to watch – gregarious and noisy as they stomp along the ground probing for worms or playing together tumbling over and over in the air currents. (*Holly Anderson*)

AGM

About twenty members attended the AGM on 9th June and heard the Committee give a very encouraging report of our activities over the last year. Dick Newell, from Action for Swifts, gave a very informative talk about swifts, their decline in numbers and hence the importance of installing swift boxes. Finally, John McGill, who is compiling information on the Burnside and lakes area for the Mill Road Local History Project, gave insights into the history of the Cherry Hinton Cement Works between 1901 and 1984, adding much to our knowledge of the area around the brook. Anne Cleasby was thanked for her support from the start but has stepped down from the committee as she is moving away. A new member, Emmy Smart, was elected. (*Monica Frisch*)

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Monica Frisch (editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) 10th July 2014