

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
Occasional Titbits, No. 42, February 2015
www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

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

Next litter pick - Sunday 1st March, starting at 10.30 am. Meet outside the dentist at 97-99 Burnside. All welcome.

Brook improvements



In January members of the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook committee and a number of other volunteers had three work parties and successfully installed four flow deflectors in the Brook between Burnside and Sainsbury's. These are designed to narrow the channel so that the water flows faster, removing silt and thus exposing the gravel and diversifying the watercourse. The deflectors are made of natural hardwood logs placed on gravel which has been added, and secured with chestnut stakes, fencing wire and staples.

Thanks so much to everyone who helped – it was a lot of very hard work – and to Guy Belcher, Cambridge City Council's Conservation Officer, for obtaining permission, providing materials, and organising and helping us with the work. Sainsbury's very kindly provided refreshments.

We have permission to install a total of 15, so more working parties are planned for 3rd, 4th, 5th and 7th March. Please get in contact for details.

The work on the flow deflectors is funded by a grant to FCHB from Natural England which will fund a number of activities – we will report on progress in future newsletters.



above left: banging posts in; above: finished at last! Photos © Sue Wells

Update on proposed “East Cambridge Urban Country Park”

FCHB representatives attended a meeting that was organised at the Guildhall on 29th January 2015 for interested parties to discuss the proposed East Cambridge Urban Country Park. CamLakes presented the results of their survey* showing 86% of respondents supported opening of the lakes to the public but several had concerns about how this should be done. There were also some questions as to how representative of local people the survey was, given that some 25% of respondents were from people based outside the City.

*Details at www.camlakes.co.uk/home/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SURVEY_REPORT.pdf

The Anderson Group is leading the development of proposals for the park. They have appointed a consultancy company, Ecological Solutions, to carry out ecological surveys, kicking off now with a survey of wintering birds. Other surveys will take place later in the year. We urged the Anderson Group representatives to ensure that the ecologists liaise with other individuals who have good knowledge of wildlife of the lakes and surrounding area.

continued

The City Council, with the Anderson Group, is setting up a small working group to take discussions about the area forward. FCHB will be represented on this and we will continue to report progress in the newsletter. In addition, the Anderson Group will run a series of “open days” to talk to residents and local people around end of Feb/early March and will set up a website with information about the project. They have said that they will advertise these activities through a letter that will be delivered to all local households.

The City Council arranged for the Anderson Group to take a small group of interested people around the lake and FCHB representatives took part in this. The fishermen have clearly been taking good care of the wildlife interest of the area and the environment in general. The group also noted the small amount of land that surrounds the lakes, and the surprisingly high chalk cliffs on the north side, both of which will be important to bear in mind when planning for the country park starts in earnest.

Bird life along the Brook

As I write this there is snow on the ground, but the birds are responding to the lengthening days and are beginning to sing in the trees alongside the Brook. Robins are the most vocal and sweet singing, dunnocks have a slightly less varied song and most mornings now the song thrush has also sent out his (songs are always from the male birds) flute-like notes. Tribes of tits dance along the treetops, calling to each other with the twice repeated “si-si-surr, si-si-surr” of the bluetits, tri-syllabic “srih-srih-srih” of long-tailed tits and the urgent “tea-cher, tea-cher” of the great tits.

With the trees still bare it is now very easy to spot the kingfisher perched above the stream intently watching for small fish such as sticklebacks. Having flowing water is essential for their existence. Many kingfishers starve during very cold weather, so to have a chalk stream that does not freeze over so close to their nesting area in the chalk pits makes them less vulnerable to any icy weather.

Other birds too take advantage of having running water close to the larger expanse of water in the pits and in past years there have been sightings of water rail, snipe and the wintering little egret all feeding in the Brook whilst having the safety of the pits nearby. The egret is now a regular feature and can be seen along the Brook from Sainsbury’s to Cherry Hinton Hall.

Keep your eyes and ears open as you walk or cycle past and you may be surprised. Even if you don’t spot a rarity, the more common birds are also a delight. Please do let us know if you see anything unusual.



Little egret flying off. Photo © Sue Wells

Wildlife records

We have prepared a draft report on wildlife along the Brook, from Daws Lane to Sainsbury's, and lakes. This drew upon existing sources of information, especially the survey done by Cambridge Natural History Society in 2009 – many thanks for that – and we would like to include more up-to-date records in the final version. So please send us lists of what you see: amphibians and reptiles, birds, invertebrates, mammals, mosses, plants, trees... Please be as specific as possible about location. CNHS divided the Brook into east and west, with the dividing point at the narrow strip of land separating the two big lakes; you may wish to do the same.

JOIN US! See our website www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk for our aims and activities.

To be taken off this email list, please email membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Monica Frisch (editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) 15th February 2015