

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
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www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Coir matting installed in brook at Sainsbury's

Thanks to everyone who turned up to help on 1st April. The absence of the coir matting was not an April Fool's joke – it had been misplaced. But we were very grateful that you all stayed on for some extra litter-picking and work on the flow deflectors - your assistance was much appreciated. The delivery was found on the Monday and Vic Smith, from the City Council, very kindly installed the mats with a couple of volunteers. Thanks, Vic! The contractors have strengthened the banks along the section of the brook that flows through the car park and the matting, planted up with native aquatic vegetation, has been fixed to the edges. This was the last of the activities that were funded through our grant from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Fund.



Spring litter pick

On Saturday 4th March we held our spring litter pick as part of the Great British Spring Clean. Eleven members and volunteers collected 76.4 kg of litter – that's almost 7 kilos each – along the stretch of Brook between Burnside and Sainsbury's. Many thanks to Rivercare for providing the equipment and to our hardworking volunteers.

Forthcoming events

Earth Optimism Solutions Fair: Saturday 22nd April, 11 am – 5 pm

David Attenborough Building, Downing Site, Pembroke Street

With support from Cambridge Water's Pebble Fund, we are producing a new leaflet to publicise our activities. This will be launched at Earth Optimism, an event which aims to help visitors to "become inspired, leave empowered". Our leaflet should enable people to do both. With other local groups, under the banner of Cambridge Wild, we'll be in the Going Wild section. There will also be displays on Buying Smart (reuse, recycle and repair), Bright Ideas (lowering your carbon footprint) and Eating Well (learning about a sustainable diet). Come along, see what is going on and give us a hand telling people how to be inspired, empowered and get involved.

www.cambridgeconservation.org/earthoptimism/

Water vole survey and training: Sunday 21st May, 10 am – 12.30 pm

Meet outside Burnside Allotments gate at end of Burnside at 10 am

Peter Pilbeam, from Cambridgeshire Mammal Group, has kindly agreed to survey the brook for water voles, and provide some training on how to spot latrines and other signs of their activity. Let us know if you would like to participate.

Litterpick: Wednesday 31st May 4 – 6 pm *Meet outside Sainsbury's at 4 pm*

This litter pick is being organised by the City Council's Streets & Open Spaces Volunteers programme. Please let us know if you'd like to come along.

Cambridge Natural History Society's Conversazione: Wonders of the Natural World

Friday 16th June, 1 – 6 pm & Saturday 17th June, 10 am – 5 pm

Department of Zoology, Pembroke St

As usual, we will have a display at this annual event celebrating the wonders of the natural world. We need volunteers to help look after the display, so please contact us if you can help out for an hour or two. It will give you a chance to see the wide range of exhibits.

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook AGM: Monday 26th June, 7.30 pm

St Thomas's Hall, Ancaster Way (just off Birdwood Road)

Our 2017 Annual General Meeting will be followed by a talk by Peter Pilbeam from Cambridgeshire Mammal Group, on water voles and the results of his survey, and an update from the students at University Technical College on their water quality project. We need more volunteers for the Committee – if you are interested in helping to run our activities, please get in contact.

Wildlife along the brook

Winter walk Sat 25th Feb

The cool dull damp day discouraged most people but Rebecca, Monica and Anne walked along to Sainsbury's to watch the riverfly monitoring team at work. We trimmed back brambles encroaching on the path and looked at the restoration work being done around the lake and ponds in the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall, which since then has almost been completed – update in the next issue.

An eel – and it was t-h-i-s big!

In mid-February Guy Belcher was helping with the restoration work at Cherry Hinton Hall when he hauled this massive eel out. Unfortunately it was dead, but quite a specimen, over a metre and as thick as his wrist. Other fish are regularly seen in the brook, but we have never seen eels or anything of this size. There may well be more eels there so keep your eyes open and let us know if you see anything unusual – eels are species of conservation importance, emphasising again the value of the brook.



Water voles are out and about again

We received our first vole sighting of the year on 12th April – a sign the weather is getting warmer. A large adult was sitting on a concrete block at the side of the brook near lamppost 10, completely unperturbed by people watching. After his survey in 2015, Peter Pilbeam concluded that the brook had 'a particularly healthy water vole population'. There were rather fewer records in 2016, so it will be interesting to see how 2017 turns out. Please send your sightings, including date, time and location, using the numbered lampposts on Snakey Path to wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk.

Birds on the brook

The mating season is well underway and many birds have already established their territories. Rooks can be seen with large unwieldy twigs in their beaks, patching up nests ready to lay eggs. Greater spotted woodpeckers (the black and white birds with red heads and underparts) are drumming furiously. This is to claim a territory and attract a mate rather than to excavate a nest, although they do of course nest in holes in trees. Several pairs of ducks swim up and down the brook and those males as yet without a mate are roaming in groups on the lookout. Four were seen recently trying to court a moorhen – without success! They can be quite aggressive towards other birds and have been known to injure a female mallard in their frenzy to win her over.

The first of the summer migrants have arrived, many from West Africa. Chiffchaffs have been singing loudly since their arrival in the middle of March and although unremarkable in both plumage and song, being one of the birds we refer to as LBJs (little brown jobs) with a repetitive disyllabic call (chiff – chaff), they are a welcome sign of Spring. Recently two buzzards have been seen circling over the lakes. Until a few years ago these birds were quite rare in Eastern England but are now seen all over Cambridgeshire.



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