

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, issue 63, April 2020

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Great British Spring Clean



Restrictions imposed due to the covid-19 pandemic mean we have had to cancel the litter pick we had planned as part of the Great British Spring Clean. Keep Britain Tidy, the organisation that arranges the Great British Spring Clean, has postponed this year's event until 11th - 27th September. This will fit in with our litter pick already planned for 27th September to coincide with World Rivers Day. Cambridge City Council has also postponed its litter picking clean up events.

Please help us keep Cherry Hinton Brook clean, for the benefit of the wildlife whose home it is, and so we can all enjoy it looking attractive and litter free. If you want to borrow a litter pick (see photo) for those hard-to-reach items contact Sue (chair2019@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk).

However, do keep safe when litter picking:

- Wear gloves when litter picking at all times
- Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds before and after litter picking and, where not possible, use hand sanitiser
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects, such as litter pickers, using your regular cleaning products
- Stay at least 2 metres (about 3 steps) away from other people
- Take great care not to disturb wildlife, and avoid stretching out over the Brook in case you slip.

NatHistFest, the 101st Conversazione Like most events planned for this spring, the Cambridge Natural History Society's annual exhibition on the wonders of the natural world has been cancelled.

Water vole survey Peter Pilbeam kindly carried out a survey of the Brook to check for water voles on 15th March. We are unclear whether we arranged the survey too early this year, but Peter saw no voles, droppings or feeding stations. He thought there might be two vaguely possible holes (one between posts 19A and 18A, and one between posts 17A and 16A). Peter has said that he will carry out another survey in the summer, once normal life resumes.

If you are still walking along Snakey Path for your exercise keep a look out for voles and report any sightings to us at wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk. **Please take care as the path is not 2 metres wide in many places.**



Cherry Hinton Lakes © Sue Wells

New notices to deter people from littering We still have some unspent funds from the grant Cambridge Water (The Pebble Fund) gave us for flow deflectors. The committee felt we should use it for permanent (aluminium) signs that make it clear why people should not throw litter in the Brook. We approached RiverCare team who were very helpful, and gave us some ideas on innovative approaches to litter prevention. Good practice involves creating positive emotions, clearly explaining to people what to do, and providing relevant images and localised messaging. As we were told "People don't always link their own behaviour with the wider consequences."

The cigarette ends alongside the Brook at the side of Sainsbury's are a particular problem. So we will put more detailed signs there as people will have time to read while they smoke. One example is "just one butt per litre of water can kill fish in a stream". We are also asking Sainsburys to re-instate the bin for the butts. The other three signs are much shorter and focus on water voles. We have agreed the designs for the signs and where to put them, avoiding locations where there are nice views. Watch this space! *Emmy Smart*

Working with Colville Primary School

Sophie Mitchell, a Year 5 teacher at Colville Primary School in Cherry Hinton, got in touch with us to ask if we could help with a project she is developing with her class. Sophie has been using Snakey Path for field trips for her class and knows the Brook well. Having become very concerned about the low water level last year, she re-planned her lessons this year to include more information about water extraction and its effect on the Brook. Holly met with her to discuss how we could help, and subsequently Sue went to the school and spoke to two groups of Year 5 pupils about the Brook, why it is important, the wildlife that depends on the water in it, and the current abstraction problems and potential solutions. The children were already impressively well-informed; Sophie had made good use of the Cam Valley Forum's River Cam Manifesto and the reports and material put out by the Environment Agency and Wildlife Trust. We hope to continue this partnership with the school once it is running normally again. *Sue Wells*

Spring along the Brook March 2020

The spring flowers are coming along nicely. There's a lot more Early Dog Violet (*Viola reichenbachia*) (right) than I remember noticing in previous years, e.g. near lamppost 8, lamppost 17 and lamppost 19. It differs from the Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*) which is almost over, as it has got smaller paler flowers and small heart-shaped leaves which are not hairy. The leaves of Sweet Violet get bigger after the plant has finished flowers. There's also a good patch of Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) between lampposts 21 and 22 (below). The flowers appear before the leaves which are now coming out.



While the Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*) has almost finished flowering and is coming into leaf, the Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) buds are just opening. The two species can be told apart because the youngest twigs of Cherry Plum are smooth and green. There are lots of other spring flowers coming out: the bright yellow stars of Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*), the first of the cow parsley and other common species.

There are several big patches of frogspawn in the Brook: one along Burnside, opposite Rose Cottage (next to the dentist) and another further along past the allotments. *Monica Frisch*

Please do email your sightings of interesting birds, mammals or other species, for our records. We also welcome your photos for use in the newsletter. wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Volunteer(s) needed

We could use a volunteer to help us with Facebook and Twitter, so if you are familiar with social media please do get in touch.

Data protection

To ensure that we comply with the General Data Protection Regulations, we inform you that you are able to withdraw your consent to be on the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook mailing list should you wish. Your email address and contact details are currently held in our database to receive our email newsletter and other occasional messages about our activities and your membership. We do not sell or share your details with anyone outside the committee of Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook. Should you have any concerns whatsoever about the way we use your data, or wish to withdraw from our database, please let us know.



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Monica Frisch (editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) 28th March 2020