

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, No. 40, October 2014

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

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

Next litterpick: Sunday 9th November

Since we started regular litterpicks twice a year the Brook is noticeably cleaner and much more pleasant both for us and for the wildlife. So come along and help on Sunday 9th November. We will provide waders, gloves, litterpicks, rubbish bags and hope that Sainsbury's will provide some refreshments as in the past. Meet at 10.30 outside the dentist at 97-99 Burnside. All welcome.

Sainsbury litterpick

Twelve volunteers, including staff from Sainsbury's, cleared rubbish from the stretch of the Brook from Burnside to Sainsbury's on World Rivers Day, 28th September. This was one of many events around the country put on by RiverCare groups to mark the day. There are some photos on the RiverCare Facebook page. Many thanks to all.



We are delighted to have been given a grant from Natural England's Innovation Fund. We will use this to install an interpretation board near Daws Lane and additional nest boxes in the Sainsbury's area of the brook, and to fund work to improve the flow of water in the Brook.

Detailed plans for the work are now being developed. If you are interested in joining a working party this winter to help install flow deflectors (to make it slightly narrower in selected places to speed up the water flow) please contact Sue Wells (chairman2012@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk).

Wildlife sightings

We are continuing to record sightings of water voles and other wildlife along Cherry Hinton Brook. A large crayfish was spotted in August by two of our committee members and was almost certainly the invasive American Signal Crayfish. This is leading to the rapid decline in native White-clawed Crayfish, which it out-competes as it is a much fiercer animal. Do let us know if you see any. Also keep sending in sightings of water voles as we are trying to build up a picture of where they are and how many there may be. A map of sightings is on on website.

Committee member, Emmy Smart, reports “I saw a water vole last Sunday morning [5th October] at lamppost 9. I also saw a rabbit and then I saw a squirrel and the two touched noses as the squirrel wanted to find out what the rabbit was. They then kept on doing what they had come out to do - the squirrel taking nuts and the rabbit just sitting there a few yards from each other!”

Birds in the autumn

In the autumn, now that the breeding season is over and the summer migrants have headed south, the birds most frequently noticed along the brook are the long-tailed tits. They are currently much in evidence along Snakey Path, chittering and flitting among the shrubs and trees. These tiny black, white and pink balls of fluff with their distinctive long tails are often heard before they are seen, making high-pitched zee zee zee contact calls to each other whilst moving along the hedgerows.

As the birds no longer need to defend their territories and nesting sites they group together in large flocks for safety, with many eyes to watch for predators such as the sparrow hawk. Once your attention has been caught by the contact calls look carefully as several species of small birds (mainly other tits such as great, blue and coal, but also goldcrests and treecreepers) can join in the mixed flock. You never know what you may find!

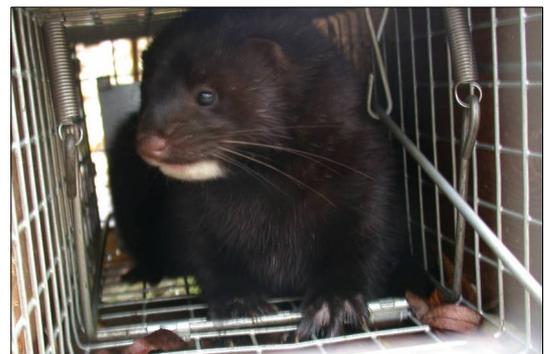
With fewer leaves on the trees it is also easier to spot the iridescent blue of the kingfisher as it flies along the brook and over into the lakes. One was seen on 12th October by the Cherry Hinton Hall boundary on Daws Lane, another was seen twice a few days earlier along the brook towards Sainsbury's. The photo is of one of “our” kingfishers.

Kingfishers do keep their territories all year round, so it seems likely that we have at least two pairs along the brook at either end of “our patch”. Their nesting sites are in the banks of the lakes as they need places close to water where they can excavate tunnels in which to raise their young. The brook itself has shallow banks, so is not suitable for this but remains a vital food source as, being spring fed, it rarely freezes over.



Talk on water voles and mink

On Thursday 13th November Vince Lea will talk about the Countryside Restoration Trust / Wildlife Trust BCN project to eradicate mink and rescue the dwindling water vole population, starting on the Bourn Brook and now extended to the other waterways of the Cam catchment upstream of Cambridge. The talk is entitled “Trapping Mink for Water Vole recovery in the upper Cam catchment” and will be at 7:30pm (punctually) in lecture room LAB027 at Anglia Ruskin University, East Road, Cambridge.



Other talks in the series arranged by Cambridge Natural History Society may also be of interest – see their website: www.cnhs.org.uk for more information.

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Monica Frisch (editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) 29th October 2014