

# Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

## Occasional Titbits, issue 72, February 2023

[www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

*Welcome to a new year! It looks as if it will be a busy one for Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook as we have several new projects. If you would like to get more involved with any of our activities, please do get in touch.*

### FCHB AGM

The Annual General Meeting took place online on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022, attended by about 15 people. The Committee was re-elected with some changes to the officers. The new Committee members are: Sue Wells (chair), Monica Frisch (treasurer), Shona Douglas (secretary), Jón Fairbairn (webmaster), Emmy Smart (membership secretary), Caroline Murray (communications), Sarah Bowden (litter pick co-ordinator), Stuart Newbold, David Brooks, Holly Anderson, Anne Rout, and Tom Maddox. Lucy Rhymer stood down and was thanked for her involvement.



The Chair's report covered the wildlife, which has been exceptional, as well as the many activities the group has undertaken. Wildlife highlights included not only our two breeding pairs of kingfishers but also a pair of water rails that have been resident for much of the year. Little egrets still winter on the Brook, and reed and Cetti's warblers visit in the spring and summer. Peter Pilbeam's survey of water voles confirmed we still have a healthy population. A big dog otter was also seen passing through in late summer. Kip Loades and Geoff Oliver have been photographing the wildlife and are very kindly letting us use their photos – very many thanks!

In 2022, restoration work was concentrated on the area of the Brook near Daws Lane, and was undertaken with the support of the Wildlife Trust, especially Ruth Hawksley, as well as the City Council, Vic Smith and her volunteers. It was funded by Cam Water's Pebble Fund. Anne Rout and Tom Maddox have restarted the Riverfly monitoring programme at this spot, which will help us to see how animal communities in the Brook change as a result of gravel which has been added to the stream bed.

Removing litter, including now working with St Bede's School, is an ongoing activity. Three issues of Titbits were produced and, thanks to Caroline Murray, our Facebook page is now updated frequently and has attracted many followers.

At the end of the AGM, Tim Chilvers (Anderson Group) and Colin Brown (from a development company called Mission Street) gave a short update on, and answered questions about, the plans for developing the area that is known as "south of Coldhams Lane". This comprises the lakes and two areas of land north of the railway line. Mission Street has bought Parcel A (previously proposed as a delivery hub) from the Anderson Group, and will be now be working on plans for science labs. Anderson Group retain ownership of the lakes and will be developing the master plan for these (see update below).

## Update on the Lakes

The Anderson Group has established a Lakes Steering Group which has representatives on it from the City Councillors, FCHB, Cambridge Past Present and Future, and the Cherry Hinton and District Angling Club. A preliminary online meeting was held in January to discuss the arrangements for establishing the group, and the first formal meeting is likely to take place in April. We will keep you informed.

*Sue Wells*

## Progress with the mural

In the last newsletter, we announced the start of our project to develop a mural for one of the walls of Sainsbury's store, near the entrance. This is progressing well! Rowan, the charity for adults with learning disabilities, is producing the design, and the image [right] shows some of the preliminary sketches by Rowan students. The final design will be agreed with Sainsbury's and FCHB and the aim is for the painting to start in spring. The mural will be on board, so that it can be moved if necessary, and we hope it will be put up in late summer/autumn.



With Rowan, we issued a press release about the project. At the end of January, Cambridge 105 Radio interviewed Caroline Murray, from the FCHB Committee, about the project, which gave FCHB and Rowan some great publicity!

If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact Emmy Smart, who is the mural project leader, via: [membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

*Emmy Smart*

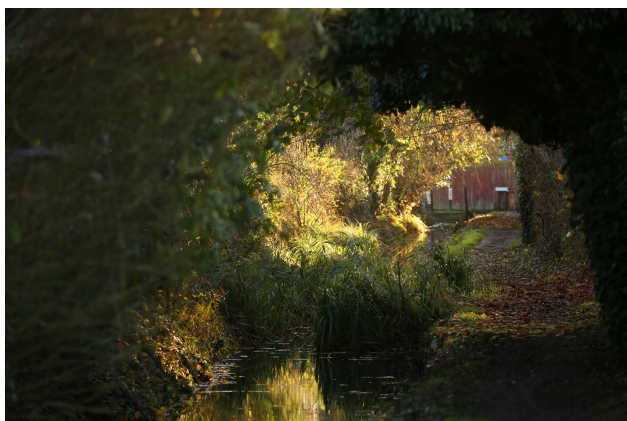
## Water flow, hydrology of the Brook and a new project

During the drought last year, the section of the Brook that runs past Sainsbury's store, through the car park and under Barnwell Road (to where it joins Coldham's Brook), dried out completely in late summer, along with a substantial section of Coldham's Brook. With the problem of over-abstraction of water in Cambridge, we need to monitor this carefully. FCHB successfully applied for a grant from Cam Valley Forum to buy and install equipment for measuring the height of water in the Brook. This will probably be in the form of measuring posts, which will help to publicise the fact that water levels change with the seasons and as a result of abstraction. FCHB is now planning where to locate the gauges, materials to be used, and how we will monitor and record the height of water in the Brook.

David Brooks has written a revised description of the hydrology of the Brook, describing in more detail how it joins up with the East Main Drain, and the course the water takes towards the Cam. His report can be downloaded from the publications section of our website.

*Sue Wells*

***Kip Loades sent us these two photographs of the Brook in December 2022: Sun (7<sup>th</sup> December) and Snow (12<sup>th</sup> December)***



## Brook restoration work at Daws Lane completed

The restoration work on the section of Cherry Hinton Brook, by the entrance to Blacklands Allotments, was finished with the help of the Wildlife Trust and City Council volunteers, in November last year. With the wet winter and the resumed flow of the Brook, it is now possible to see how the gravel area and narrowed channel is speeding up water flow. A variety of birds were seen feeding here very quickly after the work was done.

*Sue Wells*

## Autumn litter pick

FCHB's annual autumn litter pick took place on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022, on World Rivers Day. We had a good turnout of volunteers and, sadly, as usual, collected many sacks of rubbish.



## Brook celebrated in photo-essay for NatHistFest

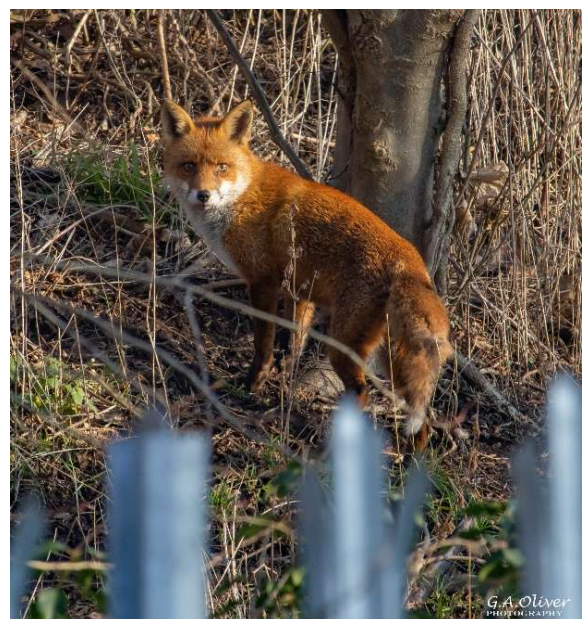
Some of the FCHB Committee members have put together a beautiful photo-essay of the wildlife of the Brook for the Cambridge Natural History Society's 3<sup>rd</sup> online NatHistFest. It is illustrated with photos from local photographers Kip Loades and Geoff Oliver, to whom we are enormously grateful. Find it here: <http://www.cnhs.org.uk/the-3rd-online-nathistfest/cherry-hinton-brook-a-hidden-wildlife-gem-in-cambridge/>

## Winter wildlife along the Brook – and some exotic newcomers

Three foxes were seen running around in the Spinney Wood, near Daws Lane, in mid-January during the cold weather, and Geoff Oliver got this lovely shot [right] from Snakey Path.

The egrets arrived back for the winter and are much in evidence. Recently, with the long cold period over, birds and wildlife are waking up, with numerous almost tame robins, flocks of busy long-tailed tits, and a grey wagtail flitting along the Brook. There have been several sightings of the elusive water rail.

Kip Loades took the fine photo [next page, right] of one of the sparrowhawks that nested last year in the willows along Burnside.



A new addition to the bird life of the area is the appearance of ring-necked parakeets (*Psittacula kramera*) [below left] which have been regularly seen up in the trees in Cherry Hinton Hall and even on Holly's bird table in Burnside. These are common in parks and green spaces in London but have only recently been recorded in Cambridge – although they might have spread up from London, anecdotal reports are that they are escapees. Sue Wells

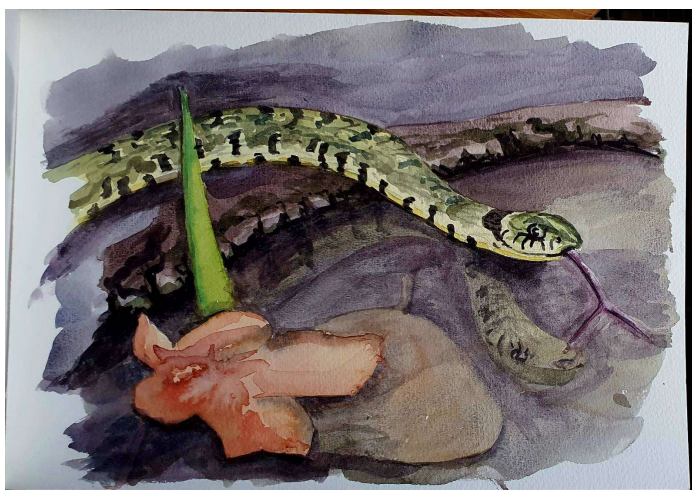


Ring-necked Parakeet, photo © Geoff Oliver



Sparrowhawk, photo © Kip Loades

*The photographs Kip took of grass snakes inspired Mark Skipper (bitterjug.com) to paint this watercolour from one of Kip's photos.*



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**Monica Frisch** ([editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk))

**1<sup>st</sup> February 2023**