

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, issue 73, October 2023

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Apologies for the long gap since the last newsletter. We said in it that we thought the year would be a busy one for Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook and that has been the case. If you would like to get more involved with any of our activities, please do get in touch.

Litter picks

We have had two litter picks this year. There was a pretty good turnout on 2nd April; 16 people, including some children, who collected about 12 bags of rubbish and various bits of debris. Then in September, Monica Frisch organised an “activity” walk with a group of Cubs from the 2nd Cambridge Scouts at their request. They spent an hour or so collecting 3 bags of litter, trimming back vegetation, and looking at wildlife on the Brook between Sainsbury's and Burnside. Much enjoyed by all as shown by the photo!



Chalk Streams Officer

Rob Martyr, who used to work for RiverCare and was a great help to FCHB in the early days, was appointed this year as Project Lead for the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project. Planning for the project, which is aimed at improving the health of the chalk streams in and around the city, is underway and will involve collaboration with local communities, environmental organisations, and stakeholders. A phased programme of activities will be starting in November and we will let you know as soon as Cherry Hinton Brook is involved.

"Pure Clean Water"

This new film deals with the chalk stream crisis in greater Cambridge, though the issues raised (over-abstraction; chalk streams protection; growth) are common to many other parts of SE England. Against a developing groundwater emergency, business groups and central government are calling for further Cambridge expansion. Will they get their way at the expense of the environment or is growth about to be derailed by a shortage of water?

The premiere at the Arts Picturehouse is on Wednesday 25th October, with a second screening on Thursday 26th October, as part of the Cambridge Film Festival. For more information and to book tickets, please go to <https://www.cambridgefilmfestival.org.uk/film/2023/pure-clean-water> .



Rights of the River Cam

Monica Frisch (left) kindly represented Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook at the rededication of the Rights of the River Cam on 21st June 2023, on Jesus Green.

The event, which included displays from a few local organisations, some speakers and music from local musicians, was organised by Friends of the River Cam <https://www.friendsofthecam.org/>.

Water resources

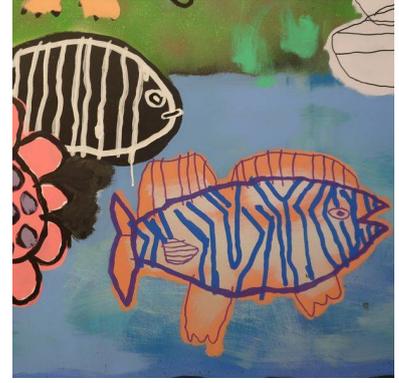
The Environment Agency has now declared the Cambridgeshire area to be “recovering from drought”. As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have a small grant from the Cam Valley Forum to install water level gauges along the Brook. These will provide a visual indication of water level and how much this fluctuates. We have consulted with various people, got much useful advice from Dr Steve Boreham, and agreed three locations for the water level gauge boards. We hope to install them this autumn.

Monica Frisch

Update on the mural for Coldhams Lane Sainsbury’s

In our last newsletter we announced the start of work on a mural to go on Sainsbury’s wall, funded by Public Art S106 by the City Council. Students at Rowan (the charity for adults with learning disabilities) are painting it and have produced lots of sketches as shown here. Sainsbury’s, FCHB and our partners have given the go-ahead for the final artwork, but we won’t be revealing this until the launch, in a couple of months. Watch this space! If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact Emmy Smart (membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk), who is the mural project leader.

Emmy Smart



Riverfly monitoring on the Brook

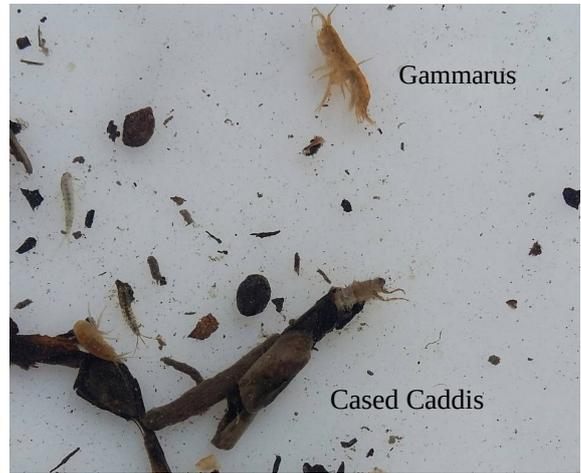
Having attended a training course last year run by the Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency, Tom Maddox and I started carrying out riverfly larvae monitoring of the Brook as part of a UK-wide citizen science scheme. This scheme is spearheaded by the Riverfly Partnership – a network of anglers, conservation groups and statutory agencies – aiming to conserve riverflies and to protect river water quality. The riverfly monitoring scheme involves taking regular monthly samples from the Brook, using a standardised sampling technique (kick sampling) from a single designated site – in this case, we are monitoring the area of the Brook near Daws Lane where the restoration work took place last year. From these samples we identify the presence/absence and abundance of the larvae of eight target riverfly groups. FCHB had previously taken part in the scheme in 2016 – c.2019, when we monitored the restoration area adjacent to Sainsbury’s.

Each target riverfly group has preferred habitat requirements. They also have different sensitivities to pollutants and river degradation. So, by monitoring the presence/absence and abundance of these riverfly larvae groups we can monitor the relative health of the Brook. It can also help identify possible pollution events or river degradation, should these occur, so that remedial action can be taken by the Environment Agency. Riverflies are freshwater invertebrates that spend all or part of their life cycle living within a river or stream. They break down organic matter and are an important food source for fish, birds, mammals and other invertebrates.

The eight target groups that we are monitoring are: Caddis flies (both cased and caseless); Up-winged flies – which includes mayflies, blue-winged olives, flat-bodied up-wings and olives; Stoneflies; Gammaras (or freshwater shrimps). These eight groups are chosen because they are relatively easy to identify, present in most healthy rivers and most can be found throughout the year.

Once we complete our first year of monitoring, we will publish our results on the FCHB website. However, initial results show that this section of the Brook has a healthy population of riverfly invertebrates – which is good news for other river animals that include these in their diet. The riverfly larvae that have been most prevalent in each sample for this section of the Brook have been the Gammarus, Olives & Cased Caddis. In addition to the riverfly larvae, we also regularly come across Bullhead fish (bottom-dwellers), water snails, mites and spiders.

Anne Patel



Wildlife along the Brook, August 2023

Late summer is generally quiet, with most birds having now reared their young. Once again the sparrowhawks have chosen to nest along the Brook in Burnside and have raised noisy demanding youngsters. Members of the corvid family (magpies, rooks, crows, jackdaws and jays) have also been successful. All corvids are vocal gregarious birds and add colour and noise to the neighbourhood. Like sparrowhawks they predate smaller birds, robbing nests of eggs and fledglings. In spite of this tits, finches and sparrows have fledged several broods and are now forming feeding flocks along the hedgerows. A mixture of blue, great and long-tailed tits were seen with goldcrests in the trees near Burnside allotments at the end of August.

Sadly though the water birds have not had the same success. One of the swans in the lakes was predated (presumably by a fox), making rearing a brood impossible. The swans in Cherry Hinton Hall had two surviving cygnets out of six hatched. Although both parents and cygnets are back together, one youngster had to be taken away for treatment as it couldn't swallow and, distressingly, the adult female had a large lump on her face investigated. The cause of this was found to be an airgun pellet. There was also a report of someone hitting the swans earlier this year as they tried to defend their cygnets. This callous behaviour is criminal but sadly even well-meaning people also add to the stress of the birds. With so many people using the park, and so many dogs being exercised, it has meant the swans (and other wildlife)



encounter many potentially threatening situations. The park is a wonderful resource, and enjoying the wildlife is part of that, but it is so important that dogs are not allowed to get too close to the birds. Even well behaved dogs can disturb wildlife, especially during the breeding season.

Increased traffic along Snakey Path has also had an impact on the wildlife. With e-scooters, e-bikes and even delivery motorised bikes all using the narrow path inevitably there have been casualties. Fewer ducklings have been raised this year and sadly someone reported seeing a moorhen run over by someone on a bike travelling fast along by the Brook. When a parent bird dies it often means the young die too.

Cambridge is growing as a city and areas for wildlife to thrive are being squeezed. The interest shown by people in our Brook and its environs indicates the importance we attach to the natural world. We share our city with other wildlife so it is important that we are aware of their needs and try to be as respectful as possible to them in their diminishing habitats.

Holly Anderson

The photographs of the Moorhen feeding a chick and of a Bee on willowherb are both taken by Geoff Oliver. He kindly sends us some of his photos and is happy for us to use them. Many thanks, Geoff.

Thanks

We are most grateful to Rosamond (Cynthia) Reavell for her very kind donation to FCHB funds. Rosamond lived in Burnside in the 1950s and still has very fond memories of the Brook. Although now living in East Sussex, she remains a great supporter of FCHB – see Titbits 71, September 2022, for some of her memories. We also thank other supporters who have given us small donations.

Update on the lakes

Mission St., the company responsible for developing Parcel A, part of the area known in the Local Plan as “Land South of Coldhams Lane”, is intending to submit its planning application by the end of this October. The application will include “a detailed proposal for landscape works and access” for Parcel C, i.e. the lakes. It will also give plans for “the protected ecological enhancement and managed public access” for Parcel B, the land north of the TA lake. Further information can be found at <https://www.cherryhintoninnovation.co.uk/june-exhibition> and click on the boxes labelled October exhibition boards and packs. There is value in providing feedback NOW on your views and concerns. FCHB is sending in the objection submitted during the 2022 consultation on Anderson’s application, as we do not



think that the issues we raised have been adequately addressed. Our objection is at [https://friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk/Publications/ConsultationResponses/FCHB_objection - Anderson planning application 2022.pdf](https://friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk/Publications/ConsultationResponses/FCHB_objection_-_Anderson_planning_application_2022.pdf)

Photo: Sue Wells

Anderson, which still owns a major part of the lakes and is currently responsible for management, is erecting a new fence along the section of the lake that parallels the Brook and Snakey Path. This is the type of fencing used by schools and is considered very secure; it is also less intrusive than the fencing erected by Peterhouse further towards Cherry Hinton Hall. FCHB has asked Anderson about providing some gaps in the new fence to allow wildlife to cross between the lakes and Brook – we understand that this is being looked into.

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)

11th October 2023