

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, issue 60, Summer 2019

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting date has been changed to **Monday 1st July at 7.00 pm** and will be held in **Cherry Hinton Library**, High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 9HZ.



The change of date is to enable **Steve Boreham** to give us a talk on “**Cherry Hinton Brook: A view from the Giant’s Grave**”. Steve Boreham is an ecologist, geologist and palynologist and very knowledgeable about the geology of Cambridge and how it affects the water supply.

His talk will be followed by the Annual General Meeting. The formal reports will include what we have done over the last year and there will be a chance to discuss what we are planning for the coming year. Light refreshments will be served afterwards.

We urgently need some new committee members. If you are interested in helping with the running of our group (e.g. taking minutes of committee meetings, or helping to organise events and publicity, or co-ordinating monitoring of the Brook etc.) please let Sue Wells know (suewells1212@gmail.com). The Committee meets in the evening about once every two months but regular attendance is not necessary as we do most of our business by e-mail.

Great British Spring Clean

We had our largest turnout yet for our litter-pick on 24th March as part of the Great British Spring Clean. The volunteers worked for 2 hours to collect 120 kg of litter, leaving the Brook restored to its natural beauty. Among the 36 volunteers was Richard Chen, leader of the 14th Cambridge Scout Group with some of their members. Many thanks to those who attended. Our next litter-pick will be on 29th September to coincide with World Rivers Day. We continue to communicate with Sainsbury's about the amount of litter in the Brook.



NatHistFest: the 100th Conversazione

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook had a display at the Cambridge Natural History Society's 100th annual exhibition – its Conversazione – in April, helping to promote our activities to a wider audience.

Video

The Pebble Fund has produced a video about the work Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook did to improve the Brook, by using the Pebble Fund money to buy pebbles – a lot of pebbles – to put into the Brook. Watch the video to see Holly and Sue explaining clearly how the Pebble Fund has helped us. It's on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NykHIWlc10k&feature=youtu.be Some of our water vole footage, captured a few years ago with a trail cam, is also on YouTube at www.youtube.com/channel/UCC7Sen-xkE3LIDoU3EggZQw

Interpretation boards

New perspex has been put on the interpretation boards, thanks to the City Council. They had got rather scratched, making them hard to read. We hope that they won't get damaged again.

Water voles

Peter Pilbeam, of the Cambridgeshire Mammal Group, kindly surveyed the Brook on 11th May 2019. He showed those who accompanied him (right), some of the signs of water vole activity.



Although only one vole was seen, briefly, Peter's conclusions were that the signs seen "again indicates a reasonably healthy water vole population. Unfortunately no good estimate of population size can be made from the information obtained. Some shading could be removed in some lengths to let more light in and encourage the bankside vegetation there." He commented that the state of the vegetation meant it was easy to have missed some signs of voles and that next time we should undertake the survey earlier, in late March or early April.

Water birds – spring 2019

The most common water birds seen along the Brook are ducks. The mallards are "dabbling ducks" and feed by upending to forage for food in shallow waters so the brook is an ideal habitat. In the winter, tufted ducks (black and white) can be seen on the lakes; they are diving ducks and need deeper water on which to feed.

The other water birds most frequently seen are moorhens (with a red bill and shield) and coots (slightly larger, with a white bill and shield). Moorhens, like the mallards, stay mainly on the Brook to feed in the shallow water whereas the coots need deeper water so are seen on the lakes. Both these birds are part of the family known as "rails and crakes" and are widespread across the UK. Another of this family, the far less common and much shyer water rail, was spotted skulking along the muddy margins of the Brook near Blacklands allotments in February. It is smaller than both moorhens and coots, and has beautiful slate-grey underparts, rich brown and black barred flanks and a long red curved bill. It lives in shallow, overgrown edges of streams and lakes so the stretch of the Brook between the Blacklands allotments and Cherry Hinton Hall is perfect for it, however the shy nature of the bird means it is rarely seen. Look out for it on the water's edge – you may be lucky.

Most of the migrating warblers have now returned and a morning walk along the Brook is full of the songs of the more common chiff-chaff, blackcap, reed warblers as well as willow warblers and cettis warblers (heard along the brook for the first time last year, now a regular feature).



The little egret, which usually winters in the lakes and brook, was seen in mid May so perhaps it is now breeding in the lakes.
Holly Anderson

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.

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) 5th June 2019