

HADDENHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 32 No. 2
May 2017

SPRING 2017

The Committee for 2016/17 is:

Barclay Arnott	740500
Ann Biggs	740810
John Burgess	749441
Sheila Dickerson	749443
Susan Everitt, Treas.	740352
Elver Langley	
Wendy Lanman	741138
Caroline Lee	361678
Paul Mason	740219
Robert Norman	740473
Chris Prescott	749038

All numbers are 01353.

Please feel free to get in touch with any committee member with questions or information you might have. If you have any specific records of flora and fauna, please send them to Paul Mason, 13 Aldreth Road, Haddenham (740219).

HCS Website:
www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk

Membership information

Subscription rates
1 Jan to 31 Dec 2017:
Individual: £7
Family: £12

If you wish to join the Society, send your cheque, made out to

Haddenham

Conservation Society,
with your name, address
and telephone number,
to:

Susan Everitt
21 Twenty Pence Road
Wilburton, Ely CB6 3RM

This will entitle you to receive our regular newsletter and will give you free entry to the 7 winter talks, a saving of £2.50 per person per session.

Playing Cricket[s]...

Contributed by Paul Mason

Well Bush Crickets actually. Much overlooked but marvellous insects with a high-pitched call that not all can hear. That now includes me, as when a man (more so than a woman) gets older his hearing of high-pitched sounds deteriorates. So, when you go looking for crickets, make sure you have a youngster with you and they will find them.

In this parish we are blessed with six species of these close relatives of the grasshoppers. Crickets have long wavy antennae whilst grasshoppers have short ones. However, crickets are more spectacular and make their calls in a different way. They all make a vibrating, rasping sort of sound, which in the Bush Cricket's case usually starts on a warm afternoon during late June through sometimes to early October. The calls are made by rubbing wings together, whereas grasshoppers rub legs together. As you would expect, each one has a different call but the loudest comes from the biggest, and that is the Great Green Bush Cricket at over 5cm (2in) long.



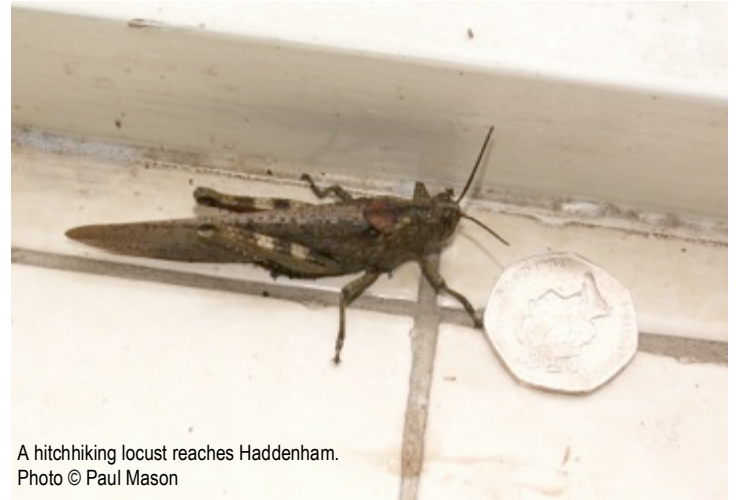
Dark Bush
Cricket. Photo
© Simon Stirrup

In addition to the Great Green we have Roesel's Bush Cricket, Dark Bush Cricket, Oak Bush Cricket, Speckled Bush Cricket and Long-winged Conehead, and the last is exactly what it says on the tin. Most are common wherever there is a decent sward of grass, and the Oak and Speckled can be found in your garden. The latter are sometimes attracted to a lighted window. Their calls are so faint that they are rarely heard. A Dark Bush Cricket will hide on a pile of straw or similar and be just under cover.

Given patience, a small child (if you have one) and intense searching of long grass or similar foliage, the marvellous Great Green can be found around the southern edge of Nine Acre Wood and on the nearby Church Fen Drove, and you will wonder which planet it comes from. More fabulous than a Dalek or Silurian. Certainly noisier than a Silence figure. The smaller Roesel's Cricket is even more extraordinary with crescent moon shaped marks on its side. The fabulous Speckled Bush Cricket is likely to invade your space of a warm evening if it comes though an open window and sits on your settee. Don't worry though, it will not carry you off to Sontaran, it's completely harmless. Just look at it, indeed them all, and understand where the makers of Time Lord movies gathered their inspirations.

There are other Crickets too. There is the House Cricket (also found in Haddenham, sometimes in outside buildings) alluded to by Charles Dickens in *The Cricket on the Hearth*. There is the very rare Mole Cricket (not to be found here) and, of course, the locusts of biblical fame. Swarms of them are common in Africa, denuding farmers' crops. Believe it or not, a locust even reached Haddenham in about 2008. It had hitched a lift on a lorry and revealed itself when the cargo was unloaded at a local factory premises.

And there's yet another one on the way. The Southern Oak Bush Cricket is wingless and is one of those new arrivals through Climate Change, so they say. It's colonised Kent and hitches lifts on lorries, as do other immigrants so they say, and there will be a picture when it arrives in Haddenham. Be not afeared of these fantastic creatures, but just be in awe of Mother Nature's creations.



A hitchhiking locust reaches Haddenham.
Photo © Paul Mason

If You Find a Grounded Swift



Swift over Aldreth. Photo © Simon Stirrup

Swifts are insectivorous birds, so they need to be fed only on insects.

Diets based on cheese, cat food, any meat or other non-insect food are ultimately fatal.

Most grounded Swifts are likely to be fledglings that have fallen out of the nest before they are ready to fly, so they will need fostering. Occasionally an adult will meet with an accident and plummet to the ground, in which case it may need rehabilitating.

If you find a grounded Swift, the priority is to make it safe by carefully picking it up and putting it in a box, then closing the lid to enable it to calm down and then keep warm.

Swifts are difficult to care for, as they need a special diet. Swifts are not for beginners, so your next step should be to get in touch with someone who is a specialist in this field. Sadly, the major conservation bodies and also many wildlife rescue centres are often unaware of the Swift's dietary needs.

A common problem for recently rescued Swifts is dehydration. Outcomes can be improved if the Swift is rehydrated by stroking a wetted cotton bud around its bill, avoiding the nostrils. A small pinch of sugar or glucose in the water can also help.

If you pick up an adult and consider that it is ready to fly, the technique for releasing it safely is not to throw it

into the air, but to hold it in the palms of your hands, raise your hands high and the bird should go. Make sure you are releasing it *into* the wind, and choose a place where, if it should come to ground again, you can easily find it.

For further information or help, visit actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk, or get in touch with Jake on 01353 740540.

Hedge Laying Completed

On Sunday 29 January there gathered the Fairchild's hedge laying team, intent on completing the work that had to be left from last year's successful event. It was just a few yards at the bottom of the field by the kissing gate. Also last year's work had to be inspected and judged to be a success insofar as how well the new growth had 'bushed out'. A little titivating here and there and pulling out some aggressive bramble plants. Not an easy job that, as it grows so strongly, but we must not let it take over and smother all the erstwhile bushes like Hawthorn, Hazel and other berry bearing plants.

It's a great big thanks to Alastair, Ann, Chris, Chris, Gareth, Hazel, Jez, Kate, Robert, Stuart, Tim and, of course, Buster the dog! To Haddenham Conservation Society for lending us the gazebo. And to Barclay and Loz for sourcing the binders for the top of the new-laid hedge. They could not come, but they still played their parts. And not least to Hazel for providing some super tomato soup with added zest herb wise!

Fairchild's Meadow Working Group



Wildlife Waking Up

Our contributors' reports direct from the HCS website
www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk

4 February A Little Egret was spotted in Long Drove and 13 Roe Deer on North Fen.

14 February Haddenham sewage plant: 28 Pied Wagtails plus Grey Wagtail. Hoghill Drove: Mixed flock Finches and Sparrows including 2 Yellowhammers. Aldreth Engine Drain: Kingfisher. The Boot: 5 Common Buzzards circling, 250 Fieldfares, at least 4 Redwings. Dambank: Minimum 4 Goldfinches on Teasels, 2 grey Herons, 1 Cormorant in drain. Long Drove: 6 Kestrels, approx. 250 Golden Plovers, 2750 Lapwings in two places, 300-400 Fieldfares spread all over very large field, 6 Reed Buntings on wires, 2000 Blackheaded Gulls following tractor and plough. North Fen not observed. Not a bad day's birding in our local patch. *PM&I&SD*

23 February Storm Doris' high winds have caused thousands of gulls, mainly Common (Mew) Gulls and Lesser Blackbacks to congregate in grass fields near College Farm behind Northumberland Close. It is a wind-protected site with high hedges, and gulls have found this out and remain there for the duration of the winds. *ID*

25 February North of Small Fen: 250 Whooper Swan, 1 male Bewick's Swan, 160 Greylag Geese. *SS*

1 March The frogs are very active today and there's lots of spawn. I saw a Sparrowhawk displaying over the road between Wilburton and Haddenham, coming down and landing in the hedge that goes along the footpath next to what was the orchard (now destroyed). *BY*

4 March Male Hen Harrier hunting arable at Haddenham A1123 towards Earith. *Steve Cooper*

15 March Otter reported in drain near Old West River. Coltsfoot along the Boot. Lakes Drove from south: Two brimstone butterflies. *PM*

17 March Dam Bank near the Pumping Engine: A friend reports seeing a female Hen Harrier last Friday. I am happy to accept this record – it seems that he spent part of his life on the north Norfolk coast and was a regular at Cley. It might be best, though, to call it a Ringtail. *JA*
Hinton Farm Reservoir: Wigeon now down to 1 male and 2 females from last count (250), 2 pairs Tufted Duck, 2 pairs Little Grebe, 5 Greylag Geese, 100 gulls – mixed Blackhead, Common and Herring – 6 Coots, 8 Moorhen, pair Pied Wagtails and 1000s of Pigeons on lower field, 1 pair Magpies. *PM&ID* I've just had a female or first year female Merlin circling over A1421, 1/2 mile north of Haddenham. Flew east towards Grunty Fen. Managed to pull over and see it through bins. *Chris Boness*

28 March I spotted a red kite circling over my house in Haddenham High street at about 3pm. It sailed away towards the west and was gone by the time I'd collected my camera – so no photo. C'est la vie! *Jim Sawyer*

1 April On a gentle stroll up to and around Fairchild's Meadow, we saw 2 Goldcrest, Great Tits, and Blue Tits,



Hairy-footed Flower Bees spotted on 10 April.

Chaffinch, Robins, Long-Tailed Tits, Blackbirds, 2 Green Woodpeckers, many calling Chiffchaff, Peacock and Tortoiseshell butterflies and also the Marsh Marigolds were putting on a good show. Cowslips and Celandine were in the wildflower meadow and the trees and bushes all greening up beautifully. *S&ID*

10 April I originally assumed these (see image above) were Masonry Bees but no they are female Hairy-footed Flower Bees. They are moving about between holes in an old wall. No males were seen here but I have seen one male (males are larger and khaki/brown colour and visit certain flowers in gardens only). Interesting that not all bees using holes in walls are the same species. Do they make new holes or use old ones? Don't know yet. *PM*

11 April Upon our arrival home after a few days away, we found that 'our' swallows have arrived!! *S&ID*

13 April Long Drove: 2 male Wheatears, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 6-8 Corn Buntings. Galls Drove, North Fen: 3 pairs Yellowhammer, 2 pairs Reed Bunting. Spring has started! Back Drove: A surprise find of several specimens of Storksbill in flower. This a very unusual plant in fens. Close by was early Pepperwort, less of a surprise but still early. *PM&I&SD*

14 April Dambank: Plenty of Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings. *BY*

21 April Guppy's Pond and spinney: 1 pair Great Crested Grebes again after several years' absence, 2 Kingfishers, Song Thrush beating hell out of snail on anvil, 1-2 Chiffchaffs, Marsh Marigolds west end of lake, pair Sparrowhawks circling. Hinton Farm reservoir: 3 pairs Little Grebes, 1 pair Tufted Ducks, Coots nesting on floating platforms put out to encourage terns!, 2 pairs Mistle Thrush, 1 pair Song Thrush, 1 pair Common Buzzard. Hoghill Drove: 3 Yellow Wagtails. Long Drove: 1 Wheatear, Corn Buntings, pair of Linnets in bramble bush. *PM&ID*

22 April Haddenham/Aldreth fens: 11 Wheatears, Corn Buntings, Yellow Wagtails, some singing. North Fen: 3 Common Buzzards, several Corn and Reed Buntings singing and Skylarks prolific singing. *PM&I&SD*

Chair's Report

My report consists mainly of thanks to the various people who contributed to the ongoing success and vitality of the Conservation Society during the year. So, in no particular order, thanks to:

- Sheila Dickerson, for researching and signing up speakers for the winter talks such as this evening's, and of course to the speakers themselves, who often travel a significant distance to give their talks. This year we had talks from:
The Colour of Haddenham – Paul Mason
Lions, Tigers and Birds of India – Tim Loseby
A Year in the Life of Norfolk's Wildlife – Steve Cale
Wildlife in Cambridgeshire's Traditional Orchard – Val Perrin
Giving Wildlife the Edge – Cliff Carson
And a special thanks to Ann Biggs for stepping in at the last minute when one of the speakers was unable to attend.
- Sally MacEachern, for editing the Society Newsletter, and to all contributors.
- Tina Bone for hosting the Society's website, and all contributors to the website. The website is well worth a regular visit as it is updated with photographs of recent wildlife sightings, and news and stories that supplement those in the Newsletter.
- All contributors and helpers at the annual Plant and Cake Stall, which raised £290 last year. This year the Stall will be on the Green on Saturday morning 6 May at 9.30 am. As always, all contributions of cakes and plants will be welcome.
- Haddenham Galleries for selling surplus produce from the Plant Stall.
- Helpers at various workparties during the year in the Old Burial Ground, and in Nine Acre Wood. As always, volunteers for workdays are welcome.
- Ann Biggs and Wendy Lanman, who have now completed the laminated flower card sets, which have been distributed to the Primary Schools of Haddenham and Wilburton. You may recall that this builds on the packs that were distributed to the Pre-School in an earlier year. The idea of these is to provide the children with an easy means of recognising local plants and animals, and hopefully help them develop an interest and appreciation of wildlife which they will sustain into later years.
- The Ouse Washes Partnership for funding these, and for organising the Ditch Biodiversity Day last July, which was so popular it went to a second day.
- Haddenham Beer Festival and the Steam Rally for their donations to funds.

- To Steve Hawes for the Conservation Society posters.
- To John Burgess for deputising for me on the all too frequent occasions that I have been unable to attend committee meetings.
- Finally to Christine Lowery for checking the accounts. Before I hand over to Susan for her Treasurer's Report, a quick word about Nine Acre Wood.
- The Woodland Trust owns and manages the Wood, and has thinned out the poplars to allow more light to reach the lower levels. We will see this year how this affects growth. There have been a few minor incidents of misuse of the Wood, bearing in mind that it is intended for walking only. We have now erected notices to make people aware of this.

Chris Prescott
11 April 2017



OBG Tidy Up

A trio of HCS members tackled tidying up tasks in the Old Burial Ground on 30 April. A bit of pruning, some weeding and the removal of dead stalks improved the appearance of the Butterfly Garden. Thanks to Sheila, Sally and Elver. Our major task for the year will be the late summer hay cut. Volunteers are needed to prevent it from becoming an onerous task for a few. Keep an eye open for notices.

New Housing

HCS has written to Haddenham Parish Council to raise concerns that there is confusion over plans for housing in the Parish. Every couple of weeks seems to bring up something new.

HCS has therefore suggested a public meeting to explain where we are on this. The PC will discuss the suggestion at its May meeting, so watch out for a possible public meeting during the summer.

Renew your subs!

Subscriptions were due on
1st January.

If you haven't done so already,
please pay promptly as
it really does help.

News from Guppy's Pond

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

No Swans nesting again this year. We have had the odd visitor early in the year, but none has settled. However, there is now a pair of Great Crested Grebes so, with no other large rivals for the territory, they might just stay and bring up some young. What a lovely sight that would be.

A couple of Greylag Geese visited for a few days but chose not to stay; we have seen a pair of Cormorants fishing together and they came more than once. They do help, with the Pike, to keep the Pond's fish population well balanced. There are millions of small fry in the water in spring and there simply wouldn't be enough room – or food – for them all to survive, so the visiting Cormorants are welcome. Besides, they are so beautiful to watch when they swim, even if they do look a little scary up close.

On our side of Guppy's Pond, we have once seen a duck with ten day-old ducklings, but haven't even glimpsed them since. A pair of Coots had four little ones, but only one survives. Kingfishers make regular appearances, Chiffchaff, Black Cap and Reed Warblers are all flitting around, and the usual garden birds are busy bringing up their young: Blackbirds, Thrushes, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Blue and Great Tits, Collared Doves. To which I must add the dreaded Pigeons and Magpies – although they are both rather beautiful birds.



The other day a Bullfinch was perched on a Sallow twig right in front of the house. A lovely splash of colour in amongst all that green. Maybe, like last year, it will have a family in a nest nearby.

For several weeks a little female Sparrow took to squeezing itself between the wing mirror and the door of Brian's parked car. It would stay there for hours, only leaving briefly when we disturbed it. A male joined it for a few days and then they both disappeared.



Plant & Cake Sale

We made £305! Cakes £145 and plants £160. It was difficult to see just how many plants we had to sell as new ones were coming in as others were being sold and the same thing was happening with the cakes, although Maxine's contribution was again a very large one. Many, many thanks to all of you who helped with the set-up and removal of equipment, the baking of the cakes and the nurturing of the plants.

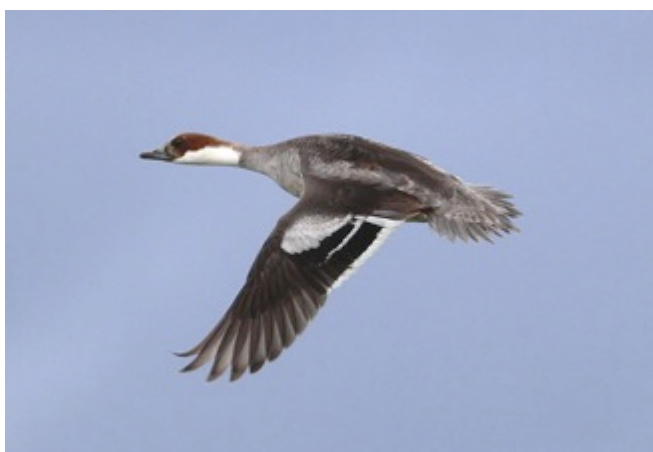
Those plants we didn't sell on the day are now for sale at Haddenham Galleries where Hazel and Alastair are kindly hosting them. All proceeds will be added to the Winter Talks.

Smew...a New Record

On our parish southern boundary runs the Old West River. Most of us are familiar with this waterway at and around the Aldreth High Bridge and by the Nine Acre Wood. Many birds can be seen there at different times, including Cormorants, various Gulls and, in summer, patrolling Common Terns. Tufted Ducks and Little Grebes both dive to garner fishy prey. Sedge and Reed Warblers sing from reedy banks and, if you are lucky, the flash of a Kingfisher is a good sighting. Graceful Mute Swans glide through the water, often with a few fluffy chicks. One very lucky observer described what can only be an Osprey on one occasion. What other large raptor dives into water from a great height and comes up with a fish? Barn Owls hunt the banks for voles, often by day, and Cuckoos can be seen calling and chasing bubbling females in spring. Various dragonflies abound.

We often don't remember that this river goes all the way west to Earith Lock....or at least half of it does, because the other half is strictly in Willingham parish. The road from Earith to Willingham runs for about half a mile right beside the southern bank and occasionally an observer will report, by one means or another, an unusual species in that section of the river. Lately it has perhaps been an Otter fishing but to glimpse Smew is really a great surprise. To get a photograph is fantastic! This is a rare duck, here for the winter from its Siberian breeding grounds. Normally it reaches southern England in the colder winter months. The Smew is a diving duck and feeds mostly on fish caught with its sawlike beak. The male is a brilliant all-white crested duck with just a bit of black around the eye and a streak on the back of its head. The females and immatures are both grey-bodied with a chestnut brown head and white throat.

On the 18 March last, Cambridgeshire birder Brendan Doe was the lucky observer and has kindly let us have photographs of this probable immature, which are also the HCS website: www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk



Smew in flight. Photo © Brendan Doe



WINTER TALKS

Indoor meetings are held at the Arkenstall Centre, Haddenham, on the second Tuesday of each month from October to May, but NOT in January, at 8:00 pm.

Members free. Non-members welcome for a nominal fee.

All welcome to stay for a (free) drink and a chat after each talk.

10 October

A NIGHT IN THE LIFE OF A BADGER

Peter Pilbeam

14 November

SOUTH GEORGIA – BIRDS AND WILDLIFE OF AN ANTARCTIC ISLAND

Professor Andrew Clarke

12 December

BRITAIN'S OFFSHORE ISLANDS – OUR OWN GALAPAGOS?

Dave Horsley

OTHER EVENTS

Early September

BOATING DAY ON GUPPY'S POND

Our yearly chauffeured boating day. Look out for the yellow posters nearer the date.