

HADDENHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SUMMER 2022

The Committee for 2022/23 is:

Barclay Arnott	740500
Ann Biggs	740810
John Burgess	749441
Sheila Dickerson	749443
Susan Everitt, Treas.	740352
Elver Langley	740583
Wendy Lanman	741138
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 send them to Sheila Dickerson on hadconsoc@gmail.com

Send articles or photos for the newsletter to Sally on hadconsoc@gmail.com

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

Community Hedge in Fairchild's Meadow

Contributed by Jez Reeve

Twenty and odd years ago Owen Bethel and others on the Haddenham Parish Council realised the precious potential of the seven acres of agricultural land at the edge of Haddenham, with the magnificent view over towards the 'Ship of the Fens', Ely Cathedral. The owner, Joyce Foreman, née Fairchild, wanted to sell the land, but agreed to wait until a community bid could be put together to preserve the land for permanent public access to the countryside. With a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and public and individual subscriptions this was achieved in 2003.



View of Ely Cathedral from Fairchild's Meadow.

Membership information

Subscription rates

1 Jan to 31 Dec 2022

Individual: £8 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.

One of the very first community actions that took place was to plant a hedge between what is called the Bonfire Field and the Pond Field. This hedge was planted with Dogwood, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Field Maple, Willow and Hazel in a classic native mix.



Before planting (above) and planting in 2004 (right).



The hedge has acquired brambles over the years and the fruit is now being served up in jams, alongside hip jelly and sloe gin all over the village. In 2016 it was sufficiently well developed to be laid. The process of cutting the live stems of the bushes in the hedge, bending them over and tying them into stakes to form a dense thicket of growing stems was first recorded by Julius Caesar when he came to Britain over 2,000 years ago. The laid hedge then has a chance to bulk out and provide safe and food-filled homes for hundreds of species of insects, mammals and birds.



Hedge immediately after laying in 2016.



Summer hedge in 2022.

The hedge is now due for some maintenance. The foundations of the 2016 laying are still holding firm with the birch and willow structure intact. However, the Dogwood, Blackthorn and brambles are jumping out into the fields on both sides. Having taken expert advice this summer it has been decided that, in order to maintain its health and vigour, a mechanised cut should be done to bring the height, excluding the Field Maples, down to around 2.4m (8ft), and trim the sides in as much as possible once the plants are dormant. In January it will then be possible to cut back unwanted growth manually and tidy up the ends and any areas that the machine could not reach.

Another community active workday is planned for 15 January to do this. I will be getting in touch with all the volunteers who have helped in the past, but will be delighted to welcome more. It will be cold in January, but we hope to provide hot drinks, etc. to sustain us during a hard day's work. Please get in touch with me at jez@jrworks.co.uk if you want to join the work team.

Welcome Relief in the Gallery Garden

Contributed by Ann Biggs

So ends the drought.....

Drops of water slide into cracks of long dry earth as summer's drought breaks to early morning rain. Trees sigh, their parched leaves caressed by moisture which wakens the sleeping giants who extend long fingers to a rising breeze.

Beneath the canopy, wildflowers present their faces, drinking new life from a long-awaited falling of this late summer shower. High on the wires, pigeons purr, fluffing their feathers to relish the cool air accompanying the rain.

No savage thrust of light and thunder but a gentle patter of softly falling water.

After the heat, visitors to the Arts Centre reappear to drink and eat cake inside the café as rain wets the windows, returning to book on our workshops with renewed enthusiasm as the promise of cooler times encourages people to come out, instead of hiding behind curtained windows at home. Check our website www.haddenhamartscentre.org.uk to learn new skills from Woodturning to Life Drawing, Glass Fusion to Watercolour painting.

And comes the thunder.....

Odin's Wolves now howl across an indigo sky, pursued by dragon's fire to split the heavens, releasing towering thunder heads which carry more life-giving water to our suffering Garden.

Parched Earth and Prickles

Contributed by Andrea Chambers

In the middle of July (on one of those really hot days) we spotted a young hedgehog in the garden. It wasn't behaving like a hedgehog should; it was out and about in the daylight. Hedgehogs are nocturnal and unless it's a nursing mother, who will usually have a purposeful gait, seeing one out in the daytime is not a positive thing at all.

The hedgepig then proceeded to amble out into the full sun and just sit there, so we put down a shallow bowl of water close by ... it shuffled over, had a drink and then went back to just sitting in the full sun.

At this point gardening gloves were donned, and it was put into a large shoe box with a folded up cool damp tea towel for company. (We found out just how good hedgehogs are at climbing at this point and put a lid on the box too.)

It was obviously a hedgehog who needed knowledgeable help ... I rang a friend (who I knew releases hedgehogs) and got someone's number (who it turns out has retired from hedgehog care). She, in turn, gave me the number of Cathedral Vets in Ely and Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care in Soham.

The vets were the closer option so I filled in a form about where I'd found the creature, ticked that I'd have it back to re-release and then carried on with life.

Fast forward five weeks and I got a call from Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care – the hot weather was breaking and could I come and pick up Mx Tiggywinkle to release close to the find site.

I was instructed to bring a cat carrier and told we'd need to put water and cat food down at the release site, as the hedgehog might keep coming back for food for a while until it found its feet. My cat eats nothing but turkey flavour dried food and it turns out that's an ideal thing to put down, and we always leave water out for the wildlife anyway.

Under the large elder tree in the corner of our garden which shelters my rotting logpile there are now bowls of water and food and beyond there is access to a series of hedgerows, aka Wildlife Corridors, which will take a determined hedgehog pretty much



*Hedgehog
when found.*

wherever it wants to go – and given hogs can travel a couple of kilometres a night that could be some way. It seems the perfect spot to release our friend.

Now we *know* hedgehogs definitely visit our garden we've looked around with a hedgehog positive gaze and realised that, although the wilderness out the front is ideal, our back garden is a wildlife cul-de-sac, so we've cut holes (about the size of a CD case) in the fences in a couple of places to create through routes.

This evening's job is to add an escape route from the pond (which we've been meaning to do for ages) and then as dusk falls release the hedgehog.

Maybe next we'll look up online how to make a hedgehog house because one of our rarest native animals needs all the help it can get.

Other than creating hedgehog highways the most helpful thing you can do for hedgehogs is leave out water and food. In hot weather they really struggle to find both and (as in the case of my little hoglet) the mothers will abandon them early if resources are scarce.

If you come across a hedgehog who is obviously struggling, just ring the wonderful Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care (who the Ely vet sends their rescues to anyway).

You can reach them on 07977 320320 and find out more about them at www.cambswildlifecare.org.uk.

A quick sniff around, a munch of food and off the hoglet paddled into the deeper undergrowth.

Help Us Out, It's Still a Drought

Contributed by Barbara Grafton

Last night we marked the twinkling stars,
This morn no dew revived the grass,
And oft across the parching fields
We see the dusty eddies pass;

And now along the hazy west
The swiftly building clouds uprear;
High overhead the winds are loud,
The thunder rolls and grumbles near;

Till all the world, rejoicing, drinks
The long-denied, long-prayed-for rain

This extract is from 'The End of the Drought' by the Canadian writer and farmer Peter McArthur (1866-1924), capturing so well the hours before rain provides relief to a drought-baked landscape.

Unfortunately, the almost-miraculous revival of our local parched brown fields, parks, gardens and roadside verges into bright green spaces after rain does not mean our prolonged summer drought has ended. East Anglia and Southern Britain are still technically in the most serious form of drought: hydrological drought in which aquifers, boreholes, rivers and reservoirs will require many months of above-average rainfall to refill from their current low levels.

On 19 July Cambridge University Botanic Garden recorded a temperature of 39.9C (103.8F), but the UK's new national record went to Coningsby in Lincolnshire which hit 40.3C (104.5F). A month later it was reported this was the driest summer since 1976, and the fifth driest ever in over 180 years of record keeping. The River Cam was at just 36 per cent of its long-term average flow. The ground water and river levels at Kingfishers Bridge Nature Reserve between Wicken and Stretham had receded to such an extent that most of the ditches and pools that normally hold water all year round had dried up completely.

I don't enjoy very hot weather and am delighted when temperatures return to 'reasonable' summer levels, around the mid-20s. But sun-avoiders like me feeling flaked-out is as nothing to what happens to wildlife during droughts. Lack of food, dehydration and heat exhaustion are the biggest concerns. With worms and other soil-dwelling invertebrates retreating deeper into damper soil, animals such as young foxes and badgers, hedgehogs, amphibians, and a wide range of garden birds, including blackbirds, thrushes, robins, starlings, crows, and wagtails were denied nutritious and plentiful food. The RSPCA, many vets and animal rescue centres reported being overwhelmed, particularly with malnourished hedgehogs, which are now classified as vulnerable to extinction on Great Britain's Red List for mammals. There were tragic news stories of young swifts overheating in their nests and attempting to fly before they were fully fledged, and of house martins and swallows unable to find enough mud to build or repair their nests.



Rockeries and logpiles provide shade to amphibians in the garden, where often the soil beneath will remain damp and the temperature much cooler than the outside. Toad <https://urlzs.com/knw76> (edited).

Some insects were particularly vulnerable to the excessive heat. Insects are ectotherms, as are reptiles, and incapable of controlling their body heat which can only match external temperatures. We rescued several bumblebees lying exhausted on the ground this summer, by placing them in the shade on a nectar-rich flower or with a very small amount of 1:1 sugar and water (not honey) solution on a spoon. Other insects did extremely well. Aphid populations exploded in early summer (before crashing as the drought worsened and food plants died), so that greatly benefited early populations of lacewings, ladybirds, hoverflies, damselflies, dragonflies, beetles, wasps, spiders, and ants. Butterflies love sunshine and although the results of the 2022 Big Butterfly Count citizen science survey have not yet been released it is likely that the decline in many species seen in 2021 (mostly due to a cold, wet summer) will have been reversed. However, next year is likely to show a dire impact on some populations as their eggs, caterpillars and food plants died in the drought.

You can make a difference

Collectively, the UK's 27 million gardens comprise an area bigger than all of the nature reserves combined (about 1.8mn acres), so gardeners can make a substantial difference to biodiversity and the survival of local wildlife through future baking summers. That includes minimising the use of paving, decking and fake grass in favour of hedges, lawn, mixed grasses, shrubs, flowering plants, especially drought-tolerant, pollen- and nectar-rich and native plants, climbers, vegetables and herbs, berries and hips, fruiting trees and ponds or bog gardens if space permits, and ideally leaving hedge-bottoms and other areas to grow wild and 'untidy' as habitat and shelter. Areas of lawn left at different lengths and studded with wild native flowers looks wonderful, and need no fertiliser or weed-killer. Mulching plants and soil generously with leaf mould or well-rotted manure will encourage worms and insects, and allowing plants to seed can provide a banquet for birds such as goldfinches. Placing tubs and containers in close groups make good hideaways for toads. If we are lucky enough to have house martins and swallows, we can maintain muddy areas for them. And hedgehog highway holes in fences are essential to allow them to move freely around the neighbourhood.

The Royal Horticultural Society has conducted research on the best plants and the density of planting schemes for different types of invertebrates <https://urlzs.com/Bny7t> and also maintains a list of plants for pollinators <https://urlzs.com/higl1> – all freely available to non-members. And the BBC Wildlife Magazine website is full of advice on gardening for wildlife <https://urlzs.com/czxLQ>.



Make sure that wildlife can access your pond safely by providing pebbles, ramps or netting. Pond <https://urlzs.com/8h3Ez>.

This summer showed we need to put real effort into helping wildlife, rather than just leaving it to its own devices, if we want to make a difference to its survival. This will include cleaning and refilling water containers daily for both drinking and bathing (with pebbles in to ensure easy access), managing areas for shade and hideaways, regularly putting out suitable food (liquid-heavy fruits such as apples and oranges, plus a range of seeds, fat balls, mealworms and waxworms for birds; cat biscuits and good quality cat food for hedgehogs), installing insect hotels, solitary bee tubes, hedgehog houses, swift bricks, bird and bat boxes, and piles of stones and logs as hibernacula for overwintering reptiles and amphibians.

May I also make a plea for far greater tolerance of 'pests'? Many of them are vital food for the creatures we love and want to encourage, and yet we often reach for pesticides, which kill indiscriminately. Or we might almost mindlessly squash beetles, spiders, caterpillars, lacewings, wasps, or moths – yet most are so beneficial they deserve to live. Maintaining a garden waste compost heap in a shady area is also a gift to wildlife such as hedgehogs, birds and amphibians – provided it is kept permanently damp to encourage slugs, snails and worms. We can also keep our curtains drawn at night to reduce light leakage, and think carefully about the type and location of external lighting installed for our own security and safety as it can have serious negative impacts on night-flying insects and bats. We also need to be vigilant, actively looking for distressed wildlife such as overheated bees, amphibians and fish, and for malnourished or sick mammals. Many vets treat small wildlife for free, but if the animal is larger than a rabbit (e.g. a deer, badger, fox, otter or large bird) and is seriously suffering it is best to call the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

Here's to a more benign summer in 2023, for us and for all our precious wildlife.

News from Guppy's Pond

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

You may have noticed that there was no boating day again this year. This was due to the growth of the reeds across the channel dividing the safe starting point of the boat trip in our garden from the wider expanse of the pond. The swans and ducks make it through with difficulty, but it wouldn't be possible for a rowing boat.

Chris Prescott has contacted several companies to clear the reeds right down to their roots but, although they showed interest in the job, they have not come back to him in spite of being chased up. Hopefully we will be able to report something more positive in the next newsletter.

The kingfishers seem to be thriving as we have seen them regularly. Coots and moorhens have had young but have not raised them to adulthood this year, at least on our side of the pond. However, several families of ducks have grown up and are still around.

I have seen grass snakes swim alongside the banks several times this year and magpies have had loud conversations from trees on opposite sides of the water. There seem to be more of them here this year.

Watching the antics of squirrels is always fun and there are plenty of them about. A muntjac munched quite a lot of our plants over the summer, not at all put off by our waving arms from inside the house. It would just stop eating for a moment to look at us with a sort of 'Yes, so what are you going to do about it?' look before resuming its meal. Only



if we opened a window or door would it move away. So, we ended up just enjoying watching it.

It was a relief to know that, even with the excessive heat and lack of rain this summer, all the wildlife could access water freely.

HCS Facebook

Contributed by Rachel Burgess

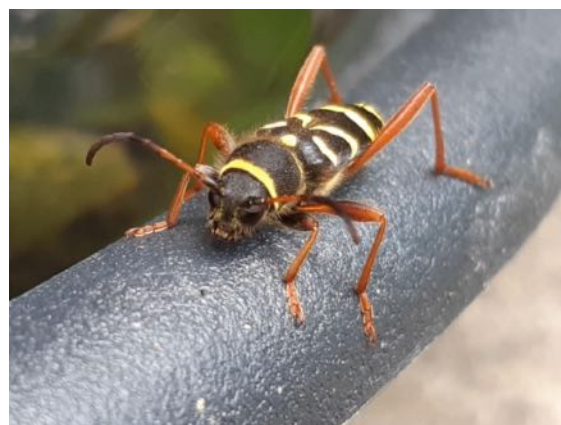
Wildlife sightings around Haddenham and Aldreth over the months of June, July, August and September from the Haddenham Conservation Society Facebook page. Please join the page and share sightings and photographs for us all to enjoy.

Elephant Hawk Moth, 13 June Haddenham. JS
Turtle Dove, 14 June Haddenham. BY
Hummingbird Hawk Moth, 15 June Haddenham. BY
Wasp Beetle, 20 June Wilburton. DG
Hummingbird Hawk Moth, 20 June Aldreth. LB
Two Privet Hawk Moths, 25 June Haddenham. FT
Elephant Hawk & Privet Hawk Moths, 2 July Aldreth. LB
Turtle Dove, 6 July Witcham Toll. ID
Peacock, Comma, Large Skipper & Red Admiral Butterflies, 12 July. DG
Scarce Chaser Dragonfly, 3 August Old West River. DG
Hummingbird Hawk Moth, 12 August Haddenham. JS
Hedgehog, 13 August, Haddenham. AC
Goat Moth Caterpillar, 12 September Witchford. MA
Clouded Yellow Butterfly, 14 September Aldreth. SS
Red Kite, Water Vole, Common Snipe, Great Crested Grebe, 19 September Aldreth/Old West River. SS
Whinchat, 21 September Aldreth. SS

Earlier in the year SS reported finding River Water Dropwort in a ditch north of Clayton's Bridge, This has not been recorded in our area since the 1980s.



Privet Hawkmoth. Laura Burgess.

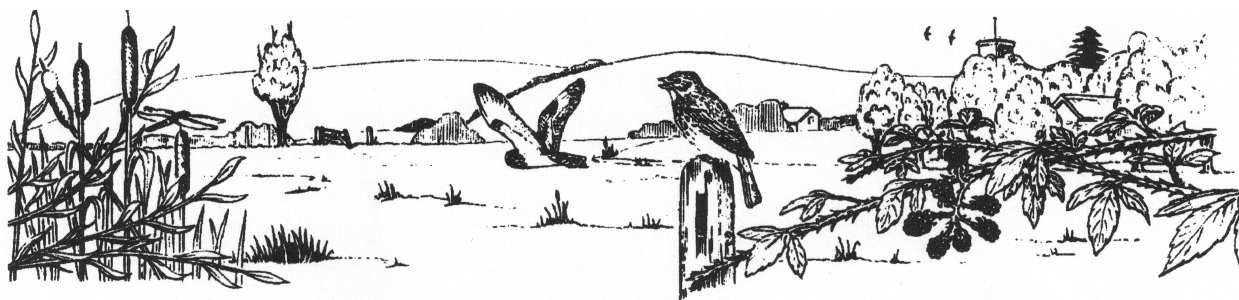


Wasp Beetle. Dave Green.



Elephant Hawkmoth. Laura Burgess.

Peacock Butterfly. Dave Green.



WINTER TALKS

Indoor meetings are held at the Arkenstall Centre, Haddenham on the second Tuesday of each month at 8.00 pm. There will be no talk in January.

Members free. Non-members welcome for a nominal fee. All are welcome to stay for a (free) drink and a chat after each talk

11 October

Helping House Martins

Martin Tickler is dedicated to increasing the population of this amazing bird.

8 November

A World of Raptors

A return visit by wildlife artist and speaker Steve Cale.

13 December

South East Cambs Badgers

The South East Cambs Badger group was formed in 2019 to promote and protect the badgers of our County. Lorraine Jenkins tells us more about it.

14 February

Operation Turtle Dove

Bethany Kiamilo, RSPB Conservation Officer, explains how the organisation is aiming to reverse the fortunes of the fastest declining bird in the UK.

14 March

New Life on the Old West

Howard Jones, Project Manager, tells us how to improve community green spaces in the Fenland Countryside.

11 April

Day-flying Moths

Bill Mansfield, Cambs County Moth Recorder, gives a general overview of these wonderful creatures.

9 May

Ponds and Associated Wildlife

Laura Osborne, of Beds, Cambs & Northants Wildlife Trust on how the wildlife is doing and what we can do to help.

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