

The Committee for 2013/14 is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Barclay Arnott | 740500 |
| Ann Biggs, Chair | 740810 |
| John Burgess | 749441 |
| Susan Everitt, Treas. | 740352 |
| Wendy Lanman | 741138 |
| Paul Mason | 740219 |
| Robert Norman | 740473 |
| Chris Prescott | 749038 |
| Gill Smith | 741662 |
| Mike Smith | 741662 |

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 2014:

Individual: £6

Family: £10

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.

Berry Fen Windfarm Objections by HCS

Copy of letter to ECDC giving reasons as formulated by the Committee

The Planning Department
East Cambridgeshire District Council, The Grange, Ely CB7 4EE

August 8, 2014

Reference 14/00728/ESF, Berry Fen Wind Farm

Dear Sir/Madam,

Haddenham Conservation Society (HCS) is a group which originated in 1985 with the aim of conserving local wildlife and habitats. In 1995 it produced the book *Birds of Haddenham*. HCS therefore modestly claims considerable and unique knowledge regarding local birdlife and behaviour. More information is available at: <http://www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk/Aims.html>

This letter presents our objections to the above listed planning application, as follows:

- The proposed turbines are located in an area which is both dense in birdlife, and also on the flight path towards feeding grounds of Bewick's, Mute and Whooper Swans. The particular problem for swans is their inability to turn quickly in flight, which makes them especially vulnerable to the moving path of the turbine blades. The size of the proposed turbines in comparison to earlier sites which have been developed means that previous studies of the effect of turbines on birds may underestimate the potential impacts. The unknowns include the behaviour of birds when taking off and gaining elevation, and the behaviour in misty and foggy conditions.
- The proposed turbines are in close proximity to the observed nesting sites of Hobbies (a schedule 1 protected breeding species) as well as those of other predators. The interaction of these predators involves aerial encounters at heights similar to those of the turbines, and there would appear to be a considerable risk of fatal collision with the turbine blades. A similar risk applies to their hunting activities, and to the reactions of other species such as Lapwings and Golden Plover, when predators are about.
- Research shows that the Gull family is susceptible to collision with turbines. It appears that the applicant's surveys do not take account of this.

We would point decision makers towards the detailed observations of our member Paul Mason on this subject, which have been submitted to the Council in objection to the application.

In summary, we believe that the applicant's research is insufficient to provide assurance that the proposal will not lead to significant and damaging loss of life among the local bird population, including that of protected species.

Yours faithfully,
A Biggs (Chairperson)

Wildflowers Galore!

Contributed by Jez Reeve

Botanical expert says: "I don't what you are doing but it is working!" July 2014

In 2002, when the people of Haddenham endorsed a plan to take over the three fields that make up Fairchild's Meadow for conservation and public access, the reintroduction of a wildflower meadow was high on the agenda. It took another two years before the money was raised for the purchase and conservation work, through public subscription and an HLF grant. Preparation for the wildflower meadow in the westmost field began in earnest in 2004 with hedge creation and improvements to public access.

By 2005 the small subcommittee of the parish council, the Fairchild's Meadow Committee, agreed that the best way to encourage wildflower growth on this land was to scrape back the grass and seed strips within the field to start off the wildflowers. Wildflowers thrive best in nutrient-low environments, which is why the hay is cut after the seeds have set followed by light grazing. We were lucky enough to have a bull called Pint Pot and his lady friend to visit in previous years, although poor old Pint Pot is not well enough to come this year. This approach showed slow progress and in 2007 it was decided to reseed the meadow. By 2011 the wildflowers were taking hold, although you could clearly see where the original scraped strips had been as this was where the wildflowers were densest. Ragged Robin and Yellow Rattle were beginning to spread and by last year, when we did the first community wildflower count in 2013, Black Knapweed was thriving in the field.



This July we have done another community wildflower count and been able to record increased numbers of wildflowers and grasses. The management regime has included late summer cutting followed by light grazing and intermittent thistle spraying.

There is a full list of wildflowers and grasses on the Haddenham Conservation Society website. This year we identified 23 different species as opposed to 17 the previous year. We also did a 1 kilometre transect of gridsquare TL4675 in which we identified 74 different species as opposed to 52. (Maybe we are just getting better at identifying them!)

It is a success story, and one that has taken time, dedication and effort. The Fairchild's Meadow committee has lost three of its leading lights over the period, Owen Bethel, Ken Bowcock and David Fairchild, but continues with new people joining from time to time. If you are interested in helping with this parish conservation project get in touch for a chat, (jez@jrworks.co.uk).



New for Old

Contributed by Paul Mason

A colourful new plaque has replaced the old worn sign by the gate of the Old Burial Ground. This peaceful village asset in Church Lane is managed jointly by Haddenham Parish Council and Haddenham Conservation Society – half in a traditional manner and half as a colourful wildlife butterfly garden and mini flower meadow, which now has some wonderful UK species in it. Also now installed is a seat to the memory of Freda Crofts who led the revitalisation of the ground and preservation of its history. She also researched a plan of those buried in the graves, many of whom still have descendants in the village.



A Full Summer of Wildlife Goings On

It was a strange way to start the summer but we had a mini appearance of leucistics. There seemed to be possibly three Blackbirds with mixed black and white plumage visiting various gardens. The one coming to Clare Presnell's feeding station was nearly all white so the term albino comes to mind, but the bird needs to have pink eyes to be called as such. All three birds seen had dark eyes, so technically are leucistic rather than albino. Various amounts of white on black were noted, and one in Duck Lane may have bred, as later in the year yet another bird with yet another variety of plumage appeared in the same garden. Are we developing a new variety of Blackbird in Haddenham? Well, we always try to keep ahead of things! Now on to the fens.

2 April: North Fen, Back Drove – up to 10 male Reed Buntings trying to attract females by singing and displaying, much of the time over flowering rape. And up to three Corn Buntings and three to four Yellowhammers getting all 'sprung up', singing and displaying. Two Marsh Harriers hunting over fields – one male and one female but don't know if they are a pair. Long Drove – Corn Buntings setting up territories and, surprisingly, 30–40 Linnets still in winter flock mode. Dambank – two smart White Wagtails. The migration has started!

9 April: North Fen, Galls Drove – two male Wheatears, also numbers of Corn Buntings, Reed Buntings and Yellowhammers all displaying, singing etc. On Long Drove at least four to five singing Corn Buntings and at Claytons Drove and bridge one female and two male Wheatears. Dambank – two nice bright Yellow Wagtails, three more Wheatears, many Skylarks and Linnets feeding all over a ploughed field and two male White Wagtails.

12 April: Dambank – a nice little gang of birds on the bare field: 22 Yellow Wagtails (mostly males), eight Pied Wagtails, nine Meadow Pipits, nine Corn Buntings, six Reed Buntings, four Linnets and, also in the area, one Peregrine, three Common Buzzards and three Swallows, all seen by Barbara York.

21 April: Simon Stirrip saw the first Large Red Damselfly of the year around his pond in Aldreth.

23 April: A red-letter day when, on some agricultural machinery off Lode Way, a Black Redstart female was found catching insects. Strangely, these birds seem to like manmade situations and in Suffolk and Kent are known to nest around atomic power stations. In France and other European mainland countries they replace Robins as a garden bird. This is only the second time one has been found in our parish.

26 April: Dambank – three male Wheatears. Long Drove – one female Wheatear and seven Brown Hares sitting down in a close group. South of Galls Drove – one male Wheatear.

The *start of May* heard a passage Whimbrel calling as it flew over Aldreth and House Martins arrived back at their nests. Then Wendy Lanman found a strange caterpillar whilst clearing out a shed. This was identified as the larva of an Old Lady Moth. We let it pupate in some soil and about six weeks later out she came, fully clothed in Victorian mourning dress plumage. (Look on the website to see it in all its glory).

On *15 May* Jake Allsop wrote on the website that 'As with



*Male Reed Bunting
by Ann Biggs*

On *15 May* Jake Allsop wrote on the website that 'As with Turtle Doves I heard and saw no Cuckoos in 2013 but this year I heard both from my garden'. Through May and June many reports were received of both, but the best sighting was two male Cuckoos flying around together and calling against each other around Aldreth High Bridge and Old West River. The Spotted Flycatchers arrived back at their traditional breeding holes in a Station Road wall and eventually bred certainly two but maybe four young, as six birds later hunted flies in the wooded garden.

Stuart Norman reported several pairs of Starlings nesting in old woodpecker holes in the orchard on Aldreth Road, as well as Little Owls somewhere in the orchard. As summer progressed all seemed well with the Turtle Doves, and probably we had five or six pairs in the parish, which is very good considering they are in severe decline as a British breeding bird. Can we hold on to them for the future? Hopefully yes, because we do have quite a lot of their preferred habitat of tall hedgerows and waste seedy spaces.

On *15 June* a Fallow Deer was seen in Fairchild's Meadows. This is the first record, although not surprising. How long will it be before we get Red Deer?

There's more to come from July on but that will be for the next newsletter. View it all on www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk. All in glorious colour.



Cake and Plant Sale

WE NEED YOU! Please remember to pot up, or at least pop into a nursery bed, any spare plants you might have whilst clearing your gardens for the winter. We know they will find good homes during our plant sale in the spring and the proceeds will contribute to the fees of next year's winter speakers. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

The Old Burial Ground



Once again we have been gratified by the positive comments volunteered to us on the value of this area. The many unsolicited reports of appreciation of the beauty and peace found here make the effort of maintaining the area really worthwhile. This year the work of sowing more wild flower seeds, particularly Yellow Rattle, was relatively easy and enjoyable but the hay cut and carting proved to be more arduous than usual.

The growing year had begun with a relatively cool spring, which restricted early growth of the grasses. It looked as though we would be in for an easy time removing the vegetation after flowering, as is required to keep the soil fertility low. But, the excellent growing conditions in June and July resulted in a lot of late growth, which looked lovely but was not easy to remove.

First the mid July rain caused us to postpone our chosen hay raking day, then, one week later than planned, we found that new growth was already through the cut hay, making raking very difficult. This was compounded by a depleted work force of only five adults and three children who all worked manfully to get the job done. Many thanks to Sheila, Sally, Vic, and Liz with her dynamic trio of Alex, Molly and Katy. Well done to all and cross fingers that the weather is kinder next year. Now we have some idea how the farmers feel when the weather catches them out!

Our next work party will be on Sunday 19 October from 2:00 to 4:00 to tidy the area for winter. All are very welcome.

Renew your subs!

Subscriptions were due on
1st January.

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

Thank you.

Many Thanks Wendy.....Hello Sally

On behalf of the Conservation Society Committee and all the members of the Society, I would like to record grateful thanks to Wendy Lanman for her work on the Conservation Society Newsletter over 18 years. It must have taken countless hours of her time; I don't know how we would have managed without her.

I would also like to welcome Sally MacEachern as our new editor who, I am sure, will do an equally splendid job.

Ann Biggs, Chairperson



A Couple of Magic Moments

Contributed by Gill Smith

On a sunny afternoon in early September I sat with a cup of tea to enjoy the tranquil beauty of Guppy's Pond, which we are so lucky to overlook. Suddenly the air was filled with a host of House Martins sailing high and then skimming very low over the water. There must have been about 30 Martins and their wonderful display only lasted for a couple of minutes. Then, as swiftly as they had arrived, they flew off. However it was a delightful sight.

I googled to see if I could find a specific group noun for Swifts but the nearest seemed to be flight or gulp of Swallows. If you know a more correct name I would be interested to hear.



House Martin

In the middle of the summer holidays we were walking around Fairchild's Meadow pond when one of the grandchildren called, "I've found a Lizard!" We all moved slowly towards him and, sure enough, there on a dry twig was a Lizard about 4 inches long. It remained motionless for several minutes so we all could get a good look at it and admire the beautiful patterning. This was a first Lizard sighting for us in Haddenham and, although we had all seen many on various holidays, it was very exciting. However, the most amazing thing was that we found it – or an identikit one – in the exact same place the next day. For the rest of the week the site was inspected daily but no further sightings were made. The next week, however, other grandchildren were visiting and were anxious to see 'The Haddenham Lizard'. To our even greater amazement it was seen once more! We are so lucky to have such a wealth of nature on our doorstep.

News from Guppy's Pond

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

On opening the lid to the casing protecting my water softener, which is outside, I discovered a cluster of most beautifully crafted tiny mud cells, just like a little heap of miniature amphora. Intrigued, I called on Paul Mason and he soon came up with the answer. These were cells made by one of our native Potter Wasps, *Eumenes courctatus* being the most likely one. You can find out more about them on www.vespa-bicolor.net.



A loud, almost tractor motor-like buzzing coming from the – unlit – wood burner made me investigate; I found a very large Hornet desperately trying to get out. The poor thing must have fallen down the chimney and was pressing itself against the glass door. I rather like Hornets, so I waited until it showed signs of being tired, then opened the burner door and caught the dazed creature under a glass. It felt really good to release it outside and watch it fly away.

Talking of Wasps, had you noticed how few of the usual ones there have been this year, in spite of the bumper crops of fruit? Consultation with Paul again revealed that this is probably the result of last year's wet summer. Many Wasps' nests in the ground were flooded so not many queens survived or were fertilised. This would also explain why there are so many White Cabbage caterpillars decimating the crops – wasps usually help keep their numbers down. However, there is hope. Paul has already seen a couple of this year's queens looking around the eaves of his house for an over-wintering site.

On the water front, the Swans made a nest and incubated their eggs, but have no young. Both Coots and Moorhens near our house had two broods of four and six young, but only have one each left – it really is a cruel world. The Mallard population has dwindled considerably over the past few years and, although some stop briefly, we no longer have breeding geese. Thank goodness the Kingfishers are thriving!

Boating Day

We had a perfect afternoon: sunny, warm weather, enthusiastic rowers, and even the Kingfishers appearing on cue every time a boat went out. We had a steady flow of visitors throughout the afternoon and all left happy and smiling – surely the sign of a successful event.



New Northumbria Houses Research and Ground Preparation

Contributed by Paul Mason

Before building could commence, legal requirements demanded a wildlife survey by trapping and excluding. HCS asked to be kept in touch. A corrugated tin fence was erected around the site and a series of soil traps were dug. Any reptiles and amphibians that dropped in were recorded and then released at a log pile built outside the site. This report was made by the surveyors involved and kindly given to HCS.

"The trapping is now complete and the site has been cleared ready for construction. Unfortunately there was nothing of particular interest to report. During the trapping we caught a grand total of 1 Great Crested Newt and a Smooth Newt and a number of common Lizards.

I think the site works should make some meaningful progress now although I expect it will still be some time before the buildings start taking shape. I will be speaking to the site manager over the next week and hope to make a site visit soon just to see how things are progressing. When I speak to the site manager I will remind him about the integrated swift boxes and the offer to assist with finding an appropriate location with the view to trying to get a rough idea of when would be the best time for you to make a site visit."

Vicky Rowe, Ecologist, MLM Group

Jake Allsop, member of HSC and 'Action for Swifts', will make arrangements for the erection of suitable swift boxes to be included as building progresses. So it should be a useful bit of joint consultation

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.*

14 October

NATURE AND RESIDENTS OF MADINGLEY HALL MEADOW

Richard Gant, Head Gardener, and **Dr Ed Turner**, Biologist, will talk about the meadow and the biodiversity of the garden. They will also tell us a bit about the trees and will give a brief résumé of the garden plants and features.

11 November

STONE CURLEWS AND BIRDS OF BRECKLAND

If anyone knows his Breckland birds it's **Paul Holness**. He's been watching and working with them for a very long time.

9 December

A VISIT TO KAZAKHSTAN AND SOUTHERN SIBERIA

One of Cambridgeshire's leading birders, **Colin Kirkland** opens up in photographs this previously enigmatic, but exciting in wildlife terms, part of Central Asia.

10 February

BRITAIN'S HIDDEN MARINE LIFE

We often hear about the sealife in faraway oceans, but what about closer to home?
Frances Dipper shows us what we have around our own shores.

10 March

DRAGONFLIES

Henry Curry (British Dragonfly Society) has photographed dragonflies all over UK and beyond. The world's most historic and magnificent insect family is truly wonderful.

14 April

EXPLORING ICELAND

Steve Magennis loves the landscape and wildlife of this magical island of fire and ice. Join him. Preceded by a short AGM.

12 May

This talk is not yet confirmed – but there will be one.

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We shall act on any information provided by readers to rectify the situation.*