

# HADDENHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SUMMER 2019

The Committee for 2018/19 is:

Barclay Arnott	740500
Ann Biggs	740810
John Burgess	749441
Sheila Dickerson	749443
Susan Everitt, Treas.	740352
Elver Langley	740583
Wendy Lanman	741138
Caroline Lee	361678
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](mailto:hadconsoc@gmail.com)

Send articles or photos for the newsletter to Sally on [hadconsoc@gmail.com](mailto:hadconsoc@gmail.com)

HCS website:  
[www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk](http://www.hcs.tinaboneuk.co.uk)

## Membership information

Subscription rates

1 Jan to 31 Dec 2019

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.

## Encounters with Butterflies in the Haddenham Parish

*Contributed by Simon Stirrup*

Our parish supports a surprising number of butterfly species, despite having none of the classic butterfly habitats. This article includes a few personal vignettes to celebrate some of our local species.

Nothing signals the ending of winter and the promise of spring quite like the sight of the first male Brimstone in the garden – an unexpected splash of lemon yellow. They hibernate as an adult and can emerge as early as February in favourable weather. As the days lengthen, the



© Simon Stirrup

*Brown Argus.* © Simon Stirrup

gradual appearance of Small Tortoiseshells, Commas, Peacocks and Orange Tips in March and April confirm that spring has arrived.

In early May, a walk along the New Cut Drain, near Aldreth, is always a delight. The special butterflies flying at this time are small and locally distributed along the bank but well worth seeking out. Small Heath, Common Blue and Small Copper are the more familiar species. My favourite is the unobtrusive Brown Argus which occurs in small colonies. In flight it flickers silver, but when perched it is a striking, neat butterfly with deep brown wings, orange spots and a crisp white border on the forewings and hindwings. The species is double-brooded and sometimes butterflies from the second brood visit our gardens in August.

Late June and early July is Hairstreak time. We have two species of these exquisite butterflies in the parish. Fairchild's Meadow is a good place to see the usually elusive White-letter Hairstreak when individuals descend from high up in the Elm trees to nectar and fidget on bramble flowers. Despite being very approachable they are easily overlooked. Given a reasonable view the letter 'W' on the underside of the hindwing, which gives the species its common and scientific names, is easily visible. Our second species of Hairstreak is the Purple Hairstreak. A pair of binoculars is necessary to see them properly as they flutter high up in the canopy of an Oak and rarely descend. I have seen them a couple of times on the edge of Aldreth, but they are probably widespread in the parish.

August provides one of the butterfly highlights in our garden when native Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells are joined by striking Red Admirals (*below*). Red Admirals are a migrant species and numbers vary from year to year. In some years, including this one, the pastel orange colour of Painted Ladies become a common sight. The Painted Lady is a spectacular long distant migrant and originates in North Africa. Migrant day-time moths also occur, including the common Silver Y and the increasingly frequent and extraordinary Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

In late autumn and throughout the winter, we regularly find Small Tortoiseshells around the cottage; perhaps hibernating in the folds of a curtain or fluttering against a window on a sunny day. They are a welcome reminder of warmer days to come.

## Summer Thoughts from the Gallery Garden

*Contributed by Ann Biggs*

August is a savage month. Down in the pond, a dragon hunts. Ever hungry, any creature he encounters is prey! Tadpoles, beetles and damselfly larva all fall to his trap-like jaws.

Above the water, his sire, a fearsome being, defends his territory from all comers, even outfacing a bold child who dares the eye of the dragon.

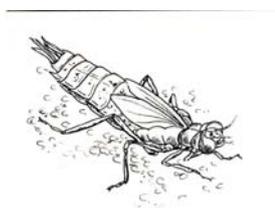
As temperatures rise, visitors to the Gallery lounge in the shade, sipping cool drinks and licking ice creams, even the bold child is still. But return later, part the velvet curtains of night and new players take the stage. Dark shadows flit beneath the trees. Drawn to a hatching of moths, mouselike Pipistrelle fiercely snatch the hapless newborns, crunching them swiftly on the wing. Lit by a risen moon, a pair of Tawnies join the hunt, high above the bats, to catch the fleeing moths.

On a lighter note our café still welcomes visitors Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4.30pm and Sunday 12 noon to 4.30pm.

Changes abound in the Gallery itself. Our manager Alan has flown to a dream job in pastures new. In August, Caroline Cawley from the Babylon Gallery, Ely, took over and Karen joined us in a part-time capacity to welcome you when you visit the Gallery. New artists, Deborah, Tim and Anissia move into Studio 4 as Kim and Pauline leave after 20 years with us.

Finally, volunteers are needed in late autumn when the pond will have a major overhaul. Talk to the Gallery staff if you would like to help.

But watch out for the Dragons.



## HCS now has its own Facebook Group!

*Contributed by Caroline Lee*

The group was set up with the aim of providing a platform for all residents to post photos and share sightings of wildlife in Haddenham and Aldreth, and to find out about activities and talks organised by HCS and other associated wildlife organisations in the Ely/East Cambs area. Membership is not restricted to HCS members, but of course we hope that people who use the Facebook group will decide to join, as we can now reach a wider and more diverse audience.

The group was created at the end of July and already has more than 60 members, many of whom have posted some great photos, including lovely dragonflies, unusual moths and weird bugs!

All the 2019-20 winter talks are listed on the calendar, including our special Christmas talk with Mike Dilger in memory of Paul Mason.

It's really easy to sign up to Facebook (all you need is your email address), then just search 'Haddenham Conservation Society' and start posting! The more we use it to share photos and sightings, comment or ask questions, the better a resource it will be.

Huge thanks to Rachel Burgess and Tracey Branson for helping me set up the group.



Swift approaching nest box © Judith Wakelam

## Swifts 2019

Contributed by Jake Allsop

First, a word about the season. A lot of birds ran into bad weather on return migration (e.g. 5,000 found dead in south Italy, brought down by a storm), which caused some delay in the arrival of our birds. But, in the end, breeding numbers were only slightly down in the sites we monitor, for example, St Mary's Church and the Maltings in Ely. And it was still possible to see a swirling flock of 20 or more in Haddenham High Street on some summer evenings.

I know of about 45 nest sites in the village. Some are 'natural' sites (a crevice behind a soffit or a space under a tile), but most will be nest boxes (both internal and external) put up by Swift enthusiasts.

In most cases, we can say at the very least that Swifts have shown interest. 'Showing interest' may be simply flying close to the box or banging against it, especially if you are playing attraction calls. Or, if you are lucky, you might have one or more birds actually entering the box, sometimes flying out again immediately, sometimes staying inside for longer.

But how do you know that Swifts have actually *bred*? If you have installed a camera, or an acrylic back to the nest chamber, you know what's happening in your boxes. Otherwise, proving breeding can be difficult. If you see heads peering out of the box from mid-July on, those will be chicks getting ready to fledge. The next best clue is if you see birds returning to the box at regular intervals, suggesting adults feeding young. It's a clincher if you can see the pale throat patch bulging with a bolus of insects. There is one other clue, though it's not 100% reliable. Swifts make very little mess, but there is usually a trace of droppings on the ground below the nest if birds have bred.

They have gone now for another year, so maybe this is the time to think about providing nesting accommodation on your property to welcome them next spring. If so, and you need help or advice on Swift nest boxing, get in touch with me ([jakeallsop2010@gmail.com](mailto:jakeallsop2010@gmail.com)), or visit our website at [actionforswifts.blogspot.com](http://actionforswifts.blogspot.com).

---

**Amnesty International Ely Group's** annual lecture on 6 October at 6.30pm in Ely Cathedral is entitled 'Conservation and Human Rights – Friends or Foes?' and will be given by John Burton, founder of the World Land Trust <https://www.worldlandtrust.org>.



*From an unpromising start...*



*...signs of a bumper crop*



*Multiple stems*



*Unmistakeably a Bee Orchid*

## Bee Orchid Bounty

*Contributed by Barbara Grafton*

In the Spring 2019 issue I wrote that we had discovered about 20 Bee Orchids in a corner of Feast's Green in mid-April. Well, we eventually had many more than that. Local photographer Simon Stirrup counted 120 flower stems in June, an embarrassment of riches. From the unpromising start of tatty-looking rosettes of leaves, the flowering plants were gorgeous. Evidently the poor and disturbed soil in the corner of the Green suits them very well, and there must be a healthy underground colony of the appropriate mycorrhiza fungus upon which their seeds rely for germination.

Unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding about the timing of the tidying of that corner of Feast's Green. The entire Bee Orchid patch was strimmed on 2 July, far too early for any of the flowers to have set seed.

Individual Bee Orchid capsules produce between 6,000 and 10,000 minute, spore-like seeds. We can only hope that sufficient numbers were dispersed from the Bee Orchids growing safely in two neighbouring gardens to ensure Feast's Green enjoys further spectacular displays in the coming years. Maybe, even now, germinated seeds from previous years are waiting in darkness to delight us with their distinctive rosette leaves next April.



*Late June.....*



*...and still more flowers to come*



*Empty seed heads from a neighbouring garden in early August*

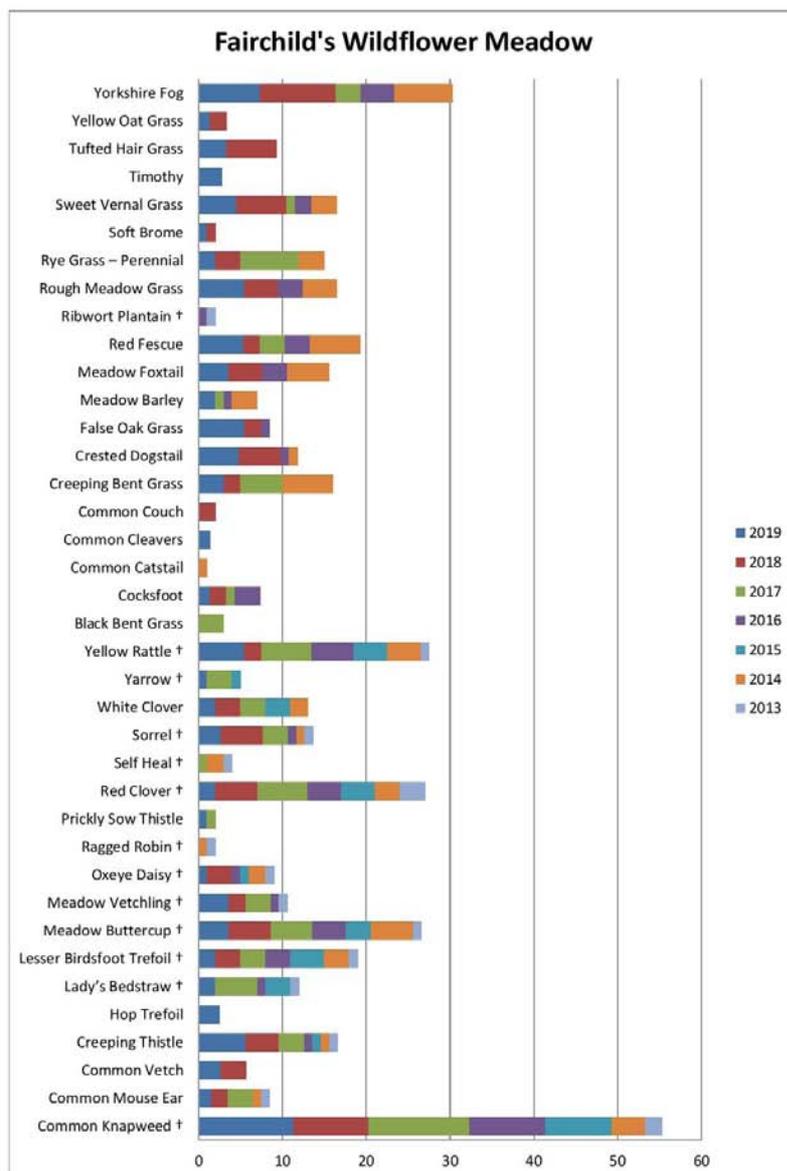
*All images © Barbara J. Grafton, 2019*

## Can You Have Too Much of a Good (or Bad) Thing?

Contributed by Jez Reeve

These are the results of seven years of monitoring the wildflower meadow around mid to late June each year. The † symbol indicates species that have been sown and/or re-sown in the meadows during those six years. (Crowslip, Saxifrage and Betony were also sown, but Crowslips are only recorded in spring and Pepper Saxifrage has only been rarely recorded; Betony has never been recorded). What is clear from the table is that Common Knapweed really likes the soil and the aspect of the meadows; this is true in all parts of the meadow. Each Knapweed plant, even without flowers, takes up the space of a large dinner plate. Whilst this is not an issue in itself, it does mean that smaller leaved wildflowers have less space to find the light and flourish. Equally the Creeping Thistle has gone from a mild problem to one that is increasing and spread throughout the meadow. Yellow Rattle, Red Clover and Meadow Buttercup are doing well, but the smaller leaved wildflowers, like Ragged Robin and Selfheal are struggling.

A radical test programme of spraying has been instituted this year to test whether Thistlex (trade name of a thistle herbicide for use in hay meadows) can help with reducing the dominance of Creeping Thistle and Knapweed. Three strips at the top, middle and towards the bottom (north) of the field and the edges of the field that join up these strips have been sprayed. Next year an early cut of the field will take place in early spring and then again in late August. This will complete the trial. Obviously, we will be recording the wildflowers in both the sprayed and unsprayed sections of the meadow and reporting back to you.



## A Mostly Warm Summer

Early summer got off to a good start and, for the first time in a few years, Cuckoos were heard in Aldreth and near the Old Burial Ground. Goldcrests, our smallest bird, decided to nest in Barbara York's Duck Lane garden – what a treat for her! The weather improved with Sparrows, Starlings and Blackbirds producing young, but then very heavy rain, making it difficult for parent birds to feed young. Amazingly, they all seemed to survive into the warm settled weather of June. There was an influx of Painted Lady butterflies into the country, with the first reported here in mid-June. They laid eggs and offspring emerged in mid-July in gardens. A good year all round for Butterflies and Dragonflies.

Hummingbird Hawkmoths were seen in good numbers too, feeding on the Buddleia amongst others. Also, many bees of all kinds seem to have done well.

3 May Fairchild's Meadow: 1 Turtle Dove. LP Hobby hunting on the edge of Aldreth. SS

31 May Aldreth: Cuckoo heard for the first time in about three years. JB

16 June 120+ Bee Orchids in West End and a single spike in Robert Norman's orchard. SS

22 June Warm sunny walk round Fairchild's Meadow: Turtle Dove heard purring, Blackcaps, Swifts, House Martins, Blackbirds with young, Robin and Dunnock. Butterflies: Speckled Wood, Large White, Meadow Brown, Skipper, faded Painted Lady, Small Heath, and many small Bumblebees, Honeybees and Hoverflies. S&ID

30 June Cinnabar Moth in the outside plant area by the doors of Haddenham Garden Centre. RK

9 July Fairchild's Meadow: 3 White-letter Hairstreak butterflies, Hornet Hoverfly and a singing Turtle Dove, which display flighted over the meadow. SS

19 August Aldreth garden: 2 Painted Lady, 1 Hummingbird Hawkmoth. North Fen: 1 male Marsh Harrier. Dam Bank Drove: 2 Herring Gull with a flock of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Long Drove: 6 Gadwell. SS

24 August Trip around the droves this morning, hot and sunny even at 9.00am! Nine Acre Wood area: 1 Herring Gull, 1 Whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail and 2 Moorhen. Dambank: 3 Linnet, 50+ Goldfinch, 2 Kestrel and 2 Swan (by bridge). Long Drove: 200+ Goldfinch, 2

Kestrel. Back Drove: Up to 10 Chaffinch, small flock Long Tailed Tits, Blue Tit, Green Woodpecker and Robin, 1 Field Vole, many small white butterflies, Red Admiral and 1 Painted Lady. Interesting that two lots of Kestrels were with two flocks of Goldfinch that didn't seem bothered by them! S&ID

26 August Flat Bridge: 3 Little Grebe, 3+ Heron, 5+ Cormorant, 1 Tufted Duck, 40 Mallard, 10 Gadwall, 1 Teal, 10 Mute Swan, 1 Marsh Harrier, 1 Buzzard, 1 Green Sandpiper, 1 Lapwing, 1 or 2 Golden Plover, 1 Snipe, 1 Kingfisher heard, 5 Yellow Wagtail, 1 Willow Warbler, several Whitethroat, 6 Corn Bunting. Nine Acre Wood: 1 Red Kite, 4+ Long-winged Conehead (*below*). SS



After seeming to miss all the thunderstorms this summer, we are now into a very dry spell, good for harvesting. The last Sparrow and Goldfinch fledglings are doing well. Barbara York spotted an Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar on her Rosebay Willowherb. Butterflies are still on the wing, as are the bees, with nectar-rich flowers such as Sedum and Michaelmas Daisies to feed on. So, we say goodbye to summer and look forward to autumn (and some rain).

## News from Guppy's Pond

Contributed by Wendy Lanman

We had an extraordinary visitor on 23 August – an Osprey! Jackie Robinson saw a huge raptor-type bird dive into the water very close to her garden, and was beside herself with excitement when she realised what it was. Both Charley and Karen Stather saw it too and confirmed that it really was an Osprey. Although Jackie phoned me immediately and then rushed round to show me where it was, the Osprey had already left and I just stood there, thoroughly disappointed.

The Great-crested Grebes had two chicks, which disappeared only a few weeks later; the Coots kept

one of their four chicks and the Moorhens still have two of their four, one of which has a severely damaged leg.

The Kingfishers appear regularly and, if they behave as they usually do, they will appear on cue every time a boat goes out on Boating Day to the delight of the passengers.

There seems to be a greatly expanding population of squirrels this year, and it's lots of fun to watch them gather cobnuts off our neighbour's tree and plant them in our lawn, borders and flower pots. Although we smile now, will we still be smiling when they start growing? On average, I think the fun of watching will win.

## Sustainable Haddenham

Contributed by Sarah Tickle

Watching David Attenborough's *Blue Planet* shocked many of us. The progress made by our Sustainable Haddenham Group, founded in May, shows how quickly we can start to turn things around.

Sustainable Haddenham is for those in the Haddenham and Aldreth community who care about our environment and wish to live more sustainably.

The Sustainable Haddenham Facebook group, sharing updates, news and ideas, is already over 150 members strong and our stand at the beer festival generated much interest. We now have links across the Ely district with other eco groups. Helen Marriott attended the Parish Council meeting in June, where the group was adopted and assigned Tracey Scott as responsible councillor.

A Terracycle collection point has been installed in the Arkenstall Centre carpark. Terracycle is an innovative recycling scheme that reuses, upcycles or recycles to avoid landfill. The streams being collected are KP snack packets (crisps, popcorn and nut brands), Pringle tubes, all brands of baby food pouches and lids, Ella's kitchen pouches and snack packets and any brand toothbrushes, tubes and packaging. Proceeds will go to local charities. Please make contact if you would like more details.

Our Who Gives a Crap Eco Friendly Toilet Roll buying group (on Facebook) proved extremely popular – 26 households took part and we ordered 33 boxes (1,584 rolls). The rolls are 100% recycled, contain no plastic, wrapped in paper and 50% of profits go to building toilets in third world countries. Buying in bulk is much cheaper than the supermarket – please let us know if you would like to join or try a roll – our next order will be in November.

Haddenham Litter Pickers (on Facebook), run by Louise Barnes, continues to meet regularly – collecting over 25 bags of rubbish. New members report it surprisingly addictive. ECDC have donated 10 sets of equipment for community use – please contact us if you would like to borrow them. Further

dates this year will be 20 October and 12 November, meeting 10.30-11am at the rec car park.

We have many ideas for future initiatives including:

- walk to school campaign
- working with skaters to tackle litter and recycling at the skatepark
- wildflower verges
- tree planting
- working with local businesses, groups and events to help them become more sustainable and reduce plastic use
- freecycle and resource sharing
- lift share scheme
- promoting real nappies
- more buying groups for sustainable products
- community visit to the Amey recycling centre
- a community repair café and workshop

Everyone is welcome to join our group or make contact. We really want to make this a community effort and appreciate all ideas and support.

Keep up to date via *Village Voice*, Facebook, email to [sustainablehaddenham@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablehaddenham@gmail.com), contacting Helen on 01353 741546 or via the parish council – c/o Clerk to the Parish, 8 Aldreth Road, Haddenham CB6 3UB.





## 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 pm.  
Members free. Non-members are very welcome for a nominal £2.50 fee.  
All are welcome to stay for a free drink and a chat after each talk.

8 October

### **HEDGEHOGS IN YOUR GARDEN**

**Paul Wyer** of the Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust tell us all about our prickly friends.

12 November

### **A YEAR AT HOLME DUNES RESERVE**

**Gary Hibberd**, reserve warden, tells us what there is to see on this North Norfolk coastal area.

17 December

### **MEMORIAL TO PAUL MASON**

**Mike Dilger**, celebrity speaker (*The One Show*) and naturalist, together with memories of Paul from friends. Wine and soft drinks with festive food. £5.00. Time 7.30pm.  
*Note: this replaces our regular December talk.*

11 February

### **STANDING UP FOR TREES**

**Peter Vince** from the Woodland Trust tells us all about our native trees and how they are faring.

10 March

### **PUFFINS IN SIMMERING SEAS**

**Euan Dunn** discusses the threat to seabirds and their food supply.

14 April

### **THE BIODIVERSITY OF KINGS DYKE NATURE RESERVE**

**Philip Parker** tells us how this area changed from a clay pit to a reserve benefitting nature and the local community at Whittlesey.

12 May

### **BIRD LIFE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NENE WASHES**

With **Charlie Kitchen**, the site manager.