

HADDENHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SUMMER 2020

The Committee for 2019/20 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

Membership information

Subscription rates

1 Jan to 31 Dec 2020

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.

Front Window

Contributed by Babs York

My lockdown life has mainly consisted of rehabilitating bats. From April to August I hardly left the house and it had nothing to do with government restrictions. I love helping injured bats but sometimes I need a few minutes' break. When I have a break, I sit in the lounge with a cuppa, which is almost the only room without bats in it. (See *Newsletter Vol 31 No 3 Summer 2016 for Bab's account of her work.*)

In the first week in July I noticed that a Song Thrush was singing its beautiful song for long periods from my neighbours' roof. I'd already seen two broods using the garden, so I wondered whether the same pair was planning another family? At this point I'm feeding abandoned



baby bats around the clock and I'm somewhat sleep-deprived. Well, that's my excuse for failing to notice that a nest was being built less than a metre from my front window. I only noticed the nest because a bright piece of pale fabric had been built into it. This caught my eye, and only then did I see there was a Song Thrush on a nest. The fact that I was regularly sat only a metre or so away didn't seem to bother them at all. The placing of the nest was rather clever; tucked into a thick shrub, it even had some thick leaves which made a neat umbrella, protecting the sitter from a couple of heavy downpours. The nest couldn't be seen from anywhere apart from my front window. In the past few years this bush – a weigelia – has had nests of Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Dunnock and Goldfinch, but none had constructed the container for their precious bundles so carefully.

The eggs hatched on 26 July and from the beginning I saw only four chicks. On one very hot day when they were still quite small, I was very concerned about them – two were gasping and had laid themselves over the edge of the nest. I think I knew just how they felt!

The parents hardly visited the nest that day and I feared the worst. But the following day it was all systems go and both parents kept the chicks well fed. On 7 August two chicks started to wander and were leaving the back of the nest and sitting in the bush; 'branching' as it's sometimes called. Two days later they had all gone.

All their comings and goings were such a joy in a pretty challenging time.



*Willow Emerald
Damselfly.*
Photo © Simon Stirrup

© Simon Stirrup

Dragons and Damsels

Contributed by Simon Stirrup

September has arrived, bringing shorter days and a chill to the air. It is the tail end of the dragonfly flight season with only *Migrant Hawker* and *Common Darter* still on the wing. This seems an appropriate time to review my casual sightings of dragonflies and damselflies from around Aldreth in the past decade. I enjoy Odonata, but I am no expert; don't be fooled by my inclusion of the scientific name for the dragonfly and damselfly family. I am sure that more knowledgeable Society members could add greatly to this personal account.

Our decision to create a wildlife pond in our garden has been a great success. It has been attractive for Odonata and provided opportunities to admire and photograph the adult insects at close range. Their colours and aerial prowess are a wonderful sight and add greatly to our enjoyment of the garden. The numbers and range of species have changed as the pond has matured and the growth of native water lilies has reduced the area of open water. The exclusion of fish from the pond has been beneficial and dragonfly nymphs are regularly seen when observing the world below the surface. They are difficult to identify but I have tentatively identified *Broad-bodied Chaser* nymphs.

Obviously, the airborne adult stage of Odonata lasts only a matter of weeks with most of the life cycle being aquatic. From memory, I have observed egg laying in the pond, over the

years, by *Emperor*, *Southern Hawker*, *Four-spotted Chaser*, *Broad-bodied Chaser*, *Ruddy Darter*, *Common Darter*, *Azure Damselfly*, *Blue-tailed Damselfly* and *Large Red Damselfly*. The exuviae (larval cases) left by emerging adults can sometimes be seen on emergent vegetation.

*Migrant Hawk*ers are common over the garden during the summer and early autumn and often fly late into the evening. We have a few sightings of *Brown Hawker*, *Emerald Damselfly* and *Black-tailed Skimmer* most years.

Away from the garden, the many ditches on the fen and the Old West River provide attractive habitats for Odonata. Additional species seen in these areas include *Hairy Dragonfly*, *Scarce Chaser*, *Common Blue Damselfly*, *Small Red-eyed Damselfly*, *Willow Emerald Damselfly* and *Banded Demoiselle*. I cannot remember having seen Red-eyed Damselfly, but I am sure that they occur. A walk along the banks of the Old West in summer can be impressive with *Emperor*, *Brown Hawker*, *Migrant Hawker*, *Four-spotted Chaser*, *Ruddy Darter* and *Common Darter* being much in evidence.

The impact of global warming is evident in this list of local Odonata, with both *Small Red-eyed Damselfly* and *Willow Emerald* being comparatively recent colonisers. Lesser Emperor and Southern Migrant Hawker are colonising Cambridgeshire and could potentially occur locally and are worth watching out for. Finally, White-legged Damselfly occurs along the River Great Ouse at Over and might just occur.

I hope that this short article will help generate an interest in our local Odonata and encourage people to look out for flying dragons and damsels next summer.

Close Encounter of the Moth Kind

Contributed by Barbara Grafton

Once upon a time I suffered from mottephobia, a fear of moths, which is a sub-set of lepidopterophobia, the fear of both butterflies and moths. Butterflies never frightened me, but even a micro moth in a room would send me into a panic. I owe this not uncommon phobia to my Mum. As a child, the fluttering sensation of a large moth put down her back by one of her sisters scared her so much she became phobic, subsequently passing on her mottephobia to me.

I worked hard to overcome it, as screaming at the sight of a clothes moth is not a good look. Now I am a moth fan as I think they are exquisite, little-understood and little-appreciated. Incredibly, over 2,500 moth species have been recorded in the British Isles (compared to just 57 resident and two regular migrant species of butterfly), so they deserve a lot more attention.

I had the opportunity to get up close to a moth earlier this year. On 11 July, a very handsome striped caterpillar about 4 cm long and patterned with longitudinal light brown, mid brown and yellow wavy lines and dark and orange spots, fell from a bunch of supermarket-bought carnations as I was arranging them in a vase. It turned out to be a Scarce Bordered Straw (*Helicoverpa armigera*). That made it a member of the Noctuidae, the largest and most dominant family of the Lepidoptera with around 10,000 known species.



Larvae. Photo Gyorgy Csoka, Hungary Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org / CC BY 3.0 US

In the UK, it is a rare migrant usually found in coastal areas (including Dungeness in Kent, and Swanage and Portland in Dorset), as the adults can cross the Channel in favourable conditions. It can also, as in this case, evade quarantine measures as a larva and stow away in flowers imported from Africa and elsewhere where it is common.

It is also one of, if not the, most damaging agricultural insect pests in the world, as shown by just a few of its common names: cotton bollworm, tomato fruit worm, gram pod borer, tobacco budworm, and corn earworm. As it eats such a wide variety of foods, and is resistant to many insecticides, it causes billions of pounds' worth of global damage annually.

This presented me with a dilemma: dispose of it, or keep it captive and see what emerged.

Curiosity got the better of me, so I lined a large Kilner jar with kitchen roll (for easy cleaning), stocked it with a fresh carnation and a couple of long twigs, and waited. My observations were:

- The larva was likely to be in its final (6th) instar (developmental stage as a larva) due to its size and patterning
- It spent at least 75% of its time eating, usually with its yellow head buried deep inside the flower heads, leaving sizeable holes
- Its diet of pink flowers produced pale pink frass (excrement)
- It voraciously ate honeysuckle flowers, tomatoes and rose leaves, as well as carnations
- Over the weekend of 18 and 19 July it started to reduce its feeding time, a sign of the pupation stage beginning. I moved it to a container with a layer of moss over compost about 8 cm deep
- On 20 July, it had ceased to eat and spent much of the day circling the container at speed, then vanished.

I decided not to disturb it at all, even though I would have liked to see the silk pupa and how deep it was buried.

The moth emerged on 4 August, two weeks after it had gone underground to pupate (it takes between 10 to 16 days and is temperature-dependent). When I saw it, it had already pumped fluid from its abdomen into its wings to expand them. It was a female, and understated but pretty with pale brown forewings (the upper ones when folded) with a kidney-or-comma-shaped spot in the middle and a darker band on the outer third. The hindwings (underneath) were a lighter greyish-brown with a pale patch in the dark margin. It had a large fluffy cape at the back of its head, but most striking were its very large, bulbous, lime-green compound eyes. Extended, the wings spanned almost 3.8 cm. The body was stout and tapering and the entire moth was 1.7 cm long.

I found the empty cocoon, a smooth, semi-transparent, reddish-brown shell about 1.7 cm long, segmented with parallel bands at the rear end. The spiracles (breathing holes) were clearly visible along the sides.

I provided overripe strawberries as a food source, and saw it feeding on several occasions. As it is non-native and such a damaging pest, I could not legally release it, so I'm sorry to say it had no opportunity to



fly free even though it was very unlikely to find a mate. In the wild, they live for ten days or so and the females will lay about 1,000 eggs on a suitable food source. The entire life cycle can take just four weeks.



I encourage everyone to take more notice of moths. Not only are many extremely beautiful, rivalling and even outshining some butterflies, but they are vital pollinators. Their hairy underbellies are highly effective at collecting pollen, and they fly further distances than bees when foraging, so help to improve genetic diversity in plant communities. They are also a valuable food source for wasps, beetles, earwigs, spiders, amphibians, lizards, small mammals (especially bats), and birds including threatened species such as Grey Partridge and Stone Curlew.

It's not expensive or difficult to go mothing and, once you start looking, you will be astonished at how many you can find in a garden or local park.

I very much enjoyed keeping the moth and observing its behaviour, but I was also reminded of how incredible metamorphosis is in lepidopterans. That a caterpillar can spin a silken cocoon for itself in an artfully-constructed underground chamber, and within a fortnight break down, re-organise and transform itself into a winged creature of huge complexity, is astonishing and humbling. I saw a tweet from Richard Osman on 3 October that sums it up: 'I don't think we discuss enough how ABSOLUTELY INSANE it is that caterpillars turn into butterflies [and moths]. This should literally be the leading story on the news every single night'.

I wish you productive and enjoyable mothing!



Luna Moth.

Mystery Migrant

John and Sarah Shippey

We have a flowering cherry tree at the back of the house. It has a few leaves growing straight from the trunk near the bottom. Sarah glanced at it from inside the house and thought that there was a particularly large, pale green leaf about 45 cm from the ground. She went to look and found that it was, in fact, a Luna Moth (*Actias Luna*).

It was quite windy, so we put the moth in a container and brought it inside to have a better look and photograph it. We also did a bit of online research, finding that it is a North American native species with an adult lifespan of around only seven

days as it has only vestigial mouth parts and no digestive system. Occasional vagrants have been found in Europe, but it seemed in such good condition that we thought it must have emerged here. We put it back outside in an open, sheltered container, but it made no attempt to fly off and ultimately died.

As it was such an unusual find, I emailed the information, with a photo, to the county moth recorder (who happens to live in Ely), but received no response. I then telephoned Butterfly Conservation – which runs the National Moth Recording Scheme – who were interested, thinking that probably the moth had been brought into the country at some stage in its lifecycle on some type of imported goods, and I was told that someone would call me back. But sadly, no-one did. So, we now have a very beautiful, but unfortunately unrecorded, Luna Moth.



Hummingbird Hawk-moth. Photo Charles J Sharp / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

Wonderful Visitor

Contributed by Jez Reeve

I always love watching the *Verbena bonariensis* at this time of year, especially after a long sunny afternoon. Bees of all sorts visit as the heat is slowly leaving the garden and bob along from flower head to purple flower to get the sweet nectar. But what is this I see before me? As I approach to get a closer look the orangey wings are in a whirr, keeping the insect afloat, like a hummingbird. It has a chequered furry tail, which looks almost like it is made of feathers. What am I looking at? Then I see the inch-long proboscis dipping into each tiny flower and moving onto the *Escallonia* Red Claw that is also in flower today. What a treat!

I have been watching the Hummingbird Hawk-moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*). Originally from the South of France and North Africa, but now here, taking advantage of our changing weather and hotter summer weather. Apparently, its wings beat at 70-80 times per second. It was first described by Carl Linnaeus in his 10th edition *Systema Natura* in 1758. I wonder if he was as delighted as me to see such a colourful clever nectar-collector?

Wildlife in Lockdown

Contributed by Martha How

Covid has meant more time at home, more time watching wildlife in the garden.... which is no bad thing. A previously rare visitor to our garden in Hillrow, the Coal Tit has been present throughout the last six months. March was a bonanza month for us, our huge cherry tree reached full bloom on 29 March and all our birds were busy nest building. We saw a Redwing early in the month and a Brimstone butterfly late on. The full range of garden butterflies enjoyed the April sunshine, including our first Comma for the year. May brought the first Swifts and Swallows, we were thrilled to see our little Goldcrest flitting about the conifers and a rare and beautiful treat, a pair of Bullfinch in our apple tree.

Our most spectacular sight seared across the garden in May, a Sparrowhawk smash and grab assault on a Starling pecking at seeds which had fallen from the feeders. The surprise, speed and brutality of it took our breath away. Late May brought Great Tits and Blue Tits fledging, we watched anxiously but the Sparrowhawk, Magpie and Jays took none as far as we are aware. June brought us Chiffchaff and Blackcap and lurking in



the shadows by our shed, a stunning Cinnabar Moth.

Much of July-August was spent staring skywards at the aerial masters, Swifts and Swallows. One summer day I spotted a small brown mammal hoovering up seeds and maybe worms from under our feeders – a Pygmy Shrew. We watched him for an hour, busy foraging, most industrious and very entertaining. September, as is often the case, has been a much quieter month and at the time of writing, we have not seen two of our usual visitors – Blackbirds or House Sparrows. All the peaks and troughs, dramas and life-stories in a village garden during Covid.

Swift Nest Sites in Memory of Paul Mason

When Mark Hugo, the Chairman of the Haddenham Community Land Trust (HCLT) discussed the plans to build affordable homes for Haddenham people with the Conservation Society in 2017-18 Paul Mason said he would support the project on the condition that Swift nest sites would be erected on Trust-owned properties.

Sadly, Paul has gone but the HCLT are fulfilling this wish – 24 swift bricks made by Dick Newell from Action for Swifts were delivered recently. They will be installed in the upper storeys of suitable Trust-owned properties, i.e. not bungalows or those finished with cladding. The cost of the bricks was funded by one of the Trustees. Hopefully we will see Swifts nesting there in future years. The HCLT would like to put up a plaque to commemorate Paul in one of the green spaces and will consult the Conservation Society about this next year.

Strange Thoughts from the Gallery Garden

Contributed by Ann Biggs

As lockdown brings an eerie silence to village streets, Apollo warms the earth to summer but revels in sounds of spring. I take my breaks alone, listening to Chiffchaff and Blackcap, a Cuckoo calling from distant trees, and scolded by a peevish squirrel who wants the Garden for herself.

Wings caress petals of early flowers as Red Admiral and a sun-yellow Brimstone whisper 'summer is here' to all who listen, dancing through sunlit grass and dappled shadows, cast by a growth of new leaves. A Mallard couple claim our new pond, sleeping away tranquil hours, waking only to enjoy each other in the heat of passion.

May brings Swifts fresh from a Saharan 'winter', scything the high cirrus, conversing with old friends while I watch a mated pair consummate their love.

Meanwhile Haddenham Arts Centre is open for you to sample our tea rooms, meet our studio artists and marvel at 'Storm Warning', our new exhibition of iconic images from Storm Thorgerson and Storm Studios, which shows until 31 October.

Gemma is providing amazing home baked cakes, scones and light lunches for you to sample, either in the tea rooms or in the marquee.

Workshops restart (with social distancing) and, for Christmas, two Saturday 'Handmade at Haddenham' events on 7 and 28 November for you to buy original gifts for friends and relations. All details on www.haddenhamartscentre.org.uk.

As our Garden rings to the sound of human voices once more, I fear I may miss the solitude of 'lockdown' where the company of wild creatures brought calmness to a world in turmoil.

Fairchild's Meadow – 2019 Experiment and 2020 Count

Contributed by Jez Reeve

According to the monitoring report done by Martin Baker (from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust) in 2018 the meadow restoration project of the eastmost field (started in 2003) 'has been a success, and after 15 years the pattern of species distribution is beginning to settle down.' (See *Newsletter Vol 33 No 3 Summer 2018*).

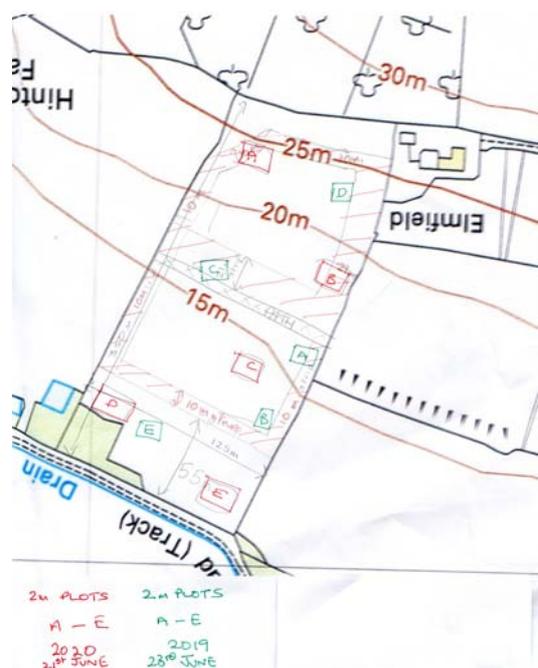
The results of the 2019 annual wildflower and grasses count in the meadow restoration field, called the Wildflower Meadow, showed that Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) was still dominant and that thistles were becoming a nuisance in some areas. After much discussion the Fairchild's Meadow Working Group agreed to sample spraying with Thistlex of strips around the field and across the middle in September 2019 as an experiment to test the resilience of the knapweed and thistles. (See *Newsletter Vol 34 No 3 Summer 2019*). The results would only be realised when the 2020 annual count could take place.

2020 results

In early April Cowslips were widespread throughout the field, including in sprayed areas. In May, when the working group visited, Lady's Bedstraw, Cowslips, Rattle, Ragged Robin and Meadow Buttercup were observed coming through the grass in sprayed areas. As June dawned it was clear that the knapweed was not in evidence in the sprayed areas. Although the five 2-m squares that are randomly selected to do the annual recording do not directly overlap, a comparison of those with nearby locations in and outside the sprayed areas serve to illustrate the impact of the spraying regime.

Overall the incidence of different species observed on 21 June 2020 in the five squares was down by 26%. In the two sets of squares that gave results for unsprayed areas in 2019, which had been sprayed in 2020, species observed were down by -48% (2019 C, 2020 B) and -30% (2019 D, 2020 A). Neither Black Knapweed nor Creeping Thistle were present in either of the sprayed squares A and B in 2020, neither was Common Mouse Ear, Common Vetch, False Oat Grass, Timothy and Yellow Oat Grass. Hop Trefoil, Meadow Buttercup and Sorrel had been reduced in numbers. In the same squares Meadow Vetchling continued to be rare, but Red and White Clovers and Yellow Rattle had increased slightly. Creeping Bent Grass had increased in dominance and Yorkshire Fog Grass remained strongly in evidence.

In the three other sets of comparative squares, (2019 A & 2020 C, 2019 B & 2020 E, 2019 E & 2020 D) Black Knapweed had increased in the first set, but decreased in the other two. Creeping Thistle was only in evidence in the 2020 D where only one or two individuals were seen. Observations in the three unsprayed areas were up by 16%, 21% in the first two sets and down by 9% in the third.



Two-metre plots for 2019 (green) and 2020 (red) with sprayed areas (hatched)

Conclusions

Without doubt the spraying experiment of 2019 had been successful in completely removing the Black Knapweed and Thistle, but it also appears to have removed Common Mouse Ear, Common Vetch, False Oat Grass, Timothy and Yellow Oat Grass in the two sets of comparative squares. Other species had been reduced as well, although Yellow Rattle disappeared in one area and had been found in the other. Where comparison allowed the difference between two years of unsprayed ground to be recorded, the Black Knapweed had not increased overall, but decreased in two of the three sets. Unsprayed areas generally showed an increase in the number and diversity of species record in 2020.

Change to management regime for 2020-2021

The results of the experimental spraying, as illustrated by the comparison of the counts between the pre- and post-sprayed areas, have led to the decision to further test how quickly the Black Knapweed and other species that were lost in the sprayed areas re-colonise from the unsprayed areas. Therefore, the annual cut of the wildflower meadow has been left as late as possible (mid-late August) to allow plants to seed. This cut will not make a usable hay crop, which normally brings in some money, and there will be a cost for the removal of the bales, but it was agreed that, given that there were funds available, this was the best course of action for this year. Next year the species count will be very interesting and help with understanding how the species in this field respond to this particular management regime.

Badger Cub Rescue

Contributed by Ellie Walliker, SECBG

Badger cubs are born in February and start to emerge from their setts in April and May. This is when badger groups and wildlife rescue centres get high volumes of calls about 'lost' cubs. Cubs are very curious and restless, and it is not uncommon for them to leave their sett during the day to explore. More often than not they are well and will quickly retreat to their sett when disturbed. Only occasionally will the badger be in need of help.

On one of the hottest days this summer Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care was contacted by a concerned member of the public who had spotted a cub lying in the sun. She did exactly the right thing in leaving him undisturbed and contacting experts for help. Due to my involvement with Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care and the South East Cambridgeshire Badger Group, I volunteered to assess the situation.

On my arrival in Little Thetford (at which point the badger had been above ground for over five hours), the cub was slowly walking along the public footpath. He was wobbly and unsteady, a clear sign of dehydration and disorientation. Unfortunately for me, he managed to slip down into a ditch lined with brambles and stinging nettles, just as I reached for him. Unbelievably, considering his warriorlike face markings, it took me (and the lady who first found him) half an hour to locate him again. Despite the heat, I wished I had been wearing long trousers! Once he was secured, we started to look for a sett. The best scenario for any wildlife rescuer is to reunite an animal with its family and avoid taking it into care. Unfortunately no sett was located. Following consultation with the North East Essex Badger Group, it was decided that he would be taken into care and the best course of action decided the following day.

Once set up safely at my house, he gorged on a mixture of wet dog food and scrambled eggs and drank multiple bowls of water. I checked on him throughout the night. He was so tired he slept solidly, curled into a ball with his paws covering his face; very cute. His weight was 1400g, very light for a cub his age. It is possible that during the drought, as food was



scarce, the mother favoured other cubs and he was pushed out. It is also possible that he strayed too far during the night's foraging trip and got lost. It was decided that he should be transferred to a large rescue centre with other cubs so that he could be rehabilitated and released as part of a clan.

Wildlife Aid in Surrey kindly agreed to take him. So, that afternoon, we embarked on the long journey to their hospital. He was whisked straight to their onsite vet and within three days he gained 200g. He integrated well with other cubs and will learn all the skills needed to survive and thrive in the wild. I hope to receive news once he is released. He is the first badger cub rescued by Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care and SECBG, so he is very special.

A thank you to all who aided in this rescue: Cambridgeshire Wildlife Care, SECBG, North East Essex Badger Group, Wildlife Aid, Johnson and Scott Vets and the kind lady who found him. He will not be returned to Cambridgeshire but, once fully ready to be released, will live his life as a wild badger. A fantastic outcome.

Website: www.cambsbadgers.co.uk

Incident at Fairchild's Meadow

Contributed by Sarah Shippey

In July a dog walker and her dog discovered a wasp's nest near the hedge, and the dog was stung. Being stung by wasps or bees is not pleasant, but if you are allergic to stings (like the lady walking the dog) I imagine you carry an EpiPen, cover yourself up, or just keep away from likely places where insects may be, like grass meadows. There was an outcry on the local Facebook page, and the nest was quickly destroyed.

Wasps are valuable pollinators. If you do an internet search on 'Insect declines and why they matter' you need not go far to see the reason that

insects need protection, not destruction. One result brings up the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's recent report, which concludes 'that drastic declines in insect numbers will have far-reaching consequences for wildlife and people, causing knock-on losses of insect-eating birds, bats, fish, whilst costing society millions in lost revenue and broken ecosystems'. Insect decline is causing huge concern worldwide.

The causes of insect decline are habitat loss, chronic exposure to mixtures of pesticides, and climate change. The research is ongoing and makes uncomfortable reading. What is the purpose of Fairchild's Meadow? Was there an alternative solution to the wasp nest problem? And is it possible for dog walking and conservation to co-exist?

A Confusing Summer

The weather has been very mixed this summer, first wet and then very hot – over 34°C at one stage for five to six days, ending with heavy rainstorms and high winds, then back to hot, dry weather. This has resulted in our berry crop being very advanced, starting an early autumn! Blackberries and sloes (sloe gin!) plentiful this year too. We had reports of cuckoos and then young being fed by Sedge Warblers, which is a hopeful sign for the species.

8 July A morning walk around the village produced 1 juvenile Green Woodpecker in the orchard; a Hobby flew past Bedlam Farm and headed in the direction of Nine Acre Wood; a nice pair of Bullfinches along Fen Side to the north-east of there; at least two different Song Thrushes to the east of the orchard. SB

12 July Fairchild's Meadow: Many butterflies including a rare White Letter Hairstreak and Commas, plus Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Peacocks, many small Skippers, a few Ringlets and Dragonflies and a lovely Emperor Dragonfly in our garden SD.

9 August Old West River: Otter spraint on pile of dried weed by river, many Small Red-eyed Damselfly, 2 Willow Emerald Damselfly. I've not seen these 2 species locally before, but I haven't looked for them either! SS

16 August Aldreth Causeway: 2 adult Yellow-legged Gull; Clayton's Bridge: about 6 Golden Plover. SS

23 August Duck Lane: a black Grey Squirrel. SS

31 August Fen Church Bridge: 1 Ringed Plover calling multiple times in flight from direction of the bridge; New Cut Drain to east of Aldreth: Lesser Whitethroat and Willow Warbler; Aldreth Causeway: 1 Stoat, 1 Great Green Bush-cricket singing. SS

6 September Dam Bank Drove: 1 female Marsh Harrier, Giant Puffballs in stubble field; North Fen: 1 Hobby chasing Meadow Pipits. SS

23 September Ewell Fen: First sighting of a winter Wheatear was a treat this morning. SS

Birds and their young all appeared to do well, with Goldfinches still feeding young only the other day. Pigeons have nests on the go most of the year. In these uncertain times, please check your gardens and note *anything* for our records, even if you think 'it's only a few Starlings'. This autumn/winter is going to feel different, but Nature is still out there, so we should enjoy what we have. Put food out now for Hedgehogs, and look forward to welcoming winter visitors to our fields and gardens.



Pygmy Shrew spotted by Martha How.

HCS Facebook

Contributed by Rachel Burgess

Some of the local wildlife sightings reported on the HCS Facebook page from mid-June to the end of August. The Facebook page now has 172 members. Why not follow the page and add some of your local wildlife sightings?

Bee Orchid **15 June** Haddenham. WC
Hummingbird Hawk-moth **18 June** Haddenham. BY
Elephant Hawk & Poplar Moths **26 June** Haddenham. SD
Barn Owl **2 July** Fairchild's Meadow. A&AC
Water Vole **6 July** Guppy's Pond. WL
Kingfisher **1 August** Haddenham. HA
Cinnabar Moth Caterpillars **4 August** Aldreth. RB
Pygmy Shrew (see photo above) **5 August** Haddenham. MH
Luna Moth (see page 4) **13 August** Haddenham. SS
Vapourer Moth Caterpillar **23 August** Haddenham. DD
Young Grass Snake **25 August** Aldreth. MJ

WINTER TALKS

The current 'rule of six' makes it impossible to hold our talks, so we have cancelled the October to December talks. We very much hope that the situation will have improved by February 2021.

Every effort has been made to obtain copyright permission for illustrations. Any errors will be rectified on notifying the editor.