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The Wildlife Trust Huntingdonshire Local Group

NEWSLETTER ♣ NEWSLETTER ♣ NEWSLETTER

“Summer Outdoor Walks”

The summer walks this year provided a chance to see around some of our Wonderful Wetlands Nature Reserves, but started with our popular Traditional Bluebell Walk in Brampton Wood. The late Spring this year meant that we did not get the full benefit of the bluebells, but we had a good crowd of people attending and they all seemed to enjoy the walk.

We visited 3 Wetlands Nature Reserves during the Summer. The walks were guided by the volunteer wardens for each Reserve and they all showed how enthusiastic and knowledgeable they are. The people that turned up for these walks all said how enjoyable they were and we were blessed with some good weather, sometimes a little warm so it was good that they were all in the mornings before it became too hot.

“Winter Indoor Talks”

We have some great Indoor Meetings planned for this Winter and I am sure they will be as popular as ever. Full details can be found on the last page.

“**BarBQ**” - We had 108 people at the Summer BarBQ at Ramsey Heights this year and we were extremely lucky with the weather as there were severe storms all around us while we kept dry. This was a joint effort with the Ely Local Group again and we have enjoyed socialising with the hard working members of this Group for the past 2 BarBQs. The venue for next year’s BarBQ is still to be confirmed and may not be a joint effort. We do have a provisional date of 13th August.

Phil Norton
Editor

Help Huntingdonshire’s Reserves Appeal Update

We’re almost there! Our Appeal to raise £5,000 to support the work needed on our local nature reserves is close to its target.

Receipts on the “Just Giving” website, including Gift Aid recovery have reached £1,270. Other notable donations included £494 from Waitrose in Huntingdon, £250 from Huntingdon Cromwell Rotary Club and £292 in other cash donations.

Your committee’s sterling work at the local CAMRA Beer Festivals in St. Neots and St. Ives has raised £662 and selling logs from Brampton Wood has contributed another £400. Our 2010 calendar, produced by Pat Doody has added £135. We are still hopeful of further donations from the Local Rotary and Round Table clubs and there is another Beer Festival in St. Ives in September where we will again be collecting.

We already had good reserves accumulated from previous years and these will be used to top up any shortfall. It’s not too late to add to our appeal. Please visit: www.justgiving.com/George-Cottam or send cheques payable to the Wildlife Trust Hunts Local Group to George Cottam, 2 Buckden Road, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE28 4PS.

Hunts Local Group installs owl boxes in Brampton

We were happy to assist Brampton Parish Council when they asked us to help with their Brampton In Bloom competition entry, this summer. The council needed an environmental project and installing owl boxes in Brampton Churchyard was suggested. The Environment Agency gave £100 towards the cost and three local people contributed £140 for the remainder.

This allowed the Local Group to obtain and install 2 Tawny Owl boxes in the middle of the Churchyard and 2 Barn Owl boxes in trees on the perimeter, overlooking the meadows.

Brampton Brownies then asked if they could pay for the installation of two more Tawny Owl boxes – the Brownie leaders have owl names – and with permission from the Golf Club, they were able to watch them being installed in the trees down River Lane, firing questions at the writer on the life of tawny owls.

Many thanks to the donors and to Nigel Rogers, our ace tree climber, who helped with the installation. Let's hope that next year we will have some success and new owl families in these boxes.

George Cottam



Grafham Pond Update

The pond at Grafham Water, to which the Huntingdonshire Local Group contributed greatly through money raising (and physical endeavour) in 2008, continues to prosper. Both this year and last year the Grafham Watch Group has really benefited from this. The children absolutely love getting down on their hands and knees and identifying all the creepy crawlies they find.



In our first year we were delighted to find great crested newts and common newts and we all got really excited when we found a toad! On 13th June this year we were slightly better organised and followed a survey prepared by Open Air Laboratories, which is based at Imperial College London. On this occasion our score was 47, which put the pond in the 'very healthy' section. To obtain this score we identified species such as dragonfly, damselfly and mayfly larvae, water beetles, pond skaters, water shrimps, water snails, smooth newt, tadpoles and common blue damselfly. (Unfortunately, we were not too hot on identifying the pondweed!) These results were then entered back into the national survey. I also know that the great crested newts continue to thrive as I have seen them on several other occasions this year, although not during this particular survey.

The purpose of writing this article is to say a **big thank you** to everyone who contributed and assure you that your efforts are very much appreciated, both by the youngsters and the leaders as well. I would also like to mention that to date, despite very enthusiastic handling, no child in the group has been hit by the sturdy wooden-framed nets or even fallen in the water and, who knows, maybe a future David Attenborough may emerge in years to come!

Rosie Surrige
Watch Leader

Bluebell Trampling



The bluebells in Lady's Wood prior to 2007 were in pristine drifts, then, that spring, people started making detours into the best areas.

The damage became worse year on year as people made inroads into the bluebells to take photographs.

Understandably local people, including photographers who have been photographing the bluebells for years, were very upset. I was not best pleased either, with this chain of events.

Photographers who had successfully captured the beauty of spring flowers in our nature reserves for decades informed me there was no need to stray off the paths to take great pictures.

So my plea is that if you see anyone next spring acting irresponsibly and marching through bluebells to take "better" pictures either chat to them about the need to do it or contact the Wildlife Trust.

Bluebells trampled on year after year lose their vitality (who wouldn't!) and may never recover. It would be very sad to lose the wonderful spectacle of a carpet of unbroken blue each spring.

Martin Baker
Warden of Lady's Wood

Hunts Local Group Calendar

Once again, Pat Doody is producing a Calendar for next year and these will be on sale soon. The photographs are really stunning and we are hoping that these will be as popular as they were last year.

Hunts Local Group Quiz

This summer, apart from our guided walks, we have taken our Quiz on the road. That is to say we have attended a few fetes and garden shows and offered local people the chance to take part in a free quiz. The purpose of running these stalls was purely to raise awareness of the activities in which the Local Group is involved and to let people know about the Nature Reserves on their doorsteps.



These quizzes turned out to be very popular and quite a few local people were pleasantly surprised at just how much they already knew about British Wildlife when they found they could correctly identify the different species pictured on the quiz board.



The quizzes also had the added bonus of finding new local people interested enough to want to join the Wildlife Trust and I hope we will see them again at some of our Winter Talks and Summer Walks.

Phil Norton
Editor

Winter Talks

The talks this year are mostly on Local Wildlife and Habitats, with the exception of George Cottam's Christmas talk, which is based on his trip to Hungary:

Wednesday 8 September 2010:

Brief AGM followed by **The Great Fen Wetland Project**. Illustrated talk by Emma Pollard of the Wildlife Trust

Wednesday 13 October 2010:

The Dragonflies of Cambridgeshire. Illustrated talk by Val Perrin of the Dragonfly Society and Dragonfly Recorder

Wednesday 10 November 2010:

The Reptiles and Amphibians of Cambridgeshire. Illustrated talk by Laura Watson of the Wildlife Trust

Wednesday 8 December 2010:

Hungary for Wildlife. Christmas talk by George Cottam, Local Group Chairman. Plus mince pies, wine and raffle.

Wednesday 12 January 2011:

Water Voles and Otters. Illustrated talk by Cliff Carson of the Middle Level Drainage Board

Wednesday 9 February 2011:

Our native Ladybirds and the Harlequin. Illustrated talk by Peter Brown

Wednesday 9 March 2011:

Life on the Fens; Eels, Punts and Poaching. Illustrated talk by Peter Carter

Evening talks are held at Brampton Memorial Centre, Thrapston Road, Brampton, PE28 4TB at 7.30pm.

Admission £2.00 for WT members and £2.50 for non-members.

Children FOC.

Advance Notice:

Sunday 1 May, First Sunday morning walk of the Summer Programme, Brampton Wood Bluebell Walk starting at 10.30am

Nature Reserves Volunteers

Do you want to keep fit, make new friends and learn about the wildlife on our local nature reserves, all at the same time? You can do this by joining a volunteer work party on either Sundays or Wednesdays, during the winter months. Everybody is welcome, but children must be accompanied by their parents. No special skills are necessary and all training and tools will be provided.

Most work parties start at 10.00 am and involve mainly cutting back vegetation, coppicing and clearing paths, but can involve bonfires, fencing and bridge building. Why not give it a try? You will be doing valuable work for nature and enjoying yourself at the same time.

The Wildlife Trust wardens in Huntingdonshire currently organise the following work parties:

Every Wednesday at **Grafham Water**. Contact Aidan Matthews on 01480 811075

First Sunday in the month October to March at either **Lady's Wood, Upwood Meadows or Raveley Wood**. Contact Martin Baker on 01487 831994 or Kevin Doidge on 01487 815204

Second Sunday in the month September to March at **Brampton Wood**. Contact George Cottam on 01480 450809

Second Sunday in the month October to February and 6 March at **Pingle Wood and Cutting**. Contact Barry Dickerson on 01480 475689

Every Sunday, September to March, except 26 December, alternating between **Waresley Wood and Gamlingay Wood**. Contact Graham Moorby on 01480 380307 for Waresley Wood and Dave Smith on 01234 870948 for Gamlingay Wood.

Main contacts:

George Cottam 01480 450809 email georgecottam@dsl.pipex.com

Pat Doody 01480 392706, email jp.doody@ntlworld.com.

[The views expressed here are solely those of the Wildlife Trust Huntingdonshire Local Group]

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough, **The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH**. <http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/> Charity no 1000412

The **Huntingdonshire Local Group** supports the work of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough. See: <http://wildlifetrust-huntsareagroup.org.uk>