



# ABINGTON NATUREWATCH

The Record  
2009-2010

Records the activities of Abington Naturewatch from Autumn 2009 to Autumn 2010. Includes records of sightings of the fauna and flora in Great and Little Abington, Cambridgeshire, as noted by members and covering several sectors: Life in the River Granta, Birds, Amphibians & Reptiles, Invertebrates, Mammals, Flora

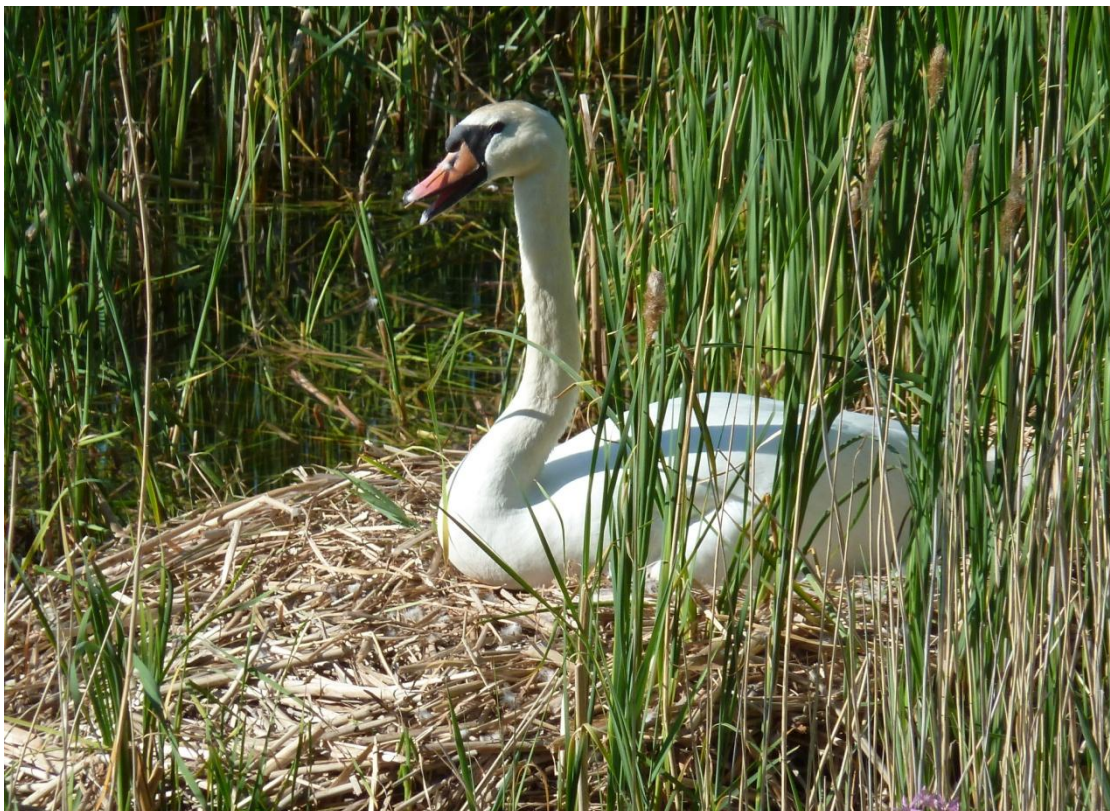




*Front cover photographs:  
Installing flow deflectors in Sluice Wood (with help from the Environment Agency)*



**1: Get off my lake! 23<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)**



**2: Mute Swan on nest, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)**



## FOREWORD

It would have been difficult for last summer to have been worse than the one before and it wasn't that, though it was an up and down affair, a series of promises unfulfilled. Spells of drought in spring and early summer threatened to devastate our wild flora but in the end did more good than harm to most species since it was the grasses, their chief competitors, which suffered most. Gardeners however had plenty to worry about, above all in the fruit and veg department; Jean and I were obliged to share our raspberry. The weather broke meanly in time for the holidays, so that a mixed year for flying insects ended in disappointment, only bumble bees seeming to have had a good time all through. Most notable within our bird life has been the increasing deadly infection which trichomoniasis has imposed on a number of our garden birds, chiefly greenfinches but it seems other finches too. Whether or not as a result of the persistently cold winter, surveys of the aquatic fauna in our river showed a hopefully temporary decline in numbers, size and diversity.

Members are grateful to the Abington Institute for its welcome whenever we have our meetings and to Jennifer Hirsh for her excellent production of *Flora Abingtonia*. Outings seem to have gone well, though it is never easy to time them to the convenience of as many members as we wish. We have discussed the need to review the ways in which we plan and organise our programme, and by the end of the year ideas have come forward which we hope will ensure for the membership as a whole a better service of activities and communications from now on.

So all we need now is for spring to come, and come quick.

PD



3: Red Admiral on Snowdrops, March 2010 (Victor Bugg)

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1. RIVERCARE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. RiverCare Network Meeting</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III. Sluice Wood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV. Himalayan Balsam</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>V. River Sampling 2010</b>	<b>5</b>
i. Overview	5
ii. First Sampling, at the Ford, 24 April	5
iii. Second Sampling, Home Reaches, 13 May	6
iv. Third Sampling, Homes Reaches, 8 June	7
v. Fourth Sampling, Abington Lodge and Ford, 20 July	8
<b>2. BIRDWATCH</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I. Outings</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>II. RSPB Garden Birdwatch</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>III. Members' Reports</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. REPTILES &amp; AMPHIBIANS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>I. Reptilia</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>II. Amphibia</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4. INVERTEBRATES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>I. An overview</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>II. Moths trapped at Lagdens</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5. MAMMALS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>I. Winter</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>II. Spring</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>III. Summer</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>IV. Autumn</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6. PLANTWATCH</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>I. Overview</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>II. Home-ground Study walks</b>	<b>25</b>
i. Granta Park Meadow & Lake, 30 June	25
ii. Protected Road Verge S52, Bourn Bridge Road Fields, 13 July	26
iii. Linton Road arable in stubble, 23 October, and other stubble walks	27
<b>III. Outings</b>	<b>27</b>
i. Devil's Dyke (i) – Section 2, Newmarket/ Dullingham road to National Stud, 10 June	27
ii. Devil's Dyke (ii) – Section 3, National stud to A11, 25 June	28
iii. Wicken Fen, 24 July	29
iv. Devil's Dyke (iii) – Section 4, from the NW (Swaffham to Burwells Road), 28 <sup>th</sup> July	29
<b>IV. Some other records of interest 2010</b>	<b>30</b>
i. Bourn Bridge Road Fields and Coach Road	30
ii. Disused Railway, either side of Chalky Road	30
iii. Riversides and banks, Abingtons and Hildersham	30
iv. 'The Meadow' and Meadow Snicket Little Abington	30
v. Cooke's Meadow	30

vi.	PRV S36, east side of A1307 south of Hildersham back road	30
vii.	Farm roadside near Brent Ditch	31
viii.	Cambridge Road, East side, near the bus stop	31
<b>V.</b>	<b>Flora Abingtonia</b>	<b>31</b>
i.	Plants not previously listed	31
ii.	Plants only listed potentially (formerly in italics)	31
iii.	New site for plant already listed	31
iv.	Plant still potential in the Abingtons, known now in Hildersham	31
<b>7.</b>	<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>I.</b>	<b>The Abington Naturewatch Website</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>The Abington Naturewatch Project Team and Sectors</b>	<b>34</b>
i.	Rivercare	34
ii.	Birdwatch	34
iii.	Amphibians & Reptiles	34
iv.	Invertebrates	34
v.	Mammals	34
vi.	Plantwatch & Coordinator	34
vii.	Website <a href="http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/">http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/</a>	34

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1:	Get off my lake! 23 <sup>th</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)	2
2:	Mute Swan on nest, 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)	2
3:	Red Admiral on Snowdrops, March 2010 (Victor Bugg)	3
4:	Caddis fly larva, 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)	6
5:	Mayfly, 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Peter Brunning)	6
6:	Abington RiverCare's page on the main RiverCare web-site	1
7:	RiverCare network meeting, 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2011	2
8:	Bottomer Sluices – before and after restoration (Peter Brunning)	3
9:	Driving the wooden pile supports – Derek and Jennifer	4
10:	Fixing the faggots	4
11:	Water snails, 20 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)	9
12:	Carp at Granta Park, 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)	9
13:	Great Spotted Woodpecker, 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Susan Hodges)	10
14:	Barnacle (and Canada) Geese at Granta Park, 20 <sup>th</sup> August 2010 (George Woodley)	10
15:	Mute Swan and cygnets, 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2010 (George Woodley)	13
16:	Mute Tit, May 2010 (James Cracknell)	14
17:	Pheasant, Church Lane, 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2010 (Peter Brunning)	15
18:	Greylag Goose, 19 <sup>th</sup> August 2010 (George Woodley)	15
19:	Common Toad in garden pond, 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2010 (Derek Turnidge)	16
20:	Smooth Newt in garden pond, 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 (Derek Turnidge)	16
21:	Grass Snake, 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2010 (George Woodley)	17
22:	Spindle Ermine moth caterpillars, 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Jennifer Hirsh)	18
23:	Swallow-tailed Moth Ourapteryx sambucaria, 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Sally Turnidge)	18
24:	Poplar Hawk Moth, Lagdens, 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)	19
25:	Scalloped Oak Moth	20
27:	Yellow Underwing Moth, 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)	20
26:	Emperor Moth caterpillar	20
28:	Hedgehog, 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Sally Turnidge)	22
29:	Konik ponies, Wicken Fen, 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)	23
30:	Highland Cattle, Wicken Fen, 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)	23
31:	Knapweed, 13th July 2010, Bourn Bridge Road (Peter Brunning)	24
33:	Lamium album (White Dead Nettle), 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)	24
32:	Lamiastrum glaeobdolon ssp. Argentata (Silvered Yellow Archangel), 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2010	24
34:	Devil's Dyke Walks 25th June and 28th July 2010 *those from 28th July	32
35:	Another cold winter, December 2010 (Marion Rusted)	34



4: Caddis fly larva, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)



5: Mayfly, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Peter Brunning)



# 1. RIVERCARE

## I. Overview

*Abington RiverCare* has two main interests: looking after, and improving access to, the 'home' stretch of the river Granta and surveying its flora and fauna. *Abington RiverCare* is a member of the national *RiverCare* organisation <http://www.rivercare.org.uk/> (see below).

On the last Saturday of each month, we take a walk along the river through the cricket and recreation fields and check its condition, while picking up litter along the bank and, if possible, from the river itself. [Volunteers always welcome at the road bridge at 9:30 a.m.] The national *RiverCare* organization has provided equipment and safety guidelines. They can also help us to arrange clearance of larger debris by the *Environment Agency*, which is responsible for the river through Abington. They usually respond quickly to requests to clear fallen trees and other blockages.

Membership of RiverCare has many benefits including insurance supplied by *BTCV* (<http://www.btcv.org.uk/>), with whom they are affiliated. They are also in touch with many of the national bodies and can help us to make the right contacts. We have a supply of leaflets giving further information.

home about rivercare join in... local projects news handbook

**river care**

**Biodiversity in Cambridgeshire .**

Biodiversity Action Plans identify local priorities for conserving the richness and variety of wildlife or biodiversity. To find out more about local plans in your area please click [here](#).

**Groups Login**

Username

Password

Login

**Publicizing your event.**

To publicize your events make sure to liaise with the Rivercare Co-ordinator who can help get coverage in the local press and can supply posters. Click [here](#) to view a sample poster.

**ABINGTON RIVERCARE GROUP**

Abington Rivercare group carries out regular litter-picks along the River Granta in the parishes of Great and Little Abington; any more serious issues are noted and the appropriate authorities alerted. The group aims to enhance the river and its immediate surroundings both for the enjoyment of local people and for the benefit of wildlife. It also conducts regular flora, fauna and fish surveys.

The group meets at the ford (road bridge) at 09.30 a.m. on the last Saturday of each month. New members always welcome.

**Date Formed:** 21/02/2006

You can also find out about this group by contacting Rivercare directly. [click here](#) to email Rivercare.

Click on the images below to view larger versions...

6: Abington RiverCare's page on the main RiverCare web-site

The river surveys use equipment supplied by the *Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biological Records Centre*. We continued our surveys this year (see below) and explored one or two new areas. We have yet to find a site with more aquatic biodiversity than those at the ford and near the Millennium footbridge – and they are both open, unshaded and easily accessible.

We expect to continue the surveys again this year. We are gradually improving our skills identifying the various species. There have been further reports of reasonably large Trout and we've seen them as well as Sticklebacks and Minnows.

PB & AD-N

## II. *RiverCare Network Meeting*

We were invited to the first Network Meeting on 20 January 2011. Representatives from twenty groups around East Anglia converged on the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre at Rutland Water to share ideas and experiences.



7: RiverCare network meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011

We each showed a picture of an activity and gave a 2 minute summary of the most rewarding part of the group's work, the greatest challenge and the biggest / weirdest / most surprising item found in the water. In our case, I showed the activities in Sluice Wood (see below) and mentioned the challenge and achievement of identifying the fauna, realising what good water quality we have in our river and finding one of the cricket club's sight-screens in the river! Later we discussed our *big ideas* eventually voting for one proposed by Camboaters – a National River Day, possibly a new Bank Holiday (!), to clean up and celebrate our rivers. A representative of DEFRA, who is currently drafting legislation, was present to listen to all the ideas and discussions. *Big Government* in action?

After a nice lunch provided by Anglian Water, who support RiverCare in their region, we were treated to a visit to two of the bird-watching hides.

PB



### ***III. Sluice Wood***

The Environment Agency (EA) carried out some repairs and improvements around the old Bottomer sluices in Sluice Wood. These are of historical interest and the sluice walls and two plaques dated 1721 are listed ‘buildings’. The channel had become partially blocked by debris and silt and a flood had then damaged it. It is now restored and the unblocked channel has been working well during a wet winter! Regrettably, the EA decided to remove the old gates in the interests of safety.



8: Bottomer Sluices – before and after restoration (Peter Brunning)



During the surveys before the work began, it was suggested that we might like to help with some environmental improvements. With the kind permission of the riparian owners, two Environment Agency staff members, Ruth Hawksley of Water for Wildlife and two heroic Naturewatchers (Jennifer Hirsh & Derek Turnidge) successfully installed two stream deflectors in the river nearby. The deflectors, one at each bank, consist of a short line of vertical poles, angled upstream, to which are wired substantial bundles of brushwood and long faggots. These are permanent fixtures, in which silt and vegetation accumulates. The finished structures can be seen on the front cover; the project is also due to feature in the Wildlife Trust’s local newsletter.



The aim is to improve the habitat for a wide range of animals. By diverting the stream to the centre they enhance its flow, thus scouring out the bed to make it more gravelly and improving oxygen levels. Fish find refuge in the 'pools' above the deflectors, and the silt and vegetation provide habitat for many species of invertebrate.

The site is fairly inaccessible and can only be approached from private land but the effect should be to improve the wildlife we see in the river elsewhere. We will be looking to see what happens on our regular river sampling trips.

The agency has also been doing similar work in Hildersham, upstream of the village hall.



**9: Driving the wooden pile supports – Derek and Jennifer**



**10: Fixing the faggots**



#### **IV. *Himalayan Balsam***

Himalayan or Indian balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is spreading along our river.

It has been seen in Hildersham and Babraham, as well as in Abington, notably near the Recreation Ground.

A native of the western Himalayas, it was introduced to Britain in 1839 but escaped from gardens and rapidly colonised river banks and areas of damp ground. It is the tallest annual plant in Britain, growing up to 3m high.

RiverCare and the Environment Agency are keen to control it, so we have started to pull it up from the river banks where we can. This needs to be done before the seed pods are ripe.

The characteristic purplish-pink slipper shaped flowers appear in June. When the seed pods mature, they explode when touched, scattering the seed up to 7m away. Seeds are also spread by water and they may remain viable for up to two years.



Himalayan balsam plants grow in dense stands that suppress the growth of native grasses and other flora. In autumn the plants die back, leaving the banks bare of vegetation, and therefore liable to erosion.

#### **V. *River Sampling 2010***

##### **i. Overview**

This was a generally disappointing year, prompting the thought that the cold winter had adversely affected all overwintering species. Numbers, diversity and size of specimens were all down. Among the few good discoveries were two perfect imago Mayflies and our first record of River Limpets.

Also on the positive side were the welcome given to us by Mr and Mrs Treamor at Abington Lodge and the active participation of three children at one of our sessions.

##### **ii. First Sampling, at the Ford, 24 April**

##### **Highlights**

This was the first time we had openly invited the membership to look in or take part in a sampling session. The result was that, as well as several members paying short visits, we had a larger number than usual playing a full part, including three keen young children, who were highly active in the river and especially good at spotting specimens on rocks.

Our finds were rather low in numbers and specimens generally small, suggesting that very little has succeeded in over wintering. Diversity on the other hand was good, although there were no dragonfly or damselfly larvae and only one water snail. We found more beetle larvae than usual, of several kinds.

Two quite new finds were two fine, long **Haplotaxis annelid worms** and a number of gastropod **River Limpets** (*Ancylus fluviatilis*). A third novelty, less certainly identified, were several small **Midge larvae**.

### Operations

Three samplings were taken about 15m above the road bridge, all in shallow water on a more or less gravelly bottom; we netted a good deal of weed (Water Crowfoot, prob. *Ranunculus fluitans*). Differences between the three catches were insignificant and they do not need to be distinguished.

We inspected more small rocks than usual, with good results.

### Details

#### Crustaceans

- Freshwater shrimp (*Gammarus pulex*; order Amphipoda), fairly numerous, all rather small, two pairs copulating.
- Water Hog Louse (*Asellus aquaticus*; order Isopoda), several, all about 2cm.

#### Molluscs, order Gastropoda

- River Limpet (*Ancylus fluviatilis*, fam. Ancyliidae) several together on one stone from midstream.
- Ramshorn Snail (fam. Planorbidae), only one, very small.
- Pea Mussel (genus *Pisidium* or *Corbicula*), two 7.5 mm, several v. small.

#### Insects

- Mayfly larvae, quite numerous, some minute and unidentifiable. Larger ones (1.5-2 cm) all dark with side gills, prob. therefore fam. Baetidae.
- Beetle larvae (order Coleoptera), their short tails and snapping movement distinctive; not many but more than previously. None were identified to fam. Level, though some were light brown like Great Diving Beetle larvae (gen. *Spercheus*), others dark grey like larvae of Great Silver Diving Beetle (gen. *Hydrophilus*).
- Stonefly larva (order Plecoptera), one seen, the four 'wings' and twin tail distinctive.
- Midge larvae (order Diptera, fam. Chironomidae), v.small (25 mm), pale brown and soft bodied; identification needs confirming but prob. correct.

#### Annelid Worms

- Sludge Worm (gen *Tubifex*), two seen, rather small (3 cm).
- Leeches (class Hirudinea), several, 2-3 cm, one v. dark brown.
- *Haplotaxis gordioides*, two fine long worms, the longest ca. 20 cm.

Fish: Several good-sized Brown Trout (30cm) were seen in Football Reach.

### iii. Second Sampling, Home Reaches, 13 May

#### Highlights

Although there was still a good amount of water our findings over five attempts were surprisingly poor, one of the poorest ever - the persistently cold winds and nights presumably the cause of this. Populations were everywhere low and diversity hardly impressive. Apart from one mayfly larva at the third sampling specimens were again



small. At the Ford the relative abundance of beetle larvae was a feature as last time, as also were the limpets on one rock.

### Sites and nettings

1. and 2. **Ford** (gravelly bottom about 10 metres above the bridge).

Molluscs. I small (5mm) Ramshorn Snail (fam. Planorbidae); on a rock, a group of River Limpets (*Ancylus fluviatilis*, fam. Ancyliidae)

Insects. About a dozen good sized (up to 2.5cm) dark Beetle larvae, probably Diving Beetles (gen. Spercheus or Hydrophilus); several small Mayfly larvae.

Annelid Worms. Two leeches (class Hirundinea), 1.25 cm, pale greyish, possibly Fish Leech (*Hemiclepis marginata*).

Fish: A group of good sized (7cm) fry, probably Minnows, sighted just above the main road bridge.

3. and 4. **Football Reach** (3. on gravelly bottom, 4. among Water Crowfoot).

Crustaceans. Many small Freshwater Shrimp (*Gammarus pulex*).

Insects. Many small Mayfly larvae; one large (1.5cm) top-gilled Mayfly larva, probably gen. Ephemer. Two small (1.5cm) live gravelly Caddisfly larvae (order Trichoptera) – see illustration 4.

5. **Millennium Bridge** (just below the bridge, partly muddy; above bridge too deep).

Crustaceans. Several small Freshwater Shrimp (*Gammarus*).

Insects. Many tiny Mayfly larvae, two larger dark side-gill Mayfly larvae, perhaps fam. Baetidae. One empty dark Caddisfly case. One small Stonefly nymph (order Plecoptera).

Annelid Worms. One small (2.5cm) segmented worm, possible fam. Naididae.

### iv. Third Sampling, Homes Reaches, 8 June

#### Highlights

Results were somewhat more encouraging than last time, with specimens tending to be a bit larger, but no striking improvement in numbers or variety. Absence of *Odonata* nymphs and of molluscs was noticeable. As usual results were better near the bridges than in mid reach. We believe that some of the larvae we've previously thought to be beetles are more likely non-biting midges. The one special find was of two live imago mayflies (*Ephemera danica*) in perfect condition at the water's edge above the Ford – see illustration 5.

#### Operations

We had four sweeps, all over more or less gravelly riverbeds, two just below the Millennium Bridge, one each in the Football Reach and upstream of the Ford. These are numbered [1] - [4] below.

#### Details

Crustaceans. Freshwater Shrimp (*Gammarus pulex*) abundant [1], [2] & [4], one also [3]. Mostly small, one larger at [4]. Pair mating at [1]

Water Hoglouse (*Asellus* sp), one 1.5 cm [4].

Molluscs. One small Pea Mussel's empty shell (*Pisidium* or *Corbicula*) [1].

Insects. Two fine adult Mayflies (*Ephemera danica*) alive on surface of water near the bank [4].

Mayfly larvae, too small to identify, generally abundant [1] - [4]. One good sized, brownish, top-gilled larva (*Ephemera* prob.*danica*). [4].

Cases of two Caddisflies (order *Trichoptera*), one dark & gravelly, live, 2 cm, one smooth, lighter, smaller, empty.

Two larvae of Non-biting Midge (*Chironomus* sp), one each [1] & [2].

Two small larvae of Diving Beetles (*Dytiscus* or *Spercheus* sp) [4].

Annelid Worms. Four good-sized Leeches (class *Hirudinea*) [1].

One or two mostly small Sludge Worms (*Tubifex* sp) [1] and [4], five at [3].

Nematomorph Worms. Two v. small Hair Worms [1].

Fish: A group of small prob. Minnows near Millennium Bridge.

**NB. The good stretch at and above the Ford is getting badly overshadowed by trees.**

#### **v. Fourth Sampling, Abington Lodge and Ford, 20 July**

##### **Overview**

Thanks to the welcome from Mr & Mrs Treamor, we were able for the first time to explore the left bank of the reach in their property. There was plenty of easy access to the bank but not many points of entry into the stream. Although there were good gravelly sections as well as muddy ones, flow seemed generally rather sluggish so that oxygen levels cannot be high. Given the disappointing results elsewhere on the river this season, it was no surprise therefore that both diversity and numbers were rather low and specimens mostly small. Of particular interest was the large number of live Pea Mussels of various sizes, and of their empty shells, found in one muddy patch near the house. Results at the Ford were somewhat better, but not especially good if compared with previous years.

##### **Operations**

At the Lodge we took three samplings about 250 yards upstream from the house at points where the river bed was more or less gravelly, and one nearer the house where it was more muddy. A look further upstream as far as the wood did not show any more good access points. Our one sampling at the usual point near the Ford was taken for contrast.

##### **Species**

Crustaceans. Quite good numbers of Freshwater Shrimp (*Gammarus*) at the Lodge and Ford, all notably small.

Molluscs. The highest number of Pea Mussel (*Pisidium*) we have recorded, in mud at the Lodge; also there one minute Ramshorn (fam. *Planorbidae*).

Insects. Two rather small pale brown nymphs of Damselfly (suborder *Zygoptera*), the flakey lamellae (tails) v. distinct.

- The only Mayfly nymphs of any size were at the Lodge, one of fam. *Ephemeridae* (dorsal gills), and one very interesting dark stocky one, perhaps of genus *Caenis*, such as 'Anglers Curse'.

- At the Ford, two good caseless Caddis fly larvae (order *Trichoptera*; I had supposed these were Beetle larvae but I now think that was wrong), and one dark cased one.



Annelida. At the Lodge, a few Leech (class *Hirudinea*), including one large one.

- At the Lodge, a quite good number of small red Sludge Worms (*Tubifex*).

Fish: A good number of small Minnow (about 10cm) were seen at one point at the Lodge, and even more near the main road bridge at the Ford.

PD



11: Water snails, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)



12: Carp at Granta Park, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)



13: Great Spotted Woodpecker, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Susan Hodges)



14: Barnacle (and Canada) Geese at Granta Park, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010 (George Woodley)

## **2. BIRDWATCH**

### ***I. Outings***

29<sup>th</sup> January: Visit to WWT Welney.

7<sup>th</sup> February: Visit to RSPB Ouse Washes: on a cold day a variety of birds were seen including Tree Sparrows, Corn Buntings and Yellowhammers.

### ***II. RSPB Garden Birdwatch***

30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January: 10 members submitted their sightings of 25 species in all. In joint first place were Blackbird and Blue Tit. Bramblings were seen by one recorder.

### ***III. Members' Reports***

I am very grateful for all the reports I have received from a large number of people. All reports are logged in detail. The following is a month by month summary.

#### **November 2009**

Fieldfares seen in South Road area throughout the month. Mid-month: Barn Owl reported in South Road area. Tawny Owls heard. Late in the month Fieldfares seen on Roman Road, Stock Doves in centre of village and 2 Green Woodpeckers in field by South Road.

#### **December 2009**

Early in month 2 Buzzards seen overhead in Chalky Road area. A Redwing, 16 Lapwings overhead and a Pied Wagtail were all seen mid-month. Moorhens, a Drake Mallard and at least 8 Longtailed Tits were seen from Millennium Bridge on 22/12. On 30/12 a Kestrel was seen in a tree in field behind Cambridge Road.

#### **January 2010**

On 1/1 an Oystercatcher was seen on manure heaps in South Road. Also a Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard drumming. Up to 16 Collared Doves in the same area. A week later 2 male Bullfinches were seen and a Fieldfare eating apples with Blackbirds. Mid-month there was a probable sighting of a Little Egret near the river behind Little Abington Church and a Kingfisher flying upstream a bit further down river. Towards the month end, a Bullfinch, a Green Woodpecker, 8 Redwings and c200 Fieldfares were reported. 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>: RSPB Garden Birdwatch: see above.

#### **February 2010**

In the first part of the month, a Kestrel, a Song Thrush singing, a Bullfinch, c50 Fieldfares on the Recreation Ground and Yellowhammers on Grange Farm were all seen.

Later in the month, there were more reports of Bullfinches, a Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, a Jay and finally 2 Goldcrests in a conifer in Cambridge Road.

#### **March 2010**

Early in the month there were several reports of both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a very vocal Wren near the river on 8/3. There were Great Crested Grebes, Mute Swans and Coots on Granta Park Lake. 15/3 Siskin on nyjer seed and 16/3 female Blackcap at water in Cambridge Road. 20/3 Skylark singing above Bourn Bridge Road and next day 5 Longtailed Tits in Great Abington High Street. 26/3 Chiffchaffs heard in both Great and Little. In village centre Goldfinches, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits, Chaffinches, Woodpigeons, Collared Doves, Jackdaws, Rooks,



Dunnocks, Robins, Magpies, Jays, Blackbirds and Wrens... and a threatening Heron. On the Lake a Mute Swan drove off a pair of Canada Geese and the female was nest building on 28/3.

### **April 2010**

Early in month, hen Pheasants, Redlegged Partridge, Bullfinches, Goldcrest, Greenfinches and Goldfinches all in evidence. One Fieldfare seen on 3/4 and a Chiffchaff on 8/4. House Martins were back at the Village Shop on 9/4 and a Swallow was seen on 11/4. In mid-month reports of Song Thrushes in Bourn Bridge Road, a Kestrel, Blackcaps and Bullfinch in Cambridge Road and c200 Starlings in South Road. Later several reports of Buzzards as well as Yellowhammers at Grange Farm. A Willow Warbler was heard at Sluice Wood and on 26/4 a fledgling Blackbird was seen in Church Lane area. On 29/4 a Cuckoo was heard behind Great Abington High Street towards Granta Park.

### **May 2010**

Early reports of Wrens, including a nest with 5 eggs. Barnacle Goose and dead Kingfisher at Granta Park. A Buzzard was being mobbed by a corvid above Cambridge Road on 9/5. Family of 12 Mallard young with mother on river by Cricket Field on 10/5. On 12/5 first report of Swifts (2) - in Little Abington, also party of 10 Longtailed Tits. Following evening 20+ Swifts above Millennium Bridge and up to 5 Mistle Thrushes on Football Field. 16/5 Skylarks above Bourn Bridge Road fields and a probable Great Spotted Woodpecker's nest in that general area. 20/5 Barn Owl seen in South Road. At least 2 cygnets (see illustration 15) on the Lake but by 31/5 nest is empty. 30/5 reports of young Blackbirds, Great Tits and Robins in Bourn Bridge Road.

### **June 2010**

4/6 Spotted Flycatcher seen in Cambridge Road garden. 5 & 6 /6 Abington Naturewatch Survey – maximum number of each species of bird seen at any one time by recorders throughout the 2 days in the Abingtons: 43 species in all recorded by 8 recorders, including Corn Buntings, Little Egret, Lapwing and Pied Wagtail. 8/6 female Mallard and 7 mid-sized young on the river. 11/6 family of 5 or 6 Treecreepers on tree by road next to Cricket Field. Mid-month 18 Canada Geese, Coots and Great Crested Grebe on Lake. Pair of House Sparrows being fed by mother in village centre, family of Blackcaps in Bourn Bridge Road, Cuckoo heard from Church Lane on 18/6. Dogs mobbed by Tawny Owl. 2 Linnets on Grange Farm. 18 species noted during flower walk at Granta Park on evening of 30/6.

### **July 2010**

Early in month Green Woodpecker and 3 young, also a Barn Owl in South Road. Spotted Flycatchers nesting. Swifts around Little Abington Church. Sparrowhawk, Blackbirds with rings, Jays, Goldcrest and a Buzzard all seen.

### **August 2010**

Yellowhammer, dead Treecreeper, young Goldcrest and female Blackcap all reported early in month and up to 10 Barnacle Geese among Canada Geese on Lake. In mid-month Greenfinch feeding young in Church Close and a Red Kite overhead High Street, Little Abington; Greylag on the Lake. On 27/8 c50 Mallard on Lake. 30/9 up to 8 Goldfinches, several immature, in Cambridge Road garden. Kingfisher seen on river near the month end.

**September 2010**

Kingfisher seen on river in Sluice Wood on 7/9. Goldcrest in High Street Little Abington garden. Mid-month 2 reports of up to 6 Buzzards, probably family group. 20/9 many hirundines high up apparently heading West. 26/9 5 House Martins in Little Abington near Roman Road; Kestrel seen very clearly in tree on Cricket Field. 29/9 13 Brent Geese on grass near cricket pitch on Granta Park and 40+ Canada Geese on Lake.

**October 2010**

1/10 25 Goldfinches in Lewis Crescent. 2/10 Report of numerous finch deaths in Magna Close, mostly Goldfinches, a few Greenfinches. 5/10 Swallows still here. Recent reports of families of both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers in South Road. 2 Lapwings seen in South of Great Abington. 17/10 last report of a Swallow – South Road and a flock of Fieldfares on Grange Farm. 23/10 Skylarks near Allotments during Stubble Walk and on 26/10 6 above Bourn Bridge fields in great excitement. Buzzards and Heron reported at month end.

DLT

15.1.2011



15: Mute Swan and cygnets, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010 (George Woodley)





16: Blue Tit, May 2010 (James Cracknell)





17: Pheasant, Church Lane, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (Peter Brunning)



18: Greylag Goose, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010 (George Woodley)





19: Common Toad in garden pond, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010 (Derek Turnidge)



20: Smooth Newt in garden pond, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010 (Derek Turnidge)

### 3. REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

There were no remarkable records this year.

#### *I. Reptilia*

In the Abingtons the reptilian fauna consists of the common lizard, the slow worm and the grass snake. There have been occasional reports of vipers, but so far these have not been authenticated.

#### *II. Amphibia*

The only tailless amphibians known in our villages, the common frog and common toad, are probably still abundant, but rarely reported simply because of this.

Frogs and toads are still breeding in a number of our garden ponds, and there have grass snakes in both L/A and G/A. Common newts are also seen but the presence of a breeding colony of crested newts in a L/A garden is now discounted by the SCDC Ecology Officer.

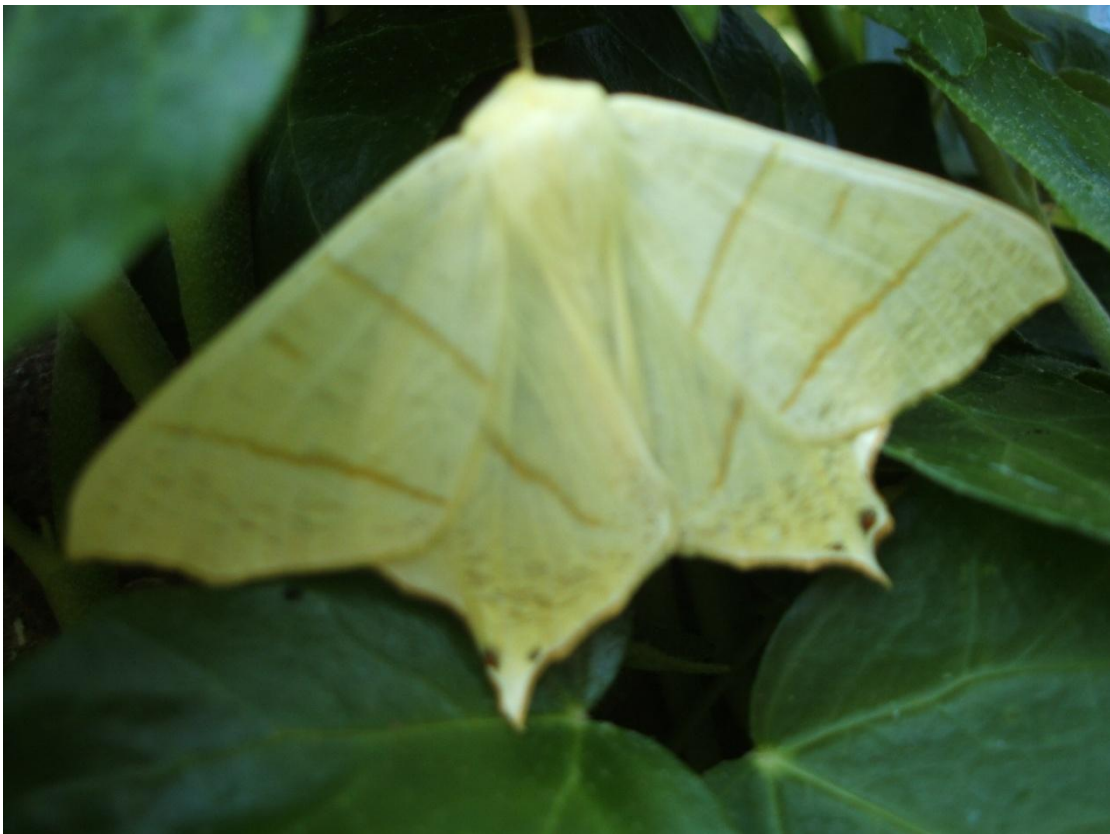


21: Grass Snake, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010 (George Woodley)





22: Spindle Ermine moth caterpillars, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Jennifer Hirsh)



23: Swallow-tailed Moth *Ourapteryx sambucaria*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Sally Turnidge)

## 4. INVERTEBRATES

### *I. An overview*

2010 was a better summer than the previous year. Spring was a bit dull and chilly, June and July mostly dry and hot. August was rather dull and quite wet; September had some lovely days alternating with a lot of wet ones. October gave us a good variety – all very English. There were not many ladybirds or greenfly this year. Overall, July was the best month for variety.

In April, we had reports of Hummingbird Hawk Moths mating in gardens, various Bumble Bees and a Comma butterfly. It seemed to be a good year for Bumble Bees and there were honey bees in greater numbers. There are now hives at the Three Tuns.

May brought reports of Damsel Flies and a variety of butterflies – Hollies, a Comma, Brimstones, Orange Tips and Speckled Woods.

July brought lots of Bumble and Honey Bees to my Marjoram. All the bees loved Echinops and stayed all night. There were Burnets, Small Coppers, Gatekeepers, Cabbage Whites, Green-veined, Tortoiseshells, Small Skippers, Ringlets in Granta Park. There was a good variety of hoverflies.

Phil Jenner set up his moth trap at Lagdens in July but a second session at the Old Paddock was cancelled due to the weather. See below for a partial list of moths trapped. Thanks are due to Phil for setting up his traps in the evening and letting us all see the results early on Saturday morning!



24: Poplar Hawk Moth, Lagdens, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)

August gave me Red Admirals, a Peacock and a Gatekeeper. September saw quite a lot of dragonflies on my pond – Emperor, Darters, Damsels – and the bees were still around. A Marbled White was reported at the former Land Settlement.

MR



## ***II. Moths trapped at Lagdens***

Included Nut Tree Tussock, Common Footman, Dingy Footman, Dark Arches, Ruby Tiger, Swallow Prominent, Burnished Brass, Brown-line Bright-eye, Least minor, Heart and Dart, Setaceous Hebrew Character, Rustic Shoulder-knot, Ghost Swift, Green Carpet, Light Brocade, Oak-tree Pug, Flame Shoulder, Large Nutmeg, White Ermine, Privet Hawkmoth, Poplar Hawkmoth, Large Yellow Underwing.



**25: Scalloped Oak Moth**



**26: Emperor Moth caterpillar**



**27: Yellow Underwing Moth, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)**

## 5. MAMMALS

This was the first year of recording mammal sightings.

Bats have been the first area of focus for this section. They are one of the most successful groups of mammals in the world. A training session at the Wildlife Trust provided information and some practice using a 'bat' detector. All bat species and their roosts are legally protected in the UK. This is so even if the roost is empty. There is ongoing concern about the number of bats inhabiting the church at Little Abington. They are thought to be the Common Pipistrelle (*pipistrellus*) but further identification is planned to see if there are Soprano Pipistrelles among them. Near the river, and in parts of Little Abington, there are also thought to be Daubenton's bats (*myotis daubentonii*) the water bat. They fly low over the water when feeding.

Pipistrelles can be seen feeding and flying over gardens in the villages on summer evenings.

The following mammals have been reported:

### ***I. Winter***

Fox (*vulpes vulpes*) – seen during snow

Hedgehog (*erinaceus europaeus*) – 2 rescued from roadside after temperature drop

Muntjac (*muntiacus reeves*) – seen near kennels

Grey Squirrel (*sciurus carolensis*) – reported as always stealing bird nuts

### ***II. Spring***

Deer – unidentified

Fox – in the area of the Science Park

Hedgehog – moving around pavements

Muntjac – occasional report

Rabbits (*oryctolagus cuniculus*) – small rabbits emerging on Pampisford Road

Grey Squirrel – Melanistic adult seen on driveway in Great Abington

Stoat – in a Little Abington garden

### ***III. Summer***

Bats – Pipistrelles (common) seen over gardens

Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*) – 4 who made forms in the field by the path to the Science Park. Many people from the villages enjoyed watching their displays and speed throughout the summer.

Fallow deer (*dama dama*) – in the pre-harvest period, 3, a doe and two young adults

Fox – 1 seen several times in surrounding fields, always moving rapidly

Long tailed mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), also known as the Wood mouse – reported

Mink (*Mustela vison*) – reported once in the river near the Millennium bridge

Muntjac – occasional reports

Rabbits – in gardens and on roadsides

Roe deer – 6 in a group were seen on Grange Farm



#### **IV. Autumn**

Fallow deer – 3, a doe and two young adults, seen pre-harvest at the top of Long Field

Fox – seen on Bourne Bridge Road

Hedgehogs – seen around gardens, some very young

Muntjac – 2 seen coming out of a sugar beet field and others seen singly round the villages. In one property this was the first appearance in over two years.

Roe deer – 6 seen in a group, on and around Grange farm. The roe deer were also seen frequently sitting in the stubble in Franklins' middle field.

*Some members have provided reports consistently throughout the year but more contributions would be appreciated. It is hoped that during the next year pupils of the village school will also be involved.*

DW



28: Hedgehog, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (Sally Turnidge)





**29: Konik ponies, Wicken Fen, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)**



**30: Highland Cattle, Wicken Fen, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Peter Brunning)**





31: Knapweed, 13th July 2010, Bourn Bridge Road (Peter Brunning)



33: *Lamium album* (White Dead Nettle),  
1<sup>st</sup> May 2010 (Peter Brunning)



32: *Lamiastrum glaeobdolon* ssp. *Argentata*  
(Silvered Yellow Archangel), 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010

## 6. PLANTWATCH

### I. Overview

This was a helter-skelter sort of year, notable for two quite extended periods of what passes in our climate for drought, with another dry spell in early autumn, and the usual erratic mixture in between these. Of the droughts, although the one in early summer left our lawns thoroughly frizzled and Jean and I obliged to share our raspberry, the effects of the one in spring were even more drastic. By May the leaves of the Rock Roses on the Dyke were shrivelling and the stems of Weld (abundant along roadsides this year) curled over like bishops' crooks. Our planned visit to admire the Helleborines in Beech Wood had to be cancelled, the plants scant and barely showing above ground. Yet (as they say) it's an ill lack of wind that fails to bake anyone any good: grasses had a dreadful time, so that the dicots on the Bourn Bridge Road verges (for example) flourished hugely from the lack of competition.

High spots among our events were an evening walk through Granta Park, where the diversity and abundance of the flora never fails to astonish anyone who isn't a regular visitor there, and a trip out to Wicken Fen where the flora was richer than I have ever seen it. The three outings to different sections of Devil's Dyke at different times of the summer enabled us to see both the diversity and the progress of the vegetation over the most impressive of all our local floral environments.

Members were given a surprise treat when Jennifer Hirsh produced an excellent version of the *Flora Abingtonia*, complete with illustrated cover, an index she created herself and pages for 'additions and notes'. Comb-bound A5, the booklet is easy to store, carry and handle, exactly as is fitting to its original purpose.

### II. Home-ground Study walks

#### i. Granta Park Meadow & Lake, 30 June

##### Overview

Plants generally are surviving the long hot dry spell better than we expected; some species, such as Mallow and Dark Mullein are specially flourishing. It was too late in the day for there to be many butterflies on the wing, but the good number of Burnet moths was encouraging. The immediate value and good long-term prospects for quality and diversity of species which the meadow and lake afford was much appreciated by the members, and we are grateful to Granta Park both for this opportunity and for recording our visit in their newsletter.

As time ran out we were not able to complete our survey of the lakeside, so a record of flora observed there is added at the end of this.

##### Species recorded

Pea family: Sainfoin, Kidney Vetch, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Lesser Trefoil, White Clover.

Rose family: Salad Burnet, Creeping Cinquefoil.

Mallow family: Common Mallow, Musk Mallow.

Umbellifer family: Wild Carrot, Hemlock, Rough Chervil, Hogweed.

Mint family: Black Horehound, White Deadnettle.

Bedstraw family: Hedge Bedstraw, Lady's Bedstraw, Goosegrass.

Teasel family: Common Teasel, Small Scabious.



Composite family; Goatsbeard, Common Cudweed, Mouse-eared Hawkweed, Ox-eye Daisy (Marguerite), Bristly Oxtongue, Yarrow, Nipplewort, Common Ragwort, Common Knapweed, Carline Thistle, Welled Thistle, Creeping Thistle, Soft Sowthistle, Prickly Lettuce, Burdock.

Grass Family: Quaking Grass, Cocksfoot, Wall Barley.

Others: Field Poppy (Poppy family), White Campion (Campion & Pink family), Weld (Mignonette family), Hedge Mustard (Cress & Mustard family), Broad-leaved Dock (Dock family), Perforate St John's Wort (SJW family), White Bryony (Marrow family), Meadow Cranesbill (Cranesbill family), Great Willowherb (Willowherb family), Yellow Loosestrife (Primrose family), Dark Mullein ('Scroph' family), Yellow Flag (Iris Family).

#### Lakeside plants recorded at other times this summer

Regulars noted were:

In the water - White Water Lily

By the water's edge - Gipsywort, Yellow Loosestrife, Purple Loosestrife, Soft and Hard Rush, Drooping Sedge, Water Forget-me-not, Water Plantain, Marsh Marigold, Reed Grass, Branched Bur Reed

On nearby turf - Spotted Medick, Selfheal, American Willowherb.

Vervain and Centaury are spreading on to the 'look-out' area, where Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) has appeared for the first time here or recorded anywhere other than by garden ponds in our villages. By the water, a welcome return after two years' or so absence was Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*).

#### **ii. Protected Road Verge S52, Bourn Bridge Road Fields, 13 July**

##### **Comments**

David Farrant's spraying of the nettles was most effective; followed up by Peter Brunning's strimming, it contributed to an excellent season for the chalk-loving plants. We regretted however the mowing of the front metre or so of the verges to the east of the PRV. They are virtually as good as the protected ones, and a second mowing as early as this seems quite unnecessary.

In spite of two periods of drought the condition of the dicot plants was remarkably good, helped partly by the poor growth of the grasses.

##### **Notes on species**

Greater Knapweed, Lady's Bedstraw, Lesser Bindweed and Bladder Campion were all doing extremely well and there were good patches of Hedge Bedstraw and of Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*). We were not deceived by the relatively feathery upper leaves on some of the plants into supposing they were the less common Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*).

White Campion was mostly past flowering, while plenty of Common Knapweed was just coming into flower.

The best find was a good patch of Restharrow on the south verge beyond the oak tree.

There was no sign on the PRV of Wild Basil, which reappeared there last year after several years' absence, but it's holding on well on the east edge of the Temple property.

Mignonette is still on the south eastern verge, though not on the PRV; Common Calamint (*Calamintha ascendens*) has appeared there for the first time. On the NE verge Goatsbeard was abundant.

On the western spur between Temple & Comfort Café we saw plenty of Cudweed, Blue Fleabane, American Willow Herb and Creeping Thistle, with one Self Heal.

Field Pansy was plentiful in the rabbit-bitten edge of the arable there, but in poor shape.

### iii. Linton Road arable in stubble, 23 October, and other stubble walks

#### Comments

A return to delayed ploughing of the lowland fields promised a rich stubble flora for the first time for two or three years, a promise only partly fulfilled. The dry September held everything up (Field Pansy was massed but the flowers meagre), and by the time any rain came it was getting late in the season. The flora at Linton Road was much more abundant than on the Bourn Bridge Road fields, but even there diversity was modest. Remarkable was the abundance on both sites of Henbit Deadnettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*), not – perhaps wrongly – recorded before in our villages.

#### Linton Road field in stubble

There were two other welcome finds as well as the mass of Henbit Deadnettle. Night-flowering Catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*) has returned in force, with a good number of strong plants near the allotments, plenty of flowers fully open in daylight. New records for us were Hedge Cranesbill (*Geranium pyrenaicum*), with several plants on the right as you enter the field, and, with many fine plants in midfield, one of the small-flowered Fumitories, probably Dense-flowered (*Fumaria densiflora*).

Big patches of late Field Sowthistle made a brave show. Black Nightshade was plentiful, Black Bindweed widespread but fading, Field Pansies a much better size now, some with purple ‘ears’. Speedwells were scattered and generally sorry for themselves.

#### Bourn Bridge Road fields in stubble

As at Linton Road, Henbit Deadnettle, Black Bindweed and Black Nightshade were abundant in patches but Speedwells scattered and scrubby. A few Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*), with no sign of flowers, survived among the Chickweed at the far side of the SW field.

### III. Outings

As mentioned above, our proposed May visit to Beech Wood to see the celebrated Broad Helleborines there had to be cancelled, the drought having done for the plants this time. Next year, then!

#### i. Devil’s Dyke (i) – Section 2, Newmarket/ Dullingham road to National Stud, 10 June

An excellent visit, the abundance of John Ray’s Bloody Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*) being most pleasing; it’s mingling with Rock Rose near the start of the southwest open slope beyond the railway was particularly splendid. Also good news is that Pasque Flower is holding on well here, and to find Horseshoe Vetch in unprecedented abundance.

#### Plants in the partly wooded area south of the railway or near that

Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum*), Welled Thistle (*Carduus crispus*), Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium*), Hogweed (*Heracleum*), Hedge



Woundwort (*Stachys*), Early Forget-me-not, (*Myosotis ramosissima*), Great Mullein. (*Verbascum Thapsus*; Aaron's Rod), White Bryony (*Bryonia*).

**Bloody Cranesbill.** (*Geranium sanguineum*). Abundant, coming into flower, both sides of the path. Likes limestone and sand dunes as much as chalk. Uncommon in the north, rare elsewhere, famously in the Burren limestone pavement. Usually an escape, but native here: 'Found on Newmarket heath in the Devil's Ditch and in a wood adjoining the highway betwixt Stetchworth (Stetchworth) and Chidley (Cheveley)' - John Ray, *Catalogue of Plants round Cambridge* 1660.

### Plants on the open dyke

Bloody Cranesbill (see above; with Rockrose).

**Pasque Flower** (Dane's Blood; *Pulsatilla*). In seed, scattered but q. plentiful, preferring the SW side. Named from Pascha, Easter (Greek from Hebrew 'Passover'). Only a few good sites left ('the plough, the destroyer of wild flowers' - Clare), including the next section of the Dyke, Church Hill at Therfield Heath (Royston) and Barnack ('Hills & Holes').

Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), Rockrose (*Helianthemum*), Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), Salad Burnet (Drumsticks; *Sanguisorba*; 'makes the heart merry & glad' - Culpepper).

**Sainfoin** (Baby's Cradles; *Onobrychis*). Plenty coming into flower. From Latin Sanctum foenum, Holy (i.e. wholesome) Hay. 'The pink of Quattrocento paintings' - Grigson. 'Opens the bladder; boil it in the ordinary milk of nurses' - Culpepper.

### Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*)

Wild Thyme (*Thymus*), Birdsfoot Trefoil (Eggs & Bacon; *Lotus*), Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon*, 'Lion's Tooth'), Privet (*Ligustrum*), Cowslip (*Primula veris*; in seed), Hemlock (*Conium*), Quaking Grass (*Briza*), Upright Brome (*Bromus erectus*; the dominant grass), Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*); mostly pale blue or bright pink, one near white; no 'gentian' blue, so Chalk Milkwort (*P. calcarea*) may be absent.

Some dyke chalk-loving regulars not seen: Squinancywort, Kidney Vetch, Pyramidal Orchid.

### ii. Devil's Dyke (ii) – Section 3, National stud to A11, 25 June

Kidney Vetch and Sainfoin were exceptionally prolific and luxuriant, many of the latter deep in colour. Pyramidal Orchids were in quite good numbers, varying in colour, Lizard Orchids rather sparse and of poor growth. Bastard Toadflax is still doing well on short turf near the far end.

Plants recorded were:

Composites: Mouse-eared Hawkweed, Goatsbeard (seed), Carlina Thistle, Greater Knapweed, Common Knapweed (Hardheads), Rough Hawkbit, Oxeye Daisy, Mugwort, Nipplewort.

Pea family. Kidney Vetch, Restharrow, Spiny Restharrow, Horseshoe Vetch, Lesser Trefoil, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Sainfoin, Tufted Vetch.

Umbellifers. Rough Chervil, Wild Carrot, Burnet Saxifrage, Hogweed.

Rose family. Dog Rose, Salad Burnet, Dropwort.

Bedstraw family. Squinancywort, Lady's Bedstraw, Hedge Bedstraw..

Buttercup family. Pasque Flower (seed), Lesser Meadow Rue.

Mignonette family. Mignonette, Weld.

Mint family. Thyme, Black Horehound.

Birch family. Silver Birch, Downy Birch.

Orchid family. Pyramidal Orchid, Lizard Orchid.

Grass family. Upright Brome, Quaking Grass.

Other families. Bastard Toadflax (Sandalwood F), Hedge Mustard (Mustard & Cress F), Field Scabious (Teasel F), Bladder Campion (Campion F), Common Milkwort (Milkwort F), Rock Rose (Cistus F), Yellowwort (Gentian F), Bittersweet (Nightshade F), Privet (Olive F).

### **iii. Wicken Fen, 24 July**

A good number of members came and, while not very many birds were seen, the diversity and beauty of the flowers was outstanding. Two species deserve special mention.

We found one clump of Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus pratensis*), an uncommon plant which I have only seen once before, also at Wicken. The curious aquatic carnivore Greater Bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*) was making a great show in a number of pools. While Lesser Bladderwort belongs in upland acid fens, this one is happy in limy water, which Wicken's is, since it comes from the 'hills round Newmarket'.

Other fen-loving plants observed were:

Reed, Reed Grass, Meadow Rue, Purple Loosestrife, Yellow Loosestrife, Fen Bedstraw, Meadowsweet, Hemp Agrimony, Spearwort, Great Willowherb, Yellow Water Lily, White Water Lily, Water Dock, Water Mint, Marsh Thistle, Lesser Water Parsnip (also in a cottage pond in the access lane).

Of the plants equally at home on dry ground the most interesting we saw were Yellow Rattle, Hoary Ragwort (exceptionally large plants), Meadow Vetchling, Tufted Vetch and Fleabane.

### **iv. Devil's Dyke (iii) – Section 4, from the NW (Swaffham to Burwells Road), 28<sup>th</sup> July**

The most unexpected find was an impressive patch of Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), said to be long since naturalized, preferring coastal sites, occasional inland and increasing. We did not reach the station of Devilsbit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) which I have twice found shortly before the overgrown section, evidently beyond the point when we were turned back by devastating clearance.

Overall, flora was remarkably abundant, mostly still in full bloom. Notable were the numbers and spread of Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), with Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*) also plentiful though over a restricted area. Welcome too was a good number of Small Scabious and, on one site, a patch of Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*).

Both Knapweeds, Parsnip, Carrot and Weld were especially numerous. Also seen were: Kidney Vetch, White Bryony, Salad Burnet, St John's Wort, Squinancywort, Carline Thistle, Mignonette, Field Scabious (with one albino), Hoary Ragwort and Sainfoin (beginning to fade).



## **A note on Nine Wells**

Lovers of the famous Nine Wells Wood may, if they paid a visit there this year, have been shocked by the devastation wreaked on the noble stands of the Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*). I reported my dismay to the Vice-County Plant Recorder who (having told me that Spurge Laurel has now appeared in the wood) referred me to CCC's Environment Department. From them I had a courteous reply assuring me that the plants would recover and all would be well. Let's hope so.

## **IV. Some other records of interest 2010**

### **i. Bourn Bridge Road Fields and Coach Road**

Whitlow Grass (*Erophila verna*) was still doing well at the south end of Coach Road. On the east verge of SE field, St John's Wort has now appeared, Mignonette and rough Chervil are increasing and (at the north end) Scented Mayweed (*Matricaria recutita*) still flourishing early in the year. Diversity is also increasing on the similar verge of SW field with Hoary Ragwort, Blue Fleabane, Hawkweed Oxtongue, Great Willowherb, Hedge Bedstraw and Catsear all increasing.

### **ii. Disused Railway, either side of Chalky Road**

The west side is still accessible and as good as ever, with Hoary Ragwort and Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*) still present and Burnet Saxifrage and Toadflax plentiful. To the east the path was in a good state. Marjoram, Burnet Saxifrage and Hedge Parsley were abundant, Red Bartsia and Hoary Ragwort holding on, but Honeysuckle sparse and only a few ragged plants of Meadow Vetchling and one patch of Carrot visible at the far end. Further east in the Hildersham covered and open stretches Small Scabious is still on station and Restharrow and Knapweed Broomrape in good numbers.

### **iii. Riversides and banks, Abingtons and Hildersham**

Himalayan Balsam has invaded the football reach in Little Abington (see Rivercare above), and both above and below the bridge in Hildersham. A fine Angelica plant has appeared on the left bank in Little Abington. In the Abingtons, Slender Speedwell (*Veronica filiformis*) is established upstream near the cricket nets as well as downstream near the Millennim Bridge. Both this plant and Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*V. serpylliformis*) are on similar turf above the bridge in Hildersham.

### **iv. 'The Meadow' and Meadow Snicket Little Abington**

Diversity is increasing at the north end of the Meadow, with Salad Burnet, Mignonette, Lady's Bedstraw and Birdsfoot Trefoil all present. There was too a good patch of Pellitory-of-the-Wall (*Parietaria judaica*) in the snicket between the Meadow and Cambridge Road, a first record of this in the Abingtons.

### **v. Cooke's Meadow**

Two large patches of Lesser Teasel (Shepherd's Rod) have spread near the river, and further west a patch of Meadowsweet near the path.

### **vi. PRV S36, east side of A1307 south of Hildersham back road**

One poor White Melilot has appeared, a first for our villages. Burnet Saxifrage, Carrot, Hawkweed Oxtongue (*Picris hieracoides*), Birdsfoot Trefoil and Agrimony were all present, also Grass-leaved as well as Common Orache, presumably attracted (like Danish Scurvy Grass) by the salt.

**vii. Farm roadside near Brent Ditch**

Black Bryony (*Tamus communis*), a relative of the yams, by no means common in South Cambs, was recorded here about 20 years ago - and here it still is.

**viii. Cambridge Road, East side, near the bus stop**

Horseradish is a not uncommon naturalised escape, but it's not so often seen in full flower as here last year.

**V. *Flora Abingtonia***

I've already welcomed Jennifer Hirsh's edition of *Flora Abingtonia*, and drawn attention to the provision in it of space for supplementary data. Here are the additions to make following new records in 2010.

**i. Plants not previously listed**

6.1.2. F. muralis (Ramping Fumitory). Cricket Field hedge, High St, G/A 2010.

6.1.3. F. densiflora (Dense-flowered Fumitory). Stubble, Linton Road Field 2010.

20.1.5. G. pyrenaicum (Hedge Cranesbill). Right of entrance to Linton Road Field G/A 2010.

44.2.3. F. sachalinensis (Giant Knotweed). Abington Lodge 2010.

**ii. Plants only listed potentially (formerly in italics)**

20.1.1. G. pratense (Meadow Cranesbill; NB previously wrongly named!). Granta Park Meadow G/A 2010.

28.5.2. M. albus (White Melilot). PRV S36, A1307 L/A 2010.

44.2.2. F. japonica (Japanese Knotweed). Cooke's Meadow L/A.

45. 2. Parietaria diffusa now judaica (Pellitory-of-the-Wall). Meadow snicket L/A 2010.

87.7. Briza media (Quaking Grass). Granta Park Meadow G/A 2010.

**iii. New site for plant already listed**

11.1. Hypericum perforatum (St John's Wort). **Add** - E Verge BBR SE Field L/A 2010.

13.2. Lychnis flos-cuculi (Ragged Robin). **Add** - North shore, Granta Park Lake G/A 2010.

63.5. Calamintha ascendens (Calamint). **Add** - SE verge, BBR Fields L/A 2010.

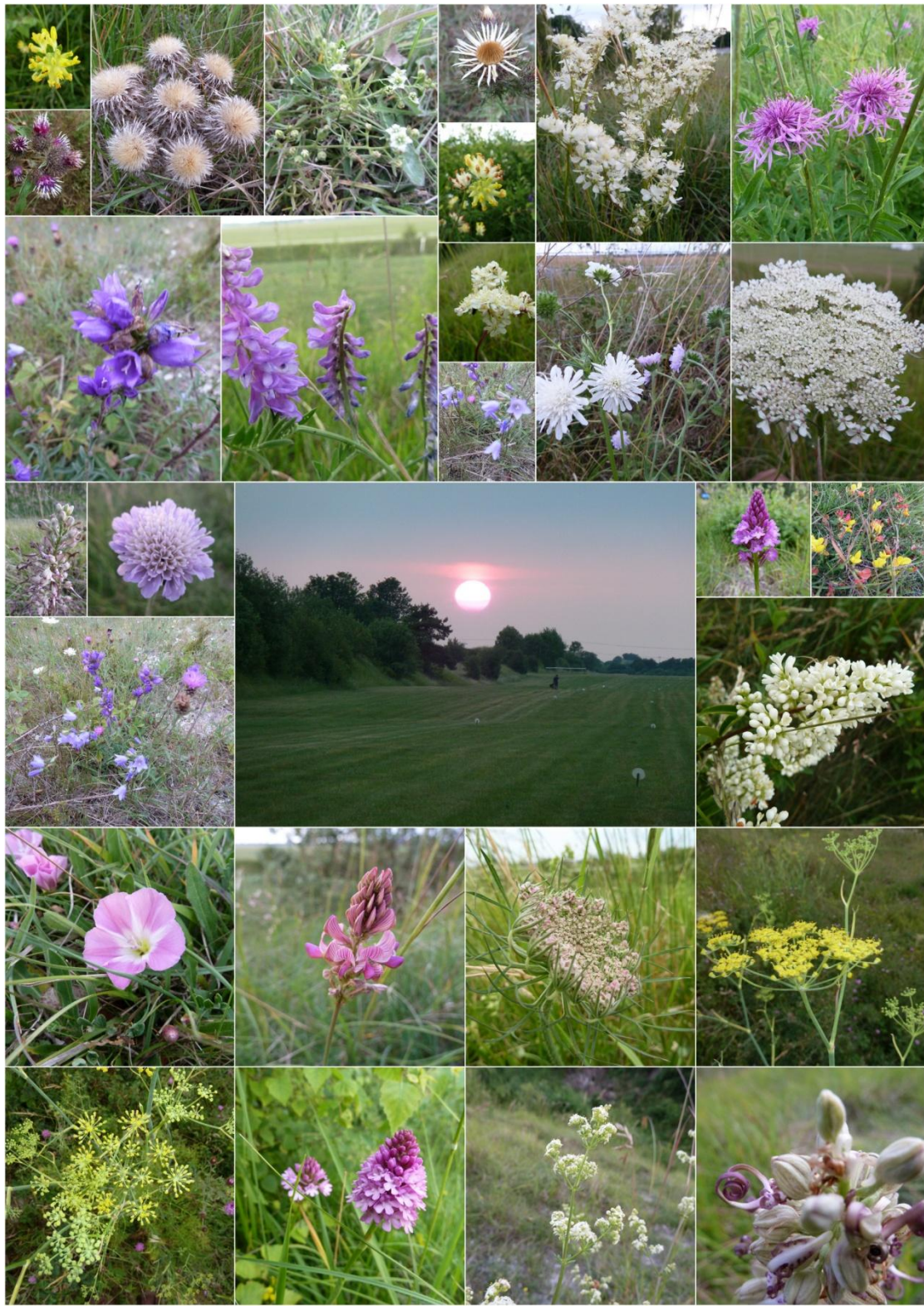
70.21. Carduus crispus (Wetted Thistle). **Add** - Granta Park Meadow G/A 2010.

70.28. Tragopogon pratensis (Goatsbeard). **Add** - Granta Park Meadow G/A 2010.

70.32. H. pilosella (Mouse-ear Hawkweed). **Add** - Granta Park Meadow G/a 2010.

**iv. Plant still potential in the Abingtons, known now in Hildersham**

60.9.11. V. serpyllifolia (Thyme-leaved Speedwell). Known on riverside turf in Hildersham but not yet in the Abingtons.



Horseshoe Vetch	Carlina Thistle	Bastard Toadflax	Carlina Thistle*	Meadowsweet	Greater Knapweed	
Lesser Burdock *			Kidney Vetch			
Clustered Bellflower *		Tufted Vetch	Dropwort	Albino Field Scabious *	Burnet Saxifrage	
			Harebell *			
Lizard Orchid	Scabious	<b>34: Devil's Dyke Walks</b> <b>25th June and 28th July 2010</b> <b>*those from 28th July</b>			Pyramidal Orchid	Birdsfoot Trefoil
Common Knapweed Clustered Bellflower Harebell *					Privet	
Field Bindweed		Sainfoin	Wild Carrot		Fennel *	
Fennel *		Pyramidal Orchid	Hedge Bedstraw		Lizard Orchid	



## 7. CONTACT INFORMATION

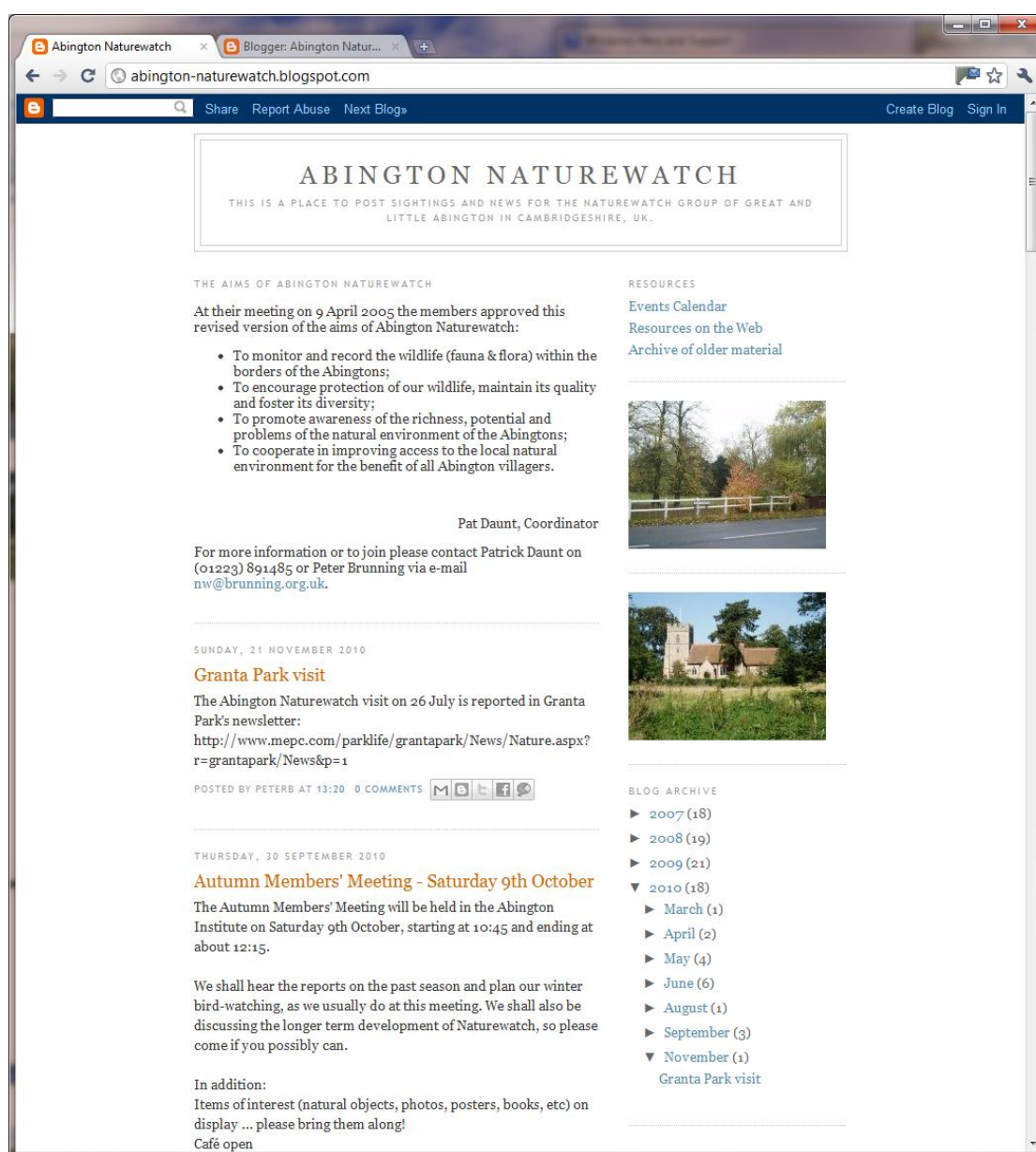
### I. *The Abington Naturewatch Website*

The Abington Naturewatch Website is now maintained as a *blog* (i.e. web log) at <http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/>. It is also easily reached from the village web-site: <http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/>. Using a blog means that it is simpler for members to submit material for publication.

The site lists the aims of the group and has details of members' meetings. Those interested are encouraged to join – there is no membership fee! Members receive personal invitations to meetings, by email if available.

There are also reports and photographs submitted by members and some useful links to other sources of information.

### Naturewatch Home Page:



## ***II. The Abington Naturewatch Project Team and Sectors***

### **i. Rivercare**

Anne Dunbar-Nobes, 41 South Road G/A; tel 890 945;

email: [dunbarac@aol.com](mailto:dunbarac@aol.com)

Peter Brunning, 47 Church Lane L/A; tel 891 960;

email: [peter@brunning.org.uk](mailto:peter@brunning.org.uk)

### **ii. Birdwatch**

Derek Turnidge, 23 Cambridge Rd L/A; tel 891 133;

email: [derek.turnidge@virgin.net](mailto:derek.turnidge@virgin.net)

### **iii. Amphibians & Reptiles**

Jasmine Miller, 5 Bourn Bridge Road L/A; tel 891 797

### **iv. Invertebrates**

Marion Rusted, Lagdens, High Street L/A; tel 894 245

Audrey Bugg, Old Paddocks, High Street G/A; tel 891 250

### **v. Mammals**

Diana Wingfield

email: [di\\_wingfield@hotmail.com](mailto:di_wingfield@hotmail.com)

### **vi. Plantwatch & Coordinator**

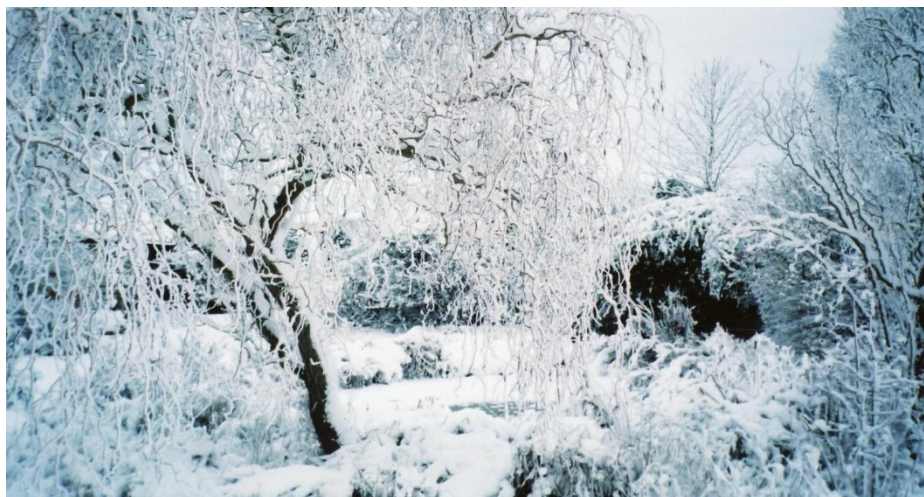
Pat Daunt, 4 Bourn Bridge Road L/A; tel 891 485;

email: [patrick.daunt@talktalk.net](mailto:patrick.daunt@talktalk.net)

### **vii. Website** <http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/>

Peter Brunning, 47 Church Lane L/A; tel 891 960;

email: [peter@brunning.org.uk](mailto:peter@brunning.org.uk)



**35: Another cold winter, December 2010 (Marion Rusted)**

Ian Grant is still in Bolivia: see <http://www.climbingsouthamerica.info/>