



ABINGTON NATUREWATCH

The Record
2017

Records the activities of Abington Naturewatch for 2017. Includes records of sightings of the fauna and flora in Great and Little Abington, Cambridgeshire, as noted by members and covering several sectors: Wildlife at Granta Park and in the River Granta, Birds, Reptiles & Amphibians, Mammals, Insects, Flora, Fungi.



Front Cover:

1: Sparrowhawk – 25 Oct (JG)

2: Bird feeding, village Primary School – 20 Oct (GAPS)

NOTABLE EVENTS OF 2017



3: JANUARY – Trees damaged by storm (PJB)



4: JULY – Bourn Bridge Rd access to GP closed (PJB)



5: JULY – Granta Park closed to village visitors (PJB)



6: DECEMBER – Diseased Ash Tree condemned (PJB)

Notes:

1. In this document, GA stands for Great Abington, GP for Granta Park and LA for Little Abington; LSA means former Land Settlement Association area (North, South, Chalky and Cutting Roads).
2. All photographs were taken in 2017, unless noted. Photographers are:
Andy Merryweather (AM), Anne Dunbar Nobes (ADN), Annette Shortell (AS), Barry Brooks (BMB), Chrissy Bidwell (CB), David Farrant (DF), Derek Turnidge (DLT), Emma Jones (EJ), Great Abington Primary School (GAPS), GB Non-native Species Secretariat (GBNNS), George Woodley (GW), Granta Park (GP), Jennifer Hirsh (JAH), Jean Gwynne (JG), John Webb (JW), Len Mead (LAM), Peter Brunning (PJB), Pat Wallman (PW)
3. Visits out of the Abingtons are recorded separately in Section 9.
4. For contact details for all sectors, please refer to the back page.
5. Species of particular interest (declining native or invasive non-native) are shown in **red**.

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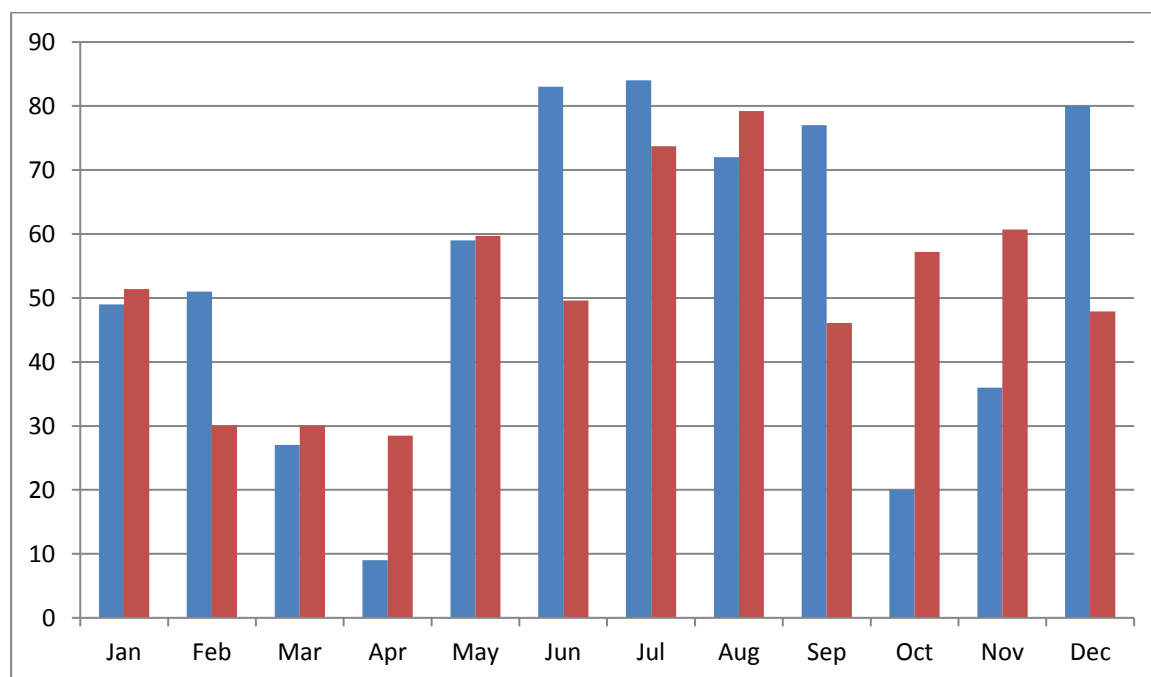
1. FOREWORD

Key weather periods in 2017 were the mild spring, an unsettled summer and a mild and long autumn. This resulted in good butterfly numbers in the spring (mainly Brimstones, Large Whites and Red Admirals) and a good breeding period for birds. The wet summer reduced butterfly numbers but then the long mild autumn saw butterfly numbers rise again and also produced excellent wildflower numbers on the Roman Road, Fleam Dyke and in Granta Park. The extended autumn tree colour was also impressive. Although butterfly numbers were positive, Bumble Bee and Ladybird numbers were down.

I. Weather

A generally mild wet winter in 2017 seems to follow the current pattern with little snow and only a few heavy frosts. After a changeable March, April was often warm with plenty of sunshine. May was cool and cloudy but warmer towards the end of the month. June, July, August and September were generally unsettled with a few hot spells. June was a particularly wet month compared to the average. October and November were untypically mild and dry with little in the way of frost. December produced some hard frosts early and then heavy rain towards the end of the month.

Abington Rainfall for 2017 (blue) compared to 10 Year Average (red) in mm.



Abington Rainfall 2017

Source of 10 year average- Cambridge Botanic Gardens

II. The 2017 Programme

We held two Naturewatch members meetings in April and November. In April we discussed our spring and summer programme and in November looked back on our visits and the season's reports from our members. It was encouraging to see that we had received an increase in the number of reports compared to the year before. We switched our river samplings this year from the cricket field back to the ford as we get a wider variety of species, particularly fish, from this area. The three samplings in April, June and August again demonstrate that we are privileged to have a clean and active stretch of river through the village, which the RiverCare group keeps tidy throughout the year. This year we have also kept an eye on the stretch through Sluice Wood where we have removed several fallen branches.

We have again gathered our own reports from the RSPB Garden Birdwatch in January and held our own survey over the late May Bank Holiday. In June we held our popular trip to RSPB Lakenheath where we noted 43 species. Interesting birds reported during the year were our resident Buzzards and also the odd report of a Red Kite. These seem to be spreading across from the west. Granta Park has again seen the Little Owls nesting in the pile of masonry and, on the river, we regularly see Herons, Little Egrets and Grey Wagtails.

We had planned visits to Wicken Fen in June and Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits in July but a lack of numbers for Wicken Fen and few plants in the Chalk Pits resulted in cancellation. However, the trip to Fleam Dyke in July provided a huge number of the spectacular Chalkhill Blue butterflies together with 22 species of flowering plants. Full details of all the visits are given later in the report.

For our autumn Speakers Meeting it was decided that this year the subject would be dragonflies and damselflies and we were lucky to have the secretary of the British Dragonfly Society, Henry Curry, agree to come and talk to us in November. He explained the differences between the two and also helped identify the common ones we are likely to see in our area. He has promised to lead us on a visit to Wicken Fen in spring 2018.

III. Granta Park

Granta Park has again had the nesting Grey Herons, Great Crested Grebes and Little Owls. There has also been a regular flock of Barnacle geese on the cricket field and the Starling Murmuration around the reeds on the lake. An otter has also been regularly spotted along the river.

This year our visits into Granta Park were stopped from July due to security concerns. This has prevented members from visiting several important areas in the park but fortunately the wildlife reporters within the park have kept us updated with monthly reports and provided a written report for the Record. We hope normal access to the Park can be restored next year. I would also like to record our thanks to Granta Park for the small annual grant which goes towards paying for meetings and speakers. We have this year used a small part of this grant to provide the Reception Class at the school with bird feeders and bird food which they have been keeping regularly filled on their bird table.

IV. Naturewatch Members

Thanks must go to our Naturewatch reporters and the project team members who carefully record the observations and write the summaries for the Record. We now get a regular record of the wildlife we see around the villages and within Granta Park. The Naturewatch Record started in 2004 and the 2017 issue will be our fourteenth. It gets larger each year and thanks are due to Peter Brunning who collates it and searches out the colour photographs from our database to go with the text. He also keeps our blog updated throughout the year, with a good deal of help from Andy Merryweather.

I hope our members will keep up their regular reporting and we again have an interesting year of reports and visits in 2018.

David Farrant

V. Recreation Ground Trees

The Recreation Ground Committee commissioned a survey of the trees around the ground, which was conducted on 4th and 5th December. As a result, a few trees will be felled and other works carried out during 2018. One tree, an Ash tree (see photo 6) close to the school pool, needed urgent attention as it was deemed imminently dangerous. It had “multiple Ganoderma fungal brackets at the base on the south-east side, and black exudation from the trunk in the same location”. It was felled before the end of the school Christmas break.

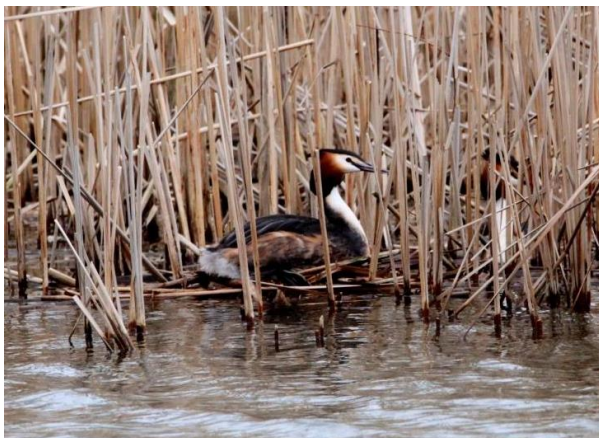
Peter Brunning



7: Lakenheath Fen – 3 June (BMB)



8: Henry Kelly, British Dragonfly Society



9: Great Crested Grebe, Granta Park – 19 Mar (DF)



10: Little Egret, Granta Park – 25 Jun (DLT)



11: Filling bird feeders at the school...



12: and hanging them up – 2 Jan (GAPS)



13: Fallen trees in Sluice Wood...



14: cleared by RiverCare team – 21 Jan (PJB)



15: Grey Wagtail near river – 14 May (AM)



16: Little Egret, Sluice Wood – Mar (JAH)

STOP THE SPREAD

STOP THE SPREAD
INVASIVE AQUATIC SPECIES
CHECK-CLEAN-DRY

Are you unknowingly spreading invasive species on your water sports equipment and clothing?

Invasive species can affect fish and other wildlife, restrict navigation, clog up propellers and be costly to manage. You can help protect the water sports you love by following three simple steps when you leave the water.

CHECK your equipment and clothing for live organisms - particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

CLEAN and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly.
If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

DRY all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions.
Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk and search for **Check Clean Dry**



2. RIVERCARE

I. Overview

Abington RiverCare has two main interests: looking after the stretch of the River Granta next to the playing fields in the village and surveying its flora and fauna. *RiverCare* is a member of the national *RiverCare* organisation <http://www.rivercare.org.uk/> (see below).

On the working day following the last Saturday of the month, we walk through the playing fields along the river and check its condition, picking up litter along the bank and, if possible, from the river. [Volunteers are always welcome at the road bridge at 9:30 a.m.] We look out for, and attempt to eradicate, invasive plants such as **Himalayan Balsam** and **Giant Hogweed** – we removed a small amount of **Himalayan Balsam** from the bank near the cricket field this year but there was not as much as before. We notify landowners or the *Environment Agency* of any issues that need further attention, such as the clearance of larger items of debris, and did remove some fallen trees in Sluice Wood early in 2017. The national *RiverCare* organisation provides equipment, insurance, safety guidelines and other advice.

II. News

There have been changes in our contacts in various places:

- RiverCare: Rob Martyr has moved on but Andrew Walters is back and has been joined by Lottie Williams to cover our area.
- South Cambs: Ecology Officer Rob Mungovan has moved to the Wild Trout Trust.

III. River Sampling 2017

Our reports from the River Granta are submitted in the name of Abington Naturewatch. We now sample at the Ford (Grid ref: TL534489), just upstream of the road bridge.

We use a sampling method based on 3 minutes (1 minute, for each of 3 locations) use of a net, disturbing the river bed by kicking/shuffling just upstream so that material is carried into the net. We supplement this by examining stones and local vegetation for additional specimens. We look mainly for the larvae of some specific species of river flies.

The Riverfly Partnership *abundance* figures are as follows:

1 – 9	category A = (based on a quick count)
10–99	category B = (+ estimated number to nearest 10)
100–999	category C = (+ estimated number to nearest 100)
over 1000	category D = (+ estimated number to nearest 1000)

i. 17th April 2017 at 18:00

3 kick shuffles of 1 minute each

Recorded by: Anne Dunbar-Nobes / Peter Brunning

Weather: Cloudy Bright, dry, cool evening. River low but flowing well

Sampled fauna was mostly very small.

Images: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskTetsng>

Caseless Caddis: B: ca. 15-20

Mayfly Ephemeridae: Nil

Blue-winged Olive: A: ca. 20

Flat bodied up-wings (Heptageniidae): Nil

Olive Baetidae: C: ca. 100

Stoneflies: Nil

Shrimp Gammarus: B: ca. 10-20

Other:

1 Signal(?) crayfish, ca. 3 cm

2 Minnows, ca. 6-7 cm – lively, 1 jumped out of tray – ? 1 male, 1 pregnant female

ii. 28th June 2017 at 17:30

3 kick shuffles of 1 minute each: rock/gravel (best), weed, sand/stones

Recorded by: Anne Dunbar-Nobes / Peter Brunning + Barry, Robin, Ross N, David

Weather: Overcast, 12C. River level raised, flowing fast

Sampled fauna was mostly small.

Cased/Caseless Caddis: Nil

Mayfly Ephemeridae: A: 4

Blue-winged Olive: Nil

Flat bodied up-wings (Heptageniidae): Nil

Olives Baetidae: C: 100+

Stoneflies: Nil

Shrimp Gammarus: C: ca. 200

Other:

8 Signal crayfish: 7 small ca. 2 cm, 1 ca. 6 cm (see pic)

3 hairworms

No fish

iii. 15th August 2017 at 17:30

Recorded by: Anne Dunbar-Nobes/Peter Brunning + David F, Derek & Sally T, Ross N

Weather: Cloudy Bright, dry, ca. 20C. River low

Not very prolific, fly larvae very small.

3 sites: central stream (weed & silt); left bank (gravel & stone); rocky bottom, some silt

Images: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsm2FSQ6S>

Caseless Caddis: A: 1

Mayfly Ephemeridae: Nil

Blue-winged Olive: B: 80+

Flat bodied up-wings (Heptageniidae): Nil

Olives Baetidae: C: 100+

Stoneflies: Nil

Shrimp Gammarus: B: ca. 20

Other:

4 Signal Crayfish, ca. 3-4 cm

2 Stone Loach, ca. 8 cm

2 Minnows, ca. 3 cm – very lively, jumped out of tray

2 Pea Mussel



17: Minnows, R Granta – 17 April (PJB)



18: Signal Crayfish, R Granta – 15 Aug (PJB)

IV. RiverCare & BeachCare Conferences

i. Winter “CamEO” Conference - The Maltings, Ely - 28th February 2017

Richard & Robin attended this conference organised for the “Cam & Ely Ouse catchment partnership”: <http://www.cameopartnership.org/>. There was a trade show and an interesting and informative agenda covering topics such as:

- Opening Remarks (CaBA Policy Context),
- Farming and Land Use (WaterLife Project),
- Habitats (River restoration on the River Lark),
- Coordinated Delivery through Sub-Catchments (including Little Ouse and Thet),
- Invasive Non-native Species (Bourne Brook)

After a break for lunch, there were three workshops in parallel:

1. Gaining project permissions
2. Best practice project delivery
3. Demystifying funding

The conference closed with a review of the day and an overview of the IntCatch monitoring project, an EU initiative for innovative tools to deliver smart water monitoring solutions.

Richard reported:

“Robin and I attended the conference at Ely on 28 Feb as planned. I spoke to Lottie Williams and Andrew Walters, who are proposing to come to Abington to walk the river bank in the Rec and in Sluice Wood. I asked about chainsaw training, but Andrew stated the RiverCare insurance totally excludes chainsaw use.

Among other points we learned about another invasive species, namely **Floating Pennywort** – see [guidance](#). It's been found in Cambridge but not upstream. We also took away the idea that we should test our river water for nitrate and phosphate content, considering the likely run-off from all the arable fields round here.”

ii. Summer Conference – Rutland Water - 29th July 2017

Peter attended this conference which included some team participation!

After introductions, we had a short talk on “Pecha Kucha (Japanese for chit chat)”! This gave us examples of new ways of working, for example 2-minute beach clean: providing bags & bins on beaches for people to pick up and dispose of waste. Various groups spoke of what they'd achieved.

After a short break, we split into small teams to compete in various educational games:

- The Great Throwline Challenge!
- That was close!
- Invasive or Native? Let's get quizzzy!
- Sort it out! Recycling challenge!

They are keen for us to remove non-native species, some very invasive, from our waterways. See section 11.IV for more information.

This was followed by a light-hearted talk on Lee's Ludicrous Litter Finds! We then saw VANEL present their VR game Pipes Away! – one enters a virtual world and zaps away sewer blockages to save our rivers and beaches!

After lunch, we went off to see the Ospreys after a brief update from the team there. We could stay as long as we liked.



19: RiverCare Conference, Rutland Water – 29 July



20: Floating Pennywort – invasive (GBNNS)



21: Himalayan Balsam – invasive (GBNNS)

What are freshwater invasive non-native species?

Animals and plants that have been introduced by human actions to parts of the world outside their natural range are known as non-native species.

Most of these animals and plants do not cause any problems in Great Britain.

However, a few species can cause serious and permanent problems by harming ecosystems. They can be bigger, faster growing or more aggressive than native species, and may also have fewer natural predators to control their numbers. As a result, native species are often unable to compete and the non-native species are able to take over. These species are called invasive non-native species. Freshwater invasive non-native species are non-native plants and animals that have been introduced into GB freshwaters.

22: Please see NNSS...

Floating Pennywort *Hydracotyle ranunculoides*



- Fleshy stems and roundish bluntly toothed leaves held horizontal and generally dissected to the middle
- Flowers without petals, greenish, held erect
- Precludes growth of other aquatic plants
- Obstructs movements of animals and boats preventing navigation and recreational use of watercourses

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/>

V. Other RiverCare Events

i. RiverCare visits to Abington

Lottie and Andrew visited for a walk along the river on Monday 26th June, with Peter, Richard and Robin. They brought some new equipment (notably waders, grappling hook) for us. They spotted a little **Himalayan Balsam** near the cricket nets, which we swiftly removed!

ii. World Rivers Day – 24th September

Abington Woods hosted an informal open day at the former scout campsite for people to access their woodland site, including the river from the north side opposite the Rec Ground.

Peter Brunning

3. BIRDS

I. Members' Reports

Many people have provided reports during the year: without them this report could not be written. These all are recorded and highlights follow here. Because of the detailed report of birds on Granta Park which appears elsewhere in this Record, I have only included Granta Park sightings which have been provided to me by village residents as opposed to people working there and reporting to Andy Merryweather. Lack of easy access for residents later in the year has had an impact on such reports.

January 2017

Regular reports of Grey Wagtails, Little Egrets, Stock Doves and Treecreepers. In addition, Barnacle Geese on Perse playing fields, Fieldfares and Redwings seen in various places. Nuthatch on feeders in two gardens, flock of Golden Plover seen for 3 days towards Abington Park Farm. One report of a Siskin. RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch resulted in 12 reports including one from School and 34 species.

February 2017

Huge (at least 300) flock of Fieldfares towards Abington Park Farm; another flock and one of Redwings on Roman Road. Flock of Linnets on Bourn Bridge Road fields. Bullfinches, Buzzards and Goldcrests all noted. Great Crested Grebes and Meadow Pipits reported on Granta Park. Jays, Blackcap and Stock Dove all reported.

March 2017

Early in month two reports of a raptor almost certainly a male Merlin near track leading south from LSA. Later a Corn Bunting in similar place, Chiffchaffs heard and then seen from 14.3 onwards. Skylarks, Fieldfares and Stock Doves in evidence. Little Owls seen back on Granta Park on 25.3. On 27.3 very probable female/immature Black Redstart seen near Great Abington Church.

April 2017

Several sightings of Sparrowhawks and of Red Kites. First Swallow report on 7.4. Corn Bunting, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Garden Warbler all noted. House Martins seen inspecting nests in centre of village on 23.4. Mallard young and fledged Blackbird seen on 12.4. Buzzards and Little Egrets seen often.

May 2017

Further reports of Warblers including Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. Swifts seen from 5.5. Many Swallows and House Martins over cricket meadow on 17.5. Few reports of Siskins. Cuckoo heard behind Church Close on 17.5 and later in Bourn Bridge Road area. Nuthatch in LA garden.

Bank Holiday weekend survey over the two civil parishes: 8 reports and 48 species.

June 2017

Grey Wagtails seen on river. Swifts in evidence in numbers in LA Churchyard on 22.6. Probable Little Owls behind Church Close. Bullfinches and Little Egrets reported.

July 2017

Early in month up to 3 Little Owls seen on Granta Park site. 8.7: 20/25 Swifts and a Red Kite seen Gt Ab. Good numbers of Swallows on LSA but not Swifts or House Martins. Corn Bunting near track towards Abington Park Farm. **Kingfisher** seen on river and in nearby garden. 31.7: Green Woodpecker and young near GA Church

August 2017

Swifts reported until 18.8. Several reports of a **Kingfisher** from various reaches of the river. Little Egrets in various places on the river and at a pond in a LA garden. House Martins seen in numbers throughout the month. Swallows thought to be about to start third brood on LSA. Nuthatch visiting two gardens. Mistle Thrushes on Perse fields.

September 2017

House Martins last reported on 22.9..Male Blackcap recorded on 2.9. Robins beginning to sing again. Jays, Grey Wagtails and Grey Herons all seen. Chiffchaff seen on 27.9. Flock of 20/30 Long-tailed Tits in GA garden. Red Kite on 30.9.

October 2017

Last Swallow report on 3.10. Redwings recorded from 11/12.10. Jay, Buzzard, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Long-tailed Tits, Goldfinches and Greenfinches all noted.

November 2017

First report of Fieldfares on 7.11 between Chalky Road and Hildersham Wood; also Buzzards and Lapwing. Tawny Owl heard and Little Owl seen flying on LSA. Sparrowhawk, **Kingfisher**, Little Egret, Redwing and Song Thrush sightings.

December 2017

Nuthatch regularly visiting feeder in LA garden. Red Kite on 7.12. Lesser Redpoll on feeder in Gt Ab. Later up to 4 Lesser Redpolls with Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Chaffinch visiting feeder. Jays seen frequently in gardens with Magpies. Fieldfares in numbers on Perse fields on 21.12. Redwings in some numbers in field between Cambridge Road and Church Lane and on 24.12 a **Barn Owl** seen in LA Churchyard while temporary lighting was being set up. Flock of Long-tailed Tits over path from Church Lane to Millennium Bridge.

II. RSPB Garden Birdwatch – seen in Abington – January 2017

12 reports were received, including from Class I at Great Abington Primary School. In total, 31 species were seen, with an additional 3 flying over, a total of 34.

Blackbird	Jay
Blue Tit	Long-tailed Tit
Bullfinch	Magpie
Carrion Crow	Nuthatch
Chaffinch	Pheasant
Coal Tit	Pied Wagtail
Collared Dove	Redwing
Dunnock	Robin
Fieldfare	Rook
Goldfinch	Siskin
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Song Thrush
Great Tit	Starling
Green Woodpecker	Stock Dove
Greenfinch	Woodpigeon
House Sparrow	Wren
Jackdaw	

In addition, these were seen flying over:

Black-headed Gull	Skylark
Buzzard	

A comparison of the 10 most commonly reported species in gardens between Abington, Cambridgeshire and the whole of England is interesting:

<i>Species</i>	<i>Abingtons</i>	<i>Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>England</i>
Blackbird	1=	1	1
Blue Tit	1=	4	4
Robin	1=	2	2
Woodpigeon	1=	3	3
Collared Dove	5=	5	9=
Great Tit	5=	8	6
Chaffinch	7=	10	11
Dunnock	7=	9	8
Long-tailed Tit	9	13	13
Jackdaw	10	15	16

III. Abington Naturewatch Bird Survey - End of May Bank Holiday Weekend

Nine reports were received, and the 48 species below were recorded within the bounds of the two civil parishes. Blackbird, Collared Dove, Robin and WOODPIGEON were the most frequently noted, being recorded on 8 reports.

Blackbird	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Pheasant
Blackcap	Great Tit	Pied Wagtail
Blue Tit	Greenfinch	Reed Bunting
Bullfinch	Green Woodpecker	Red-legged Partridge
Buzzard	Grey Heron	Robin
Canada Goose	Herring Gull	Rook
Carrion Crow	House Sparrow	Skylark
Chaffinch	House Martin	Song Thrush
Chiffchaff	Jackdaw	Starling
Coal Tit	Jay	Stock Dove
Collared Dove	Long-tailed Tit	Swallow
Corn Bunting	Magpie)	Swift
Dunnock	Moorhen	Whitethroat
Goldcrest	Mallard	Woodpigeon
Goldfinch	Mute Swan	Wren
Great Crested Grebe	Nuthatch	Yellowhammer

IV. Outings

Please note that Reports of Outings can be found in Section 9.

Derek Turnidge



23: Swifts in formation – 8 July (AM)



24: Male Blackcap, Lewis Crescent – 22 Jan (AM)



25: Stock Dove – 6 Mar (ADN)



26: Red-Legged Partridge, Rly Cutting – 7 May (AM)



27: Yellowhammer, Rly Cutting – 7 May (AM)



28: Grey Wagtail, Rec Ground – 11 May (DLT)



29: Blackbirds, High St – 13 June (GW)



30: Green Woodpecker – 21 Oct (AM)



31: Goldfinch, Lewis Cresc. – 24 Oct (JG)

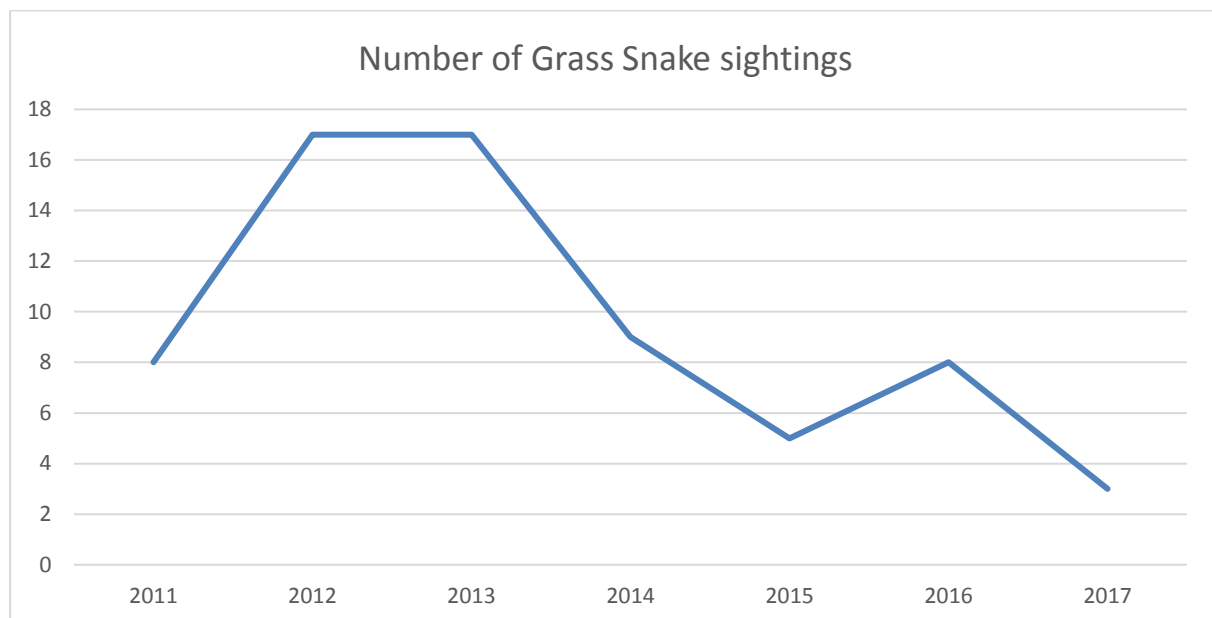
4. REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

I. Summary

This was a quiet year on the amphibian and reptile front, with the presence of **Common Frogs** and Smooth Newts (both tadpoles and adults) being reported sporadically from four ponds in the Abingtons but in no great numbers.

There was a noticeable fall in reports of **Grass Snakes** and **Toads**. Our pond at 41 South Road had Smooth Newts continuously from April to October, but the numbers seemed to be down on previous years. Furthermore, only three reports of **Grass Snakes** were received during the year compared with eight last year and a peak of 17 reported in 2012 and 2013 (see graph).

It is important to note here, however, that the number of reporters has declined in recent years (from 6 regularly reporting individuals to 3 or 4) so this may be a reporting issue rather than a real decline. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see if the tadpole population rebounds given this apparent decline in **Grass Snakes** (which are a major predator of amphibians); in years to come it may be possible to plot a cycle based on the changing abundance of both **Frogs** (tadpoles and adults) and **Grass Snakes**.



32: **Grass Snake**, GP lake (CB)



33: **Common Frog**, Lewis Crescent (AM)

II. Records

i. AMPHIBIANS

Frogs

22 Feb. – adult **frogs** appearing in ponds on the LSA. Some seen squashed on Chalky Rd.

Early to mid-March – 5 **frogs** appeared in pond at 41 South Rd, but all had left by late March without leaving any frogspawn.

April to May – tadpoles found in ponds along South Rd (40 and 41).

14 May – about 6 adult/young **frogs** seen in pond at 41 South Rd, diving about trying to avoid a **Grass Snake**.

June/July – **frogs** seen in small numbers in the pond at 41 South Rd, and surrounding long grass. No sign that the tadpoles survived to become froglets. Possibly predated by Water Boatmen which are very numerous this year.

1 October – one adult **frog**, dark brown in colour, in beetroot patch in garden, 41 South Rd.

8 October – one adult **frog** in vegetation around pond, 41 South Rd.

Early Nov. – one very dark adult **frog** seen leaping across lawn from neighbour to pond at 41 South Rd.

Toads

July/August – occasional adult **toads** disturbed in garden borders, 41 South Rd.

Early Nov. – 3 or 4 **toads**

found in damp areas in tunnel greenhouses at 40 South Rd, presumably looking for places to overwinter.

Newts

Apr./May – Smooth (Common) Newts return to ponds (reports: 41 South Rd, 23 Camb. Rd).

11 May – Smooth Newt reported in pond at 23 Cambridge Rd.

9 July -- Smooth Newt reported in pond at 23 Cambridge Rd.

June/July – smaller number of newts seen at midsummer compared with previous years.

Late July/Aug. – good numbers of very young newts in pond at 41 South Rd (every dip of the net brought out 3 or 4 newts among the pondweed).

Early October – a few young newts found in pond weed removed from pond at 41 South Rd.

ii. REPTILES

Grass Snakes

14 May – one, about 40 cm long, very slender, in pond at 41 South Rd.

14 August – one, about 90 cm long, disturbed by landscapers on Granta Park (Vernalis Building)

5 Oct. – small one (30 cm) behind shed at 41 South Rd.

Common Lizards

23 October – one unconfirmed sighting in West Field (more probably a newt).

5. MAMMALS

Hedgehogs and **Muntjac** have again been reported fairly frequently this year, as have **Bats**.

A group of us went out at dusk in September to Little Abington Churchyard with bat detectors, but I think the **Bats** detected us first, because we didn't see very many. But we spent a very pleasant few hours watching the night fall.

Reports of mammals in Granta Park have fallen dramatically since July because of the restricted access given to Abington residents. No doubt the **Muntjac** will make the most of being undisturbed and I expect to hear of many more appearing in the village in the future.

Other mammals reported to me during the year have been the usual mix of **Hares**, Roe and Fallow Deer, Dead Badgers and Foxes, and the occasional Shrew. One Otter was captured on camera in February in Lagden's Grove as was a POLECAT, or possibly a Ferret.

I. Summary report of mammal sightings:

Species	Location	Date	Comments
Fox	Crossing Cooke's field	05.01.2017	
Fox	Field between LA church & G.Pk	06.01.2017	
Pygmy Shrew	Garden, Cambridge Rd	07.01.2017	Moving logs disturbed it
Fox	Cooke's field	08.01.2017	Large, 3pm in afternoon
Fox	A1307 between bus stops	09.01.2017	Dead at side of road
Muntjac	Sluice wood	08.02.2017	
Fox	Field behind LA church	08.02.2017	Female
Polecat/Ferret	Lagden's grove	13.02.2017	Captured on camera. Could be either
Water Shrew	Garden, LA	16.02.2017	In pond in garden
Otter	Lagden's grove	17.02.2017	Captured on camera.
Hare	Millennium bridge	20.03.2017	Early evening
Muntjac	Recreation ground	22.03.2017	Evening
Mole	Sluice Wood	26.02.2017	
(Fallow Deer)	Hildersham Wood	26.03.2017	Prints in the mud
(Hedgehog)	Garden, Cambridge Rd	03.04.2017	Droppings
Fox	Garden, Cambridge Rd	11.04.2017	
Hedgehog	Garden, Cambridge Rd	11.04.2017	
Bat	Garden, Cambridge Rd	11.04.2017	Unidentified species
Muntjac	Old railway line	17.04.2017	
Baby Vole	Garden	18.04.2017	Discovered in compost bin
Vole	Sluice Wood	20.04.2017	Dead at side of path
Muntjac	Lagden's grove	Feb.Mar.Apr	Frequent sightings.
Muntjac	Garden, High Street, LA	01.05.2017	9am in the morning
Muntjac, Bats	Garden, Cambridge Rd	06.05.2017	Pipistrelles & serotines
Badger	Side A1307	06.05.2017	Dead by side of road
Muntjacs x 3	Garden, Cambridge Rd	06.05.2017	Adult and young
Hedgehog	South Road	13.05.2017	
Hares x 10	Near Hildersham Wood	28.05.2017	Unusual to see so many
(Hedgehog)	Garden, Meadow Walk	31.05.2017	Droppings on lawn
Hedgehog	Perse playing field	22.06.2017	
Muntjac	Field behind garden	10.07.2017	

Brown Hare	Granta Park	25.06.2017	
Bats	Garden in High St, LA	June/July	
Hare	Roman Road	09.07.2017	
Bat	Road bridge	24.07.2017	Clinging to side of bridge in daylight
<i>ABINGTON RESIDENTS NO LONGER HAVE EASY ACCESS TO GRANTA PARK</i>			
Hedgehogs	Garden, Meadow Walk	13.08.2017	One sickly on lawn, one dead in drain
Hedgehogs, bats	Garden, Cambridge Rd	11.04.2017	
Hedgehog	Garden, LA	16.08.2017	Dead in pond
Hedgehog	Garden, Cambridge Rd	27.08.2017	On lawn in middle of day
Mole activity	Garden, Cambridge Rd	04.09.2017	On lawn
Bank vole	Garden, Cambridge Rd	04.09.2017	
Hare	Granta Park	14.10.2017	On cricket field
(Hedgehog)	Garden, Cambridge Rd	25.10.2017	Droppings
Bats	Garden, Cambridge Rd	25.10.2017	Possibly pipistrelles
Badger	Verge by International school	29.10.2017	Dead
Fallow deer	Near Chalky Road	07.11.2017	13 seen
Hare	Near Chalky Road	07.11.2017	
Hare	BB Rd by International School	05.12.2017	Morning
Fox	Pony paddock, LSA	10.12. 2017	Morning
Hedgehog	Garden, High St LA	19.12. 2017	Evening, curled up
Muntjac	Garden, Cambridge Rd	19.12. 2017	Walking through garden

34: **Brown Hare**, Granta Park – 25 June (DLT)35: **Mole**, Sluice Wood – 26 Feb (DF)36: **Hare**, Granta Park – 10 Sept (AM)37: **Fallow Deer tracks**, Hildersham Wood – 26 Mar (DF)

6. INSECTS

This report covers mainly butterflies, bees, dragonflies and damselflies, and also moths and ladybirds. These are the groups that members recognize and can usually identify. Other invertebrates, which are hardly ever reported or identified, are also mentioned at the end.

This was a better year for butterflies, though, due to variable weather, some months were better than others - a mild spring and early summer followed by a wet July and August.

This year I received a total of almost 1400 individual species reports, almost double the number received in each of the last three years.

There are four regular reporters (includes couples) and about eight occasional reporters.

I. Butterflies

Again, this year we saw 21 of the 34 county resident species.

Brimstone butterflies topped the ranking once again being seen all through the summer from February until October. They say that Brimstones can be seen every month of the year!

Large Whites were next, and thirdly the Red Admiral which has had a remarkable year being seen from February to November. One rarity was a single White Admiral seen by Andy Merryweather.

There were increasing numbers of Commas and Speckled Woods, reflecting the national trend.

Small Tortoiseshell numbers were up a bit on last year. Orange Tips were fairly abundant from March to May.

Meadow Browns were up a bit in numbers, but Ringlets and Gatekeepers were down in number again. This may be due to the lack of access to four previously recorded sites, which have all been good habitats for butterflies in previous years. These are:

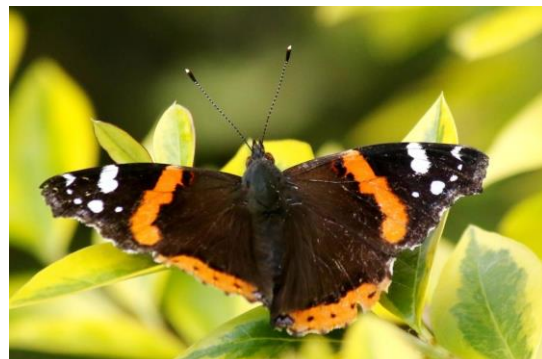
- Cooke's Meadow down the Old Coach Road in LA, due to horses being kept there
- latterly no access to Granta Park
- limited access to the meadow between Church Lane and Cambridge Road;
- the overgrown state of the path along the old railway line in Great Abington.

First butterfly seen outside: Peacock on 8 January 2017

Last butterfly seen: Red Admiral in October 2017



38: Peacock – 3 Feb (AM)



39: Red Admiral – 30 July (AM)

2017 Butterflies ranked by number of sightings (top 12)		
		<i>Last year's ranking</i>
1	Brimstone	1
2	Large White	3
3	Red Admiral	6
4	Small White	2
5	Comma	7
6	Small Tortoiseshell	9
7	Meadow Brown	10
8	Orange Tip	4
9	Peacock	5
10	Holly Blue	8
11	Ringlet	-
12	Gatekeeper	-

Sightings (species to date) are shown in the table as:

- ✓ only one reported sighting in month
- ✓✓ more than one reported sighting in month

The table opposite shows those butterflies seen in Abington in 2017 by month (20 species)



40: Comma – 5 April (AM)



41: Brimstone – 12 Aug (AM)



42: Ringlet – 21 June (EJ)



43: Small Tortoiseshell – 22 June (JAH)

Butterfly name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Notes from <i>Butterflies of Cambridgeshire</i>
Reported in Abington 2017	21 species in 2017										
Large white				✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	<i>Widespread & common</i>
Small white			✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	<i>Widespread & common</i>
Green veined white				✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓		<i>Widespread & common</i>
Brimstone		✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		<i>Widespread & common</i>
Orange tip			✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓						<i>Widespread & common</i>
Small copper						✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓	<i>Widely distributed – not abundant</i>
Common blue					✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓			<i>Widespread & fairly common</i>
Holly blue				✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓	✓			<i>Widespread & common</i>
Red Admiral		✓			✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	<i>Widespread & common</i>
Painted lady					✓✓		✓✓				<i>Common migrant</i>
Small tortoiseshell			✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓			<i>Widespread & common</i>
Peacock	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓			<i>Widespread & common</i>
Comma			✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	<i>Widespread & common</i>
Speckled wood					✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	<i>Widespread & fairly common</i>
Gatekeeper							✓✓✓	✓✓✓			<i>Widespread & common</i>
Meadow brown						✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓			<i>Widespread & common</i>
Ringlet						✓✓✓	✓✓✓				<i>Widespread & common</i>
Marbled white							✓				<i>Uncommon</i>
White admiral							✓				<i>Uncommon</i>
Small heath							✓	✓			<i>Widespread but localised</i>
Small skipper							✓				<i>Widespread & common</i>



44: Common Blue – 17 July (EJ)



45: Painted Lady – 3 June (AM)



46: Marbled White, South Rd – 2 July (ADN)



47: Marbled White, South Rd – 2 July (ADN)



48: Gatekeeper, Lewis Cresc. – 6 July (AM)



49: Green-veined White – 30 July (AM)



50: Small Copper, Camb. Rd – 13 July (DLT)



51: Small Skipper, Camb. Rd – 9 July (DLT)

II. Bees

Bumblebees were reported from February onwards but in much smaller numbers than in previous years; this reflects the national situation. Bumblebees can be very active on the warm spring days, but the erratic weather patterns meant that they did not always have the right food plants in flower. Unusually twelve Red-tailed Bumblebees were seen on 7 December. Fewer reports of Honey Bees this year.

III. Dragonflies and Damselflies

Reports of Dragonflies were mainly Southern Hawkers, Ruddy Darters and Broad-bodied Chasers, but only one report of an Emperor. We learnt more about these at our talk on 24 November which should also help us with identification.

Fewer reports of Damselflies this year but some Azure, Common Blue and Large Red were seen. Several reports of Banded Demoiselles in June and July at their usual haunt on the river by the Millennium footbridge.



52: Four-spotted Chaser Dragonfly – 3 June (AM)



53: Common Blue Damselfly, GP – June (AM)

IV. Ladybirds

Only 5 reports of our native 7 spot Ladybirds. Very few reports of Harlequins.

V. Other

Several reports of Bee-flies in March and April – more people are recognising them now.

Hummingbird Hawkmoths reported in larger numbers from May to October.



54: Dark-edged Bee-fly, Lewis Cresc. – 2 April (AM)

VI. Outings

We organised two outings to see butterflies and damselflies.

June 24 – Wicken Fen

Unfortunately, the outing to Wicken Fen to see dragonflies and damselflies was cancelled since so few people were able to go.

July 29 – Fleam Dyke

This was on a Saturday morning primarily to see the Chalkhill Blue butterflies; apart from a strong wind, we were lucky with the weather. We shall try to repeat this outing every summer as it is not far from home and is always very rewarding.

Full details of outings are in Section 9.

Jennifer Hirsh



55: Black-tailed Skimmer, GP – June (AM)



56: Banded demoiselle, Millennium Bridge – 21 Jun (JAH)



57: Privet Hawk Moth – 4 July (JW)



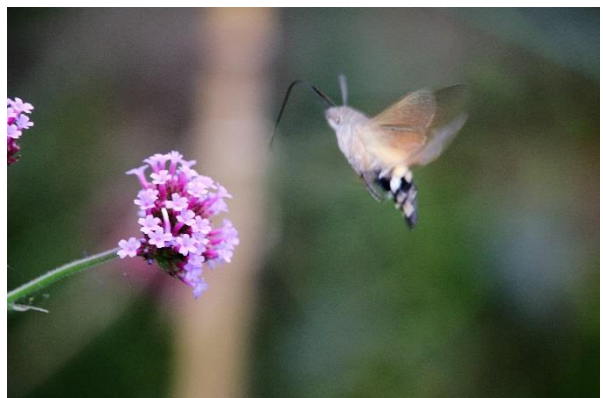
58: Mint Moth, Lewis Cresc. – 9 July (AM)



59: Cinnabar Caterpillars, GP (AM)



60: Elephant Hawk Moth, West Field – 7 Aug (PW)



61: Hummingbird Hawk moth, South Rd – 4 Aug (ADN)



62: Bumble Bee, Lewis Cresc. – 3 Sept (AM)

7. FLORA

The year got off to a good start: many members and their families were able to visit excellent displays of spring flowers in the woods in Granta Park. The flowers were particularly good in the wood towards the old A11. No arrangements had been made to visit as a group, but several people mentioned how nice it had been to walk through the wood.

It had been intended to take a group to the East Pit at Cherry Hinton as this has been a good place to see a variety of chalk loving plants. The flora would have been different from our recent visits in early summer to the beech wood. In early July there appeared to be no flowers at all, but after searching for some time it was possible to identify some tiny specimens almost completely hidden in the grass, due to the hot dry weather in early June, so the proposed visit was cancelled.

I walked the Roman Rd several times and the flora in the Abington section of the road seemed good. Unfortunately, I did not keep a record.

On 29th of July a visit was arranged to visit the Fleam Dyke to see both butterflies and flora. Harebells and picnic thistles were in good supply, we recorded 20 other plants without leaving the main path. More would have been added if we had ventured down the grassy slopes.

After a poor year for Bourn Bridge Rd. protected verges last year, they were better this year. I hope many who walked that way enjoyed them. These were noted on August 28th, 2017.

Common Mallow	Ladies Bedstraw	Hoary Plantain
Common Knapweed	Mugwort	Yarrow, Pink and White
Bladder Campion	Chicory	Teasel.
White Campion	Cow parsley	Common Poppy
Hedge Bedstraw	Dock in seed,	Dandelion
Greater Knapweed	(Curled & Broad leaved)	Wild Basil
Field Scabious	White Dead Nettle	Buttercup.
Common Toadflax	Oxford Ragwort	
Common Ragwort	Hedge Bindweed	

In late August I found some things in flower for a second time and others in seed, hopefully set up for next year.

Creeping Bellflower or *Campanula Rapunculoides* flowered in my garden this year. I thought it was a perennial weed that has been subjected to efforts to eradicate it for 20 years. This year it invaded the asparagus bed. Since it does not flower until late July, it came on unnoticed until it was in full bloom. Another member of my botany group identified it. I was then disappointed to discover it is described as a garden escape in many books, but is also said to like acid soils. Our very chalky patch seems an unlikely spot.

Sally Turnidge



63: Snowdrops, GP – 3 Feb (AM)



64: Catkins, GP – 3 Feb (AM)

8. GRANTA PARK – WILDLIFE SUMMARY 2017

I. Introduction

2017 has seen even more changes on Granta Park, perhaps most significantly with the completion of a new office building and associated car park. The living wall on the car park has been a great success and has flourished beautifully. Last year due to the construction work on these two buildings Lagden's Grove woodland walk was closed, however, with the completion of works on the north side of the Park this path has now reopened and efforts have continued to be made to encourage wildlife to the area. This also allowed us to resurrect our annual bat safari much to the delight of staff.



65: Living Wall – 24 May (GP)



66: Bat Boxes – 24 May (GP)

Over the past year six bat boxes have been installed in Lagden's Grove, yellow rattle was sown on the meadow to encourage species diversity and two new bug hotels have been started. Previous lake improvement works to improve vegetation have most definitely had an impact on local wildlife; this year we have had at least three otter sightings on the Park and stoat were also spotted for the first time.

We continue to encourage staff based on Granta Park to report what they are seeing on their lunchtime walks. Anything of a significant nature is then reported back to Abington Naturewatch.



67: Wild Rattle – 19 May (GP)

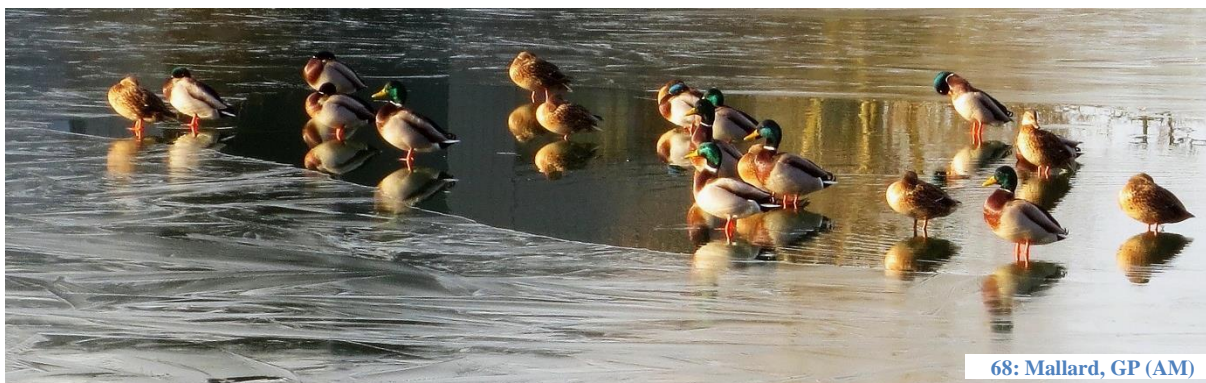
II. Butterflies (contributed by Mike Gittos, TWI)

In 2017 I had to abandon the 'Butterfly Transect' walk, which I have carried out for several years. This is due to a combination of the erection of barriers, building work and changes to the wild area cutting, which have upset the original route.

III. *Birds (contributed by Andy Merryweather, MedImmune)*

A total of 66 bird species were recorded on Granta Park during 2017 – including three species not reported in recent years: Lesser Redpoll, Nuthatch and Marsh Harrier. Very many thanks to all those who contributed their sightings, in a total of around 141 reports. The highlights for each month are summarised below, followed by a tabulated record of all the sightings reported for all species.

January: Flocks of Fieldfare (up to 15), Redwing (10-20) and Meadow Pipit (15-30) were often seen feeding on the cricket green, along with a few Starling and up to 70 Pied Wagtail. Over 100 Mallard and up to eight Moorhen were commonly seen around the lake, along with two Canada Geese on 5th, and a Mute Swan on 31st. Grey Heron were seen regularly by the river, and a Little Egret was spotted twice (19th and 24th). In Sluice Woods, Great Spotted Woodpecker were heard drumming (from 18th onwards), and the mixed flocks of up to 30 Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit and Blue Tit occasionally included a few Coal Tit and Goldcrest. Chaffinch and Goldfinch were commonly reported, with single sightings of a Bullfinch (19th) and two Greenfinch (20th). One or two Buzzard were often seen soaring overhead, with a



68: Mallard, GP (AM)

Kestrel and a Sparrowhawk being seen on occasion. Small numbers of Linnet, Jay and Treecreeper were also occasionally reported, as well as eight Red-legged Partridge.

February: A single Great Crested Grebe returned to the lake on 11th, followed by a second on 22nd, joining the regular Mallard (60) and Moorhen. A single female Reed Bunting was spotted alongside the lake, as was a Little Egret on two occasions (7th, 16th). A flock of 13 Barnacle Geese visited the cricket pitch on 16th and 17th, briefly joining the more regular Black-headed Gull (30), Meadow Pipit (up to 40) and Pied Wagtail. Flocks of 100 Fieldfare and 150 Redwing were reported feeding in the fields alongside the river, and a **Kingfisher** was seen at the sluice (3rd). Mixed flocks of Tits and Finches continued to be seen, including an occasional Coal Tit, Goldcrest or Treecreeper. In Lagden's Grove, a male Blackcap was seen (16th) and a female Bullfinch was spotted feeding on leaf buds. A single Yellowhammer was heard flying over (16th), and a Red Kite was also seen overhead (21st).

March: Barnacle Geese (2-13) and a Mute Swan were seen regularly on the lake throughout month, joining small numbers of Mallard and Moorhen, and occasionally two Canada Geese. The Great Crested Grebe pair was seen regularly, and were spotted 'head-shaking' and nest-building on 9th. Flocks of Meadow Pipit (c.30) and Pied Wagtail continued to be commonly seen on the cricket pitch, whilst the various Tit and Finch species were mostly spotted in pairs now. Chiffchaff were regularly heard singing after 15th, as were Blackcap towards the end of the month. A Little Egret was reported on two occasions, and the Grey Heron pair was seen nest-building



69: Redwing, GP (AM)

by the river. A Little Owl was first seen on 25th, and shortly afterwards the pair was seen mating near their nest site. Green Woodpecker were quite often seen, and up to six Linnet were spotted on rough ground. A Kestrel was reported being mobbed by Pied Wagtails, and one or two Buzzard were often reported. Redwing and Fieldfare were still occasionally seen, with the last reports being on 23rd and 31st, respectively.

April: Two Canada Geese and three Mute Swan were seen on the lake, followed by eight Greylag Geese (29th), joining the very few remaining Mallard. A Grey Heron was seen fishing in the lake shallows (5th), and the first Swallow (20th) and House Martin (21st) of the season were spotted over the lake. A single Great Crested Grebe was seen on several occasions, with its mate presumably being on their nest in the reeds. Two singing male Reed Bunting, plus a female, were reported in the reedbed (4th). Singing Blackcap and Chiffchaff were also regularly reported, as well as Song Thrush. Three fledged juvenile Robin were seen on 19th, and a Blackbird was seen collecting food early in the month, presumably to feed to young. A single Little Owl was spotted occasionally near the rubble heap where the pair was believed to be nesting. A Grey Wagtail was seen near the sluice, and occasional sightings of Meadow Pipit, Goldcrest, Jay, Coal Tit and Treecreeper were also reported. Up to seven Buzzard were seen and heard soaring overhead.



70: Greylag Geese, GP (AM)

May: On the lake, a single Great Crested Grebe was seen regularly, with both adults being seen off the nest on 22nd, but no young were visible. Two Canada Geese and two Mute Swan were also occasionally seen on the lake. In the reedbed, a Reed Warbler was first heard singing on 13th, and a single Reed Bunting was spotted on two occasions. Two young Grey Heron were seen in their nest by the river, and unusually for the season, a Little Egret was reported near the sluice on 13th. Blackcap and Chiffchaff were reported regularly. The first Swift were heard screaming over the lake on 15th, and a single Swallow was reported on 22nd. No House Martin were seen this month, and it was noted that many of the nest sites, used previously on buildings around the park, had been netted off this year. Occasional reports of Stock Dove, Skylark, Jay and Linnet were also noted.

June: Up to five Canada Geese and three Mute Swan remained on the lake throughout the month, alongside increasing numbers of Mallard (up to 70). Sadly, the remains of an adult Great Crested Grebe was found near the lake on 1st, potentially predated by an otter, with only a single bird being reported on the lake after that. Two juvenile Grey Heron remained visible on the nest, with an injured adult bird also being reported on 2nd. A Little Egret was seen by the lake on 25th. The first Spotted Flycatcher returned on 7th, with a pair then seen regularly until 16th, near a previously used nest site. It seems the pair did not stay to nest this year though, allowing none of the birds ringed last year to be recovered. A few singing Blackcap and Chiffchaff were reported, with a Reed Warbler heard singing on 26th. Twelve House Martin were seen over cricket pitch (26th), with Swift seen over the lake on several occasions. A Grey Wagtail adult and juvenile were seen feeding near the sluice (7th), a Great Tit with two fledged young (14th), and an adult and juvenile Green Woodpecker were seen (26th).



71: Young Grey Heron on nest, GP

Buzzard and Kestrel were occasionally seen, as were Greenfinch, Jay and Linnet. Unusually for Granta Park, seven Lapwing were reported flying overhead on 15th.

July: A single Great Crested Grebe was reported until 19th, with a Canada Goose and a Mute Swan occasionally seen on the lake, alongside the few regular Moorhen and Mallard. Chiffchaff continued to be heard, as were Blackcap until the last report on 15th, with Reed Warbler last reported on 19th. A few House Martin and a single Swallow were also seen occasionally, and Swift were last reported on 19th. Three Little Owl were spotted together on 4th and 6th, with one bird seen being fed away from the nest site, indicating that the pair successfully bred this year. Many thanks go to the various building contractors, and to Tracy Thomas at Granta Park, for ensuring that the site remained undisturbed until August. A pair of Wren was also spotted with a fledged youngster. One or two Green Woodpecker were regularly seen feeding on rough grassland. Red Kite was seen overhead on 6th, and single reports of Jay, Kestrel, Linnet and Mistle Thrush were also noted.



72: Little Owl near nest, GP (AM)

August: A quiet month, both for the birds and reports. A few Moorhen, and up to 60 Mallard now mostly in eclipse plumage, were seen on the lake, but the single Great Crested Grebe was reported only once on 8th. Up to 80 House Martin were seen gathered over the trees near Abington Hall on 21st, with small numbers of Swallow seen occasionally, the last report being on 22nd. A **Kingfisher** was spotted near the sluice on 14th, and a single Grey Heron was reported near the river, with the young now reported to have left the nest. Eleven Barnacle Geese were seen on the cricket pitch from 15th. Buzzard were seen occasionally, as were single Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Dove and Treecreeper.

September: Excitingly, a Nuthatch was spotted near Abington Hall on 11th, the first report here for many years. Small numbers of Treecreeper, Goldcrest and Coal Tit were also seen in the same area. Three Grey Heron, including at least one juvenile, were seen by the river on 4th. Small flocks of Goldfinch (c.20) also with young, were seen on the MedImmune feeders, and a flock of c.50 juvenile Starling was also reported. A few Chiffchaff were heard singing, and small numbers of House Martin were occasionally seen, with last reports for both being on 11th. Up to 40 Mallard, still largely in eclipse, were seen by the lake. A Buzzard and Sparrowhawk were both reported on 11th, as well as seven Red-legged Partridge on rough ground. Stock Dove were seen, and Herring Gull were reported passing overhead.



73: Nuthatch, GP (AM)

October: The Nuthatch continued to be seen, and two Lesser Redpoll, another rarity on Granta Park, were heard and seen flying overhead on 23rd. On the lake, up to 70 Mallard were joined on several occasions by up to four Mute Swan, including one juvenile, and a single Great Crested Grebe. A small number of Reed Bunting were observed roosting in the reedbeds. A flock of Barnacle Geese (13) were seen regularly on the cricket pitch from 23rd, as well as smaller numbers of Black-headed Gull on 23rd. Meadow Pipit (up to 39) also returned to the cricket pitch for a few days from 23rd, joining the groups of Pied Wagtail. A small number of Redwing were first seen on 12th near Abington Hall, and a single Fieldfare was first spotted overhead on 25th. Six Stock Dove, as well as Goldfinch and Chaffinch, were seen around the bird feeders, and a Kestrel was seen hovering around the buildings. A Buzzard was occasionally seen overhead, and a Little Egret was spotted near the river (23rd). Several Green Woodpecker, and small numbers of Greenfinch, Dunnock, Goldcrest and Mistle Thrush were noted.

2017 Total: 66 Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Barnacle Goose		2	5					3		4	4		18
Blackbird	15	6	14	4	4	3	4	3	2	4	4	4	67
Blackcap		1	3	5	2	3	6						20
Black-headed Gull		5	4							1		3	13
Blue Tit	14	7	14	3	4	2	1	3	4	4	4	2	62
Bullfinch	1	1		1									3
Buzzard	10	4	5	6		2		3	1	3	1	3	38
Canada Goose	1		2	2	3	4	4						16
Carrion Crow	11	6	11	2	3	4	4	1	2	4	2	4	54
Chaffinch	10	5	12	2	4	2	1			1	3	1	41
Chiffchaff			11	5	4	1	3		2				26
Coal Tit	4	2	4	1					1				12
Collared Dove	2							1					3
Dunnock	4	6	10	1			1			1		1	24
Fieldfare	14	4	3							1		4	26
Goldcrest	3	1		1					2	2		2	11
Goldfinch	10	7	12	3	3	3	3	2	4	5	3	3	58
Great Crested Grebe		4	13	4	4	4	6	1		3			39
Great Spotted Woodpecker	9	1	2	1	3			1	2			3	22
Great Tit	13	7	13	3	4	2	2	2	4	6	3	4	63
Green Woodpecker	3	4	8	3	1	2	5	3	1	4	1	2	37
Greenfinch	1	1	2			1				1	1	2	9
Grey Heron	11	3	8	5	3	3		1	1	2	1	4	42
Grey Wagtail				1		1						2	4
Greylag Goose				2									2
Herring Gull									2				2
House Martin				1		1	4	4	2				12
Jackdaw	11	5	12	2	3	2	4	1	1	5	4	4	54
Jay	2	1		1	2	1	1					1	9
Kestrel	2	1	5			1	1			2	1	2	15
Kingfisher		1						1			1		3
Lapwing						1							1
Lesser Redpoll										1			1
Linnet	2	1	4	1	1	1	1						11
Little Egret	2	2	2		1	1				2			10
Little Owl			3	2			5						10
Long-tailed Tit	6	6	5	1	2	1	1		3	4	1	3	33
Magpie	11	5	9	2	3	2	2	1	2	5	2	4	48
Mallard	14	7	15	4	4	4	6	3	3	6	4	4	74
Marsh Harrier												1	1
Meadow Pipit	14	4	10	1						3			32
Mistle Thrush	5	1	5	3			1	1		1			17
Moorhen	11	7	11	4	1	1	3	2	3	3	4	4	54
Mute Swan	1		7	4	3	4	1			4	1		25
Nuthatch									1	4	2		7
Pheasant	1	1	6	1									9
Pied Wagtail	14	6	12	3	2	3	3	2	3	5	3	2	58
Red Kite		1					1						2
Red-legged Partridge	1		1	1					1		1		5
Redwing	16	2	4							4	2	4	32
Reed Bunting		1	1	2	2					1		1	8
Reed Warbler					4	1	3						8
Robin	13	7	14	5	4	2	3	3	3	5	3	4	66
Rook	4	3	11	1	3	2	1			1	2	4	32
Skylark					1								1
Song Thrush	2	2	3	4	2	2	3	2	1		1		22
Sparrowhawk	3	1							1			1	6
Spotted Flycatcher						3							3
Starling	8	5	8	4	2	1	1	1	4	2	1	3	40
Stock Dove	4	2	3	1	1				1	1	1		14
Swallow				1	1		2	2					6
Swift					1	3	4						8
Treecreeper	2	2	1	1				1	1				8
Woodpigeon	11	6	8	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	56
Wren	5	8	14	4	3	3	6	1	2	4	3	2	55
Yellowhammer		1											1
Total Reports: 141	22	13	22	18	10	10	9	7	5	9	4	12	1569

November. The Nuthatch was seen twice, with small numbers of Redwing seen feeding on berries at the same location. The Barnacle Geese continued to be seen on the cricket pitch, and up to 50 Mallard were joined on the lake by a juvenile Mute Swan (6th). A **Kingfisher** was reported near the sluice (6th). Five Red-legged Partridge were seen, as were occasional Buzzard, Kestrel and Stock Dove.

December: A female Marsh Harrier was spotted flying over the parking groves on 11th, a rarity for Granta Park. A small murmuration of c.400 Starling was seen coming into roost in the reedbeds on 5th, with a Sparrowhawk spotted trying, but failing to catch one. Reed Bunting were also seen roosting in reeds, with up to 100 Mallard and 4 Moorhen on the lake. A Grey Wagtail was seen twice near the sluice, and one or two Grey Heron were seen several times near the river, both in the fields and roosting in an old oak tree. In Sluice Woods, small mixed flocks of Tit and Finch species started to be seen, with Goldcrest and Dunnock occasionally being spotted amongst them. Four Wren were also seen in the woods, as well as a Jay. A few Fieldfare were seen on several occasions in the fields near the river, as well as several Redwing in the trees nearby. A female Kestrel was seen hunting from the buildings, and up to 23 Black-headed Gull were seen on the cricket pitch.

*The table opposite indicates the number of occasions each bird species was reported, by month; the darkness of the blue shading representing the relative number of reported sightings. The pale red shading in the first column indicates those species seen in 2017, but not reported in recent years. **Contributors:** Lee Barber (BTO), Chrissy Bidwell, Peter Brunning, Laura Dalton, David Farrant, MedImmune, Andy Merryweather, Joanna Pang, Gareth Rees, Tracy Thomas, Derek Turnidge.*

IV. General Wildlife (contributed by Darren Bast, MedImmune)

The central cricket pitch and adjoining wild flower meadow still hold plenty of habitat and are abundant with flora and fauna. I have placed five new refugia tiles around the lake meadow in the hope of attracting some herpetofauna.

Over the course of the year I recorded seventeen species of dragonfly and twenty-five different species of butterfly, including Dark Green Fritillary and White Letter hairstreaks.

Camera traps in the wooded area produced lots of mammal activity including fox, muntjac, polecat and otters on the river Granta. A recording of an otter can be viewed by visiting the following link <https://youtu.be/GLGe-3hm2js>

I have also begun to contribute a monthly wildlife section to the Granta Park newsletter. In this I report what I have seen over the previous month. For example, in December I reported that starling murmuration numbers swelled to over 500. This is a great platform for highlighting what wildlife other staff at the Park may be able get out and see. The addition of this section to the newsletter has proved to be very popular.

V. Wildlife related events held on Granta Park during 2017

26 April

At the end of April, Iain Webb from The Wildlife Trust met a group of Granta Park staff and a few members of Abington Naturewatch for a Dawn Chorus Walk followed by breakfast at the Discovery Café. During the walk Iain helped us identify the beautiful calls we heard walking through the woods and alongside the River Granta.

24 May

During June, Iain returned to the Park to lead our Annual Bat Safari. Daubenton's **bats** were spotted over the lake.



74: Bat Safari – 24 May (GP)



76: Wildlife Talk – Riverside mammals – 28 June (GP)



75: Dawn Chorus – 26 April (GP)

27 June

Iain joined us again to share his excellent talk on riverside mammals. This was well attended, and we got some great feedback.

7 November

Peter Walker, from The Wildlife Trust, returned to Granta Park to lead our annual fungi foray. Species seen were:

Scientific Name	English Name	Comments
<i>Auricularia mesenterica</i>	Tripe Fungus	On dead logs
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Wood Jelly-ear	On dead Elm
<i>Conocybe sub ovalis</i>		In grass
<i>Coprinus sp</i>	Ink Cap	Too old to identify
<i>Crepidotus sp</i>	Oysterling	Too small, old & dry to identify
<i>Galerina laevis</i>		In mosses
<i>Haplophilus nidulans</i>	Cinnamon Bracket	Old specimens on branch
<i>Hebeloma crustuliniforme</i>	Poison Pie	Trooping under Oak
<i>Hygrophorus conica</i>	Blackening Waxcap	In grass
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	Sulphur Tuft	Immature specimen on wood
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash	On twigs
<i>Marasmius rotula</i>	Collared Parachute	On twigs
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Common Bonnet	On dead wood
<i>Mycena olida</i>	Rancid Bonnet	In mosses on logs
<i>Mycena pura var rosea</i>	Rosy Bonnet	In litter
<i>Micena vitalis</i>	Snapping Bonnet	In litter
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	Deer Shield	On wood
<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Tar Spot	On Sycamore leaves
<i>Tricholoma sculptratum</i>	Yellowing knight	In grass under trees

List compiled by Peter Walker

9. VISITS OUT OF THE ABINGTONS

I. *Bird Outings*

i. **WWT Welney - Sunday 4th March 2017**

Eight Abington Naturewatch members attended the trip to WWT Welney organised by Derek Turnidge on the morning of 4th March 2017. The weather was kind, being dry with a little sunshine, and thirty-nine bird species were seen. Among the highlights were a Great White Egret, a large flock of Golden Plover seen on Lady Fen, as well as the Whooper Swan and a flock of Black-tailed Godwit seen from the main observatory. The complete list was:

Avocet	Great White Egret	Pintail
Black-headed Gull	Grey Heron	Pochard
Black-tailed Godwit	Greylag Goose	Reed Bunting
Blue Tit	Herring Gull	Shelduck
Carrion Crow	Jackdaw	Shoveler
Chaffinch	Lapwing	Snipe
Coot	Little Egret	Starling
Cormorant	Magpie	Teal
Egyptian Goose	Mallard	Tree Sparrow
Gadwall	Moorhen	Tufted Duck
Golden Plover	Mute Swan	Whooper Swan
Goldfinch	Oystercatcher	Wigeon
Great Tit	Pied Wagtail	Woodpigeon



77: Whooper Swans (DF)



78: Black-tailed Godwit (DF)



79: Male Wigeon (DF)



80: Egyptian Goose (DF)

ii. RSPB Lakenheath Fen – Saturday, 3rd June 2017



81: Visit to Lakenheath Fen – 3 June (PJB)



82: Reed Bunting – 3 June (BMB)



83: Four-spotted Chaser – 3 June (BMB)



84: Drinker Moth caterpillar – 3 June (AM)

A good group (17 people) met at 10:00; we had an introductory talk by an RSPB Volunteer when we arrived. The weather was good. We walked along a well-maintained path, stopping to eat our packed lunches at the west end of the public area. We then returned to the car park, most of us following the river back, about 3.5 miles walk in all.

There is a good walk through a varied wetland habitat, mostly reeds and grazing marshes, with some poplars, the remains of a Bryant and May matchwood plantation. The railway forms the south boundary and the river the north.

We saw a good number of birds, insects and flowers, including 43 species of birds:

Bittern	Great Tit	Oystercatcher
Black-headed Gull	Greenfinch	Pheasant
Blackbird	Grey Heron	Redshank
Buzzard	Greylag Goose	Reed Bunting
Carrion Crow	Hobby	Reed Warbler
Cetti's Warbler	Jay	Robin
Chaffinch	Kestrel	Rook
Chiffchaff	Lapwing	Sedge Warbler
Common Tern	Little Egret	Stonechat
Coot	Long-tailed Tit	Tufted Duck
Cormorant	Magpie	Whitethroat
Cuckoo	Mallard	Woodpigeon
Gadwall	Marsh Harrier	Wren
Goldfinch	Moorhen	
Great Crested Grebe	Mute Swan	

II. *Insects & Flora Outings*

i. **Fleam Dyke – Saturday July 29th 2017**

This was primarily to see the Chalkhill Blue butterflies; it is a wonderful site for them and, apart from a strong wind, we were lucky with the weather. Nine members came, and we saw many Chalkhill Blues as well as other butterflies including a Painted Lady. On a still warm sunny morning, we would have seen more.

The butterflies we saw were: Small White, Large White, Brimstone, Red Admiral, Peacock, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Chalkhill Blue.

Jennifer Hirsh

List of Flora:

Harebells
Knapweed
(both Common and Great)
Teasel
Common Rock Rose
Ladies Bedstraw
Yarrow
Squintwort
Quaking Grass

Birdsfoot Trefoil
Lesser Hawkbit
Wild Parsnip
Field Scabious
Carline Thistle
Dark Mullein
St John's Wort
(probably Slender)
Goat's-beard seed heads

Smooth Catsear
Lesser Trefoil
Mignonette
Picnic Thistle
Hedge Bedstraw
Toadflax
Bush Vetch

Sally M Turnidge

10. FUNGI

There were many reports of fungi this year and quite a few photographs – selection below:



85: *Hypholoma fungi* on rotting stump, GP – 7 Jan (AM)



86: Common Earthball fungus, GP – March (AM)



87: Fungi on dead wood, Church Lane – 25 May (PJB)



88: Fungi, Sluice Wood – 15 July (DLT)

11. REFERENCES

I. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)

CPERC (<http://www.cperc.org.uk/>) collates, manages and stores data that describe biodiversity in the local area. It is the main source of natural history and protected species information for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. In the past we have provided some of our records to them, notably about native species in decline and undesirable non-native species. This issue of the Record highlights these species in **red**.

Native species in decline: Otter, Water Vole, Bats, Brown Hare, Adder, Grass Snake, Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Great Crested Newt, Common Toad, Common Frog, Scarce Chaser Dragonfly, Wall Brown butterfly, Kingfisher, Barn Owl

Invasive non-native species: Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, Floating Pennywort, Parrot's Feather, Giant Hogweed, Creeping Water Primrose, New Zealand Pigmyweed, Muntjac deer, American Mink, Chinese Water Deer

CPERC now has an online recording website *CPERC Record* where you can submit wildlife sightings for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. To get started, log in or register at www.cperc-record.org.uk.

II. Local Wildlife organisations

Wildlife Trust (for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire): <http://www.wildlifebcn.org/>

III. RiverCare

A small group of NatureWatch members make up the Abington RiverCare team, which is affiliated to the regional *RiverCare* organisation <http://www.rivercare.org.uk/>. This, together with *BeachCare*, is run in East Anglia by [Keep Britain Tidy](#), a national environmental charity, in partnership with [Anglian Water](#).

IV. GB non-native species secretariat (GBNNS)

The GB Invasive Non-native Species Strategy was developed to meet the challenge posed by invasive non-native species in Great Britain. See <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/>.

V. Cam Valley Forum

RiverCare members also occasionally attend Cam Valley Forum events. This is a voluntary group, established in 2001, which works to protect and improve the environment of the River Cam and its tributaries – see <http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/cam.valley.forum/>.

VI. Naturewatch documents:

Flora Abingtonia 2008, compiled by Pat Daunt:

<http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/site/assets/files/1179/flora-abingtonia-full.pdf>

River Sampling 2006-2011

<http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/site/assets/files/1179/riversampling.pdf>

Bird species noted in the Abingtons – a summary compiled by Derek:

http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/site/assets/files/1179/abington_naturewatch_bird_list_-161112.pdf

"What's that bird?" – by Andy M:

- Warblers <https://goo.gl/eFXYZo> and Buntings <https://goo.gl/8BhaLx>
- Raptors: Falcons <https://goo.gl/wunx4b> and Accipiters <https://goo.gl/QUhpeK>

12. CONTACT INFORMATION

I. The Abington Naturewatch Website

The Abington Naturewatch Website is maintained as a *blog* (i.e. web log) at <http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/>. Using a blog means that it is simpler to publish material in diary form. It is easily reached from the village web-site <http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/>: there is also a Naturewatch page under **Clubs**, which gives access to past issues of *The Record*.

The blog 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 is a link to a simple Google map of the area, with the names we use to refer to some parts of the area covered. There are also reports and photographs submitted by members and some useful links to other sources of information.

Naturewatch Home Page:

Abington Naturewatch

This is a place to post sightings and news for the Naturewatch group of Great and Little Abington in Cambridgeshire, UK. See below for more details and information on how to join.

Sunday, 31 December 2017


Diseased Ash tree on Recreation Ground

The Abington Recreation Ground committee commissioned a survey of the trees and regrets to advise that the Ash tree behind the school pool is diseased and will have to be felled very soon. It has a bracket fungus growing on it which will feed on it and reduce it to pulp!

"This tree has, at the base, on the side facing the school boundary, brackets of Ganoderma wood decay fungus and along with that, considerable internal decay at the base of the 'white rot' type. This destroys lignin, leaving cellulose behind. The effect is to destroy the compressive strength of the wood, leaving behind a stringy, pulpy mass."


Take care if you wish to bid the tree farewell!

27 December 2017




Resources



- [Events Calendar](#)
- [Naturewatch Programme](#)
- [Archive of older material](#)



Blog Archive

- 2007 (18)
- 2008 (19)
- 2009 (21)
- 2010 (18)
- 2011 (35)
- 2012 (30)
- 2013 (32)
- 2014 (49)
- 2015 (54)
- 2016 (62)
- ▼ 2017 (58)
 - January (3)
 - February (2)
 - March (6)
 - April (6)
 - May (6)
 - June (7)
 - July (11)
 - August (9)
 - September (2)
 - October (4)
 - ▼ December (2)
 - Snowdrops in December - early?
 - Diseased Ash tree on Recreation Ground



II. The Abington Naturewatch Project Team and Sectors

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