



# ABINGTON NATUREWATCH

The Record  
2020

Records the activities of Abington Naturewatch for 2020, which were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.





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*Many thanks to all those, especially new members, who submitted observation records and photographs for use in the Blog and this Record. Please keep it up, with as many photographs as possible.*

*To keep in touch during the year, please visit the Blog:*

<http://abington-naturewatch.blogspot.com/>

#### **Notes:**

In this document, GA stands for Great Abington, GP for Granta Park and LA for Little Abington; BBR is Bourn Bridge Road; ORC is Old Railway Cutting; LSA is the former Land Settlement Association area (North, South, Chalky and Cutting Roads).

- i. All photographs were taken in 2020, unless noted. Photographers are: Andy Merryweather (AM), Anne Dunbar Nobes (ADN), Barry Brooks (BMB), Ben Olley (BO), Carol McCrae (CMcC), Darren Bast (DB), David Farrant (DF), Derek Turnidge (DLT), Esme Langford (EL), Gill Croft (GC), Gill Smith (GS), Jennifer Hirsh (JAH), John Turner (JT), Peter Brunning (PJB), Sean Dennis (SD)
- ii. There were no visits out of Abington this year due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- iii. For contact details for all sectors, please refer to the back page.
- iv. Abington Naturewatch covers the area of Great and Little Abington: from the Roman Road south to the Essex border and from the A11 east to Hildersham parish. A map showing local names of the main areas is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/scdmlth>

*Front Cover photographs*

1: Bee Orchid - 25 Jun (AM)

2: Flooding on the Rec - 24 Dec (PJB)

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## **1. Foreword**

### ***I. 2020 the Coronavirus Year and Lockdowns***

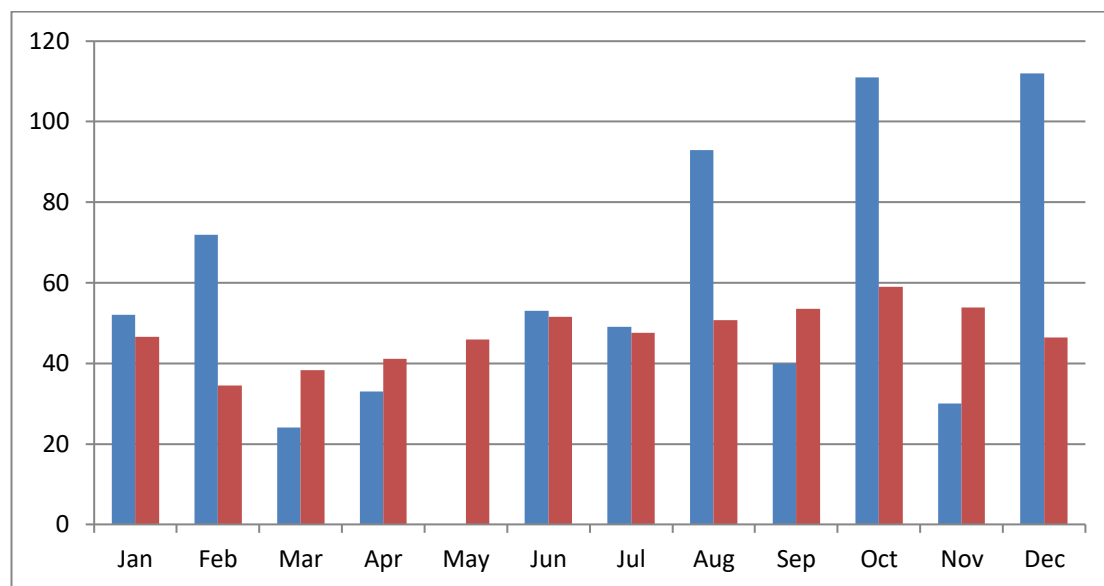
2020 started off as a normal year, with Naturewatch plans for visits to Lackford Lakes, Kingfisher Bridge, Fleam Dyke and the Bird Fair planned, together with our normal Spring and Autumn Members' meetings. Then the Coronavirus arrived, and our best laid plans came to nothing. However, as people were asked to work from home and isolate themselves, apart from local walks, it seemed that gardens and the local Abington environment became much more important and a source of wellbeing. As a result, we have seen a large increase in reports sent to our recorders and photos sent in for the Blog. We also continued our monthly summary on the blog where we summarised the previous month's highlights for easy reference. These together with ID competitions and some garden bird recording have provided support to our members.

### ***II. Weather***

The weather in 2020 seemed to fall into four main parts. The spring was mild with a wet month in February and a stormy period in early March. The months of April, May (no rainfall was recorded) and early June were very dry. This weather pattern produced difficulties for gardeners and farmers with a need for watering plants. The summer months produced some short periods of high temperatures in the 30°C range, with one record of 37.3°C in July which was also a windy month. August in comparison was a very calm and pleasant month. The autumn was also mild with high rainfall of 111 mm in October and windy spells and frosts in November. December was a wet month again with high river levels and early wet snow which added to the muddy conditions. Just before Christmas, the Granta river valley produced flooding in several places including our own playing field and Sluice Wood.

There is growing concern at the change in weather patterns in the country linked to climate change. Whilst we have not seen the extent of flooding seen in other parts of the country, this year we have seen a very dry period in April, May and early June and heavy rain in February and December leading to local flooding. This pattern produced very low water levels in the River Granta for much of the summer but also high river levels after the rain in February and December. The low flow levels do not help keep the river clear but high flow levels after heavy rain does clean the river bed. Much has been written in the local press this summer about the low levels of the rivers and aquifers in Cambridgeshire. This is partly due to dry conditions but there is also growing concern at the abstraction of water from the chalk aquifers to satisfy the increase in new houses being built and planned for the county.

We have seen some effects of the weather locally in our reports this year. The mild spring meant that butterflies appeared early and prospered over the long dry summer period and late into the autumn. However, the British Trust for Ornithology has suggested that, due to the mild start to the year, birds like Blue Tits nested early and missed the period when caterpillars and insects are needed to feed youngsters. At the other end of the year, some reports have noted few birds coming to feeders during the autumn and early winter. This is thought to be due to birds staying out in the fields and hedgerows as natural food was plentiful but also possible effects from the early breeding problems. Certainly, with the cold weather that arrived in December, the numbers coming to feeders has improved although there are now new concerns about Bird Flu.

**Abington Rainfall for 2020 (blue) compared to Average (red) in mm.***Abington Rainfall 2020**Source of average (1981 to 2010) - Cambridge*

### ***III. Granta Park***

The virus has also had an effect on Granta Park with many staff working from home and the site locked down. This meant that the normal access to Project Team members was closed off but fortunately one of our members was able to continue to supply reports from walks around the Park.

We are grateful to Granta Park for the continued support of Naturewatch through the award of a small annual grant. This goes towards the printing of the Record and the hire of the Institute for meetings.

### ***IV. Naturewatch Members***

This year in an effort to make our information more readily available and up to date, we have continued to produce a monthly summary report on the Naturewatch Blog which forms part of the village website. This summarises the weather and the reports of what has been seen during the month. It has been well received by members particularly in this difficult year. If you have not seen the blog, the access details are presented at the end of the Record.

The Record has been produced since 2005 and has recorded the wildlife of the area every year since. It could not be produced without the reports from members and the work of our project team in assembling the data, the photographs, writing the reports and putting the Record and Blog together. Unfortunately, we have not been able to carry out our planned programme of visits this year but hope 2021 will allow us to do so.

I would especially like to record Naturewatch's thanks to Anne Dunbar-Nobes who has moved to Scotland and has supported Naturewatch since 2005, regularly reporting on the Land Settlement and the area around Hildersham Woods. Setting up Abington RiverCare was her initiative and more recently she has reported on Reptiles and Amphibia. We shall miss Anne and Ross and wish them all the best in the north. We hope to get some reports from their new area when they are settled in.

As with many organisations it is difficult to find volunteers. We have a vacancy on our project team. If you have some spare time, interested in nature and able to help Naturewatch. We shall be very pleased to see you.

David Farrant



## 2. A Photographic Diary



3: 2 Jan – Starling murmuration, GP (AM)



4: 20 Jan – Snowdrops in Sluice Wood, GP (AM)



5: 8 Mar – Storms, debris in river at old sluice (AM)



6: 8 Mar – Storm damage, GP (AM)



7: 6 Mar – River Sampling, Abington Ford (PJB)



8: 12 Jul – Scabious, BBR Protected Verge (DF)



9: 12 Jul – German wasp nest, Church La. – (GC)



10: 13 Aug – Himalayan Balsam, GP (invasive) (AM)





11: 24 Sep – Plenty of berries, incl. Haws (AM)



12: 7 Oct – Squirrel feasts on Sunflower (AM)



13: 15 Nov – Sunrise from Chalky Road (AM)



14: 14 Nov – Early view west on Roman Road (AM)



15: 6 Dec – High River, Sluice Wood (DF)



16: 14 Dec – Snow had fallen... (AM)



17: 26 Dec – Millennium Bridge, river in flood (DLT)



18: 26 Dec – Lagden's Grove from Bourn Bridge (PJB)



### 3. RIVERCARE

#### I. Overview

*Abington RiverCare* is a member of the national *RiverCare* organisation and 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.

On the last Monday in the month except for bank holidays, when it is the next working day, 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 occasionally remove a small amount of Himalayan Balsam from the bank near the cricket ground but there is now less than before. We notify landowners or the *Environment Agency* of any issues that need further attention, such as the clearance of larger items of debris. The national *RiverCare* organisation provides equipment, insurance, safety guidelines and other advice.

We paused most activities due to COVID restrictions during the year, but resumed litter-picking in a small, socially distanced group in the summer.

The River Granta had low flows for much of the year but heavy rains in November and December have helped to clear out the channel and any debris. There was local flooding for a few days in December, including the Recreation Ground: see front cover.

#### II. News

##### i. Contacts

We have seen few of our contacts this year, due to COVID. They include:

- RiverCare: <http://www.rivercare.org.uk/>. Lynsey Stafford, who lives in Cambridge, is our main contact. Andrew Walters is project manager.
- Wildlife Trust: Ruth Hawksley visited in October to help us repeat a sampling session after a particularly poor result. The second event yielded a better result, but still low after the drought conditions in 2019.
- South Cambs District Council: We have had little contact on river matters since Ecology Officer Rob Mungovan moved to the Wild Trout Trust.
- Environment Agency: we do not have regular contact but have met John Findlay in connection with River Sampling. He monitors our records.

#### III. River Sampling

##### i. Introduction

We usually run 3-4 fauna sampling sessions a year over the summer. We also sample water quality approximately monthly. We paused these group activities in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, in line with advice from RiverCare, so we recorded only two results.

Our **fauna reports** from the River Granta are submitted to the **Riverfly Partnership** database in the name of Abington Naturewatch. They focus on up-wing flies, of special interest to fishermen.

We sample at Abington Ford (Grid ref: TL534489), just upstream of the road bridge.

We log our findings directly on a database so they can be observed by the EA (and anyone else). To view the results, go to <http://www.riverflies.org/riverflies-gis-home>, then explore data for Cam catchment (River Granta).

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. N.B. We do not find Stoneflies in Abington.

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) |

We have also been testing the water quality for a year or so using the **Freshwater Watch** methodology, which focuses on measuring water turbidity (cloudiness) and two chemicals: nitrates and phosphates. These are commonly used in agriculture and elsewhere. Most of our tests have shown high nitrate and low phosphate levels, but there have been a few cases of high phosphate levels. Our results are reported using the **Freshwater Watch** app on a mobile phone and can be viewed online at <https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org>

The automated feedback usually says this:

*Your dataset indicates that this waterbody has a poor ecological status. Potential sources of nitrate pollution include fertiliser runoff, sewage discharge and livestock activities.*

Our sampling site is of course around 3 miles downstream of the sewage works, so it may not be surprising that nitrate levels are high!

## ii. 11<sup>th</sup> August 18:00

These results were perhaps our lowest ever, after a very dry year in 2019 and a long period when our sampling was suspended. We noted much less life than usual and no mayflies, after drought in 2019 and some very low flows in 2020.

|                          |   |                                    |                    |                    |         |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|
| <b>River</b>             | Low, slow flow, clear   |                                    |                    |                    |         |
| <b>Water Quality</b>     | As usual, but no water weed at all<br>Possible effect of drought in 2019<br><a href="https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org/sample/abington-ford-11-08-2020-0">https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org/sample/abington-ford-11-08-2020-0</a> | <b>NO3</b>                         | high               | <b>PO4</b>         | low     |
| <b>Weather Recorded</b>  | Bright, sunny, cloud, very warm 28C<br>Anne Dunbar Nobes, Peter Brunning  | Robin, Ross, Derek, Sally, Richard |                    |                    |         |
| <b>Samples</b>           | 3 kick samples x 1 minute:  | Rocky/<br>Stony                    | By Fool's<br>Cress | Stony,<br>Sediment | Overall |
| <b>Caddisflies</b>       | Caseless  |                                    | 1                  |                    | A       |
| <b>Up-wing flies</b>     | NONE  |                                    |                    |                    | 0       |
| <b>Freshwater Shrimp</b> | Gammarus (very small)   | A few                              | 10-20              |                    | B       |
| <b>Other</b>             | Signal Crayfish (3 @ 3cm)   |                                    | 3                  |                    | A       |
|                          | Fish  |                                    |                    |                    |         |
|                          | Minnow ( <i>Phoxinus phoxinus</i> )   |                                    | 1                  |                    | A       |
|                          | Stone Loach ( <i>Barbatula barbatula</i> )  |                                    | 1                  |                    | A       |
|                          | Miller's Thumb ( <i>Cottus Gobio</i> )  |                                    | 1                  |                    | A       |
| <b>Photos:</b>           | <a href="https://www.flickr.com/gp/peterjeb/8k2UD6">https://www.flickr.com/gp/peterjeb/8k2UD6</a>   |                                    |                    |                    |         |



19: Stone Loach (PB)



20: Miller's Thumb (PB)

**iii. 6<sup>th</sup> October 10:00**

This session was a repeat at the request of EA after poor results (below trigger level) in August, Ruth Hawksley (Wildlife Trust) attended to assist. Results were a little better.

|                          |   |                       |                         |                    |         |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| <b>River</b>             | Low, steady flow, fairly clear  |                       |                         |                    |         |
| <b>Water Quality</b>     | As usual, but little water weed – a little fools' watercress and another  | <b>NO3</b>            | high                    | <b>PO4</b>         | low     |
|                          | <a href="https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org/sample/abington-ford-06-10-2020-0">https://freshwaterwatch.thewaterhub.org/sample/abington-ford-06-10-2020-0</a> |                       |                         |                    |         |
| <b>Weather</b>           | Bright, sunny, cloud, 13C   |                       |                         |                    |         |
| <b>Recorded</b>          | Robin Harman, Peter Brunning  | Ruth Hawksley (WTBCN) |                         |                    |         |
| <b>Samples</b>           | 3 kick samples x 1 minute, sweep riverside plants   | Rocky/<br>Stony       | By Fool's<br>Watercress | Stony,<br>Sediment | Overall |
| <b>Caddisflies</b>       | Cased   | (empty case found)    |                         |                    | 0       |
|                          | Caseless  | 10                    |                         |                    | B       |
| <b>Up-wing flies</b>     | Mayfly (Ephemeraidae)   | 4                     |                         |                    | A       |
|                          | Olives (Baetidae)   | 25                    |                         |                    | B       |
| <b>Freshwater Shrimp</b> | Gammarus (very small)   | 45                    |                         |                    | B       |
| <b>Other</b>             | Signal Crayfish   | 1                     |                         |                    | A       |
|                          | Worm  | 2                     |                         |                    | A       |



21: River Sampling – 11 Aug (PB)



22: Signal Crayfish (PB)

**IV. RiverCare & BeachCare Conferences**

These events were also cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Peter Brunning





23: Brambling, Lewis Cr. – 22 Jan (AM)



24: Gt Spotted Woodpecker, High St – 20 Jan (JAH)



25: Long-tailed Tit, High St. – 8 Mar (JAH)



26: Buzzard, ORC – 8 Mar (AM)



27: Reed Bunting ♀, ORC – 8 Mar - AM



28: Nuthatch ♀, Lewis Cr. – 20 Mar (JAH)



29: Greenfinch ♂ left, ♀ right, Lewis Cr. (AM)



30: Blackcap ♂, ORC – 22 Mar (AM)

## 4. BIRDS

### *I. Members' Reports*

Many thanks to everyone who reported their bird sightings this year, both from the villages and from Granta Park, all of which have been summarised in this single section this year.

Over 7000 sightings were reported, giving a total of 89 species seen in Abington during 2020. Excitingly, this included four species not previously reported in Abington (Montagu's Harrier, European Bee-eater, Bittern, Stonechat), three of which are rare species nationally.

#### **i. January 2020**

**Fieldfare** – flocks of 5-10 around Granta Park and LSA early in the month, with similar numbers of **Redwing** on GP and in fields along Cambridge Road. A sizeable mixed flock also in the fields near the sawmill.

**Brambling** – a single male seen in Lewis Crescent, the first report of this winter visitor.

**Starling** – 1000-2000 continue to murmurate over GP most evenings, prior to roosting in the reed bed. Small flocks of c50-100 feeding at various locations during day, in particular on GP and the Perse sports fields.

Mixed flocks of **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit**, **Long-tailed Tit** and **Coal Tit** in gardens alongside finches, mostly **Goldfinch** and **Chaffinch**, with small numbers of **Greenfinch** being more frequent reported.

**Blackcap** – single report of an over-wintering male on Cambridge Road, as well as a **Goldcrest**. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker** and **Nuthatch** – all reported fairly regularly in gardens, as well as an occasional **Treecreeper**.

**Sparrowhawk** – one in a Cambridge Road garden, as well as a young male found dead along Cambridge Road, likely hit by traffic and reported to RSPB. **Red Kite** – several reports of 1-2 around LA church, and over the Roman Road. **Buzzard** – two around Sluice Wood and Perse sports fields, and one over West Field. **Barn Owl** – one heard screeching around GA church, and **Tawny Owl** reported hooting on several occasions early in the month.

**Little Egret** – two reports of a bird along the river in Sluice Wood, as well as a **Grey Wagtail** near the sluice. **Cormorant** – single bird on GP lake on several occasions, and c10 **Reed Bunting** regularly roosting in the GP reedbeds. **Barnacle Goose** – 5-7 on GP cricket field.

**Mistle Thrush** - 2 heard singing from treetops in Sluice Wood, and several reports of a single **Jay** on GP and in gardens.

#### **ii. February 2020**

**Fieldfare** – two reports of 20-50 around LSA towards the end of the month. No reports of **Redwing**.

**Starling** – small flocks reported on several occasions, especially around the Perse sports fields, and 1500-2000 continue to murmurate above GP prior to roosting in the reedbeds. **Reed Bunting** – up to 46 roosting in the GP reedbeds, and unusually one male reported in a garden in GA.

**Barnacle Goose** and **Canada Goose** – a pair of each, as well as an occasional **Cormorant** and **Mute Swan** on the GP lake. Small numbers of **Moorhen** and 10-15 **Mallard** pairing up on the river and GP lake. A single report of a **Little Egret** flying over GP.

**Blue Tit** and **Great Tit** regularly seen on garden feeders, with small numbers of **Coal Tit** and **Long-tailed Tit** occasionally seen in gardens and Sluice Wood. **Goldfinch** – flock of 8-10 regularly on feeders in several locations, and up to 20 on GP. **Greenfinch** and **Chaffinch** usually 3-5 frequently reported on feeders, as were **Robin** heard singing to establish spring territories.

**House Sparrow** – highly active and vocal colony of around 12-15 in gardens on Lewis Crescent, particularly on sunny days. **Wren** – occasional reports of single birds singing.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Nuthatch** were regular visitors to garden feeders on High Street, LA. **Green Woodpecker** heard calling once on GP. **Goldcrest** – one in conifers on LSA.

**Barn Owl** – one seen flying along Bourn Bridge Road at dusk (27<sup>th</sup>). **Red Kite** - four reports of 1-2 soaring over both villages, and near the Roman Road. **Buzzard** – 2-3 birds seen above LSA, GP and GA, occasionally heard calling. One report of a **Kestrel** on GP.

**Meadow Pipit** – loose flock of 10-30 feeding on rough ground on GP, alongside c35 **Linnet** also feeding in the same area. **Skylark** singing on LSA from early in the month.

**Song Thrush** – many reports of birds singing from prominent perches across both villages, throughout the month. **Mistle Thrush** also heard occasionally on GP.

**Jay** – two reports of a single bird in a High St garden, and near the Millennium Bridge.

### iii. March 2020

Winter visitors still around early in the month: **Fieldfare** – on Cook's Meadow and on LSA; last report on 17<sup>th</sup> of c20 south of ORC. **Redwing** – small flocks in trees behind Cambridge Road, and in Cook's Meadow (last reported on 5<sup>th</sup>). **Brambling** - female visiting feeders on GP (11<sup>th</sup>). A probable sighting of a **Merlin** alongside Perse sports fields.

**Pied Wagtail** – a flock of c12 flying over ORC late one evening, perhaps to a nearby roost. **Starling** – still murmuring over GP early in the month.

Bird song more generally noted in the early morning this month, particularly **Blackbird**, **Song Thrush**, **Dunnock**, **House Sparrow**, **Wren** and **Robin**.

Warblers: **Chiffchaff** first heard singing along ORC (on 17<sup>th</sup>), then regularly since. **Blackcap** – first heard on 22<sup>nd</sup>, also along ORC, and at a number of sites around the village since. **Willow Warbler** also heard along ORC on 28<sup>th</sup> (unusually early this year).

**Little Owl** – single bird again seen around breeding site used in previous years. **Tawny Owl** – three reports of birds hooting on LSA, and along Bourn Bridge Road.

**Blue Tit**, **Great Tit**, **Long-tailed Tit**, and an occasional **Coal Tit**, as well as **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch** and **Chaffinch** all reported regularly on garden feeders. **Long-tailed Tit** observed 'tapping' on window glass, apparently at their own reflections. **Blue Tit** pairs seen investigating nest boxes and carrying nesting material, and **Blackbird** nest-building and incubating eggs.

**Bullfinch** – two reports of 1-2 feeding on tree buds along ORC, and a pair on South Road. **Goldcrest** seen on several occasions in garden on Cambridge Road. **Jay** – one seen near Abington Woods, and on several occasions on GP.

**Reed Bunting** – a pair seen along ORC, and under feeders in Lewis Crescent garden. **Corn Bunting** heard singing and making flying 'display flights' along ORC, from 7<sup>th</sup> onwards. Up to six **Yellowhammer** singing in hedgerows on LSA, and 2-4 **Skylark** singing throughout the month over fields alongside ORC, and behind Lewis Crescent. **Linnet** and **Meadow Pipit** 10-20 on rough ground on GP.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** reported regularly on several garden feeders and heard drumming in Lagden's Grove. Up to three **Green Woodpecker** reported yaffling regularly on GP, and a single report of a **Treecreeper** near Abington Woods. **Nuthatch** – almost daily reports of 1-2 from a garden on High Street, LA.

**Little Egret** – two reports of one bird perched in tree near village cricket field, and again near Millennium Bridge.

**Buzzard** – 2-3 soaring over village, and regularly around Sluice Wood, including a very pale bird with an almost completely white underside. **Red Kite** – one bird, reported on



around 10 separate occasions from across the villages. **Sparrowhawk** reported in a GA garden, and along South Road, as well as several reports of a **Kestrel**.

**Canada Goose, Greylag and Barnacle Goose** on GP lake, as well as a **Cormorant**.

#### iv. April 2020

Summer Visitors: a **Swallow** was first seen on South Road on 5<sup>th</sup> (cf 6<sup>th</sup> April last year), and since then on North Road and along the Roman Road. **House Martin** were first seen on 19<sup>th</sup> around their nest sites on the school and in Mortlock Gardens.

**Wheatear** – two seen along Roman Road (24<sup>th</sup>), a passage migrant in this area, and a **Raven** seen flying over GP mid-month, also likely on passage after over-wintering further south.

Warblers: **Willow Warbler** – single singing males on LSA (12<sup>th</sup>), as well as along ORC and Roman Road. **Common Whitethroat** (15-20) and **Lesser Whitethroat** (4-5) singing along Roman Road (24<sup>th</sup>) and after that along the ORC. **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** in full song throughout the month, right across the villages.

**Blackbird, Blue Tit and Goldfinch** were all spotted nest building, with a report the first **Blue Tit** egg laid in a nest box on 8<sup>th</sup>, and a female **Blackbird** seen feeding young at the nest as early as 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-tailed Tit** – several seen ‘playing knock and run’ on window reflections throughout the month.

**Skylark** – c10 singing and chasing low above the fields on LSA, and behind Lewis Crescent.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – heard drumming in Sluice Wood early in month. **Green Woodpecker** calling around LSA, and feeding on a garden lawn. **Nuthatch** – male and female on a garden feeder early in the month.

**Reed Bunting** – one under feeders in a GA garden, and a pair along the ORC and on GP.

**Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer and Linnet** all singing along the ORC, on the LSA and the Roman Road throughout the month. **Bullfinch** – several pairs seen along Roman Road and the ORC.

**Tawny Owl** – heard several times, in particular around Cambridge Road and GA church, and a **Little Owl** was seen once on GP at the previously used nest site (13<sup>th</sup>).

**Kingfisher** – one flying downstream near the sluice (13<sup>th</sup>). **Little Egret** – two reports, one near Millennium Bridge, and again on GP, likely to be the same bird. **Grey Heron** – one flying over Cambridge Road.

**Greylag, Canada Goose and a Cormorant** on GP lake early in month, alongside surprisingly few **Mallard**. **Moorhen** – one bird briefly feeding on a garden lawn in Lewis Crescent.

**Red Kite and Buzzard** – both reported on several occasions from along Bourn Bridge Road, around LA church and along the ORC. **Kestrel** – several sightings, and one **Sparrowhawk** along Bourn Bridge Road and the Roman Road.

**Pied Wagtail** – small flocks on village cricket field and around LSA, and one **Grey Wagtail** seen along the river edge near the sluice. **Jay** – seen occasionally in Abington Woods and on ORC.

#### v. May 2020

**Cuckoo** – first heard on 9<sup>th</sup> along ORC, then regularly seen and heard at several sites in the village until the end of month. These are the first reports in the village since May 2017.

**Swift** were first seen around Great Abington church on 5<sup>th</sup> (cf 4<sup>th</sup> May last year), and 4-9 regularly around the village since. **Swallow** - generally 1-2 (occasionally up to 6) feeding over LSA paddocks, and alongside Cambridge Road. **House Martin** – up to 8 seen around their nests on the school, and in Mortlock Gardens.

Warblers: one **Reed Warbler** heard singing from a thicket behind Lewis Crescent, and a **Willow Warbler** was heard singing near South Grove on three occasions. **Blackcap**, **Chiffchaff**, **Common Whitethroat** and **Lesser Whitethroat** were all regularly heard throughout the month, especially on the ORC, LSA, Sluice Wood and along the Roman Road.

**Common Sandpiper** – two flying low over GP lake, alighting briefly before moving on.

**Robin** – several nests known in gardens, many of which fledged first broods later in the month.

**Blue Tit** - several reports of garden nest boxes being used; one nest (with a camera) had eight eggs hatch on 5<sup>th</sup>, the young growing up and fledging by 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit** and **Coal Tit** young were all seen being fed, and larger family groups of **Long-tailed Tit** were reported.

**Bullfinch** – one male in South Road garden, and a pair along ORC and Roman Road.

**Goldfinch** – good numbers (6-8) regularly on feeders, latterly with young. **Greenfinch**, **Chaffinch** in generally lower numbers (2-3), and reported less often.

**Pied Wagtail** – family groups feeding in paddocks on LSA, and on GP cricket field.

**Goldcrest** – one seen in garden on LSA, and heard in conifers along Chalky Road.

**Yellowhammer**, **Corn Bunting** and **Linnet** all heard singing along ORC, LSA and the Roman Road, and two **Reed Bunting** males were heard singing in the GP reedbed.

**Skylark** – up to eight singing above fields around the village.

**Song Thrush** – regularly seen beneath garden feeders and singing along ORC. A **Mistle Thrush** adult was seen carrying food, and an unusually large flock (10) feeding in field on LSA.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – adult and two juveniles on garden feeder, and young seen in a nest in Sluice Wood. **Green Woodpecker** – 1-2 adults, and likely juvenile in garden on Cambridge Road, and on LSA. **Nuthatch** – regularly on feeders in High St garden, and one heard near Hildersham Wood.

**Barn Owl** – single bird flying over Lewis Crescent late one evening, and **Tawny Owl** were heard along Cambridge Road, Lewis Crescent, and regularly near South Road. A **Little Owl** pair were observed regularly flying to and from a nest site on GP, presumably feeding young.

**Buzzard** and **Kestrel** were seen regularly, as was a **Red Kite** from several sites around the villages. Several reports of **Sparrowhawk**, including one hunting around garden feeders.

**Grey Heron** – one reported being mobbed by corvids, also one in trees along Cambridge Road.

**Tufted Duck** – one male and a **Cormorant** reported on GP lake, as well as **Moorhen**, and **Mallard** with 2-3 duckling. **Greylag** (2-8), **Barnacle Goose** (2) and up to 10 **Canada Goose** including a pair with three goslings.

#### vi. June 2020

**Montagu's Harrier** – a female of this nationally very rare raptor was seen along the Roman Road on three occasions during late June. Reported confidentially to the RSPB raptor unit, their raptor specialist believed this female was highly likely to be hunting, to feed young in a nest nearby.

**European Bee-eater** – one seen briefly in a Cambridge Road garden (1<sup>st</sup>). A very colourful and exotic-looking bird is relatively rare in Cambs, and was later seen in Cambridge.

Both Montagu's Harrier and Bee-eater are first reports for Abington!



31: Lesser Whitethroat, ORC – 5 May (AM)



32: Swift, High St – 9 May (JT)



33: Red-legged Partridge, Camb. Rd – 8 May (DLT)



34: Goldfinch feeds young, Lewis Cr. – 30 May (AM)



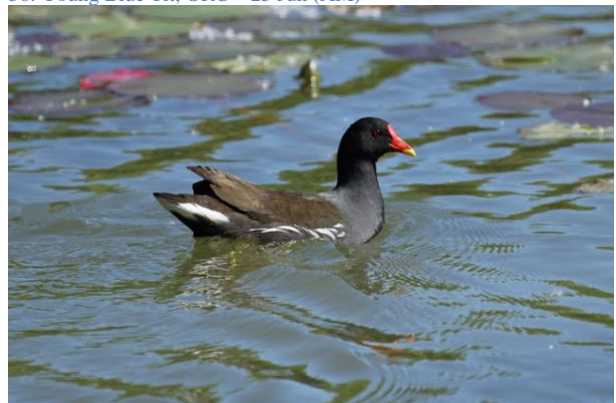
35: Great Tit feeding young, Lewis Cr. – 7 Jun (AM)



36: Young Blue Tit, ORC – 25 Jun (AM)



37: Great Crested Grebe & fish, GP – 7 Jun (AM)



38: Moorhen, GP – 25 Jun (AM)

**Common Tern** – unusually in June, one seen flying over Lewis Crescent.

A **Raven** was seen several times flying around large trees, near Hildersham Wood. An adult **Hobby** seen flying along ORC early one morning, first report this year of this summer visitor (13<sup>th</sup>).



**Swift** – 2-5 often seen around GA church this year, with up to 12 seen feeding over Perse sports fields. **Swallow** – fewer reports and generally only 1-2 birds, but a flock of c12 adults and young was seen feeding above the crops south of the LSA on 12<sup>th</sup>. **House Martin** (2-6) were frequently seen around nests near the school, in Mortlock Gardens, and c12 over GP lake.

Warblers: many **Blackcap** and **Chiffchaff** reported, including fledged young. Many singing **Common Whitethroat** and **Lesser Whitethroat** particularly along the Roman Road and ORC. A **Reed Warbler** was occasionally heard singing on ORC, and unusually at the end of Chalky Road, with a **Willow Warbler** also heard twice on the LSA, around mid-month.

**Sparrowhawk** – two reports of birds hunting around feeders. **Red Kite** – several reports of single birds from around the edges of the villages, and unusually three seen together on South Road. **Buzzard** and **Kestrel** – 1-2 regularly seen south of LSA, and at several other sites around the village. **Tawny Owl** – 1-2 reports of birds calling.

**Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit** - regular reports of family groups in gardens, and along ORC. **Coal Tit, Goldcrest** – fewer reports, generally 1-2 around conifer trees on LSA, and occasionally from gardens. Small family groups **Goldfinch** regularly on garden feeders, with– small groups of **Greenfinch, Chaffinch** more commonly seen on LSA and ORC, away from gardens. **Bullfinch** – a pair reported on LSA, ORC and occasionally a garden.

**Robin** – adults with juveniles reported from several gardens. **Song Thrush** – singing males still regularly heard, especially along ORC and on LSA, and a few reports of 1-2 returning to gardens. **Mistle Thrush** – one report from the village cricket field.

**Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker** – reports of adults and 1-2 young coming to feeders in several gardens. **Nuthatch** – 1-2 adults, and a family of 5, regularly seen on feeders on High Street LA, and unusually, one seen in a garden on the LSA.

**Treecreeper** – one heard in South Grove on LSA.

**Skylark, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Linnet** all regularly seen and heard in good numbers from fields and hedgerows along ORC, and south of LSA.

**Jay** – six reports of 1-3 birds, including 2 adults and a juvenile on Cambridge Road.

A pair of **Great Crested Grebe** were seen briefly on GP lake, as well as a **Cormorant** and a pair of **Tufted Duck**. Several families of up to 18 **Canada Goose** were also seen on the lake, alongside the regular **Mallard, Moorhen** and **Grey Heron**. Six adult **Barnacle Goose**, and small family groups of 4-5 **Pied Wagtail** were spotted feeding on GP cricket field, and singing male **Reed Bunting** were heard in the reedbed.

## vii. July 2020

A generally quieter month for birds, with many species having completed their breeding, and both adults and fledged young feeding unobtrusively. Exceptions were **Skylark, Song Thrush** and **Wren** which were regularly heard singing along ORC and in Sluice Wood, and **Robin** starting to sing again in a GA garden towards the end of the month.

**Sand Martin** – two reports of two birds apparently travelling through, along the Roman Road and ORC. Up to 4 **House Martin** were regularly reported over GA and on GP, with family groups of up to 6 **Swallow** seen on LSA and ORC. **Swift** were also seen regularly, with c10 around LA church, and a steady stream of c30 travelling high and heading south on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue Tit, Great Tit** – family groups regularly reported on several garden feeders, and an occasional report of **Coal Tit** and **Long-tailed Tit**.

**Goldfinch** – adults and young in flocks of up to 12 on GP, LSA and Roman Road, with 1-2 **Chaffinch** and **Greenfinch** reported away from gardens on LSA and ORC. Three reports of 1-2 **Bullfinch** at several sites.

**Corn Bunting, Linnet and Yellowhammer** all often seen and heard in hedgerows on ORC and LSA.

**House Sparrow** – small colony evident again after a few weeks away from GA garden.

**Duncock** – 1-2 young birds regularly feeding under shrubs in garden and ORC.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – two young in Cambridge Road garden, and regularly on garden feeders on LA High St. **Green Woodpecker** reported in a garden on LSA, three seen near GA church, and an adult seen teaching young to search for food in LSA garden. **Nuthatch** – regular visitor to garden feeders on LA High Street.

**Sparrowhawk** – male hunting along hedgerow of ORC, and a single female/young **Kestrel** reported hunting on ORC and along the Roman Road. A **Buzzard** was often reported.

**Grey Wagtail** – one report of single bird near Millennium Bridge, and a family group of c12 **Pied Wagtail** on GP cricket field. **Grey Heron** – reports of single bird near the village cricket field, flying over LSA, and around a garden pond on South Rd. A **Cormorant** was also seen fishing for sticklebacks in a large pond on the LSA.

**Barnacle Goose** – 2 adults seen on GP, along with 14 **Canada Goose**, c30 **Mallard** which were largely in eclipse plumage, and four **Moorhen**.

#### viii. August 2020

**Bittern** – an exciting sighting of this nationally rare species. A single bird was seen early in the morning in the river by the recreation ground, before flying upstream over the ford (8<sup>th</sup>). A first for Abington! Normally confined to large reedbeds in East Anglia, some birds are prone to ‘wandering’ around the local area after breeding.

**Spotted Flycatcher** – a welcome sighting of this species, seen twice in a Cambridge Road garden. Presumed to be a bird passing through after breeding, these are the only reports of this species in the parish this year. **Common Sandpiper** – single bird also likely to be on migration, seen feeding for a few days around GP lake, staying into early Sept.

**Swift** – two reports of 2-3 birds on 8<sup>th</sup>, apparently passing through – last report of the year.

**Swallow** – frequent reports of 1-4 from several sites until 20<sup>th</sup>. **House Martin** – frequently seen, flocks 10-12 over High Street GA, and around the lake on GP and returning to nests on the school.

Warblers: several species still around this month, but more silent and hidden. **Blackcap** – three reports early in month of 1-2 birds, including juveniles along ORC. **Chiffchaff** – more regularly along ORC, and one drinking from a garden pool on LSA. **Common Whitethroat** – several reports on ORC and LSA until 18<sup>th</sup>, and **Lesser Whitethroat** – one seen on ORC (7<sup>th</sup>).

With adults and juveniles of many species foraging quietly in the hedgerows, some species were starting to gather in flocks ahead of autumn, and coming back to garden feeders – particularly **Finch** and **Tit** species. **Robin** were commonly heard singing again, setting up their winter territories, and **House Sparrow** were again more evident and vocal around their colonies.

**Long-tailed Tit** were seen returning to gardens after a period of absence. Small groups of 4-6 **Blue Tit** and **Great Tit** frequently with juveniles on several feeders, as well as 2-3 **Coal Tit** also on feeders in South Road garden.

**Greenfinch** – small flocks of 6-8 returning to some feeders, as are **Goldfinch** with 8-12 adults and juveniles. **Bullfinch** – 1-2 regularly visiting running water near pond on South Road, as well as a pair seen along ORC.

**Goldcrest** – 1-2 heard calling whilst feeding in conifers on LSA, and one bathing in birdbath on LSA.

**Peregrine** – brief sighting of a single bird, hunting along hedgerows at south end of LSA.

**Buzzard** - 2 seen over Sluice Wood, as well as an adult and juvenile regularly over LA

and ORC. Occasional reports of a **Kestrel**, and a **Sparrowhawk** hunting around feeders again.

**Grey Wagtail** – one seen along the river near Millennium Bridge, and flocks of c30 adult and juvenile **Pied Wagtail** feeding on GP cricket field, with 1-2 birds also reported on ORC and LSA.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – regular visitor to garden feeder on South Road, also occasional reports from elsewhere. **Green Woodpecker** – reports of one bird near Millennium Bridge, and on GP and LSA. **Nuthatch** – occasional visitor to High Street LA feeder, often with mixed species Tit flock.

**Song Thrush** – single bird seen regularly on ORC, but no longer singing, and a **Mistle Thrush** spotted in Sluice Wood early in the month.

**Yellowhammer** and **Linnet** – small flocks (4-6) feeding along hedgerows on Roman Road and ORC.

**Mute Swan** – two flying over LSA, heading towards GP. **Barnacle Goose** – 6 on GP cricket field, and **Canada Goose** – 8 adult and juveniles on GP lake. **Mallard** – c20 in various stages of moult, 4 **Moorhen** and up to three **Grey Heron** around GP lake.

**Great Black Backed Gull** – small loose flocks seen ‘roaming’ especially over recently harvested fields, often including a few **Herring Gull** and **Black-headed Gull**.

#### ix. September 2020

A female Harrier, either **Hen Harrier** or **Montagu’s Harrier**, seen hunting over stubble field near Abington Park Farm. Largely ginger-brown with a pale ‘rump’, long tail and long narrow pointed wings, the exact species was uncertain, but either would be very unusual for Abington.

Summer visitors: six **Swallow** seen gathering on wires on LSA. **House Martin** were also seen gathering on LSA early in the month, as well as a flock of 24 on Granta Park.

Warblers: a **Reed Warbler** was seen in undergrowth along the river, and a **Common Whitethroat** was spotted feeding in hedgerow along ORC. **Chiffchaff** were heard singing in the sun near Church Lane, and two reports from along ORC.

**Kingfisher** – single bird flying downstream along river by the Millennium Bridge. Two reports of a **Little Egret** along river near the Millennium Bridge. A second winter juvenile **Grey Heron** was seen near a garden pond on Cambridge Road, and a single bird spotted ‘resting’ in field on LSA.

**Grey Wagtail** – four reports, two from along the river by the recreation ground, one on the LSA, and one around a garden pond on Bourn Bridge Road. **Pied Wagtail** – three birds feeding on cricket field, in amongst a Jackdaw flock.

**Bullfinch** – two birds feeding in hedgerow and calling quietly along ORC. Flocks of 10-14 **Goldfinch** reported regularly on garden feeders in both LA and GA, and occasional reports small numbers of **Greenfinch** on feeders in Bourn Bridge Road and GA. Similarly, just one report of a single **Chaffinch** under a feeder in GA.

**Great Tit, Blue Tit** - family flocks regularly around garden feeders, as well as along ORC. Small groups of **Long-tailed Tit** also along ORC. **Robin** – regularly heard singing.

**Linnet** – small flock (15-20) on rough ground on GP. **Skylark** – a few birds seen feeding in fields near Abington Park Farm. **Goldcrest** – heard feeding on conifers along Chalky Road.

**House Sparrow** – colony of around 20 birds on Lewis Crescent more active this month, collecting grit and visiting feeders. **Jay** – single bird regularly in last week, collecting acorns from under trees behind Lewis Crescent. **Rook** and **Magpie** also seen collecting acorns, but ‘picking’ them straight from the trees.





39: Grey Heron, South Rd – 25 July (ADN)



40: Kingfisher, North Rd – 12 July (SD)



41: Green Woodpecker, BBR – (EL)



42: Spotted Flycatcher, Camb. Rd – 13 Aug (DLT)



43: Sparrowhawk, High St – 4 Oct (JT)



44: Red Kite, ORC – 8 Jul (AM)



45: Linnet ♂, ORC – 8 Jul (AM)



46: Goldcrest & Blue Tit, South Rd – 15 Aug (ADN)

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – single bird heard alarm-calling from trees behind Lewis Crescent on several occasions, and several reports of **Green Woodpecker** feeding in fields on the LSA.

**Red Kite** – one seen soaring above LA, and two reports from LSA. A **Buzzard** was spotted hunting low over field behind Cambridge Road, with three seen soaring above Bourn Bridge Road, likely one adult and two young. **Kestrel** were seen hunting from ‘lookout’ tree perches on Cambridge Road, and a female **Sparrowhawk** was reported hunting over rough meadow on GP, as well as around several garden feeders.

**Tawny Owl** – several reports of hooting birds in LA, from oak trees behind Lewis Crescent, and from sites on the LSA throughout the month.

#### x. October 2020

Summer visitors: **House Martin** – several seen over fields near Church Lane early in the month, with the last report of the year being near Abington Park Farm on 7<sup>th</sup>. Similarly, several reports of **Swallow** early in the month; a loose group of 5-6, and several single birds, all near Abington Park Farm and heading determinedly south; but the last report was of a single bird over High Street LA on 10<sup>th</sup>. One male **Blackcap** seen in Lewis Crescent garden on 9<sup>th</sup> - whilst most likely a ‘late’ summer visitor, some Blackcap also migrate from Europe to over-winter in the UK.

Winter visitors: a small flock of c10 **Redwing** was first reported on 12<sup>th</sup>, flying over ORC. Similarly, a small flock of 6 **Fieldfare** flew over Lewis Crescent also on 12<sup>th</sup>, as well as c30 near Abington Park Farm (14<sup>th</sup>). Both species reported regularly since, feeding on berries along ORC and on LSA.

Larger winter flocks of **Skylark** and **Linnet** started gathering on ploughed fields south of Chalky Road. Small groups of **Great Black-backed Gull**, and a few **Black-headed Gull**, also feeding in freshly ploughed fields around LSA, and a few **Meadow Pipit** starting to be seen along ORC.

A number of species starting to return regularly to garden feeders – **Great Tit** and **Blue Tit**, as well as an occasional **Coal Tit** and **Long-tailed Tit** reported. A few **Greenfinch** and **Chaffinch** also being seen more regularly, alongside larger numbers of **Goldfinch**. A male **Bullfinch** was seen on ORC. Regular reports of **Robin** often heard singing, and **Dunnock**, but a notable absence of **Blackbird** or **Song Thrush** in gardens this month.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – regular visits of a female and juvenile to a Cambridge Road garden, as well as reports of birds returning to garden feeders after a few weeks away. Occasional **Green Woodpecker**, and a **Nuthatch** seen again on garden feeder after a long absence.

**Jay** regularly seen this month in several gardens, collecting and stashing acorns. **Goldcrest** seen and heard in conifers along Cambridge Road, and a pair of **Wren** noted near a garden pond on LA High Street.

**Tawny Owl** – a good number of reports of male and female calling in the early hours throughout the month, including Cambridge Road, Sluice Wood, Church Lane, Abington Wood, and LSA. **Barn Owl** – one heard screeching along ORC.

Several reports of **Sparrowhawk** returning to gardens to hunt around garden feeders; one bird seen purposefully crashing through a Sparrow colony. One **Red Kite** flying low, hunting for carrion over Lewis Crescent and High St, before heading south towards Chalky Road, and further sightings later in the month along ORC. Three **Buzzard** near Hildersham Wood, and 1-2 regularly reported from ORC and LSA.

**Grey Heron** – one likely immature bird seen again in Cambridge Road garden, and 1-2 **Little Egret** – reported in the river near Millennium Bridge, and in Sluice Wood. **Grey Wagtail** – a single female along river edge by recreation ground, and one visiting a Cambridge Road garden. Small groups of **Pied Wagtail** seen on the village cricket

field, and an unusually large flock of c30-50 on Perse playing fields. A single **Cormorant** seen flying over near Abington Park Farm.

#### xi. November 2020

Winter visitors: A pair of **Stonechat** along Roman Road near Hildersham, perching on high vegetation early one morning (14<sup>th</sup>), presumably having travelled south from their northern breeding areas - another first for Abington! Several reports of small numbers of **Fieldfare** flying over Cambridge Road, and along ORC and Roman Road, and of 1-3 **Redwing** on LSA and ORC. **Blackcap** – a single male seen feeding on fruit along ORC.

Garden birds: larger numbers of birds seen on garden feeders this month: regular flocks of 4-8 **Goldfinch** in several gardens, with smaller numbers (2-4) of **Greenfinch** and **Chaffinch** also reported regularly. **Coal Tit** – 1-2 regularly in Cambridge Road garden, one on LSA, and unusually one in Lewis Crescent garden. Occasional flocks of **Long-tailed Tit**, alongside the regular reports of **Great Tit** and **Blue Tit**.

**Blackbird** – starting to be seen regularly again in gardens, feeding on berries and windfall fruit, also in larger numbers in hedgerows along ORC and LSA. Occasional report of **Song Thrush**. **Robin** and **Dunnock** also regularly seen in small numbers.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** regularly recorded in High Street, LA garden and a pair on feeders in Lewis Crescent, and a **Green Woodpecker** was seen in a Cambridge Road garden.

**Goldcrest** – one reported being a little dazed after hitting a window on GP, recovering quickly, and one on LSA. A pair of **Bullfinch** spotted, along ORC and on Roman Road.

**Yellowhammer** – flock of 15-20 flitting around hawthorn hedge near Abington Park Farm. **Linnet** - similarly flocks of 10-50 near Abington Park Farm, and on LSA and Roman Road. Several **Corn Bunting** on LSA and along Roman Road, with one heard briefly singing on sunny day.

**Skylark** – several reports of c20 chasing each other around and singing over fields near Abington Park Farm. **Meadow Pipit** – c10 on LSA, and a single **Lapwing** was seen over Roman Road (6<sup>th</sup>).

**Tawny Owl** – several reports of calls during the night, and at dawn – including a very nice recording of one behind Bourn Bridge Road.

**Buzzard** – several reports, mostly from along ORC and on LSA. **Kestrel** - occasional reports from Cambridge Road, ORC and Roman Road. A female **Sparrowhawk** was spotted hunting in 1-2 gardens, with other reports of males from Cambridge Road, Lewis Crescent and ORC.

**Jay** – regularly 1-2, and occasionally 3 in Lewis Crescent garden, usually recovering acorns but also under bird feeders, as well as 1-2 **Magpie** regularly reported from several gardens.

**Kingfisher** – spotted along the river in Sluice Wood on 10<sup>th</sup>, and a single **Cormorant** was seen flying over LSA. One **Little Egret** was reported on river in Sluice Wood, and a few days later on recreation ground. A family of **Mallard** was seen near the Millennium Bridge, as well as a single **Moorhen**.

**Great Black-backed Gull** – large flock of 50-100 feeding in field along Roman Road during potato harvesting, and an unusually large flock of 70+ **Black-headed Gull** seen twice feeding on the Perse playing fields.

#### xii. December 2020

**Fieldfare** – 1-2 flying over Cambridge Road, and a flock of 12 seen near ORC. **Redwing** – only one sighting this month, on GP.



**Barnacle Goose** – six feeding on GP cricket field. **Grey Heron** – three seen in fields adjacent to GP. **Mallard** and **Moorhen** – single reports from GP, and three **Cormorant** seen flying over LA.

**Red Kite** – one report of a single bird over Lewis Crescent, with single **Kestrel**, **Sparrowhawk** and **Buzzard** seen at several locations around the villages. **Tawny Owl** – heard at several locations towards the end of the month.

**Goldfinch** – numbers up to 30 regularly at several feeders, small numbers of **Greenfinch** and **Chaffinch**. **Blue Tit** and **Great Tit** were also reported widely, **Long-tailed Tit** more occasionally, and a **Coal Tit** and 1-3 **Goldcrest** regularly in a Cambridge Road garden.

**Collared Dove** – groups of 6-8 quite commonly seen under bird feeders, as were 1-2 **Stock Dove**, with 1-3 **Jay** and **Magpie** feeding in gardens at several locations.

**Red-legged Partridge** – three reports of groups of 25-40 seen on the LSA. **Skylark** – small flocks, with some birds singing over fields near Abington Park Farm.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** – 1-2 seen most days at some garden feeders, with 1-2 **Green Woodpecker** being reported more occasionally.

**Yellowhammer** – flock of 30 roosting in hedgerows near Hildersham Wood, and 1-2 **Wren** and **Song Thrush** seen along the ORC. **Black-headed Gull** – c100 seen in fields around Lewis Crescent.

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47: Blue Tit, Lewis Cr. – 14 Nov (AM)



48: Blackbird, Lewis Cr. – 29 Nov (AM)



49: Jay, Lewis Cr. – 14 Nov (AM)



50: Goldcrest, Cambridge Rd – 22 Dec (DLT)

| 2020 Total: 89 species  | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Reports |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Barn Owl                | 1   | 1   |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 3       |
| Barnacle Goose          | 3   | 1   | 1   |     | 2   | 2   | 1   | 1   |     |     |     | 1   | 12      |
| Bee-eater               |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Bittern                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Blackbird               | 45  | 19  | 46  | 40  | 60  | 64  | 17  | 16  | 8   | 10  | 40  | 23  | 388     |
| Blackcap                | 2   |     | 4   | 31  | 32  | 27  | 7   | 3   |     | 1   | 2   | 1   | 110     |
| Black-headed Gull       | 5   | 1   | 4   |     | 3   |     | 1   | 1   |     | 1   | 2   | 2   | 20      |
| Blue Tit                | 43  | 20  | 50  | 40  | 58  | 54  | 20  | 23  | 17  | 22  | 42  | 20  | 409     |
| Brambling               | 3   |     | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 5       |
| Bullfinch               |     |     | 3   | 4   | 5   | 8   | 4   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 4   |     | 32      |
| Buzzard                 | 8   | 3   | 18  | 16  | 20  | 16  | 8   | 4   | 6   | 6   | 11  | 5   | 121     |
| Canada Goose            |     | 2   | 3   | 1   | 6   | 3   | 1   | 1   |     |     |     |     | 17      |
| Carrion Crow            | 17  | 7   | 16  | 18  | 26  | 18  | 6   | 4   | 3   | 4   | 21  | 4   | 144     |
| Chaffinch               | 29  | 13  | 33  | 25  | 23  | 18  | 7   | 6   | 5   | 8   | 16  | 15  | 198     |
| Chiffchaff              |     |     | 17  | 22  | 27  | 21  | 8   | 7   | 3   |     |     |     | 105     |
| Coal Tit                | 12  | 5   | 5   | 7   | 9   | 12  | 7   | 6   | 3   | 6   | 8   | 4   | 84      |
| Collared Dove           | 26  | 10  | 22  | 13  | 34  | 24  | 9   | 12  | 12  | 10  | 20  | 15  | 207     |
| Common Sandpiper        |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 2       |
| Common Tern             |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Common Whitethroat      |     |     |     | 4   | 12  | 19  | 8   | 4   | 1   |     |     |     | 48      |
| Cormorant               | 4   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 1   |     |     | 1   | 2   | 1   | 16      |
| Corn Bunting            |     |     | 5   | 9   | 9   | 10  | 8   |     |     |     | 6   |     | 47      |
| Cuckoo                  |     |     |     |     | 18  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 18      |
| Dunnock                 | 25  | 10  | 29  | 36  | 39  | 46  | 12  | 11  | 4   | 7   | 15  | 9   | 243     |
| Fieldfare               | 8   | 2   | 3   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 4   | 12  | 3   | 32      |
| Goldcrest               | 1   | 1   | 7   | 3   | 8   | 5   |     | 3   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 6   | 39      |
| Goldfinch               | 41  | 17  | 31  | 28  | 48  | 31  | 20  | 22  | 16  | 21  | 30  | 21  | 326     |
| Great Black-backed Gull | 1   |     | 1   | 2   |     | 2   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 1   | 17      |
| Great Crested Grebe     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Gt Spotted Woodpecker   | 13  | 1   | 17  | 11  | 23  | 47  | 10  | 7   | 4   | 10  | 17  | 20  | 180     |
| Great Tit               | 34  | 14  | 33  | 33  | 37  | 52  | 14  | 17  | 11  | 14  | 26  | 16  | 301     |
| Green Woodpecker        | 11  | 4   | 16  | 12  | 16  | 14  | 12  | 9   | 5   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 107     |
| Greenfinch              | 23  | 18  | 28  | 26  | 37  | 20  | 10  | 14  | 5   | 6   | 16  | 11  | 214     |
| Grey Heron              | 3   |     | 3   | 7   | 7   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 6   | 3   |     | 1   | 39      |
| Grey Wagtail            | 1   |     |     | 1   |     |     | 1   | 1   | 4   | 2   |     |     | 10      |
| Greylag Goose           |     |     | 1   | 2   | 5   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 8       |
| Hen Harrier (?)         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1       |
| Herring Gull            | 5   |     | 5   | 1   | 5   |     | 3   | 5   | 1   | 5   | 4   |     | 34      |
| Hobby                   |     |     |     |     |     | 1   | 1   |     |     |     |     |     | 2       |
| House Martin            |     |     |     | 2   | 25  | 17  | 10  | 12  | 2   | 2   |     |     | 70      |
| House Sparrow           | 16  | 8   | 16  | 21  | 38  | 10  | 4   | 13  | 4   | 12  | 11  | 6   | 159     |
| Jackdaw                 | 32  | 9   | 30  | 30  | 45  | 47  | 16  | 19  | 17  | 15  | 30  | 9   | 299     |
| Jay                     | 5   | 2   | 10  | 10  | 11  | 12  | 4   | 2   | 7   | 11  | 18  | 15  | 107     |
| Kestrel                 | 2   |     | 6   | 11  | 11  | 9   | 5   | 2   | 3   | 2   | 9   | 1   | 61      |
| Kingfisher              |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1   |     | 3       |
| Lapwing                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 2   |     | 2       |
| Lesser Whitethroat      |     |     |     | 4   | 10  | 9   | 1   | 1   |     |     |     |     | 25      |
| Linnet                  |     |     | 1   | 7   | 9   | 11  | 6   | 6   | 6   | 3   | 8   |     | 57      |
| Little Egret            | 2   |     | 2   | 2   |     |     |     |     | 2   | 1   | 3   |     | 12      |
| Little Owl              |     |     | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 6       |
| Long-tailed Tit         | 18  | 7   | 37  | 23  | 13  | 7   | 4   | 8   | 6   | 6   | 10  | 6   | 145     |
| Magpie                  | 15  | 10  | 16  | 14  | 32  | 23  | 8   | 12  | 7   | 16  | 30  | 21  | 204     |
| Mallard                 | 10  | 3   | 10  | 4   | 16  | 4   | 1   | 5   |     |     | 2   | 1   | 56      |
| Meadow Pipit            |     | 2   | 3   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   | 4   |     | 10      |
| Merlin                  |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Mistle Thrush           | 3   | 1   |     | 3   | 4   | 2   |     | 1   |     |     | 2   |     | 16      |
| Montagu's Harrier       |     |     |     |     |     | 1   | 2   |     |     |     |     |     | 3       |
| Moorhen                 | 5   | 2   | 8   | 3   | 7   | 7   | 2   | 2   |     | 1   | 1   | 1   | 39      |
| Mute Swan               |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 2       |
| Nuthatch                | 4   |     | 9   | 4   | 3   | 35  |     | 6   |     | 1   |     |     | 62      |
| Peregrine               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1       |
| Pheasant                | 8   | 9   | 14  | 19  | 18  | 9   | 3   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 10  |     | 95      |
| Pied Wagtail            | 3   | 2   | 6   | 5   | 12  | 6   | 1   | 3   | 1   | 4   | 5   |     | 48      |
| Raven                   |     |     |     |     |     | 4   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 4       |
| Red Kite                | 5   | 3   | 10  | 6   | 8   | 10  | 1   |     | 3   | 5   |     | 1   | 52      |
| Red-legged Partridge    |     |     | 17  | 12  | 12  | 7   | 3   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 8   | 2   | 65      |

| 2020 Total: 89 species         | Jan        | Feb        | Mar        | Apr        | May         | Jun         | Jul        | Aug        | Sep        | Oct        | Nov        | Dec        | Reports     |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Redwing                        | 8          |            | 3          |            |             |             |            |            |            | 3          | 10         | 1          | 25          |
| Reed Bunting                   |            | 1          | 4          | 4          | 3           | 3           |            |            |            |            |            |            | 15          |
| Reed Warbler                   |            |            |            |            | 2           | 3           |            |            |            |            |            |            | 5           |
| Robin                          | 40         | 16         | 44         | 36         | 53          | 55          | 14         | 24         | 17         | 13         | 31         | 11         | 354         |
| Rook                           | 11         | 7          | 18         | 14         | 41          | 21          | 5          | 1          | 4          | 6          | 11         | 5          | 144         |
| Sand Martin                    |            |            |            |            |             |             | 2          |            |            |            |            |            | 2           |
| Skylark                        |            | 4          | 14         | 24         | 30          | 20          | 10         |            | 2          | 3          | 12         | 1          | 120         |
| Song Thrush                    | 19         | 8          | 16         | 24         | 39          | 35          | 8          | 5          | 2          |            | 4          | 1          | 161         |
| Sparrowhawk                    | 9          |            | 1          | 2          | 7           | 2           |            | 2          | 5          | 7          | 13         | 3          | 51          |
| Spotted Flycatcher             |            |            |            |            |             |             |            | 3          |            |            |            |            | 3           |
| Starling                       | 17         | 4          | 15         | 11         | 26          | 6           | 4          | 3          | 2          | 5          | 7          | 4          | 104         |
| Stock Dove                     | 8          | 3          | 11         | 14         | 15          | 10          | 3          | 2          |            | 1          | 7          | 5          | 79          |
| Stonechat                      |            |            |            |            | 1?          |             |            |            |            |            | 2          |            | 3           |
| Swallow                        |            |            |            | 7          | 17          | 17          | 4          | 7          | 3          | 4          |            |            | 59          |
| Swift                          |            |            |            |            | 33          | 26          | 17         | 3          |            |            |            |            | 79          |
| Tawny Owl                      | 3          |            | 3          | 5          | 7           | 2           |            |            | 12         | 6          | 5          | 4          | 47          |
| Treecreeper                    | 2          |            | 1          |            |             | 1           |            |            |            |            |            |            | 4           |
| Tufted Duck                    |            |            |            |            | 1           | 2           |            |            |            |            |            |            | 3           |
| Wheatear                       |            |            |            | 1          |             |             |            |            |            |            |            |            | 1           |
| Willow Warbler                 |            |            | 1          | 3          | 4           | 5           | 1          |            |            |            |            |            | 14          |
| Woodpigeon                     | 43         | 19         | 45         | 35         | 58          | 73          | 22         | 25         | 18         | 18         | 39         | 22         | 417         |
| Wren                           | 15         | 5          | 26         | 29         | 33          | 30          | 9          | 6          | 1          | 7          | 4          | 3          | 168         |
| Yellowhammer                   |            |            | 3          | 8          | 11          | 13          | 8          | 1          |            |            | 11         | 1          | 56          |
| <b>Total reports per month</b> | <b>667</b> | <b>276</b> | <b>806</b> | <b>793</b> | <b>1229</b> | <b>1078</b> | <b>377</b> | <b>364</b> | <b>248</b> | <b>305</b> | <b>613</b> | <b>305</b> | <b>7061</b> |

**Bird reports for 2020 in Great and Little Abington, including Granta Park.**

The table indicates the number of reports received for each bird species, by month. The darkness of the blue shading represents the relative number of reports.

In the first column, pale green shading indicates a new species for the Abingtons, reported for the first time in 2020. Pale red shading indicates a species seen in 2020, but not reported in the previous three years (2017-2019).

## II. RSPB Garden Birdwatch – seen in Abington – 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January

A total of 14 reports were received from across the two parishes this year, included a total of 29 bird species, three fewer species than 2019. Of note, were sightings of a **Blackcap**, **Coal Tit**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Green Woodpecker**, **Nuthatch** and a **Sparrowhawk**. The table below lists the number of reports received for each species seen.

| Species                  | Reports | Species         | Reports |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
| Blackbird                | 11      | Jackdaw         | 11      |
| Blackcap                 | 1       | Kestrel         | 1       |
| Black-headed Gull        | 1       | Long-tailed Tit | 6       |
| Blue Tit                 | 11      | Magpie          | 6       |
| Carrion Crow             | 3       | Nuthatch        | 1       |
| Chaffinch                | 6       | Pheasant        | 2       |
| Coal Tit                 | 6       | Robin           | 12      |
| Collared Dove            | 9       | Rook            | 4       |
| Dunnock                  | 9       | Song Thrush     | 3       |
| Goldfinch                | 7       | Sparrowhawk     | 3       |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 2       | Starling        | 1       |
| Great Tit                | 10      | Stock Dove      | 1       |
| Greenfinch               | 4       | Woodpigeon      | 14      |
| Green Woodpecker         | 2       | Wren            | 4       |
| House Sparrow            | 7       |                 |         |



### III. Abington Bird Survey – Bank Holiday Weekend - 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May

A good number of reports were received, 19 in total, which included a total of 63 species seen (in 2019, 52 species were seen from 10 reports). The species most frequently noted were **Blackbird** and **Woodpigeon**, closely followed by **Blue Tit**, **Jackdaw**, **Robin** and **Rook**. The table lists the number of reports received, and the maximum number seen, for each species.

| Species                  | Reports | Max. |
|--------------------------|---------|------|
| Barnacle Goose           | 1       | 2    |
| Blackbird                | 17      | 7    |
| Black-headed Gull        | 1       | 1    |
| Blackcap                 | 8       | 3    |
| Blue Tit                 | 15      | 10   |
| Bullfinch                | 2       | 2    |
| Buzzard                  | 7       | 3    |
| Canada Goose             | 3       | 10   |
| Carrion Crow             | 8       | 6    |
| Chaffinch                | 5       | 2    |
| Chiffchaff               | 6       | 2    |
| Coal Tit                 | 3       | 10   |
| Collared Dove            | 12      | 4    |
| Corn Bunting             | 2       | 2    |
| Cuckoo                   | 5       | 1    |
| Dunnock                  | 10      | 8    |
| Feral Pigeon             | 1       | 1    |
| Goldcrest                | 3       | 2    |
| Goldfinch                | 11      | 10   |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 6       | 2    |
| Great Tit                | 10      | 6    |
| Green Woodpecker         | 5       | 2    |
| Greenfinch               | 10      | 3    |
| Grey Heron               | 2       | 1    |
| Greylag Goose            | 2       | 8    |
| Herring Gull             | 1       | 3    |
| House Martin             | 6       | 8    |
| House Sparrow            | 12      | 14   |
| Jackdaw                  | 15      | 16   |
| Jay                      | 4       | 1    |
| Kestrel                  | 3       | 1    |
| Lesser Whitethroat       | 2       | 2    |

| Species                 | Reports | Max. |
|-------------------------|---------|------|
| Linnet                  | 2       | 10   |
| Little Owl              | 1       | 2    |
| Long-tailed Tit         | 3       | 4    |
| Magpie                  | 11      | 2    |
| Mallard                 | 3       | 14   |
| Mistle Thrush           | 1       | 10   |
| Moorhen                 | 3       | 2    |
| Nuthatch                | 1       | 1    |
| Pheasant                | 3       | 2    |
| Pied Wagtail            | 5       | 3    |
| Red Kite                | 2       | 1    |
| Red-legged Partridge    | 2       | 3    |
| Reed Bunting            | 2       | 2    |
| Reed Warbler            | 1 (h)   | 1    |
| Robin                   | 14      | 4    |
| Rook                    | 14      | 12   |
| Skylark                 | 5       | 8    |
| Song Thrush             | 11      | 4    |
| Sparrowhawk             | 3       | 1    |
| Starling                | 6       | 12   |
| Stock Dove              | 3       | 4    |
| Stonechat               | 1 (h,p) | 1    |
| Swallow                 | 7       | 6    |
| Swift                   | 6       | 14   |
| Tawny Owl               | 2 (h)   | 1    |
| Tufted Duck             | 1       | 1    |
| Whitethroat             | 2       | 4    |
| Willow Warbler          | 1       | 1    |
| Woodpigeon              | 17      | c50  |
| Wren                    | 7       | 4    |
| Yellowhammer            | 2       | 5    |
| (h) heard; (p) possible |         |      |



51: Goldfinch, BBR – 2 Aug (EL)



52: Gt Spotted Woodpecker, BBR – 22 May (BO)





53: Frog Spawn, South Rd – 23 Feb (ADN)



54: Tadpoles, BBR – 5 Apr (GS)



55: Smooth Newt, Dragonfly Nymphs – 13 Apr (DLT)



56: Smooth Newt, BBR – 4 May (DF)



57: Common Frog, South Rd – 26 Apr (ADN)



58: Stickleback, South Rd – 26 Apr (ADN)



59: Frog meets Toad, South Rd – 19 May (ADN)



60: Dark-coloured frog, South Rd – 20 May (ADN)



## 5. REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

### I. Overview

Perhaps because of the opportunity to spend more time in our gardens during the Covid-19 lockdown, this was a good year for sightings of Common Frogs, Common Toads, Smooth Newts and, to a lesser extent, Grass Snakes. Three notable observations were made during the year. The first was the sighting of thousands of toadlets leaving the lake on Granta Park in mid-June. The ground was described as a moving carpet of toadlets, making it difficult to walk across without squashing them. Such mass movements are occasionally seen after a successful spawning year when toadlets leave the water *en masse* to seek out terrestrial homes where they will stay until returning to breed next year.

A second notable find was of a sloughed Grass Snake skin under a paving stone in a garden on South Rd, GA. A male Grass Snake sheds its skin twice a year, and females once a year, just before laying eggs. The sloughed skin of the Grass Snake can be identified by the large scales on the head (e.g. behind the eye) and by a divided anal/pre-anal scale. In addition, the dorsal scales are 'keeled' which means they have a ridge and feel rough to the touch.

Finally, a very dark Common Frog was observed in a pond on South Rd. The colouration in Common Frogs can be surprisingly varied, ranging from the more usual olive-green or brown, to yellow, pinkish, black and even albino. The causes of this variation are still unresolved in our native frogs but may be related to adaptations to match the background colour, seasonal changes, indications of disease or stress, or related to breeding. In this case, the frog seemed well camouflaged against the dark vegetation and shadows.

### II. Amphibians

#### i. Common Frog

February: First reports of frogs returning to garden ponds were received from 10<sup>th</sup> onwards, and the first report of frogspawn in a pond on Bourn Bridge Rd was received on the 21<sup>st</sup>, a week earlier than last year. No other reports of spawn were received.

March: On 17<sup>th</sup> tadpoles were seen emerging from the spawn in the pond on Bourn Bridge Rd. Adult frogs seen in a pond on South Rd, but no spawn.

April: Frog spawn and tadpoles sighted in ponds on South Rd and Bourn Bridge Rd through the month, and an adult frog was seen in ponds on Lewis Cr. and South Rd.

May: Adults and young frogs were reported from time to time in ponds throughout the month. Young frogs were observed leaping across a mown lawn to reach a garden pond on South Rd, presumably dispersing from neighbouring ponds. Towards the end of the month, a large adult frog was found in damp shade in the vegetable patch of the same garden, indicating that the breeding season is nearly over, and most amphibians will start seeking land-based habitats for the rest of the year. A very dark-coloured Common Frog was observed in a pond on South Rd on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

June and July: Adults continued to be seen in ponds and gardens, and young frogs were often seen moving across lawns and rough ground to find damp land-based homes.

August and September: Further adults and young frogs were seen early in August leaving ponds for terrestrial habitats. A very small froglet was observed in West Field, some distance from any known water, and a large adult and young frog were seen leaping across the lawn from a pond on South Rd. Occasional sightings in gardens continued through September.

#### ii. Common Toad

April: One adult was observed in a pond on South Rd (11<sup>th</sup>).

May: Large adult observed in pond on South Rd (9<sup>th</sup>).



June: One, sometimes two, adults observed in a pond on South Rd throughout the month, usually just stationary with head level with the water. A notable event occurred in the middle of the month (16<sup>th</sup>), when a mass exodus of tiny toadlets was observed from the lake on Granta Park.

July and August: Occasional sightings of adult toads in a pond and garden on South Rd.

September: One adult seen in damp garden vegetation, South Rd.

### iii. Smooth Newt

March: First sighting reported from a pond on Bourn Bridge Rd on 8<sup>th</sup>. Two further newts reported in a pond on Cambridge Rd on 25<sup>th</sup>.

April: As the weather warmed up, sightings were reported steadily through the month from ponds on South Rd, Bourn Bridge Rd and Cambridge Rd.

May: More sightings in ponds as breeding got underway.

June, July and August: Individual adults observed in ponds over the summer, and the first tiny, almost transparent, newt 'tadpole' was caught in a pond net in a pond on South Rd on 15 June. More tiny young newts seen in the same pond in late August.

September: A single adult was seen in a pond in Meadow Walk early in the month. No reports since.

## III. Reptiles

### i. Grass Snake

April: The first sightings of the year were reported on the 24<sup>th</sup> during a prolonged spell of warm weather. One snake was seen swimming in a pond on the old LSA where there were plenty of tadpoles, and another was seen in a garden on Bourn Bridge Rd.

May: One adult was seen in a pond on 8<sup>th</sup> in West Field when temperatures reached 23°C, and another (c. 45 cm long) was seen sunning itself in a garden on Cambridge Rd on 19<sup>th</sup>.

June and July: No sightings reported, despite some periods of warm weather.

August: Late in the month (21<sup>st</sup>), two snakes were found together under an old paving stone in undergrowth in a garden on South Rd. Both were very slender, one c. 40 cm long, the other c. 25 cm long. They were possibly preying on young froglets that had recently left the garden pond, and both snakes moved away very quickly into deeper cover. Another snake (possibly the same 40-cm long one) was seen in the same place on the 24<sup>th</sup> together with a sloughed skin.

September: A Grass Snake was observed in the river on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the last reported sighting of the year.

### ii. Common Lizard

No reports.



61: Sloughed grass snake skin, 24cm – 24 Aug (ADN)



62: Grass snake skin, head close-up – 24 Aug (ADN)

**Observers:** David Farrant, Julia Gunning, Carole McCrae, Andy Merryweather, Polly Merryweather, Ross Nobes, Freda Orgee, Gill Smith, Richard Smith, Evelyn Tredget, Derek Turnidge, Richard Wells, Anne Dunbar-Nobes

Anne Dunbar-Nobes

## 6. MAMMALS

This year there have been even more sightings of muntjac, particularly in LA gardens. Fallow deer and Roe deer have also been in evidence outside the village.

Bats have been reported regularly with the last one sighted at the end of October.

An otter and badger were reported as were several sightings of stoats, but very few reports of hedgehogs which seem to be declining further.

### *I. Summary report of mammal sightings*

| <i>Species</i> | <i>Location</i>                      | <i>Date</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Muntjac        | Granta Park                          | 05.01.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Granta Park                          | 05.01.20    | 1             |
| Fallow Deer    | Hedge line, Abington Park Farm       | 06.01.20    | 12            |
| Fallow Deer    | Field, Grange Farm (nr Cambridge Rd) | 10.01.20    | 12            |
| Fox            | Front Garden, Church Lane            | 19.01.20    | 2             |
| Muntjac        | Lagden's Grove                       | 03.02.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Lagden's Grove                       | 06.02.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Abington Park Farm                   | 17.02.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Rough ground, Illumina               | February    | 1-2           |
| Muntjac        | Fields near Abington Park Farm       | 21.03.20    | 1             |
| Badger         | LSA garden                           | 24.03.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Fields south of Old Railway Cutting  | 28.03.20    | 5             |
| Muntjac        | Sluice Wood                          | 29.03.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Old Railway Cutting                  | 28.02.20    | 1             |
| Field Vole     | Cambridge Road                       | 07.04.20    | 1             |
| Bat            | Great Abington                       | 09.04.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Garden, Cambridge Road               | 12.04.20    | 2             |
| Otter          | Lagden's Grove                       | 14.04.20    | 1             |
| Bat            | Garden, Cambridge Road               | 18.04.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | South Grove, LSA                     | 19.04.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Fields alongside Chalky Road         | 20.04.20    | 1             |
| Fallow Deer    | Fields alongside Chalky Road         | 20.04.20    | 12            |
| Muntjac        | Entrance to Bancroft Farm            | 22.04.20    | 1             |
| Bat            | Garden, Cambridge Road               | 24.04.20    | several       |
| Field Vole     | Garden, Cambridge Road               | 24.04.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Fields near Worsted Lodge            | 26.04.20    | 4             |
| Hare           | Near Abington Park Farm              | 01.05.20    | 1             |
| Stoat          | LSA garden                           | 01.05.20    | 1             |
| Hedgehog       | BBR garden                           | May         |               |
| Field Vole     | Garden, Cambridge Road               | May         | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Granta Park                          | 10.05.20    | 1             |
| Fox            | Strawberry Farm                      | 18.05.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Strawberry Farm                      | 18.05.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Strawberry Farm                      | 18.05.20    | 2             |
| Hare           | Granta Park                          | 24.05.20    | 3             |
| Rat            | Abington Park Farm                   | 27.05.20    | 1             |
| Hare           | Abington Park Farm                   | 27.05.20    | 3             |
| Fox            |                                      | 31.05.20    | 1             |
| Muntjac        | Garden, LA                           | 22.06.20    | 1             |
| Stoat          | Footbridge over A11                  | 07.06.20    | 2             |
| Hare           | Old Railway Cutting                  | 09.06.20    | 1             |

|                 |                             |             |   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---|
| Fox             | Near Hildersham boundary    | 09.06.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Old Railway Cutting         | 09.06.20    | 1 |
| House Mouse     | Lewis Cr.                   | 09.06.20    | 1 |
| Fallow Deer     | Near Hildersham boundary    | 11.06.20    | 3 |
| Muntjac         | Granta Park                 | 13.06.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Granta Park                 | 20.06.20    | 1 |
| Hare            | Granta Park                 | 20.06.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Old Railway Cutting         | 24.06.20    | 1 |
| Fox             | Old Railway Cutting         | 24.06.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Old Railway Cutting         | 28.06.20    | 2 |
| Fox             | Old Railway Cutting         | 28.06.20    | 3 |
| Hedgehog        | Lewis Cl.                   | All of June | 1 |
| Grey Squirrel   | Cambridge Road              | All of June |   |
| Field Vole      | Cambridge Road              | All of June |   |
| Muntjac         | Cambridge Road              | All of June |   |
| Bat             | Cambridge Road              | All of June |   |
| Bat             | 1 BBR                       | All of June |   |
| Grey Squirrel   | 1 BBR                       | All of June |   |
| Hedgehog        | Lewis Cl.                   | 21.07.20    |   |
| Fallow Deer     | Field by Pampisford Rd      | 11.07.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 1 |
| Stoat           | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 1 |
| Fallow Deer     | LSA near Abington Park Farm | 13.07.20    | 1 |
| Muntjac         | LSA                         |             | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 2 |
| Fox             | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 2 |
| Hare            | LSA                         |             | 6 |
| Muntjac         | Cambridge Road              | All of July | 1 |
| Grey Squirrel   | Cambridge Road              | All of July | 1 |
| Field Vole      | Cambridge Road              | All of July | 1 |
| Bat             | Cambridge Road              | All of July | 1 |
| Bat             | 1 BBR                       | All of July | 1 |
| Grey Squirrel   | 1 BBR                       | All of July | 1 |
| Grey Squirrel   | Cambridge Road              | All of Aug  | 1 |
| Muntjac         | Cambridge Road              | All of Aug  | 1 |
| Field Vole      | Cambridge Road              | All of Aug  | 1 |
| Bat - 2 species | Cambridge Road              | All of Aug  | 2 |
| Rabbit          | Cambridge Road              |             | 1 |
| Hare            | Granta Park                 | 09.08.20    | 2 |
| Fallow Deer     | Old Railway Cutting         | 12.08.20    | 4 |
| Fox             | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 2 |
| Fox             | Old Railway Cutting         | 20.08.20    | 1 |
| Fallow Deer     | Old Railway Cutting         |             | 2 |
| Hare            | Old Railway Cutting         | 29.08.20    | 2 |
| Bat             | 1 BBR                       | All of Aug  |   |
| Grey Squirrel   | 1 BBR                       | All of Aug  |   |
| Bat             | Meadow Walk                 | September   | 1 |
| Hedgehog        | Meadow Walk                 | September   | ? |
| Hare            | LSA                         | 05.09.20    | 2 |
| Bat             | 1 BBR                       | All of Sept |   |
| Grey Squirrel   | 1 BBR                       | All of Sept | 1 |
| Bat             | Cambridge Road              | All of Sept |   |



|                  |                           |             |    |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|----|
| Grey Squirrel    | Cambridge Road            | All of Sept | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Cambridge Road            | All of Sept | 1  |
| Field Vole       | Cambridge Road            | All of Sept | 1  |
| Hedgehog         | South Rd                  | 13.10.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Lewis Cr. Garden          | 14.10.20    | 1  |
| Bat              | North Rd                  | 14.10.20    | 1  |
| Fox              | Old Railway Cutting       | 16.10.20    | 1  |
| Fallow Deer Stag | South Grove wood boundary | 25.10.20    | 1  |
| Bat              | Cambridge Road            | 31.10.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Old Railway Cutting       | 01.11.20    | 1  |
| Hare             | Old Railway Cutting       | 01.11.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | High St. LA               | 08.11.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | High St. LA               | 13.11.20    | 1  |
| Fallow Deer      | Old Railway Cutting       | 15.11.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Cambridge Road            | 23.11.20    | 1  |
| Hare             | LSA                       | 23.11.20    | 2  |
| Fallow Deer      | LSA                       | 23.11.20    | 10 |
| Muntjac          | Nr Pampisford Rd          | 25.11.20    | 1  |
| Fox              | Millennium bridge         | 25.11.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Lagden's Grove            | 06.12.20    | 1  |
| Hare             | Illumina, GP              | 06.12.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | High St, LA               | 14.12.20    | 1  |
| Fallow Deer      | Field across from A1307   | 17.12.20    | 12 |
| Fallow Deer      | Old Railway Cutting       | 19.12.20    | 2  |
| Fallow Deer      | Hildersham Woods          | 19.12.20    | 6  |
| Roe Deer         | Old Railway Cutting       | 19.12.20    | 2  |
| Muntjac          | High St, LA               | 31.12.20    | 1  |
| Muntjac          | Cambridge Road            | 31.12.20    | 1  |

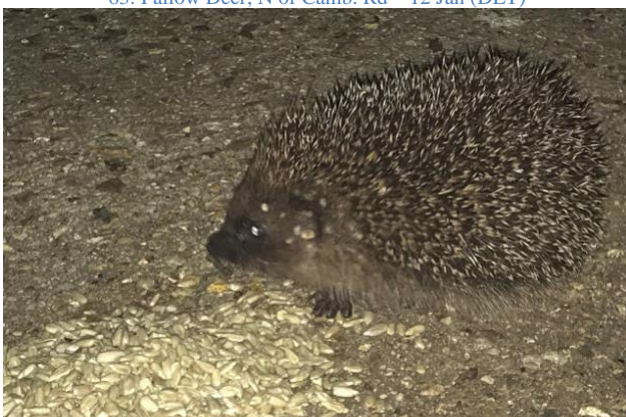
Gill Smith



63: Fallow Deer, N of Camb. Rd – 12 Jan (DLT)



64: Hare – 4 Apr (AM)



65: Hedgehog, Lewis Cr. – 2 Jul (JW)



66: Fox in flax field – 2 Jul (AM)





67: Scorpion Fly, South Rd – 13 Jun (ADN)



69: Tawny Long-horn Beetle, BBR – 8 Jul (DF)



70: Hoverflies – 8 Jul (AM)



72: Dark-edged bee fly – 24 Mar (AM)



68: Stag Beetle, Lewis Cr. – 16 Jun (AM)



71: Common Green Shieldbug – 13 Jul (AM)



73: Ermine Moth – 30 Jun (AM)

## 7. INSECTS

### *I. Insect reports and reporters*

This report covers mainly butterflies, bees, dragonflies and damselflies. These are the groups that members recognize and can usually identify.

The **total number of reports** received this year was **2359**, the most recorded since Abington Naturewatch was formed. The number of butterfly reports was almost 2000, up considerably on the last few years.

There are six regular reporters (includes couples) and several occasional reporters.

This year, with the Coronavirus pandemic, many people were working from home and spending more time in their gardens and walking in the village to get some exercise and seeing many more insects especially butterflies.

### *II. Butterflies*

This was, on the whole, a good year for butterflies, especially in May, June and July when there was less rain than August and October.

This year we saw 28 of the 34 county resident species. A few of these were more unusual for Abington with less than 10 reports.

**Brimstone** butterflies topped the ranking in the reports, with **Small White** in second place.

**Peacock** and **Brimstone** were seen in 11 months of the year.

The **White** butterflies, **Small**, **Large**, **Green-veined** and **Orange tipped**, accounted for about a third of all the butterflies seen.

The second table below shows the ranking according to number of reports of all the butterflies including those rarer ones with only 1 or 2 reports.

**First butterfly: Brimstone on 3 Feb 2020    Last butterfly: Peacock on 25 Dec 2020**

#### **Butterflies ranked by number of reports (top 12)**

| <b>2020</b> |                     |     | <b>Last year's ranking 2019</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>    | Brimstone           | 283 | 2                               |
| <b>2</b>    | Small White         | 279 | 1                               |
| <b>3</b>    | Red Admiral         | 153 | 4                               |
| <b>4</b>    | Meadow Brown        | 150 | 3                               |
| <b>5</b>    | Peacock             | 139 | 11                              |
| <b>6</b>    | Comma               | 124 | 5                               |
| <b>7</b>    | Large White         | 122 | 6                               |
| <b>8</b>    | Small Tortoiseshell | 112 | 12                              |
| <b>9</b>    | Orange Tip          | 112 | 10                              |
| <b>10</b>   | Holly Blue          | 93  | 9                               |
| <b>11</b>   | Green-veined White  | 64  | Not in top 12                   |
| <b>12</b>   | Gatekeeper          | 56  | Not in top 12                   |



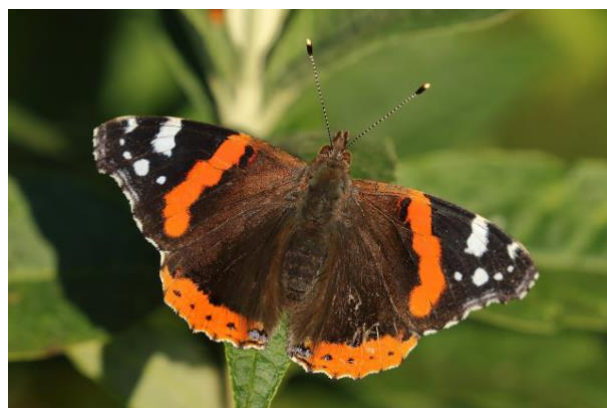
| 2020 rank | Butterfly                    | No of reports | Jan      | Feb      | Mar      | Apr        | May        | Jun        | Jul        | Aug        | Sep       | Oct      | Nov      | Dec      |
|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1         | Brimstone                    | 284           | 1        | 2        | 47       | 77         | 55         | 36         | 45         | 11         | 7         | 1        | 2        |          |
| 2         | Small White                  | 279           |          |          | 4        | 53         | 57         | 55         | 65         | 30         | 13        | 1        |          |          |
| 3         | Red Admiral                  | 153           |          |          |          | 8          | 23         | 16         | 66         | 26         | 11        | 3        | 2        |          |
| 4         | Meadow Brown                 | 150           |          |          |          |            |            | 64         | 65         | 21         |           |          |          |          |
| 5         | Peacock                      | 139           |          | 2        | 14       | 50         | 4          | 10         | 47         | 6          | 2         | 1        | 2        | 1        |
| 6         | Comma                        | 124           |          |          | 27       | 18         | 1          | 10         | 47         | 20         | 1         |          |          |          |
| 7         | Large White                  | 122           |          |          |          | 2          | 18         | 30         | 53         | 17         | 2         |          |          |          |
| 8         | Small Tortoiseshell          | 112           |          |          | 5        | 7          | 7          | 61         | 28         | 4          |           |          |          |          |
| 9         | Orange Tip                   | 112           |          |          |          | 69         | 42         |            | 1          |            |           |          |          |          |
| 10        | Holly Blue                   | 93            |          |          |          | 37         | 52         |            | 1          | 2          |           | 1        |          |          |
| 11        | Green-veined White           | 64            |          |          |          | 9          | 12         | 14         | 19         | 8          | 2         |          |          |          |
| 12        | Gatekeeper                   | 56            |          |          |          |            |            | 1          | 43         | 12         |           |          |          |          |
| 13        | Speckled Wood                | 55            |          |          |          | 16         | 10         | 11         | 4          | 7          | 7         |          |          |          |
| 14        | Ringlet                      | 33            |          |          |          |            |            | 5          | 28         |            |           |          |          |          |
| 15        | Large Skipper                | 32            |          |          |          |            |            | 21         | 9          | 2          |           |          |          |          |
| 16        | Small Skipper                | 25            |          |          |          |            |            | 11         | 14         |            |           |          |          |          |
| 17        | Small Heath                  | 23            |          |          |          |            | 4          | 12         | 1          | 5          | 1         |          |          |          |
| 18        | Marbled White                | 33            |          |          |          |            |            | 12         | 10         |            |           |          |          |          |
| 19        | Common Blue                  | 18            |          |          |          |            | 4          | 3          | 8          | 3          |           |          |          |          |
| 20        | Small Copper                 | 7             |          |          |          |            |            | 2          | 2          |            | 3         |          |          |          |
| 21        | Painted Lady                 | 6             |          |          |          |            |            | 1          | 2          | 2          | 1         |          |          |          |
| 21        | Essex Skipper                | 6             |          |          |          |            |            | 4          |            | 2          |           |          |          |          |
| 22        | Brown Argus                  | 5             |          |          |          |            | 2          | 1          | 1          | 1          |           |          |          |          |
| 23        | Silver-washed Fritillary     | 2             |          |          |          |            |            |            | 2          |            |           |          |          |          |
| 23        | White-letter Hairstreak      | 2             |          |          |          |            |            | 2          |            |            |           |          |          |          |
| 24        | Chalkhill Blue               | 1             |          |          |          |            |            |            |            | 1          |           |          |          |          |
| 24        | Clouded Yellow               | 1             |          |          |          |            |            |            |            |            | 1         |          |          |          |
| 24        | Dark- green Fritillary       | 1             |          |          |          |            |            | 1          |            |            |           |          |          |          |
|           | <b>Total monthly reports</b> | <b>1926</b>   | <b>1</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>344</b> | <b>291</b> | <b>383</b> | <b>561</b> | <b>180</b> | <b>51</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b> |

June and July were the best months with most species being seen.

*Note that the numbers in the table are not the numbers of butterflies seen but reports of that species being seen, however many.*



74: Peacock, Lewis Cr. – 24 Mar (AM)



75: Red Admiral, Sluice Wood – 22 Apr (AM)

## i. Bees

Bee numbers were well down on previous years. **Bumble Bee** were reported from April onwards but in much smaller numbers than in previous years; this reflects the national situation. **Bumble Bee** 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. Fewer reports of **Honey Bee** this year.

Bee species seen: **Buff Tailed, White Tailed, Red Tailed** and **Tree Bumblebee, Carder Bee, Honey Bee and Mining Bee**



76: White-tailed Bumblebee – 12 Jul (DF)



77: Tree Bumblebee, Lewis Cr. – 25 Jun (AM)

## ii. Bee-flies

Fewer reports of **Bee-flies** earlier in the year than usual.

## iii. Damselflies

Fewer reports this year, especially the many **Banded Demoiselle** that we normally see near the Millennium footbridge. Other species seen were **Azure, Common Blue and Large Red damselfly**.

## iv. Dragonflies

Reports of dragonflies included **Black Tailed Skimmer, Common Darter, Emperor** and larger numbers of **Southern Hawker**.

## v. Ladybird

Few reports of ladybirds and mainly of our native **7 spot Ladybird**. Very few reports of **Harlequin**.

## vi. Moths

No public moth events held this year (but see section vii). **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** were reported in slightly lower numbers, probably due to the poor spring weather.

Reports from 2 reporters were of **Box Tree Moth**, very undesirable as they can cause serious damage to box hedges and shrubs.

Jennifer Hirsh



78: Large Red Damselfly, Camb. Rd – 24 Apr (DLT)



79: Azure Damselfly, BBR – 6 May (DF)



### vii. Moth trapping session in Lewis Crescent

Andy Merryweather arranged private (COVID compliant) moth trapping sessions. Over two nights in July, using a mercury lamp moth trap kindly lent by David F, Andy attracted, photographed and identified as many moths as possible in his garden. Twenty-five different moth species were identified, including four larger and impressive hawkmoth species. In addition, a further ~11 species were photographed, but as yet remain unidentified.

|                               |  |                              |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Black Arches                  | Dark Arches                            | Scalloped Oak                |
| Box-tree Moth                 | Elephant Hawkmoth                      | Short-cloaked                |
| Brimstone Moth                | Garden Carpet                          | Small Elephant Hawkmoth      |
| Broad-border Yellow Underwing | Heart and Dart                         | Small Magpie                 |
| Brown-line Bright-spot        | Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing | Striped Twin-spot Carpet     |
| Brown-tail                    | Peppered Moth                          | Swallow-tailed Moth          |
| Clancy's Rustic               | Pine Hawkmoth                          |                              |
| Common Footman                | Dingy White Plume                      |                              |
| Common Rustic                 | Poplar Hawkmoth                        | ~11 unidentified species     |
| Common Wainscot               | Riband Wave                            | various species of micromoth |

Andy Merryweather



80: Hawkmoths – Small Elephant and Elephant



81: Pine Hawkmoth



82: Poplar Hawkmoth



83: Brown-line Bright-spot and Box Tree Moth

Photos by AM





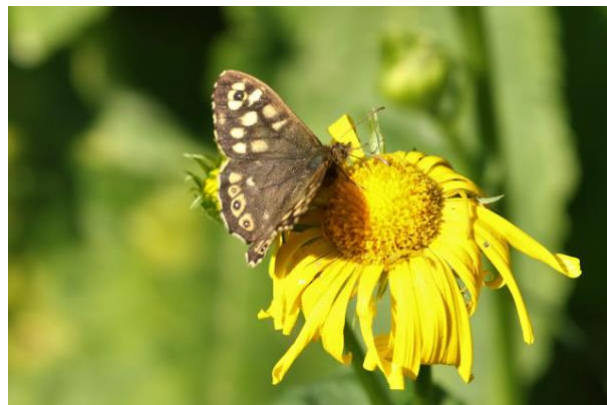
84: Four-spotted chaser, exuvia, High St – 13 May (CMcC)



85: Broad-bodied Chaser, Camb. Rd – 30 May (DLT)



86: Comma, Lewis Cr. – 5 Apr (AM)



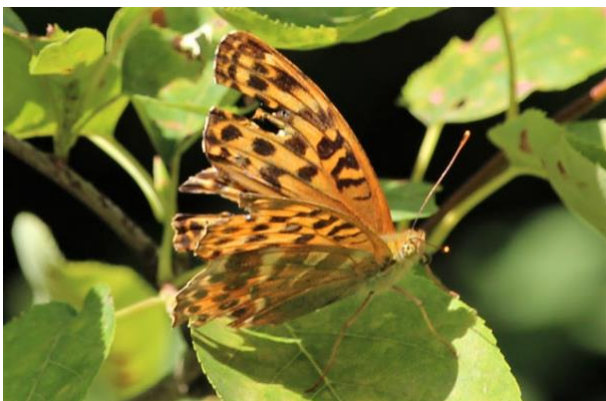
87: Speckled Wood, Lewis Cr. – 11 Apr (AM)



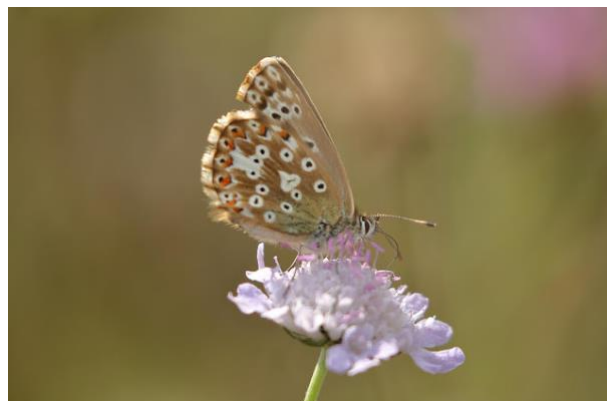
88: Holly Blue, Lewis Cr. – 4 May (AM)



89: Common Blue ♀, ORC – 30 May (AM)



90: Silver-washed Fritillary, South Rd – 25 Jul (ADN)



91: Chalkhill Blue, Roman Rd – 9 Aug (AM)





92: Snowdrops, Sluice Wood GP – 20 Jan (AM)



93: Aconites, GP – 12 Jan (AM)



94: Catkins, GP – 12 Jan (AM)



95: Sweet Violet, – 19 Mar (AM)



96: Sallow flowers, ORC – 29 Mar (AM)



97: Yellow Archangel, Sluice Wood – 16 Apr (DF)



98: Goat's Beard, ORC – 7 Jun (AM)



99: Dog Rose, ORC – 7 Jun (AM)

## 8. FLORA

### i. January

The first few clumps of Snowdrop were in flower on 5<sup>th</sup>, with large areas fully out by the end of the month. The first Aconite flowers were also showing around New Year and, following the mild weather towards the end of the month, large areas of Aconite were in full flower, particularly in Sluice Wood and more unusually, along the Roman Road. Hazel Catkins were showing well mid-month in Sluice Wood, and the glossy green leaves of Wild Arum were in abundance in Lagden's Grove by the end of the month.

### ii. February

The Snowdrops continue to flower well through the woods on GP and elsewhere, and broad carpets of Aconites were in flower on GP, especially in the area around the Sluice. A few Daisies were seen in flower on GP cricket ground early in the month, and the first few flowers of Sweet Violet, both purple and white forms, were appearing at the end of the month.

### iii. March

Wild species reported in flower this month, including along the ORC, on GP, in an LA garden:

Dandelion, Daisy, Speedwell, Ground Ivy, White and Red Deadnettle, Shepherd's Purse, Coltsfoot, Celandine, Evergreen Alkanet, Violet, Sweet Violet, Cowslip, Dog's Mercury, Blackthorn, Wild Cherry, Sallow.

### iv. April

A good number of wild flower species were reported in bloom from around the village: including from a garden on High Street LA, in the PRV along Bourn Bridge Road, in Sluice Wood, along the ORC and the Roman Road, and near Park Farm:

Dandelion, Forget-me-Not, Fritillary, Yellow Archangel, Solomon's Deal, Red Deadnettle, Bluebell, Ground Ivy, Cow Parsley, Wild Arum, Cowslip, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Shepherd's Purse, Garlic Mustard, Fodder Radish, Phacelia, Green Alkanet, Honesty.

### v. May

Wild-flower species reported this month from: the Protected Road Verge on Bourn Bridge Road, Sluice Wood, along the ORC and the Roman Road, near Park Farm and near Hildersham Wood:

Hawthorn, Cow Parsley, Cowslip, Speedwell, Red Dead-nettle, White Dead-nettle, Buttercup, Forget-me-Not, Garlic Mustard, Field Poppy, White Campion, Red Campion, Ox-eye Daisy (everywhere!), Hoary Cress, Dog Rose, Cornflower, Elderflower, Wild Strawberry, Bugle, Germander Speedwell, Rough Hawkbit, Daisy, Common Yellow Rocket, Marsh Marigold, Yellow Flag, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Alkanet, Comfrey, Common Storksbill, Field Pansy, Ground Ivy, Hawksbeard, Lesser Bugloss, Prickly Sow-Thistle, Ragged Robin, Soft Cranesbill, Spear Thistle, Phacelia, Lady's Smock, Crimson Clover, Tufted Vetch, Cut-leaved Cranesbill.



100: Cowslip, ORC – 5 May (AM)



101: Speedwell – ORC – 5 May (AM)



102: Bugle, ORC – 11 May (AM)

### vi. June

The Protected Road Verge on Bourn Bridge Road was examined for broad-leaf and grass plants. Twenty-four species of broad-leaf plants were recorded and seven grass species:

| Broadleaf Plants |               |                 |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| White Campion    | Dwarf Thistle | Common Knapweed |



|                     |                  |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Bladder Campion     | Sow-thistle      | Greater Knapweed |
| Hedge Bedstraw      | Crow Garlic      | Annual Nettle    |
| Ladies Bedstraw     | Common Poppy     | Spear Thistle    |
| Yarrow              | Wild Carrot      | Wild Basil       |
| Field Scabious      | Field Bindweed   | Sheep's Sorrel   |
| Small Scabious      | Mugwort          | Common Mallow    |
| Hemlock             | Wild Parsley     | Ragwort          |
| <b>Grasses</b>      |                  |                  |
| Annual Meadow grass | Meadow Fescue    | Hairy Brome      |
| Foxtail             | Sheep's Fescue   |                  |
| Common Bent         | Yellow Oat Grass |                  |

Other flowering species reported from around the villages:

Poppy, Bramble, Privet, Greater Broomrape (ORC and Roman Road), White Campion, Red Campion, Comfrey, Dog Rose and Oxeye Daisy (early in month), Elderflower, Nettle, Goat's Beard, Woolly Thistle, Hemlock, Salad Burnet, Wild Parsnip, Mallow, Silverweed, Meadow Vetch, Bush Vetch, Tufted Vetch, Common St John's Wort, Common Toadflax, Ragwort, Crow Garlic, Scabious, Lady's Bedstraw and Hedge Bedstraw (particularly along the ORC), Bindweed, Lesser Bindweed, Hoary Mullein, Wild Strawberry, Rosebay Willow-herb, Pyramidal Orchid (on the LSA and GP), Viper's Bugloss and Bee Orchid (around the lake on GP).

## **vii. July**

Flora species reported in flower: Pyramidal Orchid, Bramble, Centaury, Common St. John's Wort, Hedge Bedstraw, Hoary Mullein, Wild Marjoram, Ragwort, Common Toadflax, Goat's Beard, Common Bindweed, Lady's Bedstraw, Knapweed, Field Scabious, Wild Basil, Common Mallow.

## **viii. August**

Due to COVID-restrictions and social distancing, the group visit to the Roman Road had to be cancelled. However, in an effort to survey the species near Worsted Lodge along the Roman Road, an assessment by a small number of very well-spaced Project Team members produced the following:

|                 |                       |                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Common Knapweed | Common Restharrow     | Spear Thistle     |
| Goat's Beard    | Lady's Bedstraw       | Bladder Campion   |
| Yarrow          | Ragwort               | Wild Basil        |
| Common Toadflax | Field Scabious        | Mugwort           |
| Common Mallow   | Small Scabious        | Golden Rod        |
| Dark Mullein    | Common St John's Wort | Common Storksbill |
| Dwarf Thistle   |                       |                   |

Other species reported in flower:

Common Knapweed, Common Restharrow, Spear Thistle, Dwarf Thistle, Goat's Beard, Lady's Bedstraw, Bladder Campion, Yarrow, Wild Basil, Common Mallow, Small Scabious, Field Scabious, Mugwort, Ragwort, Common Mallow, Golden Rod, Dark Mullein, Common St John's Wort, Common Storksbill, Marjoram, Wild Strawberry, Rosebay Willowherb, Himalayan Balsam.

## **ix. September**

A prolific crop of berries and seeds was noted on many hedgerow species, including: Hawthorn, Elder, Ash, Rowan, Crabapple, Rosehip, Blackberry, Blackthorn (Sloe).

## **x. Protected Verges**

On Bourn Bridge Road in Little Abington, we have Protected Verges either side of the road. These are areas of natural grassland that are carefully maintained by the Parish Council to suppress grass and encourage natural chalk grassland flowers. They are also logged in the County Council Biodiversity Record as No 52. These are examined each year and the species present recorded. The verges have slowly improved with the careful maintenance and in 2020 yielded 32 flower and grass species. Unfortunately, during the lockdown, an unofficial path has developed on the northern side. The road is narrow, with a 50mph speed limit and traffic can be difficult. We hope the damage to the verge will be limited by extra signage.

Andy Merryweather



103: Common Toadflax, – 8 Jul (AM)



104: Wild Strawberry, ORC – 2 Aug (AM)



105: Common Restharrow, Roman Rd – 9 Aug (AM)



106: Old Man's Beard, ORC – 24 Sep (AM)



107: Spindle Berries, ORC – 15 Nov (AM)



108: Rosehips in the frost, ORC – 15 Nov (AM)





109: Bluebell; BBR – 5 Apr (DF)



110: Ground Ivy, OCR – 11 Apr (DF)



111: Wild Arum flower shoot, High St – 16 Apr (JAH)



112: Flowering Cherry (honey bee) – 11 Apr (DF)



113: Honesty, nr GA church – 26 Apr (DF)



114: Alkanet, GP – 12 May (AM)



115: Field Pansy, GP – 12 May (AM)



116: Prickly Sow Thistle, GP – 12 May (AM)



## 9. GRANTA PARK – WILDLIFE SUMMARY

### *I. Introduction*

2020 has been a year that has forced worldwide change, and Granta Park has not gone unscathed. The Park has been used very differently and as one would expect has been very quiet since the pandemic forced us to first lockdown in March.

Whilst it deeply saddens the Estate team to see the usual hub of activity so empty, we have observed an increase in wildlife. A small silver lining at least. Although fewer people have been at the Park to report their sightings, the staff who have been here throughout 2020 have told us they believe that more animals have been venturing out.

Those who know the Park well will remember that for several years much of the Park was a building site whilst the Illumina Centre and surrounding area was developed. We are very happy to report that over the past year we have noticed a vast improvement in how the land has matured, with frequent sightings of birds and butterflies. More recently we have also been told that a pair of hares can often be seen by the lake. Before and after pictures can be seen below.



117: Granta Park phase II laid out – Apr 2019



118: Granta Park phase II – Dec 2020



119: Granta Park phase II – Dec 2020



Sadly, another consequence of COVID-19 is that we have been unable to run any of our usual Wildlife Trust events. These events are always popular with staff here, so our hope is that we will be able to see these return at some point in 2021! We also hope to work in conjunction with a member of staff from Vernalis to set up a moth trap in the woods on the north side of the Park.

As always, we will continue to encourage staff based at Granta Park to report what they see to the Estate Office or to Abington Naturewatch.

Please note that detailed bird records have been incorporated into the Bird chapter 4.

## ***II. Sightings***

In April, on just one day, a member of staff from the Estate Office saw 3 **Grey Heron**, a **Green Woodpecker** and an **Otter** in the lake.

**Canada Goose** and three goslings – seen throughout the year (photographed in May)



120: Canada Geese – May (GP)



Toadlets were sighted in June:



121: Toadlet, McClintock car park GP – June

We had a great selection of fungi across the Park (photographed in September). See also Fungi section.



122: Fungi, GP – Sept

A Goldcrest flew into a window at the gatehouse, but flew away unharmed shortly after:



123: Goldcrest, GP – Nov

Friday 4 Dec – In the early hours, whilst gritting the roads after snow, our landscapers saw a family of a male and female and several younger deer near South Lodge and the Southern woodland. Sadly, they couldn't get a photo as the deer scattered as soon as they exited their van. Head landscaper, Ivor Andrew, told us he had never seen anything like it in more than 15 years at the park. The maintenance team and landscapers have remained on site throughout 2020, they report frequently seeing:

- **Buzzard, Fox, Owl and Squirrel**
- A **Kestrel** and **Sparrowhawk** on the cricket pitch
- A **Heron** on the cricket pitch
- **Woodpeckers**, although it seems that **Woodpeckers** are more likely to venture out only over weekends



### III. Butterflies and Dragonflies (contributed by Darren Bast, AstraZeneca)

Butterfly numbers are pretty static, I saw no **Dark Green Fritillary** this year but **Clouded Yellow** was a site first for me. It's very unlikely that other butterfly species will be spotted as there are no suitable food plants.

I am excited to report a new site addition of **Willow Emerald** (*Chalcolestes viridis*), which was another great find around the lake edges, including many mating!

| 2020                     | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Large Red Damselfly      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Azure Damselfly          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Large Red-eyed Damselfly |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small Red-eyed Damselfly |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Common Blue Damselfly    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Four-spotted Chaser      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Broad-bodied Chaser      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Black-tailed Skimmer     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Emperor Dragonfly        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Southern Hawker          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Migrant Hawker           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Banded Demoiselle        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Brown Hawker             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Hairy Dragonfly          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Common Darter            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Willow Emerald Damselfly |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Ruddy Darter             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| total number of species  |     |     |     | 1   | 9   | 11  | 14  | 12  | 9   |     |     |     |

| 2020                     | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Brimstone                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Comma                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Peacock                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small Tortoiseshell      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small White              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Orange Tip               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Large White              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Green-veined White       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Clouded Yellow           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Common Blue              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Gatekeeper               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Purple Hairstreak        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| White-letter Hairstreak  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Holly Blue               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Large Skipper            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Marbled White            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Meadow Brown             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Red Admiral              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Ringlet                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Essex Skipper            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small Copper             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small Skipper            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Speckled Wood            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Brown Argus              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Small Heath              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Silver-washed Fritillary |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| total number of species  |     |     | 5   | 12  | 14  | 17  | 26  | 26  |     |     |     |     |

## 10.FUNGI



124: Velvet Shank (*Flammulina velutipes*), GP – Feb (AM)



125: Field Mushroom, BBR – 21 Sep (GS)



126: Oyster Mushroom BBR – 21 Sep (GS)



127: Giant Puffball, nr. Sluice Wood – 21 Sep (DF)



128: Shaggy Parasol, Camb. Rd – 24 Sep (DLT)



129: Earth Ball, Lewis Cr. – 24 Sep (AM)



130: Fungus, GP



131: Fungus, GP



## 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.

CPERC 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](http://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 (GBNNSS)***

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 <https://camvalleyforum.uk>.

### ***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 Abington – a summary compiled by Derek:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oMCRNG5nrD0zexHfIGeZa0DpYbdbADdN/view>

"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 website <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. See next page for contacts.

### II. *Naturewatch Home Page:*

This is updated regularly with the latest postings and photographs.

# 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.

Saturday, 26 December 2020

## River Granta floods local fields and meadows

Following the heavy rain a day or two before Christmas, falling on already sodden ground, the level of the River Granta was very high on Christmas Eve flooding several adjacent fields over Christmas.



### Resources

- [2020 NatureWatch Programme](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
- [NatureWatch contacts](#)

### Blog archive

- ▶ [2007](#) (18)
- ▶ [2008](#) (19)
- ▶ [2009](#) (21)
- ▶ [2010](#) (18)
- ▶ [2011](#) (35)
- ▶ [2012](#) (30)
- ▶ [2013](#) (32)
- ▶ [2014](#) (49)
- ▶ [2015](#) (54)
- ▶ [2016](#) (62)
- ▶ [2017](#) (58)
- ▶ [2018](#) (53)
- ▶ [2019](#) (145)
- ▼ [2020](#) (210)
  - ▶ [January](#) (13)
  - ▶ [February](#) (8)

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

The team is always interested to hear of any sightings in the Great and Little Abington parishes, especially accompanied by photos that can be published on our website.

#### **Programme Coordinator (and Membership Secretary)**

David Farrant, 9 Bourn Bridge Road, Little Abington

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#### **RiverCare, Record**

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#### **Birdwatch**

Derek Turnidge, 23 Cambridge Rd, Little Abington

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Email: [derek@turnidges.com](mailto:derek@turnidges.com)

#### **Amphibians & Reptiles**

Gaynor Farrant, 9 Bourn Bridge Road, Little Abington

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#### **Insects**

Jennifer Hirsh, 34 High Street, Little Abington

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Email: [jennifer@hirsh.com](mailto:jennifer@hirsh.com)

#### **Mammals**

Gill Smith, 1 Bourn Bridge Road, Little Abington

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Email: [richardandgill.smith@live.co.uk](mailto:richardandgill.smith@live.co.uk)

#### **Flora**

**Vacancy – volunteer welcome!**

#### **RiverCare**

Robin Harman, 22 West Field, Little Abington

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Email: [robandkayharman@gmail.com](mailto:robandkayharman@gmail.com)

#### **Website / Blog – submission of photos etc.**

Andy Merryweather, 6, Lewis Crescent, Great Abington

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Email: [amerryweather61@gmail.com](mailto:amerryweather61@gmail.com)

#### **Granta Park**

Eleanor Miller, Granta Park Estate Office, Great Abington

☎ 01223 893 710

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