

# NEWS AND STORIES FROM ABBEY FIELDS

IVC at Long Meadow | Big Butterfly Count | Magical moths | Thalia WB funding | Long Meadow avenue

## August 2023

By the start of August many birds are done with nesting, and our gardens can seem quiet as the adult birds moult into fresh new feathers and hide away while their new wing feathers grow. Also, at this time of year some birds leave our gardens and move out into the countryside to take advantage of the bounty of natural food that starts to become available in late summer. In contrast, July and August are months for insects, when our invertebrates really come into their own – watch out for the many species of butterflies, moths, bees, dragonflies and damselflies that are on the wing this month.

## In this update

IVC students appreciate the biodiversity of Long Meadow. Join in this year's Big Butterfly Count. Magical moths and brilliant birds enchant and entertain at the CCSA. The Thalia WB Community Fund support our fundraising efforts. Plans are in place to revamp the Long Meadow avenue.



Photo by IVC

## IVC studies at Long Meadow

Recently students from IVC studying environmental science spent a morning at Long Meadow. One of the group, Katie, reflects on the experience.

“Over the time since the acquisition of Long Meadow, I have spent some time there, though mostly in the ‘passing through’ sense.

However, there is nothing that makes you appreciate a space the way a field trip does. Meadows throughout England are disappearing fast and I had not yet realised their beauty.

This was a trip organised by IVC to



Photo by Penny Reeves

allow students studying environmental science to get practical experience working in an actual environment. What a treasure it was, that such a beautiful environment was just down the road! I know that we all benefitted from this experience - both in our understanding of how to survey a space and in our joy at the environment. Personally, I delighted learning of the biodiversity of the space, of the many wonderful plants. I also took great joy in discovering the incidental critters. The slug that me and my partner were surprised finding, and the beetles that delighted in landing on our heads.

Truly, we were enriched – not just by visiting this space, but also by just knowing of its existence – that we have this little snapshot of a natural world, so close to us. This knowledge is unmatched in its power.”

## Big Butterfly Count

Having recorded over 400 butterflies in six sessions in last year’s Big Butterfly Count, we are again organising counts at both CCSA and Long Meadow.

It is not too late to join in: we have added some additional dates for these in August. See our event calendar: <https://abbeyfields.online/events-calendar>

There seems to have been an upswing in butterfly numbers from late June with good numbers of meadow browns and skippers. Marbled whites have been seen and at the Set-aside we recently spotted a purple hairstreak. Exciting stuff!

So why not come along, have fun and see what you can find? Counters of all ages are welcome! Don’t worry if you are not sure about your identification skills - we have ID charts and there will be someone on hand to assist. Each session lasts just over an hour.

If interested please email [sitemanagers@abbeyfields.online](mailto:sitemanagers@abbeyfields.online)



Purple Hairstreak; photo by Penny Reeves



Meadow Brown; photo by Penny Reeves



Marbled White; photo by Penny Reeves



Small Skipper; photo by Penny Reeves

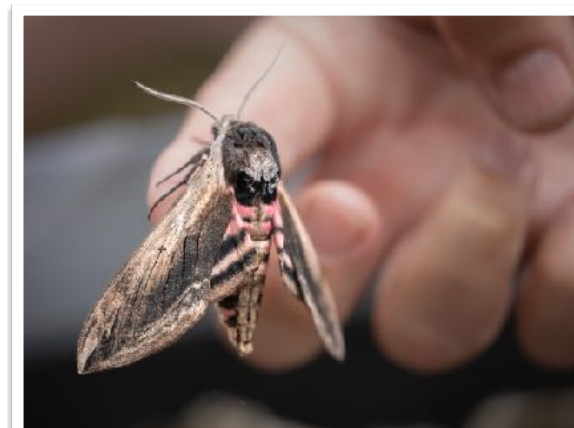
## Magical moths and brilliant birds

Good weather and an enthusiastic, engaged audience were key ingredients for an excellent demonstration of our wildlife, held at Croft Close Set-aside (CCSA) in June.

But the stars of the show were the birds and moths. These certainly did not disappoint. Our 100 visitors – of all ages – enjoyed the opportunity to see up close creatures which we rarely have an opportunity to study easily.



Elephant Hawk-moth; photo by Guy Richardson



Privet Hawk-moth; photo by Penny Reeves

Spring has seemed to be rather poor for insects in general (apart from whitefly?) and certainly the moth population appears to be down on 2022. The reason for this is not clear but the long, cold spring and last year's drought may both have contributed. So it was with a little nervousness that we put out the traps in advance. Would we get some spectacular moths – or just a few rather indistinct small brown jobbies? Fortune shone on us and we recorded over 100 species, including elephant, small elephant, privet, pine and poplar hawk-moths.



Pine Hawk-moth; photo by Guy Richardson



Poplar Hawk-moth; photo by Guy Richardson

The ringing team also had a successful morning. For some the highpoint was the young robin (which had yet to grow the familiar red breast); others found the perky great tits the main draw. And for those interested in the science, we had our first 'control', a bird that had been ringed somewhere else.

This was a male greenfinch which was ringed 20km away at RAF Wyton in 2019 as a first-year bird. Movements of such distances are not unusual for greenfinches. However, for a bird that typically lives two years this bird has done well (though has a way to go before equalling the current longevity record of 11 years).

We are very grateful to Ian Ellis and Bill Mansfield (moths) and Hannah Phillips and her six-strong team of bird ringers for all their efforts in looking so carefully after the wildlife on show and engaging with those who had come to see and learn.

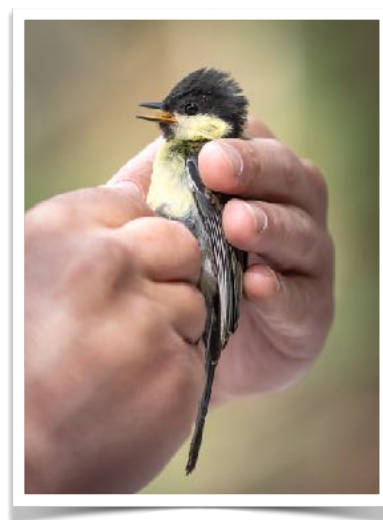
The event was part of the Cambridge Nature Festival, arranged by Cambridge Past Present and Future; we also thank them for their support.



Greenfinch; photo by Penny Reeves



Baby Robin; photo by Penny Reeves



Baby Great Tit; photo by Penny Reeves

## The Thalia WB Community Fund

We are very grateful to the Thalia WB Community Fund (formerly The Amey Community Fund) for their support to our fundraising efforts.

The Thalia WB Community Fund are assisting in two ways. Firstly, and significantly, they provided a grant towards the purchase of CCSA, allowing us to initiate the legal conveyancing in February. They are also funding a public art feature at the CCSA. This is aimed at demonstrating this County Wildlife Site is a public place where our community can enjoy and learn about the wildlife that lives on the edge of our villages. We are still at the stage of developing the concept but before too long we will also be sharing the proposals with Friends and supporters.

The Thalia WB Community Fund awards grants to support community, environmental and heritage projects run by non-profit organisations based in Cambridgeshire within 10 miles of a landfill site. The fund is managed by Cambridgeshire Community Foundation and is part of a voluntary environmental tax credit scheme called the Landfill Communities Fund.



For more information please visit <https://www.cambscf.org.uk/thalia-community-fund-2>

## The 30-day challenge

As part of the HI Eco Fest we suggested some wildlife-related activities for people to try out. Although the “official” challenge period is over, you can still find the menu of 50 activities on the website at <https://abbeyfields.online/hi-eco-fest> . We hope some will inspire you to do something with nature over the summer holidays.

## The Long Meadow avenue



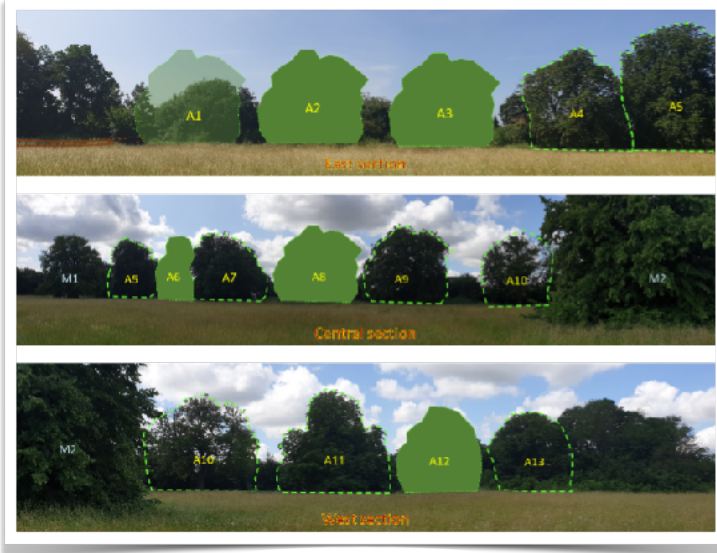
For years the avenue of horse chestnuts alongside Park Lane provided a statuesque lead-in to the village for travellers from the west.

Featuring on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map several of these trees have been lost, most likely to disease. Others are suffering from fungal infections and sadly may be approaching their last years.

We are keen to retain this impressive historic feature through a programme of replacing missing trees. Unfortunately, it would be risky to plant horse chestnuts as young trees are even more vulnerable to the “bleeding canker” that is affecting the mature trees.

So we are looking to replant with similar-sized, native trees, that have a good chance of thriving as the climate changes.

If you have any suggestions for tree species - or indeed varieties that might be particularly suitable - please let us know at [sitemanagers@abbeyfields.online](mailto:sitemanagers@abbeyfields.online) by the end of August.



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