

NEWS AND STORIES FROM ABBEY FIELDS

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June 2022

As always at this time of the year it's great to luxuriate in the long evenings – especially those warm ones that make lingering outdoors so appealing – whether enjoying one's own special spot, or going out and about.

High summer brings an insect spectacle – see below. There are still a few songbirds singing strongly: Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Song Thrushes in particular. There is always a chance of encountering a Common Lizard or, if very lucky, a Grass Snake. Put simply: there is much to enjoy!

In this update

Summer surveys are underway to discover and record the creatures and plants living in Abbey Fields, including the many species of insects. We have suggestions for fundraising, and information about how Long Meadow will be mowed and managed.



Photo by Penny Reeves

Summer surveys

When the idea to buy Abbey Fields was first mooted, it was known that these were special areas. However, as the land was previously in private ownership we had little firm data to support this, other than some bird sightings and the records kept by Moira Neal (which include some fantastic photographs).



Photo by Jon Pavey



Photo by Moira Neal

We are therefore embarking on a programme of surveys to better understand what flowers and creatures live in Abbey Fields.

Already we have held several sessions looking closely at the flora on Long Meadow – discovering new species for the site in the process – and in May we started on a programme of monthly moth trapping. During our first session at Croft Close Set-aside, we trapped 26 species across two locations. This included several that have been recorded fewer than 50 times in Cambridgeshire (excluding the old Huntingdonshire). See our website (<https://abbeyfields.online>) for more details.



Photo by Ian Ellis

Insect spectacle

Look closely as you walk around Long Meadow and Croft Close and you will see many insects gorging themselves on the nectar hidden within the flower heads of wildflowers such as hogweeds and buttercups.

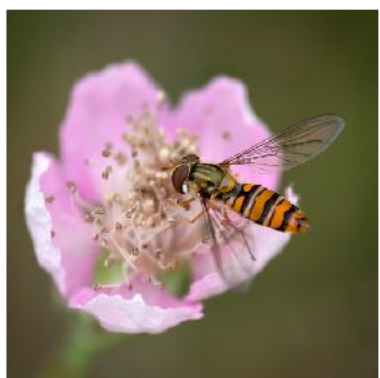
Insects can be hard to identify; often the differences between related species hinge on some minute detail that is impossible to detect as the insect moves around foraging or seeking out a mate.



Photos by Jon Pavey and Penny Reeves

And then there are so many species! There are over 270 kinds of bee alone in Britain and Ireland, and thousands of species of beetle.

But you don't have to be with a specialist or need to know the name to just stop and take a look. Get up close; maybe take a photo. Enjoy!



Photos by Penny Reeves

Have some fun - and raise funds for Abbey Fields

Summer is a good time for fun events with friends, and particularly for doing things outside. Why not add in a challenge and raise some funds for Abbey Fields along the way?

It could be anything: something to inspire the kids; a sponsored coffee morning; a golfing challenge; or maybe a wildlife count. And of course, there is the familiar sponsored run, dance, walk or cycle.

Or if this is not your thing, maybe you can encourage a friend or relative who is up for a challenge to support Abbey Fields' fundraising efforts in this way.

But how to get started? We have a helpful Fundraising Pack on the Abbey Fields website (<https://abbeyfields.online/support-us#Sponsorship>) which explains in simple terms what you need to do.

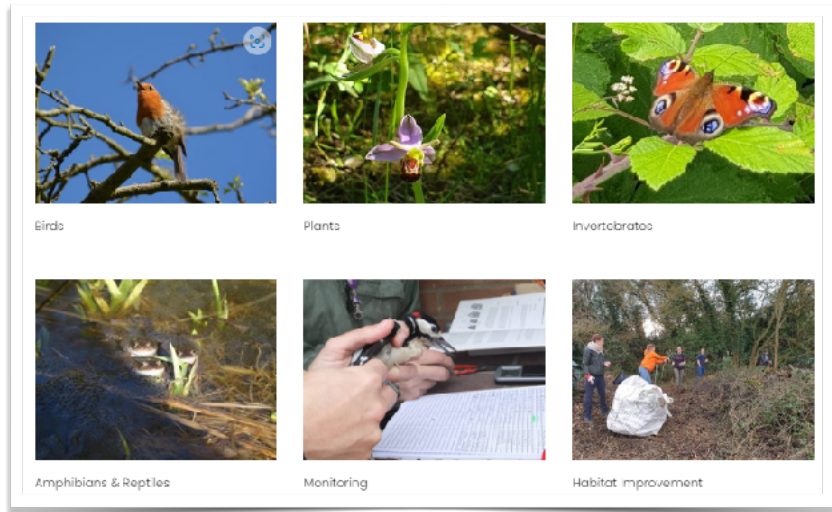
We have made it easy to collect the sponsorship through JustGiving and you can create your own fundraising page via the Histon & Impington Green Spaces JustGiving Page.



Wildlife on the website

Recent visitors to our website (<https://abbeyfields.online>) will have seen we have expanded our wildlife area. This is still a work in progress, but we have introduced a new page on “What to Look For” together with several species’ pages.

In the latter we include links to other relevant sources of information – such as the websites of the RSPB, Butterfly Conservation and Plantlife.



We are also providing lists of species seen. We have a good list of the flora and birds but need help with other wildlife. If you have records to share, please contact sitemanagers@abbeyfields.online

Fundraising update

Thanks to the excellent support from the community, we have passed the halfway mark in our efforts to complete the purchase of the Abbey Fields land.



Over the summer we will be joining in community events, sharing our enthusiasm for our fantastic villages and, of course, hoping to persuade you to spare a few coppers in return for an excellent cupcake or, as at the Jubilee Weekend, a special glass of Pimm’s.

(And despite it being far from the ideal Pimm’s weather – more like Scotch mist – we nearly sold out on this very successful event.)

Next up is the Feast Market on Histon Green – Saturday 9th July. Come and see our stall, have a

chat about what Abbey Fields means to you. Perhaps sign up for some volunteering opportunities (we will be planning our autumn programme soon). And of course, if we have cake or other delights, remember ours are really good!



Photos by Penny Reeves

Mowing Long Meadow

At around the end of June the grass at Long Meadow will be cut as a hay crop, much the same as in many years past.



We know many people are very keen to encourage the growth of wildflowers here – and if possible, to extend the flowering season. We have been working on a plan to do just that.

Earlier this year (in March), we cut the grass which seems to have resulted in the meadow's flowers being much more prominent than previously. Even now, in June, the density of tall grasses seems less than last year.

We took advice from members of the Cambridgeshire Flora Group when they visited the area recently.

Their view was that we should cut the grass at the time when it starts to fall over, blocking light to the flowers below. This typically corresponds to the time when it is best to cut for hay. Hence our plan for this year.

We continue to seek out advice – currently we are planning another cut of the grass at the end of the summer with a view to reducing the nutrients in the soil, which again will help wildflowers to thrive.



Photos by Penny Reeves

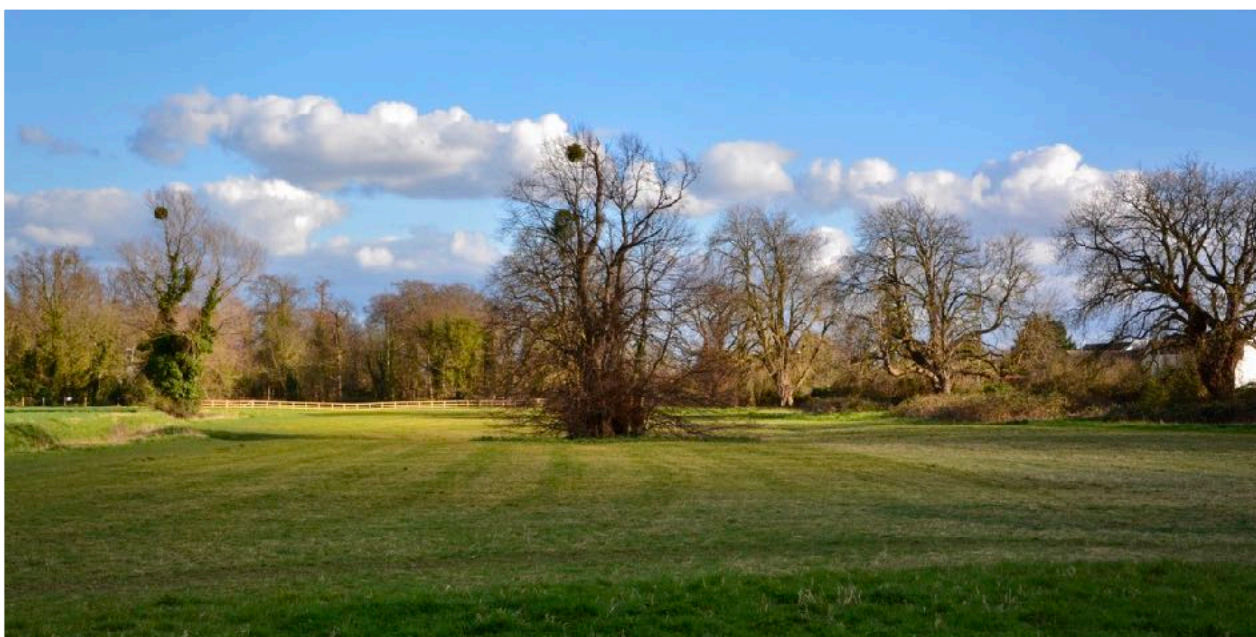


Photo by Guy Richardson

Scout group's activities

Recently a scout group came to Abbey Fields to gain some hands-on experience.

Activities included building a reptile refugia, ageing trees based on their girth and mapping the emergence of young saplings in and alongside the Park Lane hedge.

Group leader Antonio Tosi was very appreciative of the opportunity for the scouts to do something out of the ordinary and benefitting Abbey Fields to boot!



Photo by Penny Reeves