

# NEWS AND STORIES FROM ABBEY FIELDS

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## October 2022

Already a few migrating redwings have been seen in Histon and come mid-October there should be some sizeable flocks of these and fieldfares around.

The distinctly autumnal feel following our remarkable summer heralds a season of turning leaves and splendid fungi together with atmospheric mists rising up over Long Meadow.

If ever you need a reminder to put an entry into the photo competition, just look out the window!

At Croft Close Set-aside the summer warblers have largely gone but there are still hawker dragonflies patrolling glades and grassy areas.

The tawny owls will soon be setting up territories ready for breeding early in the new year whilst, as the nights cool, the bats will be contemplating winter hibernation, though they will still fly at temperatures above 7 °C (and sometimes below this).



Photo by Penny Reeves

## New trustees for HIGS

The charity currently responsible for managing Abbey Fields, which will become the owner eventually, has recently had a change in trustees.

Histon & Impington Green Spaces (HIGS) charity welcomes as trustees Ruth Moulder, Katharine Holliday and Jon Pavey. For more information on the charity see <https://abbeyfields.online/about-higs>

We are very appreciative of the contribution made by our retiring trustees, Denis Payne and Pene Nudds, in helping set up the charity, our fundraising efforts to date and helping secure these green spaces for the community.



Photo by Penny Reeves

## Learning at Long Meadow

Over the summer we held a series of flora surveys with the main aim of understanding what plants we have, when we have most in flower and their distribution across the meadow.

This will all feed into future management planning, in support of our long-term aim of enriching the wildflower spectacle.

Many who joined in had a grounding in plant identification but often from years back. Others had good knowledge of our commoner species but found rarer flora testing...



Photo by Jon Pavey



Photo by Penny Reeves

This then was an excellent opportunity for us all to learn more from each other and build up our confidence in identifying trickier plants found on the meadow.

A particularly helpful aspect was seeing how different field guides highlighted distinguishing features – not always the same were highlighted – and being able to discuss and compare with others.

Of course, some had better knowledge than others but all enjoyed the challenge of these sociable learning occasions.

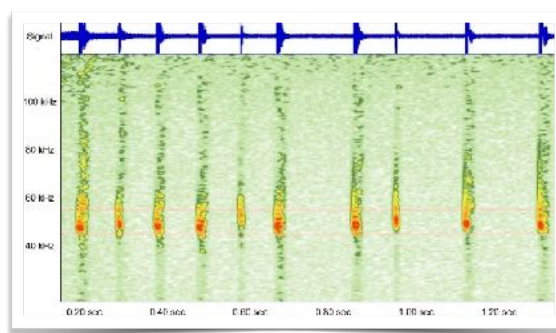
We plan to return to Long Meadow next year to see what if anything has changed, and hopefully also run some survey sessions at the set-aside which is likely to pose a set of new challenges.

At the end of the surveys, we had recorded around 135 species at Long Meadow: quite an impressive list - see <https://abbeyfields.online/monitoring>

## Bats a-plenty

In late summer we started more systematic surveys of the bats at Abbey Fields. Hitherto we had *ad hoc* records of common pipistrelle at both Long Meadow and Croft Close Set-aside

Our August survey at the set-aside found pipistrelles widely distributed across the site. We first spotted them around sunset. With our bat detectors – which pick up and translate to audible sound the bat's echo-locating pulses – we noted other bats present during the 90-minute survey. The figure shows an example of a





sonogram – a visualisation of what the call looks like over time – for Common Pipistrelle.

We now believe there might be noctule bats using Croft Close Set-aside and possibly other “myotis” bat species. We are repeating the surveys into the autumn until it becomes too cold for the bats to venture out.

If you are interested in helping with the bat surveys please email us at [sitemanagers@abbeyfield.online](mailto:sitemanagers@abbeyfield.online).

Once we have a better understanding of our bat population, we hope to organise a bat walk to share the experience of finding bats with a larger group.

Thanks to Chris Martin and Nigel Butcher, we have bat boxes installed at both the set-aside and in the trees around Long Meadow. It can take time before the boxes are used but we are hoping for early take up.



## Autumn/winter work parties

To avoid disturbing wildlife, most of our habitat management work parties take place over autumn and winter. We are aiming to have something for everyone who wants to join in. These are intended to be fun events with the opportunity to both socialise and to contribute to looking after the Abbey Fields sites.

Please see the website for up to date news on all events including dates for work parties at: <https://abbeyfields.online/events>

Details will also be emailed to all who have expressed an interest in helping with site management. We will also post details on the website and social media.



## Conkers

Early autumn is the season for the traditional game of 'conkers'. Generations of children have played this game and over time, despite the simplicity of the basic concept, a lot of rules have developed to prevent the latest ways of cheating and to make the scoring system more interesting.

Today, of course, we recognise the safety risk so this is perhaps a game of yesteryear.



Photo by Penny Reeves

Nowadays the term 'conker' is the familiar name for the large shiny fruit of the horse chestnut tree once the thick green outer skin has been removed. But horse chestnut

fruits were not always the conker of choice – earlier versions of the game used snail shells and hazelnuts.



Photo by Penny Reeves

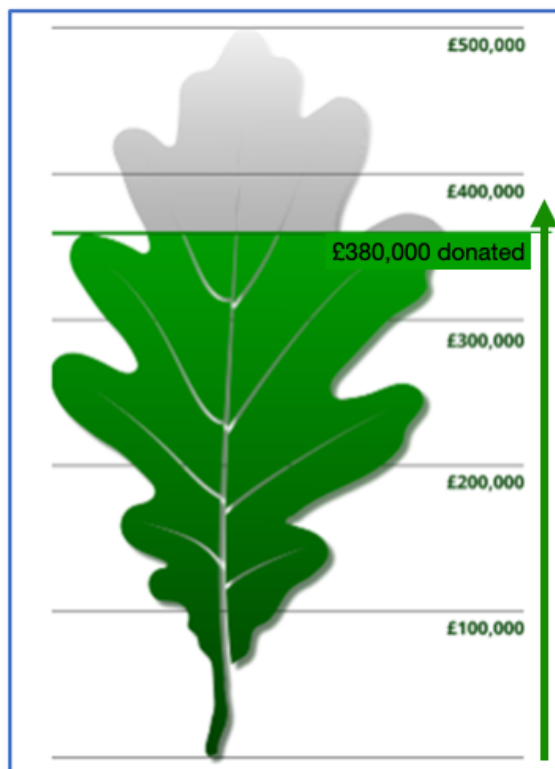
## Fundraising update

Without the pledges and then donations from hundreds of local people, and the time of volunteers and their expertise in managing the land and the fundraising campaign, there would be no Abbey Fields project – the many results of which can be seen in this and previous newsletters.

However, £120,000 is still outstanding from the target of £500,000.

Many of you have already donated which is greatly appreciated. Others have raised money on behalf of the project (see website for ideas under the Support Us section). The Abbey Fields JustGiving platform can easily be accessed from the website at <https://abbeyfields.online/donate> for one-off donations or monthly donations.

Please spread the word. Our target for the month of October is a further £10,000!!



## Photo competition 'Nature and Wildlife'



Photo by Penny Reeves

Our first ever photography competition for photos on the theme of nature and wildlife taken in or around Histon and Impington is now open for entries.

Twelve winning photographs will be chosen to appear in the Abbey Fields 2023 Calendar, and one of them will be selected by the community to feature on the cover page. The competition is open to all ages, and will be judged anonymously. All proceeds will go to Histon and Impington Green Spaces, the charity seeking to secure the Abbey Fields for the community in perpetuity.

Entry is via the website at <https://abbeyfields.online/photo-comp-intro>.

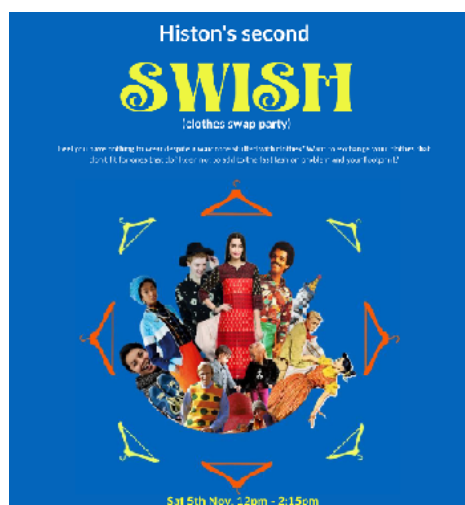
The competition closes on 31st October 2022. The names of the judges will be announced in due course.

## A Swish event

The second Histon Swish will take place on Saturday 5th November at the Saint Andrew's Centre from 12pm.

This clothes swap party, organised by HI Sustainability and Cambridge Carbon Footprint with support from Histon and Impington Youth Eco Council, aims to help you refresh your wardrobe without adding to your carbon footprint.

We will have an Abbey Fields stall at the event so you can drop by and learn more of our current activities. And maybe sign up for one of our work parties!



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