



# Newsletter

June 2017



## Welcome

As trustees of Love Hambrook Marshes, we would like to keep local people and users of the Marshes informed of what is happening down by the river. So, in addition to the monthly reports that you already receive, we are now circulating a brief annual report, which distils the information provided in the twelve newsletters of the preceding year. That document comes as a second attachment to the email bringing you this newsletter.

## What's happening on the marshes?

During the month our grazier brought on extra heifers to increase the herd to its full strength of 27. The animals should now all remain on the Marshes until about the end of October.



Exceptionally strong winds during the month ripped a large limb off one of the black Italian poplars growing on top of the old railway embankment, completely blocking the path leading up from the north-west end (see photo on left). Fortunately, this happened just before a planned work party from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. A chainsaw was used to do the hard work of cutting up the wood, and then the material

was built into a large stack (right) to block off the old route down. Black Italian poplar is a hybrid species, and these strikingly tall, fast-growing trees presumably date from shortly after the Elham Valley railway closed in 1947.



## Wildlife Report

With the excitement of spring bird migration over for another year, June was a rather quiet month, though with a highlight in the form of an almost white female mandarin duck swimming up the river with five small ducklings.

I've written before about the pale coffee-coloured bird that has nested by the river for the past two years, but this individual appeared to be even paler, so perhaps it is one of the offspring, rather than the original adult. Interest this month has focused more on insects, with painted lady (below right), small tortoiseshell (below left), and common blue butterflies all appearing in fine sunshine on 3<sup>rd</sup>. I also saw my first banded demoiselles of the year that day; the male is a beautiful deep iridescent blue, and, as you can see from the photo (left), he has a large dark patch on each wing, offering the strange illusion of them being detached from the body in flight.



In Asia cattle are accompanied by egrets and other exotic birds,

eager to snap up any frogs or large invertebrates that are disturbed by the beasts' feet. At Hambrook we have to make do with the rather more mundane sight of starling flocks weaving their way between the hooves of our herd, with up to 60 adults and young frequently present this month.

In the May newsletter I wrote about the benefits of not having coppiced the willow last winter, with garden warbler, reed warbler and reed bunting all taking advantage of the scrub that had been allowed to develop. Another colonist was added to the list this month, when an explosion of loud song from the osier bed betrayed the presence of a secretive Cetti's warbler.

The photo heading this newsletter is of mare's tail, an aquatic plant that is quite scarce in Kent but abundant in one of our ditches that doesn't dry up in summer.

*Butterfly photos courtesy of Glynn Crocker*

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