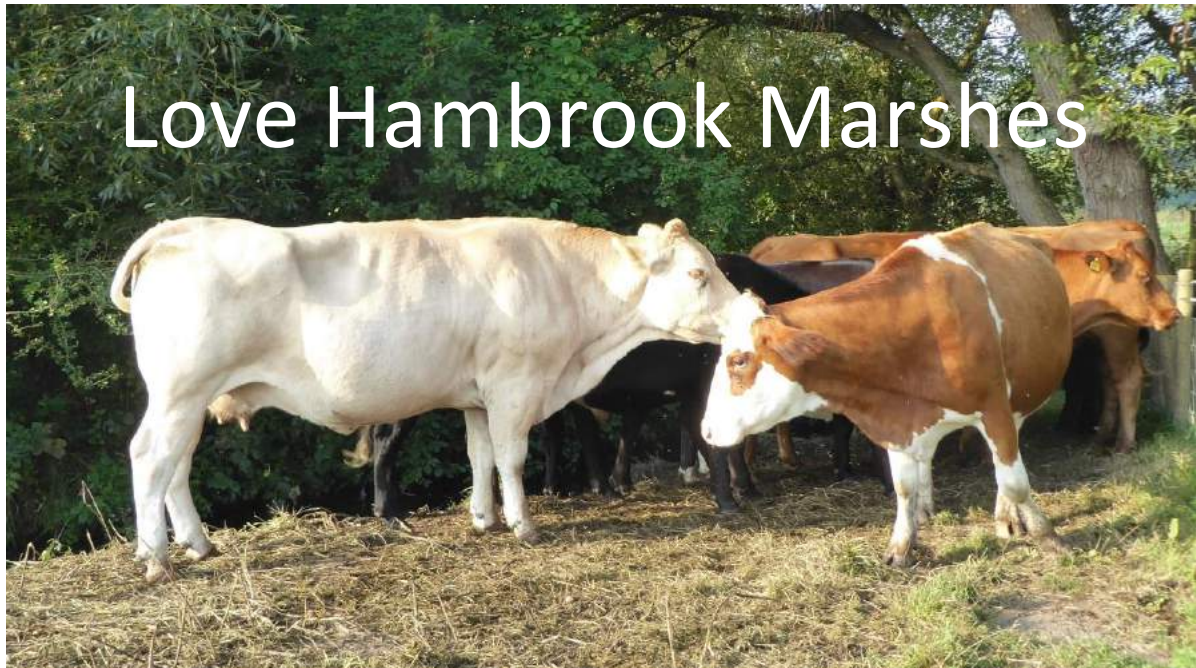




Newsletter

October 2023



Our very handsome herd immediately prior to their departure, looking very Sidney Cooperesque!

Welcome

Prior to Brexit, the UK's river water quality was covered by the Water Framework Directive (WFD), which obliged member nations to monitor the chemical and ecological state of their rivers annually. On leaving the EU, this WFD was transferred into national law, but the government has removed the requirement for annual tests, yet another example of environmental legislation being rendered toothless. This legal relaxation is additional to the government's attempts to get round the nutrient neutrality rules that were putting a brake on house-building. Quality assessments haven't been carried out since 2019, at which time only 14% of rivers were found to be in good ecological health, and none met the standards for good chemical health. Under the revised WFD rules, no full survey of rivers is proposed until 2025, using methodology that has yet to be revealed. There is concern that if, as seems likely, we do not adopt the EU methodology, it will be impossible to compare the results of the UK's river surveys with those for rivers in the EU, and we won't know if we are still "the dirty man of Europe", a slur that the UK was lumbered with on joining what was then the EEC in 1973, owing to our abysmal control of pollution.

We can only hope that the Stour, which we like to think of as a pristine chalk stream, will still sparkle with pure, clean water for centuries to come.

What's happening on the Marshes?

Canterbury BID (Business Improvement District) has produced a very detailed and informative [leaflet](#) about 17 wildlife sites along the Stour from Hambrook Marshes through to Fordwich, with three paragraphs devoted to the Marshes. It is well worth browsing through.

We recently secured funding to run an educational programme on the Marshes, so we're now looking for a volunteer to organise, manage and help host our new educational programme. Applicants need to be well-organised, self-motivated and good communicators. If you are interested and would like to know more, please email LHMvolunteerrecruitment@gmail.com. The closing date for applications is 30th November.

Our grazier came down on the Marshes on 10th to remove the ten cattle, but ended up taking off eleven, as overnight one of the heifers had given birth to the first calf (right) to blink uncertainly at its Hambrook surroundings for many years.



Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership made a start on clearing scrub from the embankment. The cattle didn't spend much time up there this summer, but certainly also helped to open up the area.

Part of the hay meadow was cut with a proper hay mower, which removes all the growing material, leaving just a green stubble behind, but the rougher SW end of the field was cut with a more robust swipe, which makes a much poorer job of actually severing the vegetation, tending to flatten it instead. So, to increase the chances of a good show of our snake's-head fritillaries next spring, the area around their four small colonies was scythed by hand.

Wildlife Report

Winter's wizened fingers crept along the ditches and fencelines, marked by the occasional ground frost, mist droplets sparkling on cobwebs, the first skylarks flying over as they fled southwards in search of milder conditions, and up to ten tufted ducks taking up residence on nearby Tonford Lake. Fresh from Scandinavia, a couple of redwings flew over on 10th, alerting me with their thin "see" calls, and two weeks later six of them were gorging on hawthorn berries on the embankment, along with a single fieldfare (right), another northern thrush that we don't usually see much of on the Marshes.



A Cetti's warbler (right) seems to have taken up residence on the embankment, startling visitors with its explosive song. You could be forgiven for thinking that its name is a weak representation of the call, which can be rendered "Sweep: chetty-chetty-chet"), and its Latin name, *Cettia cetti*, is even more onomatopoeic, but in fact it is honouring Francesco Cetti (pronounced Chetty), an 18th century Jesuit priest who devoted all his free time to studying Sardinia's wildlife – hence the use of a capital C when writing the name. However, it wasn't Cetti who named the bird, but a visiting Italian called Alberto della Marmora (who in turn lent his name to the Marmora's warbler) forty years after Cetti's death.



Fieldfare and Cetti's warbler photos courtesy of Dave Smith

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