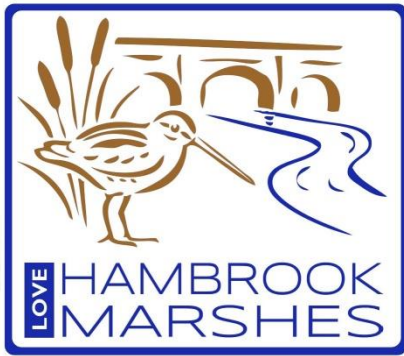




Newsletter

August 2024



Warring moorhens by Dave Smith

Welcome

In recognition of the importance of the river Stour, one of a handful of rare chalk streams to be found in southern England, Canterbury City Council last year inaugurated the Great Stour Riverfest, a week-long programme of river-related activities for the public to enjoy. Most of the events were very well supported, encouraging the Council to repeat the celebration this September. There will once again be a whole week of events celebrating the river Stour, from Saturday 14th to Saturday 21st September. All the events are free and the public are warmly invited to participate. A programme of all the activities can be seen [here](#). The hope is that the festival can become an annual fixture on the calendar, and the city council, which has been responsible for putting on the first two Riverfests, is proposing to hand over management of the week's events to local bodies, such as Love Hambrook Marshes, in 2025 and subsequent years.

What's happening on the Marshes?

The big feature coming up this month is the Great Stour Riverfest. Last year saw the first celebration of our very own chalk stream, the river Stour, that runs through Canterbury. Following that success, it was decided to hold another one from 14th-21st September this year; once again it is being organised by Canterbury City Council, and the full programme can be seen [here](#). Posters for two of the events are displayed below.



The River Stour and its Wildlife Children's Art Competition

Entries to be submitted by
9 September 2024

Three categories with many prizes:
4-7 yrs, 8-11 yrs, 12-15 yrs

Please deliver artworks to
Visitor information desk, The Beaney,
18 High Street, Canterbury
Visit
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/925819490017?aff=oddticketcreator> for more information
and Terms and Conditions.



Friday 20 September at 7pm

Evening of Illustrated Talks on the Plant life and Mammals of the River Stour

Hallie Bryant Rounthwaite, Ethnobotanist, Franciscan Gardens
and Hazel Ryan, Senior Conservation Officer, Wildwood Trust

St Peter's Methodist Church, St Peter's Street, Canterbury



Click [here](#) for terms and conditions

Back in July we reported that a stile and associated fencing had been completely removed by persons unknown, thus creating a point where cattle could potentially get out onto the riverside walk and, from there, have the option of joining in with children playing in Toddler's Cove or, rather more seriously, escaping onto the A2 or another busy road. Well, the stile has been completely rebuilt (right), but our fears about cattle trespass onto the A2 have in fact been realised (see first paragraph on page 3).



First intimation of something amiss came soon after 6pm on Friday 30th August, when we received a call from the Thanington Resource Centre asking if we knew anything about a cow that had appeared on their playing fields. The photo on the right was taken by Barry Whittaker, depicting a rather lonely-looking cow on the playing field. Details are still a bit sketchy, but the next we heard was that the following morning a cow, presumably the same one, had been caught on the A2, roughly where the road's embankment across the marshes spans the Canterbury-Ashford railway line. It was apparently persuaded to go down the embankment and then jump the fence back into the field where the other 25 of its companions were grazing. So far as we know, the beast is unharmed, and didn't cause an accident on the A2. We haven't yet found out where the weak point in the fencing is that allowed the animal to escape in the first place, nor do we know which route it took between its home field, the playing field and the A2. All the cattle were in any case due to be moved to the Canterbury end of the reserve, and this has now been done, so the pressure to pinpoint the escape route and then strengthen the fence has eased considerably. Constantly at the back of our minds was the fear that one day something like this would happen, so we must be grateful that it proved to be a harmless incident that was fairly speedily resolved.



In October 2021 we carried out the extremely satisfying task of painting over all the graffiti that had gradually accumulated on the two pillars supporting the A2 bridge spanning the river. We knew that this wouldn't be the end of the story and so, with the predictability of rain on a bank holiday, the graffiti crept back in again. Now, nearly three years after the original wiping clean of the slate, the process has been repeated, using emulsion paint that fairly closely matches the bridge's concrete (though unfortunately, when it rains the slight colour mismatch becomes more pronounced).



The willow maze received its third trim of the season. Many of the posts that were hammered in to provide a framework around which the willow stems could be woven have now rotted away, and it is not yet clear whether the structure has bound together sufficiently strongly to be self-supporting, or will need new posts to be banged in to provide crucial stability.

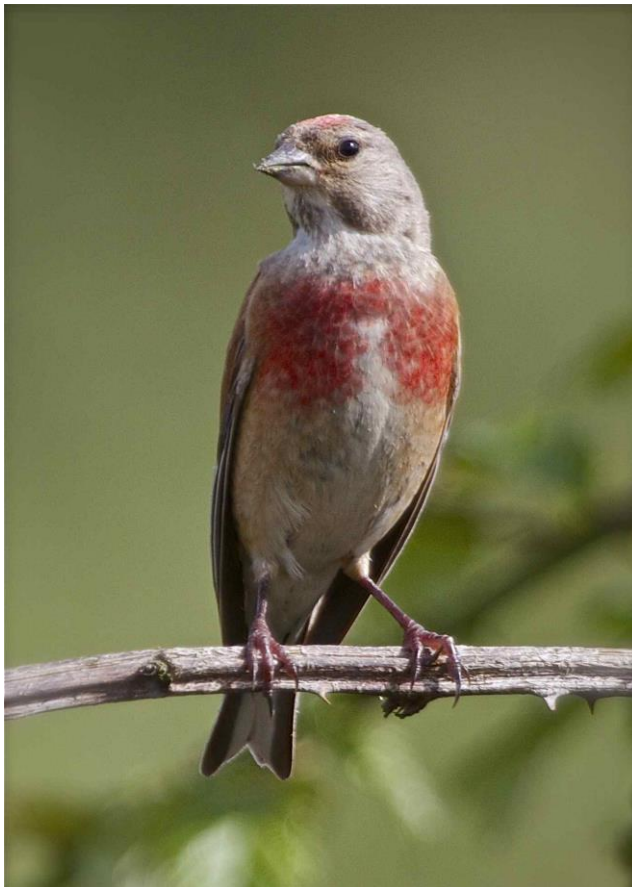


Wildlife Report

It has been another rather disappointing month for interesting wildlife records, although a count of 35 goldfinches (right) was one of my higher totals for the past ten years. The flocks are delightfully known as charms, and the birds are infinitely entertaining with their musical twittering and flashing yellow wing bars as they descend on thistledown, though if you have watched them on your garden bird feeders you will know what aggressive and vindictive little creatures they really are!

Another rather pretty, but somewhat underrated finch is the linnet (below), which seems to be appearing a little more frequently on the marshes than in recent years, and a small flock of ten birds flying over made for a welcome sight.

With the approach of autumn, restless warblers contemplating the long flight back to their winter quarters in central Africa are a little more in



evidence. Some of these may well be local birds that have now finished breeding, while others are likely to have come from further north, and are now slowly starting to move south, feeding up as they go to generate the energy store that will be needed to cope with the exigencies of a murderous trans-Saharan flight.

On 25th I was aware of two birds making a call that I didn't quite recognise. They sounded remarkably like garden birds, but they were moving along the river, and something in the quality of the notes told me that they must surely be kingfishers. Unfortunately, I was unable to get a proper view of either bird, but as the call was totally unlike the usual whistle of an adult, I wondered if it might be a contact call between two juveniles, or possibly between youngsters and their parents.

Thanks to Dave Smith for the moorhen, linnet and goldfinch photos