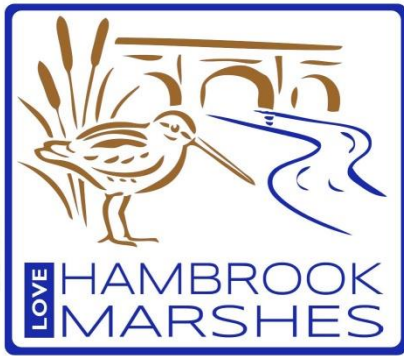




Newsletter

July 2025



Welcome

You can see that the above photo wasn't taken this year because the vegetation is standing in water, a commodity that was in extremely short supply this spring. The drought started out in March, when I recorded a mere 5mm of rain, compared to the long-term average of 45mm for that month. April was a little wetter, with 20mm, against 46mm as the Rough Common average, but May saw a return to arid conditions, with 13mm (mean 49mm) and 22mm in June (mean 45mm). So, during that four-month period there was a total of 60mm against a more normal 185mm or just 32% of what you could reasonably expect to record in an average year, and, of course, to add to the stress, we had spells of unseasonably hot weather which evaporated what little water was present in the pools and soil. The water deficit situation improved rather dramatically in July when, over a four-day period (while I was away!) 78mm of rain fell. Whilst not a record figure (on 4th April 2000 I recorded 76.5mm in one 24-hour period), it certainly went a long way towards alleviating the drought. The level of the Stour barely registered this torrential rain, as unlike most rivers, rather than getting the bulk of its flow from direct run-off, its water emanates from springs at the foot of the North Downs, meaning that the rain has to slowly percolate through a dense layer of chalk before finally topping up the river.

What's happening on the Marshes?



gratitude for this Harry has had the Love Hambrook Marshes logo emblazoned on his vest. Well done Harry!

The willow maze received its second trim of the season, and more scallops were cut in the grass strip bordering the river to diversify the vegetation's height and species structure.

Harry King (left) is a Canterbury lad studying at Leeds University. Back in June he represented Team GB in the under-20 age group at the Sprint Duathlon World Championships in Pontevedra, Spain. His studies have been sponsored by a local fan of Hambrook Marshes, and in



Harry powers through the triumphal arch

Still time to apply for the position of chair of trustees

The closing date to apply for this worthwhile post isn't until 15th September, so why not consider joining the team of trustees, and helping to steer the management planning process to the benefit of wildlife and the public. You can contact us for details and an application form at lovehambrook@gmail.com or you can go direct to our website [here](#).

Wildlife Report

I hate to say it, but the birds think summer is drawing to a close; the swifts are already abandoning Canterbury's towers, and on 28th a common sandpiper seen at the edge of Tonford Lake would probably have been a failed breeder now returning to its African wintering haunts. Although around 13,000 pairs do breed in Britain, mainly in Scotland, northern



A pair of common sandpipers exhibiting their characteristic, stiff-winged mode of flight

England, Wales and western Ireland, none nest in the south east, and its headquarters are very definitely in Scandinavia. So, any birds seen in this corner of England at this time of year are bound to be heading south.

The tufted duck is fairly widespread in the UK but, with only around 500 pairs in Kent, it was pleasing to see a female with three ducklings on Tonford Lake on 8th. The resident mute swan family has declined to five cygnets, but these are growing steadily, and are now large enough to be safe from many predators. Swifts appear to be making a bit of a comeback in Canterbury this year, though too soon for this to be the impact of the excellent work being done by the newly-formed Canterbury District Swift Initiative, and so I was delighted to see a flock of nine scything through the air above the river on 1st.



For me, the greatest joys in birdwatching come, not from spotting a rarity, but from the commonplace. On 25th I heard what sounded like a couple of blue tits calling from the clump of trees we planted the other year to screen the A2 bridge from view. Multiple glimpses of twitching leaves and a rising chorus of calls soon convinced me that two was a bit of an under-estimate, but it was impossible to gauge numbers in the dense canopy until birds began filtering out, and I eventually clocked at least 24 long-tailed tits (left), 16 blue tits and a single great tit streaming across open ground to the next tree. A lovely few minutes!



I don't see pheasants (right) at Hambrook that frequently, and a pair on 1st was even more of a rarity. Herons (left) and little egrets don't nest locally, and most of Hambrook becomes unsuitable for them as the ground dries up in summer, so a single heron sighting this month, probably of an immature bird, was noteworthy, and a lone lesser black-backed gull was present on the river a couple of times.



Thanks to Dave Smith for the photos of common sandpiper, long-tailed tit, pheasant and heron

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