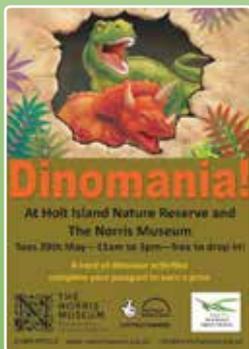


Spring 2018 Newsletter
ISSUE 32

Open 10:00am –
4:00pm weekends and
Bank Holidays from
Easter until October.
At other times the key
can be borrowed from
the Norris Museum or
One Leisure with a £20
deposit.



like us on facebook:
Holt Island Nature Reserve

Visit our website:
www.holtisland.org

The Friends Group
is a voluntary
organisation dedicated
to the promotion and
protection of Holt Island,
Wilhorn Meadow and
the Thicket of St Ives for
the enjoyment of all.

CO-CHAIRS' REPORT

The big news for this season is the weather! We have had snow, flooding and extreme winds so far, challenging for wildlife and people. The bird feeders on the island are literally life savers in these conditions, and our volunteers continue to keep them topped up regularly. We were worried that the badgers in their underground sett would be badly affected by the flooding, but happily they have been seen since the water went down, very busy and very muddy. The female badger (sow) gives birth in February, so we are hopeful that the activity is in preparation for a new litter. We will be using the night camera to keep an eye on the sett.



The Holt during the flood Photo: David Hetherington



The Holt in the snow Photo: Nigel Sprowell

QUIZ NIGHT, 11TH NOVEMBER

Were you there? It was a very fun and frustrating evening due to the evil genius of our Quiz Master, committee member Daniel Rowe!

It is safe to say that it was a great success. We sold out 3 weeks before the event, and we made over £760 net from the ticket fees and the raffle. Many thanks to all those who donated raffle prizes. We can't thank Daniel enough for making the evening such a great experience for all our guests. We are definitely going to make this an annual event, so roll on November 2018.



Deep concentration on Quiz Night!

SNOWMAN FESTIVAL

The Town Team asked if they could put a very large Snowman on the island as part of the annual, and much loved, St Ives Snowman Festival. Thanks to Nigel, Julian and Basil for joining us to consider this project. After some discussion and two visits to the island with John Souter of the Town Team so that he could explain their idea, we agreed to back their request to Huntingdonshire District Council, and they were happy to agree. We hope you all had the chance to see Chill Bill from The Waits, especially in the snow!



Chill Bill in the sun! Photo: John Souter



Chill Bill in the snow! Photo: Nigel Sprowell

HIGHLIGHTS

GEORGE DAY BENCH

Many of you will have seen, and maybe sat on, the lovely big bench under the ash tree in the meadow. The bench was donated by Sheila Day and dedicated to the memory of her grandfather, George Day. We were very happy to welcome her to the island in October, hosted by Ian and Gilly Jackson, to thank her for her donation and for her to view the bench. Miss Day was delighted both with the bench and its placement.



'In Memory of Our Grandfather George Dennis Day'

EASTFIELD INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL VISIT, 15TH AND 16TH NOVEMBER

We were delighted to welcome Eastfield School to the island last November. Four groups of approximately 40 children visited over two days, with each group doing a tour of the island and then some of the activities from the Educational Pack. We received very good feedback from the school and they are looking forward to doing more with us over the next year. Many thanks to Sue Limentani and Neil Greenwood for helping Jill and Helen to facilitate their visit.



Where next? - Photo: Jill Burt



Lots of interesting things to see - Photo: Jill Burt

DEMENTIA CAFÉ AT THE FREE CHURCH, 16TH JANUARY

We gave a brief talk on the history of Holt Island, and presented a short film showing original footage of the Harrison's basket making business. The fun really started when we tried to 'strip the willow', using one of the original tools from the island. It proved largely unsuccessful although everyone got the idea! It could have been that the willow was too green, or possibly operator error!

EXPLORE OUR NEW WEBSITE! holtisland.org

Our new website has just gone live so do visit and have a look at our progress so far. There will be changes as we move forward, but we hope you will enjoy our efforts so far.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, CORN EXCHANGE, 3rd MARCH

Come and see our Group Stall at the Community Fair from 4:00pm.

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY AT ST IVES LIBRARY, 3RD APRIL

The Library are having a family environment/recycling day to celebrate Earth Day and we will be joining them from 1:00pm – 3:00pm with some bird related fun activities.

FAMILY FUN DAY, 29TH MAY - DINOMANIA!

Don't miss our half-term adventure with our friends at the Norris Museum which is all about DINOSAURS! Come and hear stories, follow the dinosaur trail and make some crafty dinosaurs to take home with you – all free!



Dinomania!

At Holt Island Nature Reserve and
The Norris Museum

Tues 29th May—11am to 3pm—free to drop in!

A herd of dinosaur activities
complete your passport to earn a prize

THE NORRIS MUSEUM
Wherever Your Curiosity Takes You

Heritage Lottery Fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

Holt Island Nature Reserve

01480 497314 www.norrismuseum.org.uk info@norrismuseum.org.uk

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018 25th JULY, GUEST SPEAKER AUTHOR PATRICK BARNHAM

We have some very exciting news! Patrick Barnham, author of 'Badgerlands', and more recently 'Islanders', will be giving the second half talk at our next AGM. Not to be missed!!

WILDLIFE UPDATE

Bird Ringing on Holt Island 2017

We had a successful year catching birds on Holt Island. We visited 17 times catching 984 birds of which 415 were newly ringed, 550 were re-trapped and 16 were young in nest boxes. In all we caught 26 species. The most spectacular was a female Sparrow Hawk with incredibly sharp talons.



Female Sparrow Hawk - Photo: Sue Limentani

We have found that the populations on the Island vary during the year. The Blackbirds have a resident population and in the winter there is an influx of continental Blackbirds which are larger and that have a slight colour variation. Species that have increased in number during the year include Song Thrush, Blue Tit and Great Tit. The Great Tits had a poor year in 2016 when we ringed 64 new birds, but in 2017 we had a fifty percent increase in new birds ringed at 97. This seems to be partly due to an influx of birds from the Golf Course area which is being redeveloped and had at least temporarily pushed the birds out.



Blue Tit with yellow face - Photo: Sue Limentani

One can tell where the Blue Tits are feeding at different times of the year as in the spring the white feathers round the beak are yellow with pollen from Willow catkins where they have been searching for insects and in the autumn their feet are red from Elder berry juice.

The Warblers had a poor to average year partly because the main reed bed suffered early in the year and had very few flowers and there was an invasion of goose grass that swamped parts of the reed bed. But we did have Sedge Warblers present which is the first time for about four years, three were ringed.



Sedge Warbler - Photo: Sue Limentani

Blackcap numbers were much as previous years with 27 new birds being ringed. Many must have been passing through but there were 17 re-traps including one ringed at the site in 2014.

Six new Bullfinches were caught including two juveniles suggesting they were either breeding on the site or very close. Fourteen new Chaffinches were ringed but a number of others could not be ringed as they had lesions on their legs, these infections were picked up from other finches probably due to poor hygiene conditions at other sites as we take great care to disinfect feeders and water dispensers regularly.

We caught five new Great Spotted Woodpeckers of which one was a juvenile.

The Island continues to be an important area for local bird populations and for those migrating through along the river. It has shown that the Friends and Huntingdonshire District Council's work with the Island is important to the wildlife and to its enjoyment.

Julian and Sue Limentani

HOLT ISLAND RANGER'S REPORT, DECEMBER 2017

There have been five work parties since the last report in September. Volunteers have contributed over 705.5 hours of work, practical and administrative. We have had one good session so far to go over training and use of all the hand tools that the volunteers use on our sites. This is part of our duty of care to look after the volunteers and make sure all are working safely and to minimise injury.

We have commenced cutting back willow from around the boardwalk to allow more light and airflow as well as diversity of plants to thrive.

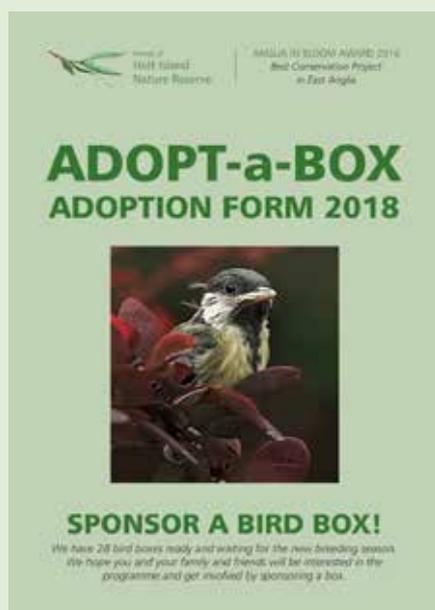
We have gated the beehive area to keep it safe from children accidentally entering as there are now 3 active hives.

We have continued with the replacement programme for the non-slip on boards where it has been worn away by use.

Due to the success of the willow tunnel we are looking at adding a new section of willow wall along the grass path by the backwater this winter.



Willow Tunnel in the snow - Photo: Nigel Sprowell



ADOPT-a-BOX 2018

We are delighted to launch ADOPT-a-BOX for its 8th year. You have the exciting opportunity of making a direct contribution to the upkeep and welfare of the birds on our wonderful island in the heart of St. Ives.

To sponsor a bird box, you can download a form from our website (holtisland.org). Forms will also be available at the Corn Exchange, Library, Norris Museum and Town Hall. In return for your £10 adoption fee you will receive a photo of your box, a certificate, and a map showing the location of your box on the island. You will also have an opportunity to join me for a guided walk around the island in May, hopefully to witness fledglings being fed and to enjoy the birdsong. I will also provide you with a report after the breeding season together with photographs. Sponsoring one of our bird boxes would also make a lovely gift!

Nigel Sprowell, Friend

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