

Autumn Newsletter 2019
ISSUE 36

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



Friends of Holt Island
Nature Reserve
Quiz Night
St Ives Corn Exchange
Saturday 23rd November
6.30pm for 7.00pm start
Fish 'n Chip supper
Bar
Teams: 4 – 8 people
£10.00 per person
Contact Helen Cripps: 07745 621361
holtislandquiz@gmail.com
www.holtisland.org



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 in St Ives for
the enjoyment of all.

CHAIRS' REPORT

Summer on the Island is always a busy time. Lots of visitors young and old come to enjoy the tranquil space, each in their own way. Some people want to come and escape from their busy lives and simply enjoy the peace and quiet, but others love the chance to get a closer look at all the Island has to offer! We are happy to let you know that from August Bank Holiday weekend the dipping pond has been open for visitors. The box of equipment and identification charts are put out by the pond, with nets, trays and magnifying glasses. The pond is still gradually becoming populated, but visitors have found a number of dragonfly larva, snails and other interesting little creatures. At the moment it is best to come earlier in the day, as by the afternoon after being caught once or twice, many of the residents have retreated to hide in the plants!



Dragon fly larvae
Photo: Ian Jackson



Elenie identifying her
catch. Photo: Ian Jackson



Fun pond dipping!



Alice...where next?
Photo: Ian Jackson

RED-TIPPED CLEARWING – NEWLY RECORDED ON THE ISLAND

The Island has a large number of insects which have not yet been identified. On 16th July Barry Dickerson, the County Moth and Butterfly Recorder visited Holt Island with some pheromone lures and proceeded to catch a number of Red-tipped Clearwing moths. It is part of the Sesilidae sub-family of which there are 40 species in this country. They have largely see-through wings, hence their name. They are a day-flying moth which is "Nationally Scarce B" and are found in damp areas where willows and osiers grow. They spend the winter as maggot-like caterpillars under the bark of willow trees. The adult emerges in late May to August. It has clear wings with red tips and a red belt round its abdomen, the rest of the moth is black.



Red-tipped
Clearwing Moth

Julian Limentani.



Red-tipped Clearwing Moth found on
the Island. Photo: Barry Dickerson

A NEW BUTTERFLY RECORDED

On the 29th August a new butterfly was recorded on the Island, a Small Heath (Coenonympha pamphilus). It was in the meadow feeding on the red dead-nettle that was in flower.

The butterfly is smaller than the Meadow Brown, has the same browns and oranges but is greyer round the edges and on the underwing. They have two broods each year with the first eggs laid in April/May which hatch into adults in August/September. They usually frequent grassland, and have had a successful year this year after a number of very poor years.

Julian Limentani



Small Heath

HIGHLIGHTS

HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND: SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 21ST AND SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22ND

This was a weekend of two halves: Saturday blessed with glorious weather, attracting 160 visitors and Sunday with heavy showers, still attracting an amazing 80 visitors. We had some delightful comments, some visitors travelling from as far as Sheffield, Milton Keynes and Cambridge!

On both days visitors had the opportunity to have a go at 'stripping the willow' using the only remaining tool that was used on the Island called a 'willow brake'. It was just the women and children who used this tool, after which the willow was bundled into 'bolts' and taken by barge to the Quay. From there it was transported by horse and cart over St Ives Bridge to Harrison's basket making workshop on Filberts Walk.

A special display of heritage photographs, and a display of Harrison's original baskets and tools, kindly loaned by the



Trevor Busby 'Stripping the willow' Photo: Jill Burt



Holt Display. Photo: Jill Burt

Harrison family, were mounted in the Holt. Visitors had the opportunity to have a go at our Heritage Quiz which was based on information in the display. If you want to find out more information about J Harrison and Sons commercial basket makers we have more details on our website, holtisland.org.



Holt Display. Photo: Jill Burt

On Sunday Jane Frost, a talented basket weaver, demonstrated her craft as well as exhibiting some of the wonderful imaginative items that she creates from willow.

The HODS event through the town was organised by our St Ives Civic Society.



Jane Frost, basket weaver. Photo: Jill Burt

HIDDEN SECRETS!

Our hidden secrets photographer, Nigel Spowell, has been taking still photos as well as video. He has set up a small camouflage screen in a densely vegetated part of the Island, and patiently waits for the chance to get a good shot. We thought you would enjoy these terrific photos of our muntjac deer and our badgers.

As you walk around the Island, enjoying the peaceful sights and sounds, it is hard to remember that there is so much going on behind the scenes! You can be sure, though, that we are seen! Photos: Nigel Spowell



WARBLERS ON HOLT ISLAND

Over the last six years we have been catching a variety of warblers through the summer months and some patterns are emerging in the way they use the Island. Eight different species of warbler have been caught on the Island. This year a total of 179 warblers were caught altogether.

The Reed Warblers bred as usual this year but not in large numbers as the reed bed was clogged up with goose grass and convolvulus making it difficult for the birds to move within them. There seemed to be more nests on the north side of the Island by the back water. A total of 62 Reed Warblers were caught including 24 juveniles and 13 new adults. Four adults had originally been ringed in 2016.

Blackcaps were present all summer with 57 being caught including 22 juveniles and 17 new adults, some of these must have been passing through, particularly in the late summer. One male was first ringed in 2014 and has been caught each year since including this year.

Sedge Warblers bred again in small numbers on the Island, they have been absent for several years. Ten new birds were caught including 5 juveniles, but all left in mid-August.



Juvenile Willow Warbler



Juvenile Whitethroat

Willow Warblers and Whitethroats did not breed on the Island but passed through on their way to their breeding areas and on the way back, a total of three Whitethroats were caught including 2 juveniles. Thirteen juvenile Willow Warblers were also ringed.



Juvenile Chiffchaff

Chiffchaffs on the other hand seem to stay the summer on the Island and can be heard singing regularly. Six juveniles were caught out of twelve new birds.

Finally, Garden Warblers again seem to pass through, some years they have bred on the Island but not this year, being caught only in spring and late summer. A total of five were caught, one of which was a juvenile.

Ringed these birds over a number of years has shown that the Island is an important staging post for the migrant warblers travelling along the river to their breeding areas as well as being a good breeding site for Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers and Blackcaps.



Juvenile Garden Warbler

Julian & Sue Limentani

HOLT ISLAND RANGER'S REPORT JUNE 2019

Scheduled Work parties: 7. Practical volunteer hours: an impressive 312 hours to August 19th. Friends committee hours: June & July 312 hours too!

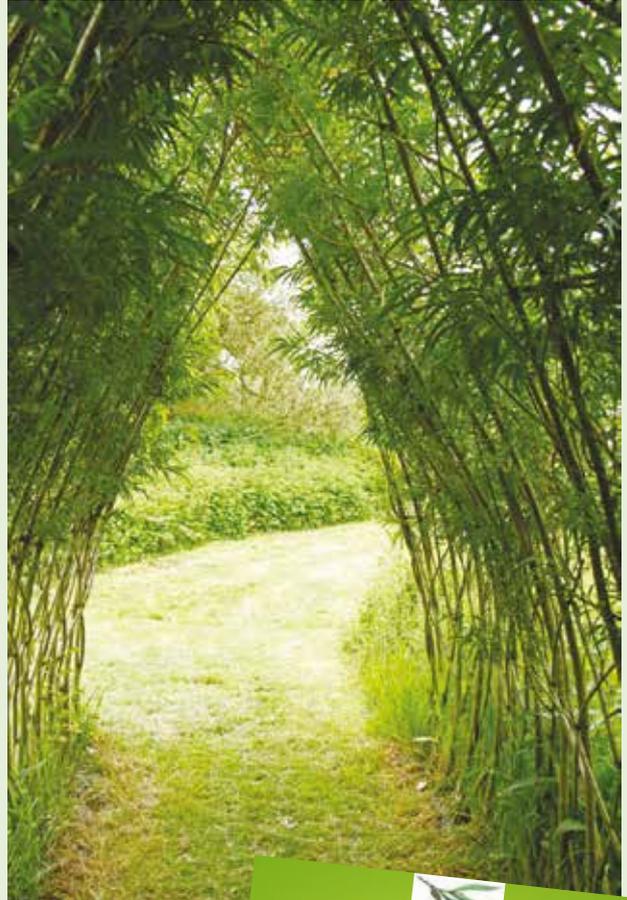
The willow "fedge" along the grass path has been lightly trimmed regularly to encourage lower level growth. The new Island sign has been up and operational with very positive feedback from both the volunteers who open and close the Island every weekend, as well as the public. The boardwalk edging is complete and so more non-slips are continuing to be installed, courtesy of funding from FOHINR. We have also had many hours of extra work parties from Roy, Doug, George & Colin K, installing boardwalk non-slip panels.

We only had a few tree casualties in the recent storms and these were minor - all dealt with in-house. The willow tunnel in the meadow however was not quite so lucky and the wind blew the top open so we are in the process of retying it to get it back to a tunnel again.

The usual maintenance of the grass path, meadow and edges of the boardwalk has continued throughout the summer and we are just opening up the osier beds ready for the winter harvesting. Once again, many thanks to both the practical volunteers as well as the committee for putting in so many hours of hard work.

Paul Claydon

Willow Tunnel
Photo: Nigel Sprowell



QUIZ NIGHT!

We are coming up to Holt Island Quiz time again! The event will be on November 23rd at the Corn Exchange, and your £10 ticket will include a delicious Fish and Chip supper. This year we are asking you to bring your own cutlery and condiments with you, and help us do our part in working to reduce plastic pollution. According to WWF eight million tonnes of plastic ends up in our oceans every year, and cutting out single use plastic items like cutlery is one way we can reduce our Plastic Footprint.

Daniel Rowe will be hosting again this year, so we can be sure of a challenging evening! Tickets are selling out fast, so do book your places soon!



Celebrity Question Master,
Daniel Rowe!

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holtislandquiz@gmail.com
www.holtisland.org

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