

Spring Newsletter 2020  
ISSUE 37

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.



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Holt Island Nature Reserve

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[www.holtisland.org](http://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.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

So, we have started the new decade with rain and winds and floods!! The weather has certainly been challenging, and we have had to keep the Island closed to visitors for most of the winter for safety reasons. Even when the flood water goes down, a raised boardwalk covered in slimy mud is very slippery indeed.

Our practical volunteers have still been working on the Island when they can, extending the willow fedge and replacing the gripping strips on the boards. As you can see below, they have also been doing a lot of fishing!



Colin Saunderson  
Photo: SL

Some of you may recall that at the AGM last year we thanked Colin Saunderson for his many years of helping with the practical work on Holt Island. Here is Colin on his last working day, just before Christmas, when the sun actually shone! Thank you, Colin!

### FISHING UNDER THE BOARDWALK

Thank you to our intrepid volunteers who spent several hours over a few days trying to rescue as many as possible of the fish trapped under the boardwalk. We estimate that around 600 Roach, Rudd and Perch have been rescued from under the boardwalk where they were stranded by the receding water and put back into the river. It is great to know that the river is so well populated.



Fishing under the boardwalk!



Young Roach



Bucket of Fish!



Shoal of youngsters, beside the boardwalk Photo: SL

### IT'S ADOPT-A-BOX TIME!!

Sponsoring one of the Island's bird boxes gives you the exciting opportunity of making a direct contribution to the upkeep and welfare of the birds on Holt Island in the heart of St. Ives.

To sponsor a bird box, you can download a form to complete from our website ([www.holtisland.org](http://www.holtisland.org)), and send it with £10 to Julian Limentani, 4 Links Way, St Ives, PE27 6DW. Forms will also be at the Library, the Norris Museum, and One Leisure.

You will receive: a photo of your box, a certificate, and a map showing the location of your box on the Island; and you will have an opportunity to join a guided walk of the Island in May to hopefully witness fledglings being fed and to enjoy the birdsong. You will also receive a report after the breeding season together with photographs. PS: Sponsoring a bird box could also make a lovely gift!



# HIGHLIGHTS

## RINGING REPORT FOR HOLT ISLAND FOR 2019

This is the fifth year that we have been ringing on Holt Island and we caught a total of 1104 birds. 543 were re-trapped, and the rest were newly ringed including 37 pulli (birds still in the nest). There were two new species, Carrion Crow and Green Woodpecker. Over the last three years a pattern seems to be emerging, with a very similar number of birds caught in each of the resident species.

The species most caught were Blue Tit and Great Tit with about 120 new Blue Tits and 80 new Great Tits. New birds were about 40 per cent of the overall catch. The re-traps seem to show that different groups of these birds use the Island at different times the year. They are most abundant in the winter months as they receive supplemental feeding. During the breeding season from March they seem to disperse and fewer are caught.

The finches and buntings use the Island most in the winter but there are only a few that breed on it. The Island does not have the flocks of young buntings in the autumn that are found elsewhere.

The river acts as a flyway both in the spring and autumn for a number of migrant species, including Whitethroat and Willow Warbler. We have only caught these in spring and autumn, and not had any re-traps, whereas we have had a number of re-traps each year with Chiffchaffs which breed on the Island.

This year we targeted the warblers in the summer and autumn and caught good numbers of several species.

### Carrion Crow



Green Woodpecker

There were 41 new Blackcaps which represented a good breeding population of about seven pairs. There were also seven pairs of Reed Warblers and three pairs of Sedge Warblers. The latter seem to be increasing in number each year. There appear to be more breeding Reed Warblers by the Backwater this year.

The populations of resident birds such as Dunnock and Wren seem to be stable. The Blackbird populations fluctuate through the year, with some continental birds coming during the winter months (the latter are larger and heavier). During autumn the resident birds leave the Island and go to the surrounding woodlands for the berries.

There have been two birds ringed elsewhere and caught on the Island. A Great Tit ringed at Wyton Bomb Dump in October 2018 and a Blue Tit ringed at Knapwell in July 2019.

There are a few birds which were ringed in 2014 (when we started) that are still around including a Blue Tit, Blackbird and a Blackcap which are being caught regularly. There was also a Wren ringed in 2016.

We intend to carry on ringing with a visit each month to sample the birds present, but also to do some more concentrated ringing of the birds using the river as a flyway. The Island certainly is important locally for a number of species, but also for the passage migrants.

Julian & Sue Limentani

# BRILLIANT BUGS!

Thank you to photographer Gill Street for her fascinating article. Next time you walk around the Island see how many insects you can identify!

Holt Island is a haven for all wildlife, but I wonder how many insects have you unknowingly walked past? In the warm sunshine there may be hoverflies basking in the sun. Many of these hoverflies are black and yellow and are frequently mistaken for wasps but they are harmless. Have you seen small flat bugs on the underside or on top of leaves? These are called Shieldbugs. When they first hatch from eggs they are called nymphs. They look like a small version of the adult Shieldbug and vary in colour. As they eat and grow larger, they go through five moulting stages, called instars, before becoming an adult. They can easily be overlooked amongst the leaves. In June and July, you may see the Banded Demoiselle perched on a stem, a beautiful elegant damselfly with its metallic body. There are butterflies and moths in various colours. When you are on the Island have a closer look. You never know what you'll find. There are some books in the Holt to help you identify the bugs you see. **Gill Street.**



Mint Moth



Green veined White



Brassica Shieldbug



Banded Demoiselle, male



Froghopper

Hoverfly

Dock Bug

Tachinid Fly



## MORE BRILLIANT BUGS!



Wasp Beetle



Cinnamon Bug



Mayfly



Hoverfly



Green Shield Bug Nymph



Red Headed Cardinal Beetle



Dark-edged Bee Fly



Scorpion Fly, male

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