



Little Ouse
Headwaters
Project

Conservation & Community

Little Ouse Headwaters Project
c/o Walnut Tree Farm
Thorpe Street
Hinderclay
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www.lohp.org.uk
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Norfolk
Biffaward 'Rebuilding Biodiversity' Award 2011
CPRE Norfolk and Boldero Awards 2012

HINDERCLAY FEN annual report for Hinderclay Parish Council

This has been a very strange year for everyone with the appearance of COVID and the attendant lockdowns. The fens have provided a safe and open area to exercise and increased numbers of visitors have been recorded. Judging by the number of families with young children on the sites, they have been especially valuable as an escape from the confines of home while the schools were shut. Talking with some of these people, at a distance, many had never been onto the fens before so now we have a new audience who visit and benefit from the sites.

This year I can report that the problem of dog fouling on our fen is slightly better. This is probably because one particularly difficult dog walker who allowed his dogs to foul the footpaths has been using different sites. How long this will last we do not know. We had problems with dogs running unsupervised through the wet fens in the middle of the bird breeding season in the past but after speaking with several dog owners most dogs are under better control. LOHP will continue to monitor this so that walkers on the fens can enjoy their walks without having to watch where they put their feet.

LOHP have continued to manage Hinderclay Fen when it has been possible to work with groups of 6, socially distanced, but is now a bit behind with scrub control. The plan had been to clear some of the scrub at the back of the wet fen to allow more room for species such as reed and sedge warbler, and therefore cuckoo, and reed buntings and water rail. Lockdown was lifted at the end of March this year just as the birds were starting to breed so scrub removal will be a priority next year. Luckily the cutting of the fen vegetation on the fens was able to be completed. Ash dieback is still proving to be a problem and yet more trees have had to be removed to ensure path safety and unfortunately more will have to be removed in the future.

Our small field next door to St Mary's well has had a lot happen this year. When we looked at old maps of the site we found that originally this nearly 5 acre field was 3 fields, one of which was named "Carr Meadow" so we have adopted this name and divided it back into 3 with mixed hedges. The hedge along the roadside is very rich in species with 16 different woody species which gave us a guide to what species to plant. Our contractor and volunteers put up fences to prevent stock from browsing these new hedges until they have matured. Carr Meadow was one of the only sites locally to have a successful barn owl breed but only one chick successfully fledged. Visitors to the area will quite often see an owl hunting on Carr Meadow or Reeves Meadows. A pair of little owls bred in the roadside hedge at Carr Meadow last year but haven't reappeared this year.

As lockdown continues to be lifted LOHP hopes to be able to run events soon, probably guided walks.

Reg Langston

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