

FRIENDS OF THE EMM BROOK



Jan-April 2014 update

A third of the way into the year, and this is FOTEB update to the end of April 2014:

The **WEATHER** along the Emm Brook in the first third of 2014 has like last year not been a lot to shout about: This information is supplied by Bernard Burton. Bernard Burton has been recording the weather alongside the Emm Brook since 1976. His weather station originally situated at Emmbrook Secondary School till 1996 and now at Emmbrook Junior School daily monitors the weather. For a more detailed analysis of the previous month's weather visit his website www.woksat.info.

January 2014

This was generally a very wet month.

Rainfall: This was an extraordinary January in respect of rainfall, with the highest number of rain days for over a century, and a rainfall total for the month of 153.9 mm, the highest for any January since before 1882, 15.7 mm more than the previous highest set in 1995. The wet spell started in mid December, and the total accumulation since then was 258.7 mm, which is 40 % of the annual average, and is 154 % of the winter season's average (3 months December, January and February). There were 6 dry days this month, equal lowest with 1995. There was no snow recorded this month, the first January since 2002 with none, and only the 5th such in the past 39 years.

Sunshine: With a total of just over half the average sunshine this month, it was one of the 10 dullest Januaries in the past 106 years.

February 2014

Rainfall: Another incredibly wet month, following on a record wet January. The rainfall total of 119.8 mm makes this the 2nd wettest February after 1951 in the past 133 years. Although the first 2 days were dry, the next 5 were very wet, producing a total of 60.3 mm, which is 17.4 mm above the average for the whole of February. Although not quite as wet in subsequent days, the accumulation reached 90 mm on the 14th. The second half of the month was somewhat drier, but even so the final 5 days produced a further 17.8 mm. Flooding was a problem in many places locally. The number of wet days (days with 1 mm or more) is most since before 1976. Rainfall duration is 61 % above average. In line with the mildness there was no snow this month, the 7th February with none in the past 39 years. The highest rainfall rate was 47 mm/hr on the 5th. Hail was recorded on 7 days, a high value for February, compared with 6 in 1990 and 1969, and an average of 1.7 days. There was no thunder.

Wind: The mean speed of 10.7 mph makes this the windiest February since 2002, 2.6 mph above average. There were some notably windy days, especially the 14th/15th, when gusts reached 63 mph, 15mph above the February average and highest since 1990. Overall, wind speed exceeded the strong category on the 1st, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 12th, 14th, 15th and 23rd. Wind direction was mostly between S and SW, except for SE on the 3rd and NE on the 28th.

Sunshine: Despite all the rain the sunshine total is quite reasonable. The month got off to a good start with 2 sunny days, despite the next 4 being dull. The second half of the month saw more frequent sunny days. Overall there were 14 days with less than 3 hours, 7 with more than 6 hours and 1 with more than 9 hours of sunshine.

March 2014

Generally mild, especially by day. Overall drier than normal and sunny.

Temperature: This was a predominantly mild March including a number of warm days, but also a scattering of cool nights. Daily max were above normal on all but 8 days. Notably warm periods were from the 7th to the 9th, 12th to 16th and 29th to 31st.

Rainfall: After the exceptionally wet winter we have just experienced, March has provided a much needed respite. Although the 2nd was a wet day, and the wettest in the month, it became dry after the 3rd and a 14 day dry spell ended on the 17th. Some rain fell from the 20th to the 25th, though the 22nd was dry, and it was mainly dry again thereafter. The month's total is 37 % below average, and in the past 10 years only 2013 and 2008 have had above average rainfall in March. The highest rainfall rate was 23 mm/hr on the 21st. Thunder occurred on the 23rd and 27th, and small hail fell on the 21st and 26th, and there were showers of snow pellets on the 23rd.

Sunshine: This has been quite a sunny March, though not as sunny as 2012, 2009, 2007 and 2003 in recent years. This is the first March since 1995 to have zero days with nil sun, the average being 5. The 25th to 31st was generally rather dull, apart from one sunny day on the 29th. Overall there were 11 days with less than 3 hours, 14 with more than 6 hours and 3 with more than 9 hours of sunshine.

April 2014

April was very mild, wet with below average sunshine.

Temperature: This has been a very mild April, ranking 9th warmest since 1883, although three other Aprils in the past 8 years have been milder. A maximum temperature of 18.9° on the 2nd and 3rd was not surpassed until 19.1° on the 30th. Slight air frost occurred on the 16th and 19th, and there was a ground frost everyday except one between the 9th and 21st.

Rainfall: Quite a high total for April, 162 % of average, and although much less rain fell than in April 2012, it is the 2nd wettest April in the past 10 years. Rainfall was unevenly distributed through the month, with all but 3 days in the first 19 being dry, with a 12 day dry spell ending on the 19th, after which it turned very wet. Rainfall accumulation, which showed a 20 mm deficit on the 19th ended up as a 30 mm surplus by the 29th. The 20th and 21st were particularly wet, producing 27.3 mm over the two days. Much of the rain was thundery in nature, and there were thunderstorms on the 20th, 21st, 25th, 27th and 29th. The associated rainfall rates reached 79 mm/hr on the 20th, and 169 mm/hr at 1118 GMT on the 29th, with 14.3 mm falling in under two hours. Overall there was 1 more dry day, and 3 more days with 10 mm or more, compared with average. Snow has fallen in 56 % of Aprils on average, but there was none this year.

Sunshine: Although it was sunny at times during the month, April started dull. It then became largely sunny until the 19th, but it then became mainly dull for the rest of the month. The period 13th to 16th inclusive was outstanding, with over 90 % of the maximum each day, and a daily average of 13.1 hours. Overall there were 14 days with less than 3 hours, 11 with more than 6 hours, 5 with more than 9 hours and 4 with more than 12 hours.

BIRDS

So far this year **68** species of birds have been seen on or adjacent to the Emm along its length. The highlights were:

January:

A total of **47** species were seen during the month. A wet month and not always the best conditions for bird watching, however the usual winter visitors included **Redwing** and **Fieldfare**. A **Tree Creeper** was seen on the 18th near Ripplestream Bridge and a crouching **Raven** was over Gorrick Woods. **Ring-necked Parakeets** are now regular along the Emm particularly near the point it joins the Loddon. On the 20th Paul Bright Thomas was out in Area 4 this morning at 08:45 on what turned out to be a Gull fest. 3 **Great Black-backed Gull** flew SE, 1 adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** flew E and 4 adult **Common Gull** flew NW. 500 **Woodpigeon** were also seen to fly N to NW over the morning in groups. On the Raptor front **Sparrowhawk**, **Peregrine**, **Red Kite** and **Buzzard** were all seen.

February:



3 species were added this month. The **Kingfisher** was very visible this month seen in Area's 4,5 and 9. **Lesser Redpoll** and a **Sky Lark** were seen near Woosehill Lane. In the flooded fields in Area 2 near Ludgrove School 2, **Egyptian Geese** were seen.

March:



Quite a good month as the weather got better and **14** additional species were added to the list. The first returning summer migrant were 2 **Chiffchaff** seen in Area 10 by Fraser Cottington on the 9th. **Blackcap** was seen on the 23rd near Smiths Walk and **Sand Martin** was seen flying over the Lavells Lake car park field on the 20th. Owls put in an appearance

with **Tawny Owl** hooting in Area 4 near Meadow Road and a **Little Owl** seen on the 10th in the area to the rear of Tesco's. **Kingfishers** were seen all on the Emm at different locations from Sandford Lane to Meadow Road. It is hard to tell how many individual birds are involved. Winter migrants **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** were seen till at least the middle of the month. Other highlights included an **Oystercatcher** over the Lavells Lake car park field and **Crossbills** in Area 1 at Gorrick Woods.

April:



More summer migrant arrivals with **4** new species for the list, these included the first **Swallows** seen flying over Area 10 on the 11th with **Swift** and **House Martin** at the same location on the 17th. **Willow Warblers** appeared on the 6th and soon took up residence along the Emm. **Blackcap** was seen on the 23rd near Smiths Walk and **Sand Martin** was seen flying over the Lavells Lake car park field on the 20th. Owls were seen again with a sleepy juvenile **Tawny Owl** seen in Gorrick Woods. **Raven** was also seen to put in several appearances near Sandford Lane.

INSECTS

Although 8 species have been seen so far it was March before any Butterflies appeared. The first seen on the 7th were **Comma** and **Brimstone** this was followed quickly by **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** on the 9th. April added **Holly Blue**, **Orange Tip** and **Speckled Wood** on the 7th. A **Green veined White** was seen on the 14th at the FOTEB Family Picnic. Again the weather so far has not been conducive to putting out the moth trap, however my front door light has attracted a few including the micro moth **Agonopterix heracliana** on the 11th March and **Early Grey**, **Light Brown Apple Moth** and a worn **Pug Moth**. Bumblebees seem to have done well so far this year with **Bombus terrestris**, **Red tailed Bumblebee** and **Buff tailed Bumblebee** all being seen in decent numbers. On the 13th April a **Large Red Damselfly** appeared in my Area 5 garden briefly.

AMPHIBIANS

March once again produced **Frogs** and frog spawn in the Balancing pond in Area 4 and in the pools near the Woosehill Roundabout.



FISH



The only fish reported so far were a couple of **Bullheads** found in Area 7 during the April Kick sampling event.

FUNGI



Fungi can appear at any time of the year. In February in Area 5 near Dragonfly Bridge what I believe to be a **Yellow Brain** *Tremella mesenterica* fungus was on a riverside tree. Its common names include Yellow Brain, Golden Jelly fungus, and Witches' Butter. It is a common jelly fungus. Seen in March were the fungi **King Alfred's cakes** *Daldinia concentric* and *Reticularia lycoperdon*. In April **Bog Beacon** was seen in the boggy area in Blackberry Gardens.

PLANTS & TREES



March is a good time to see the **Loddon Lilly** *Leucojum aestivum*. These were on the banks of the Emm near the sailing club at Dinton Pastures. Also emerging at this time in Area 4 was **Wood Anemone** *Anemone nemorosa*. **Blackthorn** appeared on schedule followed by **Hawthorn**.

MAMMALS

The first and only **Fox** reported this year was one at Gorrick Woods in April. No **Hedgehogs** have been seen so far. Deer have fared a bit better with a **Muntjac** seen near the Emm at the Dinton Pastures overflow car park on the 11th April. **Roe Deer** have been seen at several locations in most months so far this year. The first **Common Pipistrelle** bats were seen at dusk feeding over the Emm to the rear of Morrisons on the 11th April.



For all the latest sightings visit www.foteb.org.uk

Don't forget anything that you see along the Emm no matter how insignificant can be emailed to me at foteb@hotmail.co.uk.

Thank you
Eddie Napper



