

## TALES FROM THE RIVERBANK

*A regular series of stories from the Great Ouse Valley Trust*

### New Swan Families!

It's that time of year and so here are two tales of cygnets. A Mute Swan has once again nested near the Holt Island Nature Reserve sign. This is her story as told by Nigel Sprowell, the photographer.

The male brought the materials – dried reeds, grasses and sticks – and she built the large, domed nest. The first egg was laid on 15 March and nine days later there were five. She started brooding about 27 March, by which time she had laid eight eggs. The first cygnets appeared after five weeks on 1 May. In two days they were all hatched and Nigel was lucky enough to see one emerge on one of his regular visits – a rare sighting. He says, 'To my knowledge this is the third time this swan has nested here. She is identified by her ring number which indicates she was ringed as a cygnet on 23 July 2014 – a local lass!'

This is the third year in succession the Holt Island swan has had eight cygnets. The first year all survived, which was quite remarkable. The second year only five reached adulthood, and this year she is down to six, but they are now of a size to be more resilient. They are very vulnerable in the early days to predation by pike, mink and fox, but they can also succumb to eating too much bread offered by their adoring public. Mums and dads please note!



One of the first outings, all very orderly!  
Photograph by Sue Limentani

The second tale features a nest that was nearly lost as rising water in Jones' Boatyard threatened to engulf it with eight eggs. Local hero Rob Adamson noticed the danger and quickly made a raft in the dark, slipped it under the nest and secured it with a rope. The swan accepted the new arrangement and a few days later the eggs hatched successfully. This story attracted a lot of media attention and Rob and his floating nest were featured on BBC Breakfast soon after!



Rob's famous floating nest  
Photograph by Rob Adamson

We are lucky to have such lovely sightings in the Great Ouse Valley. If you are interested in the Trust you can follow us on Facebook and visit [www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk](http://www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk) The Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve also have a Facebook page and their website is [www.holtislandnaturereserve.org](http://www.holtislandnaturereserve.org)

