

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's

# annual review



Herts and  
Middlesex

2016-2017



A BETTER  
FUTURE FOR *wildlife*



# Introduction

**Over the past year the Trust has worked hard to protect and enhance wild places in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. With the support of our members and dedicated volunteers we have continued to help create a Living Landscape with an environment rich in wildlife for everyone.**



## A haven for endangered species

Our nature reserves are havens for wildlife and this year they have gone from strength-to-strength through long-term habitat improvements giving tangible benefits for wildlife. At Aldbury Nowers we have seen the return of breeding small blue butterflies – the product of over a decade of restoration work. Thorley Wash Nature Reserve achieved favourable SSSI status in summer 2016, a result of our three year programme of habitat improvements. At Lemsford Springs, satellite tracking technology has shown green sandpipers migrating non-stop to Norway to breed before returning to the reserve; a reminder that Hertfordshire is part of a global network of habitats.



## Connecting people with nature

This year we have delivered an excellent programme of walks, talks and conservation activities attended by thousands of people keen to learn about their local wildlife. Over 1,500 people enjoyed our Festival of Wildlife which packed guided walks, children's activities and conservation demonstrations into a sunny July weekend. We also launched our new Go Wild Volunteers project to train event leaders to inspire more people to get out and enjoy wildlife. Our partnerships with local authorities and businesses continue to be great way of engaging with local people.

## A voice for wildlife

From local to national level there are many threats to wildlife. This year alone we have responded to over 1,200 planning applications, helping to ensure that wildlife is properly considered in building developments. The result of the EU referendum undoubtedly creates an uncertain future for some of our most important wildlife legislation. Now, more than ever, the Wildlife Trust movement needs to be a strong voice for wildlife. With over 22,000 members, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is an important part of this national conversation.

## Thank you

All of our work is only made possible with your support. A huge thank you to our members, volunteers, donors, grant-awarding bodies, partners and staff who have supported the Trust over the last year; with your support the wild places of Hertfordshire and Middlesex and the wildlife that depends upon them are better cared for and protected.

Thank you,

Mike Master  
Chairman

Lesley Davies  
Chief Executive



# Nature reserves

Our work has gone from strength to strength with our team of staff and volunteers leading improvements and work parties to maintain and develop vital wildlife habitats on both our reserves and in the wider countryside

Some of the key successes on our nature reserves this year include:

## Woodland projects

At Balls Wood 300m of woodland rides were improved to encourage honeysuckle, the larval food plant of the white admiral butterfly.

At Danemead some of the old hornbeams were re-pollarded and fences erected to allow cattle grazing to conserve the woodland pasture.



white admiral

## Wetlands and orchard wildlife

Amwell and Marsworth saw reedbed cutting with positive effects demonstrated quickly when water rails and otters were caught on video camera. At Amwell we created new habitats for the little ringed plover, and at Stockers Lake and Broadwater Lake we improved the wetland habitats. Tewin Orchard has seen a busy year, with staff and volunteers undertaking pruning training and lots of tree and grassland maintenance, as well as a beekeeper setting up on site.



little ringed plover

## Barbastelle project

The Barbastelle project kicked off in 2016, in partnership with Herts & Middlesex Bat Group, University of Hertfordshire, Environment Agency and Herts Natural History Society. The project is developing a strategy for surveying and conserving these internationally rare bats.

barbastelle bat



## Water voles

We were delighted to see the ongoing success of the 2015 water vole reintroduction at Thorley Wash Nature Reserve where 180 voles were released and continue to thrive. They have colonised the reserve well, are breeding and have spread along 5km of the River Stort.

water vole



## Wild highlights:

- Scarce emerald damselflies found at Hertford Heath for the second year running, suggesting they are now breeding there.
- New records of otters from the River Colne at Stocker's Lake and Stanborough Lake.
- Eels, classified as critically endangered, are spotted returning to our rivers thanks to the Slimy Wrigglers Project.
- Small blue butterflies were confirmed as breeding at Aldbury Nowers by Steve Howard.
- The secrets of our Lemsford Springs green sandpipers are revealed through pioneering research using satellite technology to track their migration to Norway.
- Hilfield Reservoir celebrated four black-necked grebe chicks fledging.



scarce emerald

green sandpiper

# Wider countryside

## Local authority partnerships

We continue to advise Stevenage Borough Council on the management of their green spaces, culminating in the review of the Biodiversity Action Plan first written in 2010. The Plan gives guidance for the Borough's 2,600 hectares of wetlands, woodlands, urban habitats and grasslands.

In Harpenden we have provided advice and guidance on green spaces through the town's ecology group and maternity cover for the Town Council's Green Spaces Officer. Such has been the success of this, that the Council has created a new role of People and Wildlife Officer and our partnership has been extended by a further three years to focus on environmental education, community engagement and increasing conservation volunteering.

## Living Rivers

Eels are now classified as critically endangered and our Slimy Wrighglers Project aims to turn back the dramatic decline in their numbers. Together with the Environment Agency and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the first phase of the Project in 2016 saw the installation of two eel passes in the flood relief channel in the Lower Lea valley to help the eel migration through our rivers.

Habitat improvement work continued on a number of rivers, in partnership with the Environment Agency. On the River Stort backwaters, 30 volunteers were trained in restoration techniques, helping to deliver a management plan for 1km of the river which the Trust prepared with the landowner. Over 500m on the River Ash was improved through the selective removal of shading scrub, increasing habitat diversity by allowing the growth of marginal and instream vegetation.

The Trust has worked closely with Groundwork South on a successful application to the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme in the Colne Valley. We will lead two landscape-scale projects to prevent water voles becoming extinct, and improving wildlife habitats within fisheries.



eel

## Farmland and Local Wildlife Sites

We have provided **habitat management advice** to farmers across the area. Four farms covering 2,200 hectares were surveyed as part of a national partnership with Jordans Cereals and advice given to improve the ecological value of the farms as directed by the Jordans standard. The **Local Wildlife Sites programme** had another record year conducting over 50 surveys of woodlands and grasslands, covering over 440 hectares. This is thanks to our 11 volunteer surveyors who gave 200 days of their time. In addition to this, over the winter months the team visited 24 sites to carry out 10-yearly monitoring visits to measure gross change, provide species information, re-establish contact with landowners and provide management advice.



**11 VOLUNTEERS**  
**SURVEYED 50 WILDLIFE SITES**  
**COVERING OVER 440 HECTARES**

JOSH KUBALE

# Standing up for wildlife

## Impact of comments on planning

We commented on seven **Local Plans**, some of which included our comments and are exemplary in the content of their ecological policies – these included East Herts, North Herts and Broxbourne. If approved they will provide significant improvement in delivering measurable and objective net gain in the planning process. Objections made to the Broxbourne Local Plan resulted in the establishment of an agreement with HERC to ensure that the Planning Authority has up to date ecological data.

We reviewed 1,250 planning applications and in most cases our objections and comments resulted in positive changes to the applications.

Trust objections to the plans for the A120 bypass ensured that the local barbastelle population has been properly considered using radio tracking studies. Not only did this generate greater understanding of the behaviour of the colony, it led to targeted and extensive improvements to the mitigation scheme to protect the colony.

**1,250** **PLANNING APPLICATIONS REVIEWED**

## High Speed Two

We have continued to press for the full and proper mitigation of the impacts of High Speed Two on the ecology of, and visitors to, Broadwater Lake Nature Reserve. We presented petitions to the House of Commons and House of Lords and early in 2017 appeared on BBC's *Inside Out* about the potential impacts to the nature reserve. We are a member of the HS2 Colne Valley Mitigation Panel and continue to make the case for mitigation.

## Herts Environmental Records Centre

By the end of the year the total number of records are over 2.2 million. The HERC records is used by the Trust and local authorities to help ensure that wildlife is considered within the planning process, as well as by the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority to help inform their decisions. Data was used to inform 530 projects across the county, including six neighbourhood plans and 382 pre-planning application ecological reports, helping to guide the design and mitigation measures of the final planning applications.

HERC plays a key role in developing the ecological evidence base by supporting volunteer recording and working with other voluntary conservation organisations, including the Herts Natural History Society on the Mammal, Amphibian and Reptile Atlas Project.



cardinal beetle



**2.2M** **RECORDS**  
in the records centre

## Every Record Counts

**Every Record Counts** is a new project led by HERC in partnership with the Herts Natural History Society, Hertfordshire University and Tarmac, aims to encourage people to become involved in biological recording. HMWT is currently seeking vital funding to enable the project to go ahead which will offer training opportunities in a number of different species groups from birds to bees, ants and wasps, while providing mentoring and support to help build confidence in identification skills.

tree bumblebee



JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY



# Engaging people

✔ forest school



PAUL HOPE



PATRICIA RAYNER

Festival of Wildlife 2016 ⬆

## People and Wildlife projects

We were delighted to launch a new People & Wildlife Project with Affinity Water in 2016 that will improve important habitat for wildlife and increase community engagement and volunteering at Stocker's Lake, Springwell Reedbed and Hilfield Park Reservoir.

Our partnership with Tarmac at Panshanger Park continues well through the People and Wildlife Officer and Forest School. Forest School saw its 1,000th child and over 3,000 people came to our programme of events in the park.

## Go Wild Volunteers

In February we launched our Go Wild Volunteers project with funding from Aviva Communities Fund and Tesco Bags of Help. The project will recruit volunteers to join our Go Wild Team and be trained and mentored to run a programme of public events and engagement activities.



apple day

## Walks, talks and events

Over 5,000 people, including over 2,000 children, took part in our growing programme of walks, talks and events. Our main events were the Festival of Wildlife and Apple Day, both of which were popular and helped showcase local wildlife and the work of the Trust. The Festival, run in association with Hertfordshire Natural History Society took place in July at Panshanger Park and attracted 1,500 people who enjoyed walks, talks and activities lead by experts from the Trust and the Society. We are grateful to Tarmac for their sponsorship of the event.

In October, we enjoyed the fruits of Tewin Orchard at the annual Apple Day. Hundreds of people enjoyed the event, with guided walks to the reserve and activities for children. Our new event booking system allows us to prompt for donations at the point of booking and to introduce a better service for those who book and prospective Members to the Trust.

Our Local Groups have welcomed hundreds of people to their walks and talks, and in 2016, the Mid Herts Group celebrated their 21st anniversary. Over 1,400 people have enjoyed the talks given by our Community Speakers.

## Grebe House Wildlife Garden

The Wildlife Garden has doubled in size thanks to funding from Tesco Bags of HELP, Amazon and Cllr Walkington. Vital practical help from our new team of wildlife gardening volunteers and regular work parties with Emmaus and HACRO showcases to the public what action everyone can take for wildlife.



Emmaus and HACRO volunteers in wildlife garden ⬆

# Thank you

The Trust is extremely grateful for the continued support it gets through donations, legacies and grants from members and supporters. We are very grateful for the generous legacies we received from Mary Spencer Ashwell, Peggy Sheila Cunningham, Peter King, Mairi Patricia Mackenzie, Margaret Elizabeth North, George Frank Rogers and John Michael Fortnum Rogers.

## Corporate support

We were pleased to receive the following ongoing support from our **corporate members**:

### Platinum

- Bourne Leisure Group
- UK Power Networks (Operations) Ltd

### Gold

- Johnson Matthey
- Thames Water Utilities
- Islandbridge Properties Limited
- Affinity Water
- The Grove Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort

### Silver

- Cemex UK
- Tarmac

### Bronze

- The Institute of the Motor Industry

We have received further support from our corporate partners through participation in Working for Wildlife Days, including Mace Group, Amgen UK, Britvic, Affinity Water, UK Power Networks and Bourne Leisure. In addition to this we received support via the national agreement with Vine House Farm for bird food sold, from Wildlife Travel Ltd for wildlife holidays booked by individuals living in Herts and Middlesex, from staff at The Institute of The Motor Industry who held a garden plant sale and casual day in aid of the Trust, a donation from AMCO Rail following some access work at Stanborough Reedmarsh, the National Grid who donated to the water vole appeal and from Beazley Management Ltd following a staff charity nomination.

The Trust also received support from John Lewis Welwyn as part of their Community Matters scheme, as well as from public collections at both John Lewis Welwyn and Watford branches following The Wildlife Trusts' Christmas Charity Partnership.



Volunteers of the Year 2016

## Grants and individual donations

External income from grants and individual donations have been particularly important in enabling improvement works on our reserves and other projects, along with other projects. HMWT are very grateful for the generosity of all our funders which include:

- Abbots Langley Parish Council
- Affinity Water
- Aviva Community Fund
- City of London Corporation (Green Arc)
- Environment Agency
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Friends of Tewin
- Harpenden Town Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget (Cllr Crofton, Cllr Walkington)
- Lea Valley Regional Park Authority
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- Miss S M G Ross Trust
- Mr and Mrs Shirvell
- Mr Bennell
- Mr K Moody
- Mr M Tilbe
- Natural England
- Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust
- Robert Kiln Charitable Trust
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Rural Payments Agency (DEFRA)
- Tarmac
- Tesco Bags of Help
- Thames Water
- The Friends of Tring Reservoirs
- Veolia Environmental Trust

## Volunteers

The Trust is extremely grateful for the support of the hundreds of volunteers who enable the Trust to carry out its work. Our thanks go to each and every volunteer for their varied and ongoing support and without whom the Trust could not function. Special thanks go to our Local Groups who make a significant contribution to engaging members and congratulations go to Volunteers of the Year – Carol Newman and John Fish.

## Financial review

### Membership



Total memberships



Total members

### Volunteers



Volunteers



Total volunteer hours



Total volunteer days



Total in-kind value

### Events



### Income

Membership subscriptions	£1,015k
Grants (restricted)	£394k
Fees and contracts	£412k
Donations, gifts and grants (unrestricted)	£60k
Donations and gifts (restricted)	£75k
Legacies	£63k
Fundraising activities	£46k
Investments and other income	£41k



### Expenditure – where does every £1 go?

**RAISING FUNDS 31p**



**GOVERNANCE 4p**

**CONSERVATION AND NATURE RESERVES 65p**

These diagrams are an illustration of Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's income and expenditure of the year ending March 2017. For a copy of the full audited accounts which contain the detailed information required by law, visit [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/annualreview](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/annualreview)