

FESTIVAL *of* WILDLIFE



Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 July
10:00am-4:00pm

Panshanger Park

Join us for a FREE family festival at the beautiful Panshanger Park for a weekend of walks, talks and conservation activities to celebrate the wildlife of Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

Find out more at:

hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/festival

In partnership with



wildlifematters

Spring 2018



Herts and
Middlesex

NEWS FROM YOUR **LOCAL WILDLIFE TRUST** AND FROM **AROUND THE UK**

What lies beneath

Meet our underwater
residents **18**



» **LEMSFORD SPRINGS**

Find out what
makes this
reserve so special **22**

» **BRILLIANT BARBEL**

Find out more
about this whiskered
freshwater fish **10**

Linda Pitkin/2020VISION

PROTECTING **WILDLIFE** FOR THE FUTURE





Introduction to Beekeeping Workshop

Tewin Orchard

Sunday 22 April and Sunday 6 May | 10am - 3pm

This one-day workshop will give you an overview of the craft of beekeeping.

You will spend the morning of the five hour course learning the basic theory of beekeeping, including the equipment used and the role of the beekeeper. The afternoon will be spent in the orchard trying out your new knowledge in a session of practical beekeeping. The day will finish with the tasting of a delicious local honey selection.

£55 - suitable for adults only

Book online at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events



Badger Watching Evenings at Tewin Orchard

Enjoy a unique opportunity to observe badgers in their natural environment!

Deep in Tewin Orchard lies a mammal hide facing a sprawling badger sett that is home to more than ten badgers.

As well as our resident badgers you are also likely to see foxes, owls and a variety of other wildlife in natural surroundings.

The hide is available for public reservation from March until October on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week and is bookable 60 days in advance.

Suggested donation: £10 per adult and £5 per child

Find out more and book online at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/badgerhide



ANDREW PARKINSON/zoovision



Spring 2018

contents

Herts and Middlesex

NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL WILDLIFE TRUST AND FROM AROUND THE UK



LOCAL NEWS

- 4 Panshanger Park**
Meet Murray Brown, our new People and Wildlife Officer.
- 5 Hop to it**
Read about our new partnership with Farr Brewery.



UK NEWS

- 8 What next for farming?**
The Wildlife Trust's new report on the future of farming.



MY WILD LIFE

- 12 My Wildlife**
Meet Patrick McNeill, our Living Rivers Champion.
- 20 Gordon Beningfield**
Celebrating the life of one of Britain's most talented wildlife artists.



RESERVE FOCUS

- 22 Lemsford Springs**
Read about the reserve that never freezes and the wildlife that lives there.



CONSERVATION

Helping local barbel

Read about the barbel and what we're doing to help these special fish.

More on 10



DAYS OUT

- 24 Nature's Calendar**
Tim Hill tells us what to look for when we're out and about this spring.



MICRO HABITATS

- 26 The nature of a river bed**
Find out about life below.

wildlifematters

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From the Chief Executive



The recent publication of the Government's '25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' is welcome, albeit with some reservations.

The ambition for a 'Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife' recognises the need for protecting, restoring and connecting habitats on a landscape-scale – an idea clearly aligned to the Trust's own 'Living Landscapes' project. The Plan highlights the vital role that farmland plays in this for which appropriate funding will be critical, and the intention appears to focus on new land management schemes which support wildlife-friendly farming.

One of our most important local habitats is the globally-rare chalk river so it is significant that the Plan seeks to address water abstraction and decrease

water use by individuals (see page 27 for how you can do your bit for wildlife by saving water). In the meantime our Living Rivers Project becomes all the more important; you can read more about this throughout this edition of *Wildlife Matters*.

With thousands of new homes in the pipeline, we've been commenting on Local Plans to ensure that implications for wildlife are properly considered. We have welcomed the commitment to the principle that new development should result in net environmental gain, but the focus must be on delivering net biodiversity gain first and foremost.

While the 25 Year Plan says that environmental protections, already enshrined in national planning policy, will be maintained and strengthened, much of our vital protection for wildlife in the planning system comes from European legislation and its future is currently uncertain. Robust legislation is required to ensure that planning policies are enforceable.

Given the importance of legislation to the future of wildlife, the Wildlife Trusts collectively have called for an ambitious Environment Act to set targets and provide legal underpinning to the

Plan. This would also be the vehicle for implementing EU environmental principles and the proposed new environmental watchdog. For the Plan to be effective, it needs to have clearer and binding targets and commitment across Government departments.

It is encouraging to see the importance placed on connecting people to nature for their health, wellbeing and happiness. I'm sure that the thousands of people who come to our events feel better from getting closer to wildlife, as do our hundreds of volunteers and visitors to our nature reserves.

Your support means we can keep talking to the politicians and statutory agencies, farmers and businesses to ensure that words are turned into reality and that in 25 years' time we have seen a tangible recovery of nature and a society which values and appreciates wildlife. Critical to this will be strong legislation, funding and a commitment not just from government but from society. No doubt a challenging but, I hope, positive time lies ahead.

Lesley Davies



CHARLOTTE HUSSEY

Panshanger Park welcomes new People and Wildlife Officer

Murray Brown is the new People and Wildlife Officer at Tarmac's Panshanger Park and will help the local community get the most out of the park's special landscape and its wildlife.

Murray's role will see him further develop Panshanger Park as a valued place where people are able to experience and enjoy the historic landscape, its habitats and the wildlife they support. There will be a particular focus on volunteers, helping in the management and interpretation of the park.

Murray will develop and monitor detailed management plans around Panshanger's key habitats, including the lakes, River Mimram and its grassland to ensure that the park continues to be a haven for wildlife, as well as a beautiful place for people to visit. A programme of events will be developed to highlight the park's natural, landscape and cultural heritage. Additionally an ecological monitoring plan will be put in place.



Housing growth - ensuring wildlife is properly considered

The Trust has made recommendations to District Council Local Plans across our area over the last three years and we will wait and see if these policies are formally adopted when the examination process finishes.

If they are, they will set an excellent precedent for local plans across the UK. East Herts' Plan in particular cites a good number of considerations for wildlife, including a requirement for developments to deliver a net gain for biodiversity which must be demonstrated through the use of the biodiversity impact calculator. It also requires the use of appropriate native species in planting schemes, integrated bat and bird boxes in houses bordering open spaces, and the protection and buffering of priority habitats.



Nathusius' pipistrelle bats

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working hard to limit negative impact on wildlife in our area from HS2.

Mitigation funds have been secured to improve habitat and carry out wildlife projects along the proposed route. A recent allocation of £100,000 will enable a new project in the Colne Valley to carry out population surveys of Nathusius' pipistrelle bats. This follows last year's recovery of a ringed bat (which had originally been ringed in Latvia) at our Stocker's Lake reserve by local bat worker Patty Briggs. It is hoped the project will give us more information on this elusive bat and guide habitat improvements to benefit it. If you would like to find out more about the project or get involved please contact Matt Dodds at matt.dodds@hmwt.org.



DANIEL HARGREAVES

Hop to it!

The Trust are delighted to announce a new partnership with local brewery, Farr Brew. The Wheathampstead brewery will create a new beer which will go on sale later in the year to support the work of the Trust.

Nick Farr said "Farr Brew's principles are all about community and the environment we are part of, so partnering with the Trust is a natural decision. We believe that we should all keep the planet as green and beautiful as possible and we try to ensure that conservation is at the heart of any business decision we make. We're proud of our Hertfordshire home and we're delighted to be working with the Trust to keep it wild!"

Name that beer

As part of our new partnership with Farr Brew, we're running a competition to name the new beer.

The winner will not only see their successful entry on the beer but will also receive a brewery tour for two at Farr Brew and 12 bottles of Farr Brew beer.

Entries should be sent to fundraising@hmwt.org, closing date for submissions is 31st March 2018. Please see terms and conditions at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/farrbrew



Catchment Partnership

Since 2014 the Trust has hosted the River Lea Catchment Partnership, which brings together stakeholder groups that have an interest in the River Lea and its tributaries.

The Catchment Based Approach was piloted by Defra in 2012 and launched nationally in 2013.

The aim is to establish collaborative, bottom-up catchment partnerships formed of local people, landowners and statutory bodies, which will work collaboratively across all the catchments in England.

The ultimate aim of the Catchment Based Approach is to help the UK meet our targets under the Water Framework Directive.

The Catchment Partnership has undertaken a number of successful actions including;

- Installing two eel passes on the Lower Lea opening up three kilometres of river and 55 ha of still water habitat to eels.
- Providing training and equipment for the River Beane Restoration Association to control invasive giant hogweed.
- Establishing a Riverfly hub of over sixty volunteers, monitoring riverfly populations and water quality across the whole river catchment.
- Providing training in river restoration techniques and supporting habitat restoration projects at 12 sites throughout the catchment providing benefits for fish, invertebrates and other wildlife.



CHARLOTTE HUSSEY



PAUL THRUSH

Water voles

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has been involved with water vole conservation for nearly twenty years.

Initially the emphasis for conservation measures was on preventing further catastrophic decline as most of the rivers in the two counties had lost their water voles. UK-wide water vole numbers are thought to have declined by 90% in the 20th century, with a new Wildlife Trust report stating a 30% decline during the surveying period of 2006-2015 alone. The main cause of this decline has been predation by the non-native American mink so monitoring and controlling mink is vital. Habitat loss, water pollution and built development has also led to massive declines in the number of water voles since the 1960s.

The surviving water vole populations are isolated and risk gradually dying out due to a lack of genetic variety. Two conservation measures have been used to improve the situation. Firstly, management of river banks improves the amount of ideal water vole habitat, giving water vole populations the opportunity to consolidate and expand, ideally linking previously isolated populations. Work done in recent years around the Fray's River north of Uxbridge in Middlesex is a good example of this. Secondly, water voles can be re-introduced to rivers where they have become extinct. In 2015 water voles were reintroduced to Thorley Wash Nature Reserve on the River Stort just south of Bishops Stortford, using animals displaced from locations elsewhere in the UK. Surveys on the Fray's River and at Thorley Wash suggest that both strategies are working and that the water vole populations are doing well. Nevertheless mink are still a problem and the survival of water voles in the two counties relies on the diligence and dedication of those who monitor and control mink.

The Trust is working with the River Beane Restoration Association to control mink, improve habitats and work towards another re-introduction. It also is hoped that more work will be done to allow water voles to move further up the River Colne from Uxbridge, ultimately to link up with the population on the River Chess in Rickmansworth. This cannot be a singular effort and we are working closely with surrounding Wildlife Trusts and landowners to ensure that we are joined up in our work so the water vole has the best chance to once again thrive.

Lea Valley wader strategy

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working in partnership with RSPB, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Tarmac in an effort to address the decline in breeding wading birds in the Lea catchment through a new strategy.

These organisations all manage significant areas of land which provide habitat for these birds. The Birds of Hertfordshire, published in 2015, identified that breeding numbers of little ringed plover, ringed plover, redshank, snipe and lapwing have all decreased by more than 25% in the last 40 years. Snipe is now considered to be extinct as a breeding species in Hertfordshire.



Some of these species, notably little ringed plover and ringed plover, benefitted from the bare ground and early successional habitats created through gravel extraction over the past 100 years. As time passes such habitats become dominated by dense vegetation, scrub and then woodland. Whilst these habitats clearly have value for wildlife, they are unsuitable for these wading birds. By working collaboratively and through dynamic land management, the Trust and partners will be working together strategically to ensure that suitable habitat is represented somewhere in the valley such that the waders have somewhere to breed.

To raise awareness of the initiative, Sunday 3rd June has been adopted as 'A Wader Day' for Hertfordshire. The partner organisations will be running wader watching events at key locations. The Trust will be leading guided walks at Amwell Nature Reserve and Panshanger Park. More details are available in Go Wild and the Trust's website.

All joined-up at Amwell

Amwell Nature Reserve forms part of the Lea Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and is internationally important on account of the wintering gadwall, shoveler and bittern. It also forms part of the Lee Valley Park. In an effort to ensure a fully co-ordinated approach to managing the reserve and surrounding area of the Lea Valley, the Trust is working with a diverse partnership of organisations and landowners.

The partnership is a great example of our living landscape approach to conservation – looking beyond nature reserves to the wider countryside - sharing and gathering knowledge and experience with and from our neighbours. The Trust provided advice to the Easneye Estate when they developed their stewardship application to include approaches which joined up different habitats, such as the creation of tall grassland adjacent to the river, providing habitat for small mammals which in turn provide food for predatory birds such as barn owls. In addition the Trust suggested and provided guidance on the construction of an osprey nesting platform on adjacent land.

Pictured, the partnership includes the Amwell Magna Fishery (the oldest fishery in the country) who own and manage the adjacent River Lea; Natural England, who have responsibility for the SPA; Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, who own a number of local wildlife sites in the area; Environment Agency, who care for the water environment.

The partnership also includes the Easneye Estate and local naturalists who have an intimate knowledge of the habitats and wildlife. Mike Master, the Trust's Chairman attends the partnership.



Pictured from left to right:-
Bob Dear (Amwell Magna Fishery), Feargal Sharkey (Amwell Magna Fishery), Jenny Sherwen (HMWT), Neil Fuller (Natural England), Laura Baker (HMWT), Cath Patrick (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority), Laurie Naish (Environment Agency), Mike Master (HMWT Chairman).



Wildlife Trusts call for a farming rethink

New report proposes a better way to spend public money on agriculture after the UK leaves the EU

Leaving the EU is a rare chance to reverse the fortunes of the wildlife, soil, water and habitats which post-war agricultural policy has depleted.

That's the message in a new report by The Wildlife Trusts on the future of farming and land management in England. What Next for Farming? suggests that once the UK leaves the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, payments to farmers should be linked to a wide range of benefits, for people and wildlife.

"At the moment, farmers can sell the food they grow through the market. But they can't sell a whole range of benefits or services that society needs," says Ellie Brodie, Senior Policy Manager at The Wildlife Trusts.

"Our report proposes three public funds. The money would be allocated through local environment plans designed to achieve nature's recovery. These plans would be allocated through local nature recovery plans – identifying environmental needs using local data and consultation with local people. Linking farmers together

and targeting investment where it is most needed will restore habitats and join them up."

The report suggests the current UK agriculture budget of £3bn could fund the new system. We currently spend £144bn on health, £87bn on education and £37bn on defence.

A study of the River Aire catchment shows how this idea could work. A Yorkshire Wildlife Trust report concludes that for a similar cost to today's system, public benefits would massively increase.

For the first time, all good quality habitat in the area would be well managed and expanded. £14m would be invested in natural flood management over 10 years.

More on wildlifetrusts.org/farming

Westminster seems to agree!

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has also announced that the Government intends to change the current approach to farm payments. Whilst we welcome the proposals, one big risk remains. Vast areas of farmland currently receive 'basic payments', which require positive management of wildlife habitats, such as hedgerows. When these payments end, new regulations will be required to replace them.



Restoring peat uplands would be more profitable than degrading them

DON SUTHERLAND

For a similar cost to today's system, public benefits would massively increase

Eight things farmers should be paid to provide



1 More, bigger and better natural habitats

Using ecological mapping to co-ordinate farmers' land management



2 Thriving wildlife

Pioneering farmers have shown that you can farm profitably and restore wildlife



3 Abundant pollinators

These insects are a vital link in our food chain. Joint action can bring them back



4 Healthy soils

Farmers should be paid for conserving and improving soil



5 Clean water

Reducing fertiliser pollution and run-off will clean rivers and lower water bills



6 Clean air and climate change mitigation

Restoring dried-out peatlands locks up atmospheric carbon



7 Flood Risk Management

Changing livestock and land use on hills slows down water runoff, reducing floods



8 Healthy people

Better access to the countryside means better physical and mental health



The report shows how we can meet the needs of both nature and farming



Long-range secrets of Alderney's gulls

Long-term research by Alderney Wildlife Trust has revealed the extraordinary lives of gulls.

A lesser black-backed gull ringed as a chick was spotted in Castellon, Spain and later in Switzerland. And a herring gull ringed in 1991 is still alive at 27.

Spiders endorse Living Landscape

A survey in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Delamere Living Landscape has revealed two rare spiders: the jumping spider *Sitticus floricola* (found at two sites) and the money spider *Glyphesis cottonae* (four sites). Both species live on wet moss.



UK beavers are getting established

After the Scottish Government's 2016 announcement that European beavers would be a protected species, three new animals have been added to the original group released in Knapdale Forest, Argyll.

The aim is to improve the population's genetic diversity. Other Wildlife Trust beaver projects in Kent, Scotland, Devon and Wales are also gaining support.



Species focus: **Barbel**

This whiskered freshwater fish is in decline and the Trust is working hard so it can thrive once again.

Barbel (*Barbus barbus*) is a species of freshwater fish belonging to the family Cyprinidae (subfamily Barbinae). The name is derived from *barba* the Latin word for beard, a clear reference to the four large whisker-like appendages around the jaw, known as barbels. Barbel are native to the eastern river systems of England which drain into the Humber, Wash and Thames estuary and have been introduced to western river drainage catchments and rivers as far north as the Wear and Tees, due to their status as a prized quarry amongst anglers. Barbel are a large species, usually up to 3kg but known to reach weights of 8.5kg. Barbel are characterised by a large, broad head and an underslung mouth with thick lips and two pairs of barbels - touch and taste sensitive whiskers - used for finding invertebrates within the gravel bed of rivers.

Barbel are found in the lower reaches of medium to large gravel-bottomed rivers and require clean fast-flowing waters to survive. To help them thrive in these conditions barbel have developed adaptations including a streamlined torpedo-shaped body and strong powerful

muscles that help them swim against the flow. Barbel are a social fish and will often shoal together close to the bank amongst tree roots, fallen tree branches and other physical structures where they can rest outside of the fastest flows and shelter out of sight of predators. Barbel don't spend all their time in hiding and are in fact a very curious species, brazenly exploring and inspecting changes to their surroundings.

Barbel under threat

At one time our local River Lea was known as one of the best barbel rivers in England and whilst the Upper Lea still has a thriving barbel population, stocks have been declining in the Old River Lea - part of the Lower Lea river system. This is one of the last remaining stretches of the River Lea south of Hertford that has not been heavily modified for the purposes of navigation or flood defence. A number of issues have been attributed to declining barbel numbers in the Old River Lea including reduced flows and their associated impacts on channel morphology leading to the degradation of the habitats that barbel require to complete their lifecycle.

This includes the silting of spawning gravels and changes to aquatic vegetation structure. Barbel are a good indicator species of the health of a river and their declining numbers can often be a warning of underlying problems within that stretch of river.

Conserving the barbel

In response to declining barbel numbers, the Trust has teamed up with Environment Agency (EA), Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), Kings Weir Fishery and the Fishers Green Consortium, functioning as a subgroup of the Lower Lea Catchment Partnership which is hosted by the Trust, to develop projects with an overall aim to re-establish a thriving self-sustaining barbel population within the Old River Lea. This is important not only for the conservation of barbel but also for other river wildlife. What is good for barbel is good for a wide variety of wildlife that rely on the Old River Lea for their survival. A series of habitat enhancement projects are planned, including spreading gravel below Kings Weir to create new spawning beds;



SHUTTERSTOCK

narrowing the river at key historic spawning sites to scour silt and provide clean spawning gravels; managing bankside trees to provide a good balance of overhanging cover for adult fish and marginal vegetation cover for juvenile

barbel; and population monitoring. Whilst there is clearly still a great deal of work to do, the partnership has made great progress and is optimistic that in the not too distant future barbel populations will once again thrive in the Old River Lea.



CHARLOTTE HUSSEY

Barbel Conservation: a partnership approach on Countryfile

In November 2017 the work of the barbel subgroup was featured on BBC Countryfile.

Presenter Charlotte Smith joined members of the partnership on the Old River Lea to learn about the plight of the barbel and the work we are doing to reverse its decline. The piece included a look at some of the issues on the Old River Lea, the work of Kings Weir Fishery and their barbel rearing project and an EA fisheries investigation survey - one of the important monitoring tools being used to plan and evaluate the partnership's work.



My Wild Life

The rivers in Hertfordshire and Middlesex are essential ecosystems for our wildlife. Our team works hard to protect them - but they can't do it alone. We have a dedicated team of Living River Champions who are fundamental to our success.

CHARLOTTE HUSSEY



there is always a stretch of one of the rivers in the Trust's area that would welcome a River Champion

What does being a Living River Champion involve?

I am the Living River Champion for a four-mile stretch of the River Ash around Wheathampstead, where I live. The most important part of my role is to contact, meet, keep in touch with and support people who own land or property next to a river, stream or ditch in 'my' area. This includes small private estates, large estates, livery stables, private gardens, fisheries and open spaces. I aim to walk the river banks at least once a month and generally keep an eye on things. There are plenty of small jobs to do and if there is a major issue, I can get advice from the Trust or, in the case of a major obstruction or blockage, I call the Environment Agency's Incident line.

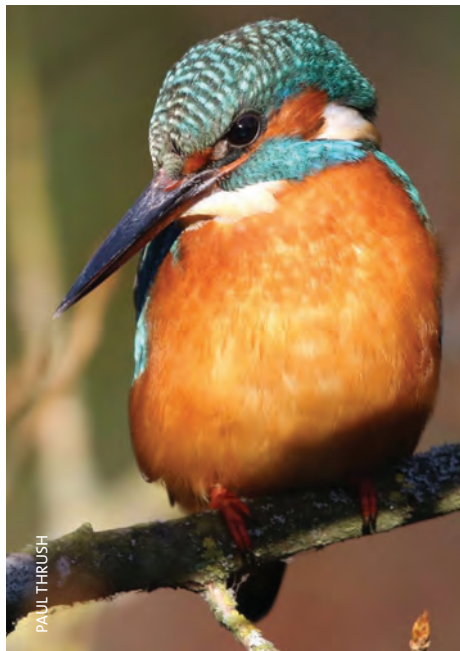
Another important aspect of the 'Champion' role is raising the public profile of the river by talking to members of the public I meet when I'm out and about, and by giving talks about the river to local groups such as U3A and the WI. I have also talked to Beaver Scouts and Year 6 primary school children. It's important too to keep in touch with the relevant people at the Environment Agency, Affinity Water, and of course, the Living Rivers Officer at the Trust.

What challenges do you face?

Himalayan balsam is a problem in the summer but as a result of pulling every patch at least twice a year, it is pretty much under control on this stretch of the upper Lea, except in one 'black spot' which is at the downstream end of what I like to think of as 'my' stretch. I distribute a 'Himalayan balsam newsletter' each year to remind local residents about the importance of pulling balsam on their land or at least letting me know where it has appeared.

How long have you been volunteering on your local river?

Just over five years. It took a couple of years to get to know all the riparian landowners and for them to give me



access to their land; I had to convince some of them that I was not an inspector who was going to make their life difficult!

How can other people volunteer on their local waterways?

This depends on how much time you have. It is very helpful simply to keep an eye on the river in your locality and to let people like me know if there is a problem or, better than that, if you see something exciting such as an unusual bird or a breeding pair. If you have more time, you can join one of the work parties that the Trust organises. If you want to get more involved, there is always a stretch on one of the rivers in the Trust's area that would welcome a River Champion.

How important are volunteers to our rivers?

Volunteers are essential, whether being the 'eyes and ears' of the Trust, helping with work parties, or being more involved. Just learning about your local river and its wildlife so that you can let others know why it is important would be a valuable contribution.

What's your Living River Champion highlight?

This must be finding signs of otters along the river in February 2017 and then later on in December. We haven't had otters here for many years and it is very exciting to think they may be coming back.

Can you recommend your favourite stretch of local river?

Most of this stretch of the Lea is privately owned but The Meads, an area of open space in Wheathampstead, is owned by Wheathampstead Parish Council and open to the public. The river flows through The Meads and the river banks are managed to balance the needs of the wildlife with accessibility for people. It's a lovely spot for a walk at any time of year and maybe a picnic in the summer.

How can we find out more about what is happening on our local rivers?

The Trust's Upper Lea Catchment Management Plan includes a number of projects on 'my' stretch of the river. We have made good progress with some of these, for example installing deflectors and brash buildouts in the river alongside East Lane car park in Wheathampstead, but others are taking rather longer. You can find out more about these projects and others on the River Lea by visiting riverleacatchment.org.uk

If you are interested in volunteering on our local rivers, please contact Living Rivers Officer, David Johnson, at david.johnson@hmwat.org or call 01727 858901.





Reserves Team appeal update



HANNAH COUZENS

Thanks to you our Reserves Team and volunteers are better equipped to help wildlife on our nature reserves!

The support you gave to our recent appeal is particularly appreciated – and was perfectly timed for our expert Reserves Officers and volunteers to complete a programme of conservation tasks over the autumn and winter.

The appeal focussed on the teams of staff and volunteers who carry out vital habitat management work on your local Wildlife Trust sites. We have been delighted by your response and sincerely thank you for all your kind donations. At the time of print, you have helped to raise over £12,000 with Gift Aid.

Your generous support is hugely appreciated. With it we have been able to...

Purchase new bowsaws and loppers which have been put to good use on our nature reserves. At Fir and Pond Woods and at Long Deans volunteers have cleared areas of scrub and holly to improve the woodland and grassland habitats.

Provide vital equipment to enable our Green Team volunteers to remove a large area of holly at Longspring Wood to let light into the woodland floor, and tackle the grassland and patches of scrub across Aldbury Nowers and Alpine Meadows.

Improve our delivery of ditch clearance work, which is directly aiding ongoing habitat conservation at our wetland sites.

Make full use of our larger equipment and vehicles to install fencing in the north marsh area of Aldbury Nowers this winter, allowing for grazing to continue.

Grazing at Aldbury has led to higher numbers of small copper butterflies and as result of the work this winter, grazing can continue to increase our butterfly numbers

Josh, Reserves Officer

We've also been able to send our staff and volunteers on chainsaw training and bought new chainsaw equipment allowing us to fell bigger trees ourselves, as well as becoming certified in brushcutter use. These have already been put to good use at Danemead where the team has carried out clearance to open up



JOSH KUBALE

the wet meadow, increase wood pasture and allow the woodland flora to flourish.

Additionally, staff and volunteers have completed a range of other training including plant identification and even a ride-on mower driving course to better manage the grassland at Tewin Orchard and cut paths for improved visitor access this coming spring.

The more training and support we give our staff and volunteers to develop their skills the better we can manage your nature reserves for wildlife. Qualified volunteers can now run their own work parties and work independently on our nature reserves without Reserves Officer supervision which greatly increases the amount we can do together for wildlife!

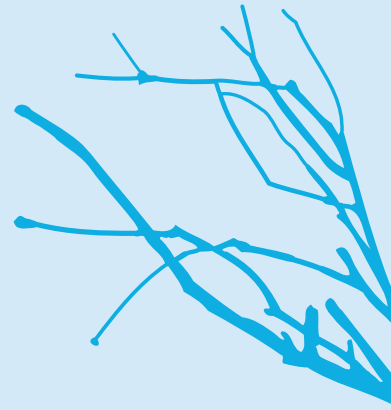
Laura,
Nature Reserves Manager

We are hugely grateful to our team of site Wardens and over 200 regular work party volunteers whose contributions are vital to the long term management and conservation of our nature reserves.

Thank you once again to everyone who has donated to this appeal. You have directly helped our Reserves Team to continue to protect and improve your local nature reserves for wildlife. If you would like to find out about becoming a Nature Reserves volunteer, please visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer



Tweets from the field...



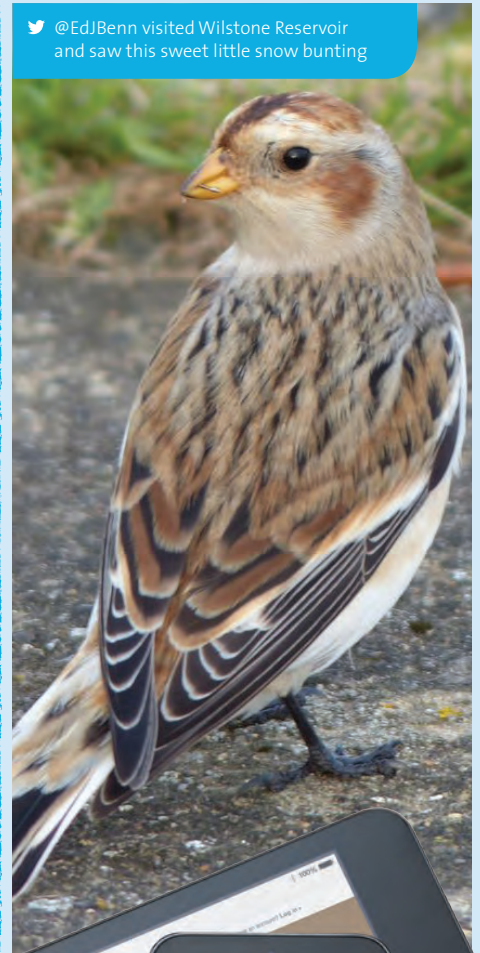
Social media highlights from the past few months



This lesser redpoll was photographed by @james_wildlife at Lee Valley Regional Park



@penny561helen captured a beautiful sunset near Stocker's Lake



@EdJBenn visited Wilstone Reservoir and saw this sweet little snow bunting



Harpenden's People and Wildlife Officer @heidi_mansell found this fungi tower on one of her guided walks!



@hertskingfisher caught this kingfisher having a bad hair day!

We love seeing your pictures from our reserves and hearing about your wildlife experiences in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Get involved with the conversation on Twitter @HMWTBadger or Facebook [facebook.com/hertswildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/hertswildlifetrust).



In remembrance

The Trust has received kind donations in memory of **Michael Evans, Mary Darker, Basil Lambert, Sheila Lyons and Shiloh.**

Donating in memory of a loved one is a very special way of honouring their lives, whilst helping to protect the rich heritage of habitats and wildlife that they cared so much about. These donations will ensure their memory lives on, providing a healthy, vibrant and diverse natural world for future generations to enjoy. Our sincere thanks and condolences go to all their family and friends.



Keeping your data safe

In May this year, the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will come into force. GDPR will govern how organisations manage personal data. The Trust is already following much of the best-practice guidelines set out in GDPR so as a supporter you should see little change.

The Trust is committed to protecting your personal information and will only use it to service your support or where you have given your permission for us to do so. We will not pass your details on to any third party, except for the purposes of enabling them to carry out activity on the Trust's behalf (such as sending you this magazine). We will never sell your contact details to another organisation.

We are in the process of updating our Privacy Policy which explains why and how we use the personal information we hold. This is publically available on our website hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/privacy-policy. If you have any questions about how we manage and process your personal data, want to update your details or change how we contact you then please contact us on **01727 858901** or at **info@hmwt.org**.



Going the distance for wildlife

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust would like to say a huge thank you to Thippawan Rashleigh for running her first marathon in support of the Trust.

Thippawan has a particular love for wildlife which inspired her to run the Eden Project Marathon where she beat her target and raised an impressive £528 for the Trust.

“Thanks to Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust our family have enjoyed many great events at different nature reserves. I love being surrounded by the diversity of natural places around us, where I can spend quality time outdoors with my children. I hope the money I have raised for the Trust will help them to continue their wonderful work for wildlife”.

We are so grateful for Thippawan's determination to help ensure our nature reserves remain healthy and vibrant for future generations to enjoy. If you are interested in raising money for the Trust we would love to hear from you. It doesn't have to be as challenging as running a marathon, you could hold a cake sale, an outdoor event or even a dress down day at work. Whatever you plan on doing, you can contact us on **01727 858901** or at **fundraising@hmwt.org** – we'd love to hear from you.





Mace Foundation's work at Hertford Heath

Staff from Mace Foundation joined us at Hertford Heath last October to help remove the brambles and other invasive vegetation that was dominating the site, and shading out the smaller wildflowers.

This site is home to a wide range of wildlife including heathland flora and dragonflies and attracts many visitors. It is therefore essential that habitats are managed to keep optimum conditions for its wildlife, and to also enable access for people to come and enjoy the reserve.

Taking part in a Working for Wildlife Day with the Trust is a fantastic way for businesses to do their bit for local wildlife and give something back to the community. Staff will experience first-hand what it means to protect local wildlife, whilst team building and learning new skills in an inspiring setting.

Visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/workparty to organise your Working for Wildlife Day or contact us to discuss your requirements on **01727 858901** or at fundraising@hmwt.org.



A good day was had by all who were able to attend. We really appreciate the opportunity to get out of the office and spend some time in the great outdoors!

Alicia Mann, Mace Foundation Finance Manager

Tee-ing up a great 2018

The Trust are delighted to be working with luxury spa and hotel, The Grove, which has renewed its Gold corporate membership for a second year.

We are excited to announce that The Grove will be hosting several special events throughout 2018 including garden tours with afternoon tea, a dawn chorus walk followed by a full English breakfast, and tours of the new nature trail with a picnic provided. Find details on our website and in *Go Wild*.

At the core of our partnership with The Grove is the delivery of conservation activity resulting from the professional advice given by the Trust's Conservation Team. This includes encouraging wildlife to thrive across the golf course and into the wilder outer edges of the estate. Work has started at Heath Wood with planting to diversify the shrub layer and removal of non-native species, soon to be followed by scrapes of the woodland floor to encourage germination of acidic heathland species. The site's wetlands will be another focus for enhancement with plans underway for a new viewpoint for visitors to experience the wildlife there.

HMWT's partnership with the Grove is an excellent example of our work to achieve a living landscape in Hertfordshire, by looking beyond recognised nature reserves. With golf courses covering five times more land than nature reserves, there is huge potential for them to make a significant contribution to conserving the counties' habitats and associated wildlife

Tim Hill, HMWT Conservation Manager

Let the tasting beGIN!

As you may remember, last summer we partnered with Puddingstone Distillery to produce a very special pink gin, infused with the edible flower of the invasive Himalayan balsam plant, which had been removed from our nature reserves by volunteers.

The next round of Himalayan balsam clearance will be taking place this summer where we will collect as many flowers as we can for this year's batch of 'Pink for a Purpose' gin. Excitingly, this year we have launched a new partnership with Puddingstone Distillery and The Grove, who we will be hosting two new gin tasting events. This is the perfect event for wildlife lovers (who just so happen to love gin too!). Find details on our website and in *Go Wild*.



JOSH KUBALE



What lies beneath... Hertfordshire and Middlesex

The rivers of Hertfordshire and Middlesex are home to some amazing wildlife that is largely hidden to us. David Johnson, the Trust's Living Rivers Officer, introduces us to some of the fascinating species that live in our rivers and highlights what work the Trust is doing to help them.



PETER TATTON

Brook lamprey

Brook lamprey are a truly prehistoric fish - lampreys are one of the oldest groups of vertebrates and have changed very little over 360 million years. Brook lamprey is the smallest of the three species found in the UK (the others being river and sea lamprey) and the only species found in Hertfordshire.

Brook lamprey require clean gravel to spawn and silty river margins to develop. By re-gravelling sections of the River Mimram at Singlers Marsh the Trust has created an area of habitat where brook lamprey can thrive.



SHUTTERSTOCK



SHUTTERSTOCK

Bullhead

Bullhead prefer fast flowing rivers where they hide under cobbles. Bullhead are a typical chalk stream species and a good indicator of whether or not a river is suffering from low flows. In Hertfordshire we have one of the highest water usages in England and this has left many of our chalk rivers over-abstracted and in danger of drying out altogether.

The Trust works with key partners to promote water saving to our local community. See page 27 for water saving tips.

Caddisfly

Serious pollution in watercourses can have a disastrous impact on river ecology. Caddisflies and other riverfly groups are an indicator of good water quality and by monitoring numbers of riverflies in our rivers we are able to identify pollution incidents early, enabling a rapid response. The Trust works as part of the national Riverfly Partnership scheme to help train and coordinate volunteers to monitor local rivers.

To register your interest in becoming a Riverfly monitor please contact david.johnson@hmwt.org.



CHRIS LAWRENCE



JACK PERKS

Eels

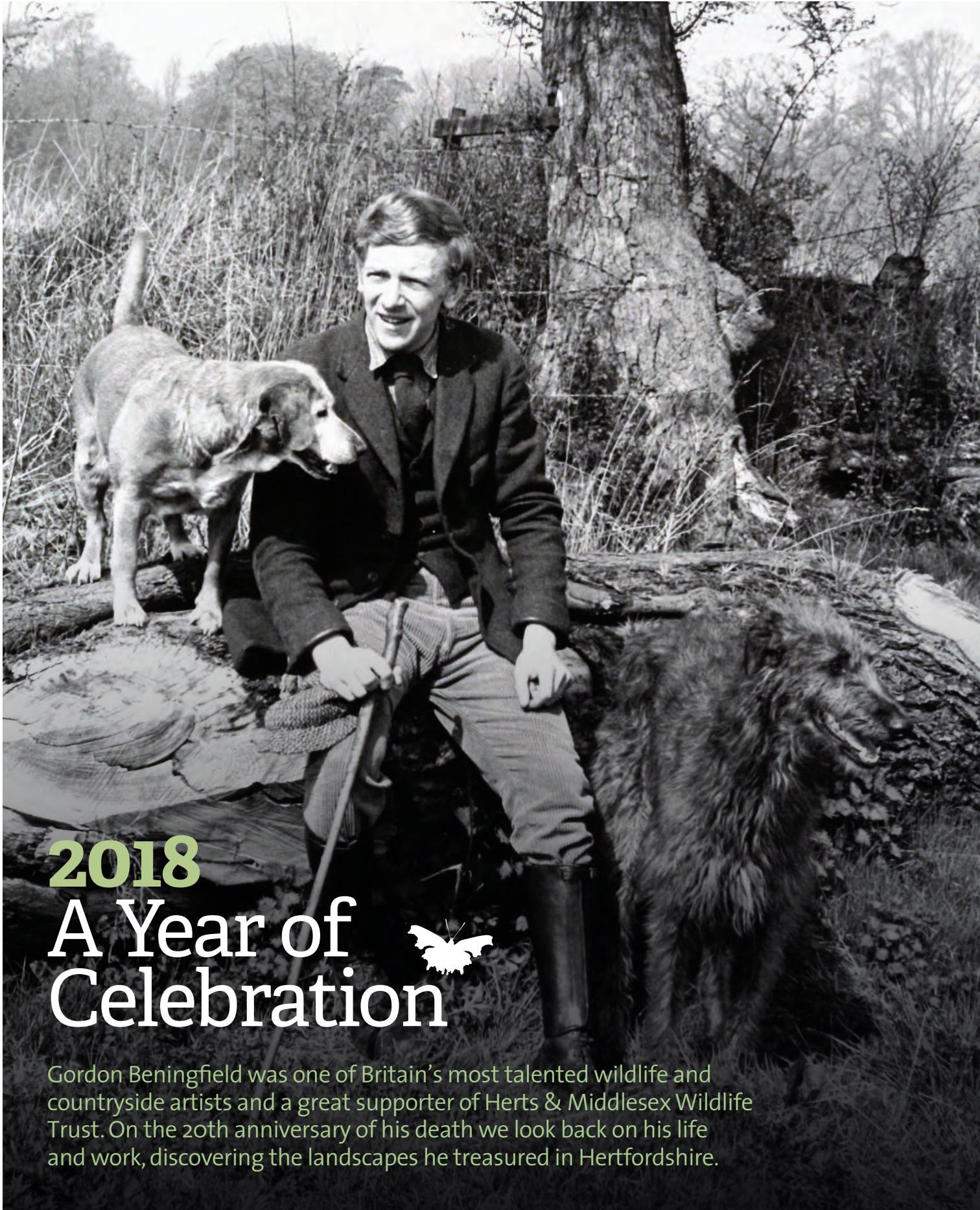
The European eel is a critically endangered species that is in global decline. The decline is due partly to man-made barriers, such as weirs, preventing eels migrating upriver to complete their lifecycle. Through the Conserving Slimy Wrighglers Project, the Trust is working to install eel passes on barriers throughout the Lea Catchment allowing juvenile eels to complete their migration from the Sargasso Sea to the River Lea where they can grow into adults.

Water crowfoot

Water crowfoot is a classic chalk stream plant species and also an important habitat for many species of aquatic invertebrate. Water crowfoot needs clean, flowing water and plenty of natural light to grow. The Trust has worked on several sites on the rivers Beane, Mimram and Ash to manage over-shading bankside trees, allowing more light into these chalk rivers and the water crowfoot and other aquatic plants to thrive.



PHILIP PRECEY



2018

A Year of Celebration

Gordon Beningfield was one of Britain's most talented wildlife and countryside artists and a great supporter of Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. On the 20th anniversary of his death we look back on his life and work, discovering the landscapes he treasured in Hertfordshire.

Growing up

Gordon grew up in East London where his father was a lighterman on the River Thames. During the Second World War the family was evacuated to rural Hertfordshire. Gordon's skill with paint and pencil was recognised by his teachers, and his father encouraged him into an artistic apprenticeship at ecclesiastical art restoration company Faithcraft in St. Albans. Here, Gordon excelled at carving, gilding, painting and sketching, going on to be considered by many as the finest glass engraver of his generation.

In 1958 Gordon married and settled first in Redbourn and later Water End, in Hertfordshire's Chiltern Hills. Here he



continued to perfect his craft through careful observation of the wildlife around him. Gordon was a countryman at heart and the countryside and its wild inhabitants were often the subject of his paintings and drawings. Later in Gordon's career he contributed to a number of television programmes and was commissioned by the Royal Mail to create a set of stamps showing endangered butterflies. Gordon's friends describe him as a friendly, loyal man with an intense desire to capture on paper, canvas, glass or bronze the magical beauty of the English countryside.

One of Gordon's favourite subjects was the butterfly. A fantastic field entomologist, he enjoyed watching and collecting butterflies since childhood. His passion translated into the publication of his first book *Beningfield's Butterflies* in 1978 and an accompanying exhibition of the original paintings sold out under huge demand. He went on to publish further books and collections, each of which combined a celebration of the English Countryside with a clear call for action to care for our special landscapes.

Supporting the Trust

Gordon was a strong advocate of nature conservation and so lent this support to the Trust. In the spring of 1983 he gave an illustrated talk for our members, followed by opening Longspring Wood Nature Reserve in 1986. Gordon's love of wildlife and dedication to our cause

led to his appointment as Vice President of Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in 1993. When the Trust marked its 30th Anniversary, Gordon spoke at the anniversary party at Letchworth.

Gordon's beautiful illustrations captured the landscape and species he found around him at that time. In the 20 years since Gordon's death, the Trust has continued to carry out vital conservation work in the Chilterns landscape that was Gordon's inspiration. A highlight of this work is the restoration of Aldbury Nowers' valuable chalk grassland to improve butterfly habitat – a decade of work has seen intensive habitat management activity including scrub control, grazing, cutting and raking, introducing basking spots and areas with coppiced glades.

This work at Aldbury Nowers has improved overall butterfly numbers (the most notable increase growing from 1,700 counted in 2007 to 3,953 in 2013), with priority butterfly species, such as the dingy skipper and grizzled skipper, rising year-on-year. Between 2010-2017, 34 species of butterflies have been recorded at Aldbury Nowers.

With thanks to Gordon Beningfield's family for the images used.

During 2018, a range of organisations are coming together to offer a programme of events to celebrate Gordon Beningfield's life and work and to help get you closer to the beautiful wildlife he loved so much.

14th April

Bird walk on the River Ver

15-17th June

Big Wild Weekend at Great Gaddesden. Flower festival in St John the Baptist Church, family wildlife activities with the Trust, guided walks and more.

6-8th July

Beningfield's Wildlife Weekend at Tring Natural History Museum, Tring Talks, activities, stalls and games.

14-16th September

Celebration of Gordon Beningfield's work with the Boxmoor Trust.

Further details for all events can be found at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/gordonbenningfield

The small blue is the UK's smallest butterfly

The small blue lives in small colonies and is rapidly declining. It disappeared from Aldbury Nowers for a time but returned within two years of restoration work carried out on the reserve. Last year small blue eggs were found on kidney vetch, the butterfly's sole food plant, proving that small blues are now breeding on the reserve. There is a colony close to the reserve and the work that HMWT did connected these areas up, putting its Living Landscape vision into practice.





Lemsford Springs



Tucked on the outskirts of Welwyn Garden City, Lemsford Springs packs in an array of habitats over a small area - from lagoons to woodland to reedbed over a small area – which makes it the perfect place for birdwatching all year round.

From watercress to waders

Lemsford Springs is the site of an old watercress bed which was cultivated in the 19th and part of the 20th century. Watercress production ceased in 1966 and it became a Trust reserve in 1970. Watercress beds were once a common site in Hertfordshire. They were created by



digging out a wide channel below springs or in the course of a stream. A thick layer of gravel was then spread across the channel, on which the watercress was cultivated.

The watercress beds at Lemsford support a large number of aquatic invertebrates with the most numerous being the freshwater shrimp. These are welcome food for our green sandpipers and lots of other wildlife. The spring water that feeds the lagoon rises at a constant temperature of 10 degrees so the springs never freeze – resident birds will be joined by other waders when water courses elsewhere freeze over.

In autumn and winter, water rail, common snipe, green sandpiper and sometimes jack snipe may be seen from the hides, along with little egret and kingfisher. These birds can be seen throughout the year, feeding on the shrimp which are abundant in the freshwater lagoons. The lagoons also support fifty species of

water snail and water shrew. The water shrew is the largest UK shrew and, as the name suggests, it lives almost entirely in wetland habitats. Instead of webbed feet, the shrew has a fringe of stiffer hairs on its back feet and hairs on its tail to aid swimming. Living in small burrows in the river bank, they are the only venomous shrew in the UK. They use their venomous saliva to help stun prey which at Lemsford consists largely of the abundant shrimp.

Bullhead fish are plentiful in the lagoon where they shelter in the eroded cracks of the old Victorian wheelbarrow runs, which workers used to collect watercress. A small, strangely shaped fish, the bullhead (also known as the ‘miller’s thumb’) has a very large head, relatively large fins and a tapering body. Spawning occurs between February and June: the eggs are laid underneath stones or in pits and the male guards and cares for them attentively.



Reserves Roundup

Thanks to the generosity of our members during our last appeal, allocations of grant funding, and to our wonderful team of volunteers...

At **Lemsford Springs** we have been watercress cutting, and created willow spiling to reinforce the banks of the river.

We have cut rides at **Marsworth** and thanks to Tesco funding, lowered rides at **Wilstone**. Good for sedge and reed warblers.

Two new woodland clearings next to the main ride at **Balls Wood**, have created ideal habitats for sun-loving insects such as silver-washed fritillary butterflies and migrant hawk dragonflies butterflies.

20 tree stumps were removed from the marshy areas of **Tewinbury**, to improve the quality of the habitat.

Three ponds have been dug at **Cassiobury Park** as part of our partnership with Watford Borough Council, designed to appeal to dragonflies and damselflies.

A new kingfisher nesting bank has been built at **Stocker’s Lake** as part of the Affinity Water project, which was featured on Countryfile.

Thanks to Tesco we re-fenced a large part of the perimeter of **Long Deans** so we can continue cattle grazing and encourage the spread of wildflowers such as bird’s-foot trefoil and pyramidal orchid.

At **Amwell**, major machinery was used to create a scrape in front of the viewpoint and excavate the Dragonfly Trail area, keeping them open so visitors can get superb views of the wildlife up close.





LUKE MASSEY

DREAMTIME

Cultivating watercress for wildlife

The principal plant at Lemsford is watercress but over the summer the white flowers of water crowfoot can also be seen covering areas of the lagoon along with clumps of water speedwell.

Every winter, volunteers help to rake up the watercress, placing it into large piles where shrimp gather to feed on the decaying vegetation, giving a rich feeding spot for other wildlife. Clearing the lagoon of large amounts of watercress maintains the open habitat and ensures that silt doesn't build up which would ultimately result in the lagoons drying out and losing their value to our wildlife.

In 2015 the Trust, with help from dedicated volunteers, spread 85 tonnes of gravel to improve this specialised habitat, with another 20 tonnes added last year.

The river running

The River Lea runs alongside the reserve and crack willow trees on the bank between the river and lagoon are pollarded on rotation yearly to reduce shading. Pollarding the trees improves their health and increases their stability, retaining their deep roots that strengthen the banks and keeps the river separate from the lagoon. Both are valuable habitat; the lagoon is rich in shrimp,

important food for the reserve's wildlife, but the river has greater diversity due to its age. Monitoring the invertebrates here has shown that this section of the river is in good health.

Meadows, woodland and reedbed

An area of wet fen meadow to the north of the reserve is cut on rotation every autumn to keep the grassland suitable habitat for the variety of flowers that grow there. Look out for cuckoo flower, commonly known as 'Lady's-smock', the sunshine yellow, water-loving flag iris, plus ragged robin, meadowsweet and the tall, purple marsh woundwort.

There are pockets of woodland across the reserve including both scrub woodland and primary woodland, along with a small area of reed which attracts reed buntings, reed warblers and other summer breeding birds.

Monitoring

Long term monitoring of birds, butterflies and small mammals takes place at the reserve, providing valuable data to inform the appropriate management on this sensitive site. 125 bird species have been recorded in or over the reserve. A special ringing study of green sandpipers commenced in 1983 and is now the longest-running colour-ringed wader project in Europe revealing much about this species biology and migration.

Sixteen species of butterfly are recorded in a long term butterfly transect study spanning 17 years. Seven species of small mammals have been recorded during live-trapping studies.

Get the most from your visit to Lemsford Springs

There are two hides at Lemsford Springs – the InFocus hide, built in 1990 with kind support from the optical company, In Focus, and the main hide funded by the National Lottery in 2005. Both face the lagoon and give photographers a fantastic opportunity to get close to this reserve's incredible wildlife.

It's thanks to our long-standing Warden, Barry Trevis, and his team of volunteers that the reserve is so well cared for and its wildlife so well understood. Barry runs work parties on the first Sunday of every month from 09:30 – 12:30

Find out more on our website at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk



Nature's Calendar

Tim Hill, the Trust's Conservation Manager, highlights some of his favourite seasonal wildlife to look out for in the months ahead...



March Butterbur

The longer days heralding the arrival of spring mean it's time for me to don my wellies and head off to Tewinbury Nature Reserve in search of one of the first flowers of the new season, butterbur.

This is a plant of our river valleys and at about this time it will be sending up strawberry flesh pink and mauve flower spikes, growing to about 30cm high. In Hertfordshire it was first recorded in 1737 and is now found locally where the habitat is suitable.

At Tewinbury the plant grows in marshy ground adjacent to the River Mimram. Recent conservation work by volunteers is aiming to conserve the butterbur by removing some of the over-shading willows. The flowers are a valuable source of nectar for early-flying bumble bees and other insects. The plant is unusual in that the leaves develop after the flower has died. When fully grown, the leaves are spectacular – sometimes nearly a metre wide. The leaves were used to wrap butter in the past, hence the common name. The scientific name, *petasites* derives from the ancient Greek, meaning broad-brimmed hat. As children, my sisters and I would have great fun using the leaves as sun hats or, more likely, as protection from the rain! They really do work.

April Larking about

In my view, April is the month to visit Hunsdon Mead in the Stort Valley. Not only will you be rewarded by carpets of cowslips, but late in the month there is a smattering of green-winged orchids for those diligent in their searching.

The mead has been managed as a traditional hay meadow for centuries such that through spring and early summer the plants flower and set seed. Not only does the mead provide a visual spectacle, there is an aural delight too, best summed up by the words of George Meredith in his poem, A Lark Ascending.

“ **He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolv'd and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide** ”

The poem describes the song and flight of the skylark, a bird which can be seen and heard every spring at Hunsdon Mead. His words provided the inspiration for the piece of music of the same name by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Both the words and music evoke the song of the skylark beautifully but neither are as good as the real thing! Although the song can be heard from far off, seeing the bird, high in the air, can be a real challenge. Once spotted, my favourite part of their display is at its climax as the bird slowly parachutes back to ground before vanishing into the cowslips, grasses and buttercups.



May

Say no mow

May is the time of year that I plan out the mowing regime for my lawn. Well, I call it a lawn but I'm not sure avid gardeners would agree – it's more of a home meadow.

For the best part of a year, the lawn was used for storing all sorts of building materials as we worked on our house. As a result all the vegetation was killed and the soil was severely compacted. Following clearance, in autumn 2013 we were left with not much more than bare ground and moss. However, miracles do happen and the following spring nature weaved its magic and a rather thin sward of grasses developed, punctuated by patches of field wood rush.

As we moved into summer I was delighted to find lots of selfheal and bird's-foot trefoil appearing. The insects loved it, particularly bumble bees. Since then I have trialled various mowing regimes to try to maintain flowering through the whole summer. In 2017 I think I nailed it and now mow in a three stage cycle such that at any one time part of the lawn is uncut,

allowing plants to flower and set seed.

It's an absolute joy and I waste hours watching the activities of the local insects and trying to capture that perfect photograph of bees in flight. It may not look particularly tidy or lawn-like but to me it's bloomin' marvellous!



June

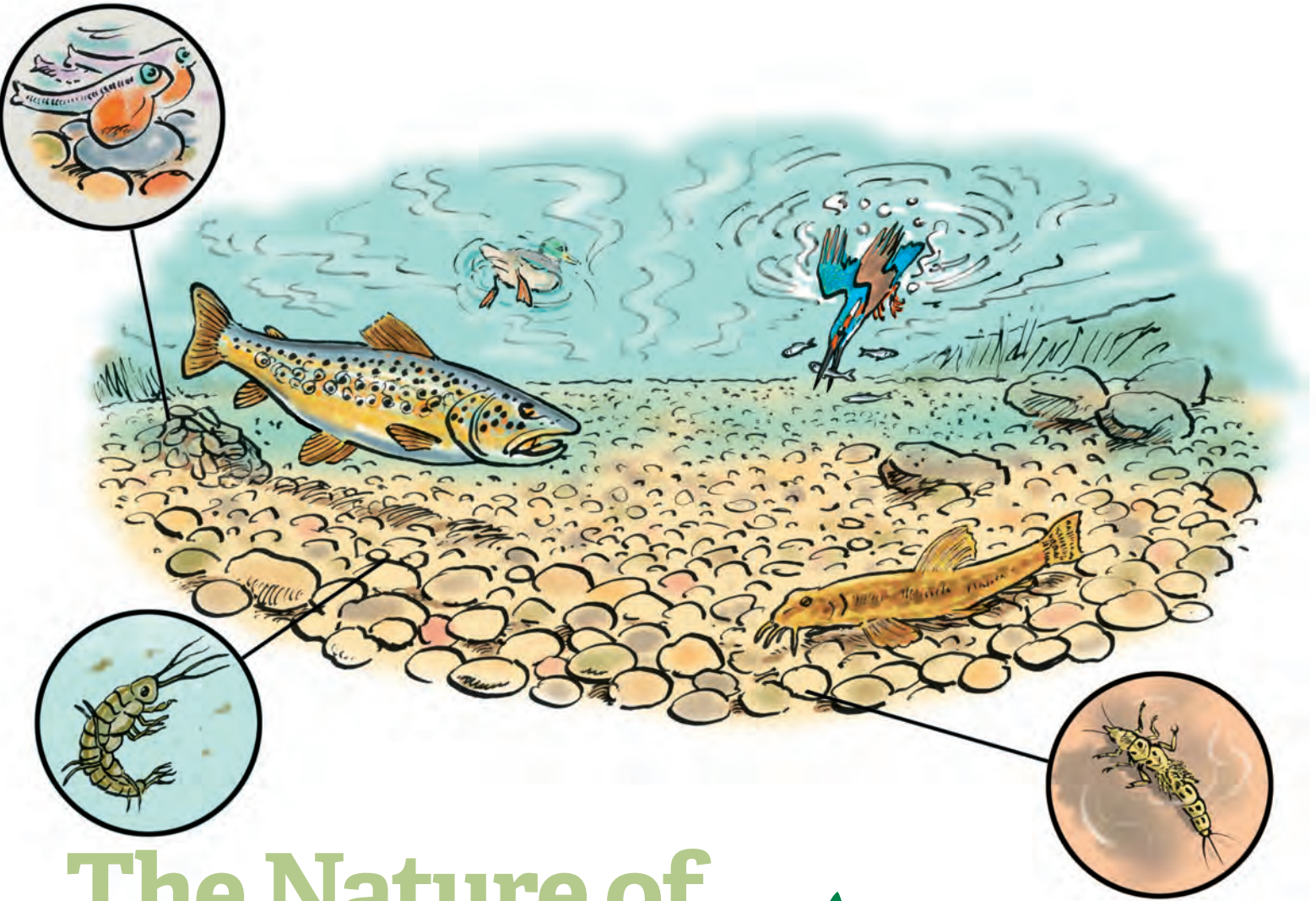
The hirsute hawker

Led by the hipster movement, beards – once the preserve of old sea dogs or polar explorers – are once again cool, which means that *Brachytron pratense*, the hairy hawker, is right on trend.

This is a fabulous insect and one that can be seen on a number of Trust reserves in early June – King's Meads and Amwell being the best. After an absence of nearly 50 years it was rediscovered in our area in 1993 at the Cornmill Stream in the Lee Valley Regional Park. Since then it has spread widely. Our smallest hawker species, it gets its name from its hairy thorax which is easily seen with binoculars.

The abdomen is dark and the male has mid-blue spots on each segment. Like all dragonflies the head is dominated by large compound eyes which are the most amazing cobalt blue if seen in the right light. Their preferred habitat is shallow water fringed with dense vegetation - as we maintain at the dragonfly trails at Amwell and Panshanger Park. It's an active insect, flying close to the water, looping in and out of the plants where it catches smaller insects to eat on the wing. After mating, the female lays her eggs into floating vegetation. Once the eggs hatch, the nymphs develop over the course of two years, living amongst the debris at the bottom of the pond, feeding on other insects and fish fry.

See the hirsute hawker for yourself by booking on to a guided dragonfly watch at Amwell on 9th June at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events



The Nature of... A gravel riverbed

Gravel riverbeds are an essential part of the river ecosystem which support a diverse range of aquatic animals and plants.

In chalk rivers the gravel bed acts as a filter and water exchange, where clean, well-oxygenated ground water filters up from the aquifer and river water is drawn back down into the aquifer bringing with it organic matter and sediments that are trapped by the gravel; providing an important food source.

In clear, well-oxygenated rivers and streams **stone loach** can be found amongst the gravel and stones of fast-flowing water where they feed on small invertebrates such as mayfly larvae and freshwater shrimps, especially at night when it uses the 'barbels' around its mouth to find prey.

From April to August females may spawn 10,000 eggs amongst sand, stone and vegetation.

Brown trout also live in fast-flowing gravel rivers, laying their eggs in nests or 'redds'. Trout eggs need oxygen to hatch so redd building usually takes place between November and January when the cold water carries more oxygen. Female fish will look for a part of the river bed that is loose and silt-free before digging a hole and releasing eggs. A 500g trout will typically release around 800 eggs before the male fish will fertilise them. Redds can be seen by eye in clear water – look for patches of very clean gravel, heaped into a mound. The trout hatchlings – or alevins – are usually born in February and

will live in the riverbed gravel, feeding on the remaining egg yolk that is attached to their body for 14-30 days.

There are 52 species of **mayfly** in Britain, some of which live for only a few short hours in their final brightly coloured form.

They start life as eggs, which are laid on a river's surface then fall to the riverbed, sticking to stones and plants. Some mayflies even pull themselves under the water to attach their eggs to the riverbed before being drowned by the current. The green drake is probably the most recognisable species of mayfly and once its nymphs are hatched they may spend up to two years living on the river bed before emerging as an adult mayfly.

Save water, save wildlife!

In the East of England, consumption of water is extremely high, with Hertfordshire residents using one of the highest amounts of water per person compared to other UK counties. Combined with a growing population and less rainfall than the rest of the country, this puts real pressure on our water resources.

Our water supplies depend on groundwater aquifers, from which 60% of the water we receive from water companies is drawn. Aquifers are layers of rock where groundwater is stored and when we have less rain, we have less water – for both people and wildlife.

Our aquifers also feed our precious chalk streams. If there's less rain over the winter then there is a knock-on effect as these aquifers can't be recharged overnight, especially throughout the summer when growing vegetation and climate keeps them naturally at their driest.

The more water we use, the less water there is for our chalk streams and rivers. This has huge effects on our local wildlife from our already threatened water voles, to the brightly coloured kingfisher. Fish can be left stranded, leading to thousands of deaths, and important riverside vegetation that animals depend on for habitat and food can quickly dry out.

But there are things we can do to lessen our impact on local wildlife by saving water.



TIM HILL

Affinity Water's top water saving tips

Working with
Affinity Water

At home

- You can save 6,500 litres of water a year by turning off your tap while you brush your teeth!
- A power shower can use up to 17 litres of water a minute! Get a free eco shower head and shower timer from Affinity Water and save over 7,000 and 1,800 litres a year respectively.
- Make sure you only put on your washing machine and dishwasher once they are fully loaded – this uses much less water than two half loads.
- If you have a dual flush toilet, use the half flush button whenever possible! You can also get free Save-a-flush bags from Affinity Water to pop into your toilet cistern which saves over 5,000 litres a year!

In the garden

- Install a water butt and save up to 5,000 litres of water a year by using rainwater instead of tap water – better for water use and your plants!
- Water your plants early in the morning or at the end of the day, directly onto the roots, to stop it immediately evaporating in sunlight and heat.

For more water saving tips and free water saving devices, visit: affinitywater.co.uk/saving-water.aspx

Affinity Water are working in partnership with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to conserve and enhance their sites for wildlife and so that they are valued, used and enjoyed by their respective local communities.