

Annual Review ^{2021/22}

Creating a wilder Hertfordshire & Middlesex



**Herts &
Middlesex**
Wildlife Trust





Wildlife *Highlights*

Wild places across Hertfordshire and Middlesex have provided year-round wildlife wonders this year from the spring apple blossom at Tewin Orchard, to the beech trees at Long Deans turning burnished gold in the autumn and the summer return of hobbies to Tring Reservoirs, hunting low over the water.

Marvellous mammals

Water voles were discovered at Springwell Reedbed and were reintroduced to the River Ver.



© TOM DAY

GREEN-WINGED ORCHID

Blooming wonderful

The vulnerable white helleborine flowered at Fox Covert.



© TOM DAY

BEE ORCHID

Growing numbers

More green-winged orchids have been recorded than average at Hunsdon Meads and five species of orchid have been counted in flower at Hexton Chalk Pit – bee orchid, common spotted orchid, common twayblade, fragrant orchid and pyramidal orchid.



© DEREK MOORE

GREAT WHITE EGRET

Welcome visitors

Bittern have been regularly seen at Amwell and the great white egret has been sighted at Wilstone Reservoir. Lapwings have been putting on a display at Rye Meads and we're delighted to report a starling roost at Marsworth Reservoir.

Dragons and damsels

No less than 19 species of dragonfly and damselfly have been sighted at Hilfield Park Reservoir, including the first ever Norfolk hawker and the first records of emerald damselfly since 2000. Again, the scarce emerald damselfly has been recorded on the Roundings at Hertford Heath.



© JEMMY SHERKIN

NORFOLK HAWKER

A rare and precious find

Herts Invertebrate Group found the chalk chafer at Aldbury Nowers, the first record of this beetle at Aldbury since the 1890's and only the second site where the species has been found in Hertfordshire.



© JOSH KUBALE

ALDBURY NOWERS



A Wilder Future for Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Over the past year, the Trust has been working hard to care for wild places in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The future undoubtedly holds many challenges for wildlife in the UK, including climate change and the need for robust legislation, but we remain committed to creating a wilder future for generations to come.

Early 2022 saw the launch of our new 'Wilder Future' strategy setting the vision and goals for the Trust up to 2030. This ambitious new strategy draws on the findings of the *2020 Hertfordshire State of Nature Report* and an analysis of challenges and opportunities over the coming years. The Strategy has three goals which focus on delivering nature recovery, inspiring and enabling communities to take action, and addressing the links between the future of wildlife and climate change and people's health and wellbeing. The Trust aims to support and inspire businesses, local authorities, farmers, educators and conservation organisations to work collaboratively, by demonstrating the action needed for nature's recovery.

The Trust's work is only made possible with the help of all our supporters, from volunteers braving all weathers to work on our reserves and in the wider countryside to our committed members and donors - each and every one helps to make Hertfordshire and Middlesex a wilder place, creating havens for rare species and beautiful places to visit.

Lesley Davies
Chief Executive

Mike Master
Chairman of Trustees

Nature Reserves

Management to further improve our nature reserves for wildlife and people has continued throughout the year. We've demonstrated that scarce emerald damselfly is benefitting from our management of the Roundings, Hertford Heath and Herts Invertebrate Project also found chalk chafer at Aldbury Nowers – the first record here since the 1890s and only the second site for the species in Hertfordshire.

To help visitors get up close to nature and see some of our very special wildlife, we've focused on improving access, engagement and education. At Wilstone Reservoir, we were pleased to be able to open a new bird hide in April, while at King's Meads we have completed a pioneering art project featuring iconic species and installed identification boards highlighting the birds and dragonflies of this special site.

In April 2021 we launched a £104,000 fundraising appeal to secure the future of Astonbury Wood, a beautiful ancient woodland near Stevenage. The response from the community was incredible and we hit the target in just six weeks. The campaign eventually raised over £216,000 in donations and Gift Aid to support our care of Astonbury and our other nature reserves. At the time of writing we are finalising the sale and look forward to formally opening the Trust's newest nature reserve soon.

We were very pleased to enter into a new agreement with Watford Borough Council to write a management plan for Cassiobury Park and to run volunteer work parties at the park and at Whippendell Woods.

Through our partnership with Affinity Water we are managing Stocker's Lake, Springwell Reedbed and Hilfield Park Reservoir. A highlight at the reservoir has been the creation of new ponds and scrapes which are now supporting toads, great crested newts, smooth newts, grass snakes and downy emerald dragonfly (a rare species in the county).

In our woodlands, there has been a considerable amount of tree safety work carried out, particularly to address the presence of Ash Dieback disease on a number of our sites.



Wildlife and the farmed landscape



Working with farmers and other land managers provides the best way to see nature's recovery on a landscape scale and we have worked with many through our Local Wildlife Sites survey programme, our Living Rivers Project and through our wider advisory work, providing support on how best to encourage wildlife to thrive on the land.

At Easneye, near Ware, we have been providing advice on the management of the estate for 15 years. The estate is contiguous with the Trust's Amwell Nature Reserve in the Lee Valley Regional Park. This approach has enabled a landscape approach to conservation and the owner sits on the landowner management group for the upper Lea Valley.

In the Chess Valley, at Sarratt, we have prepared a management plan for another landowner, guiding grassland management through grazing for the next five years. The plan is currently being implemented.

The Local Wildlife Sites team visit existing and potential Local Wildlife Sites and provide a report, species list and management advice to land managers to help sustain or improve the sites for wildlife. We were delighted to return to Oxypiss Meadow, first visited in 2015, and see how our management advice had been implemented to substantially improve the botanical value of the site. On our recommendation, the landowner had instigated a new management regime over the last few years, including cut and clear, the introduction of yellow rattle and sowing of wildflowers

which has led to a much more diverse meadow and the appearance of previously unrecorded species such as pyramidal and bee orchid. This demonstrates what can be achieved with the correct management advice and a committed landowner.

We have continued our work through the Jordans Farm Partnership, a collaboration between the Trust, farmers and the cereal company Jordans. Farmers commit to dedicating 10% of their farms for wildlife in order to produce cereals for Jordans, and the Trust provides advice to farmers to help them to do this. In effect the relationship is two way because HMWT advisors always learn a lot from the farmers. Several of the Jordans' farmers we've been advising have adopted wildlife hedgelaying, which is neat twist on conventional hedgelaying. This has helped to make farmland hedges broader and thicker, particularly at the base, and ensures they retain their flowers and berries (which cutting and traditional hedgelaying remove). It is much cheaper and faster than traditional hedgelaying, the thick basket it creates improved bird nesting success and provides more food and shelter for invertebrates and mammals.

Understanding and standing up for our wildlife

To give wildlife a positive future we need to know what's here now, what's changing and impacts on habitats and species. The Herts Environmental Records Centre gathers data collected by thousands of volunteers and now has over 3 million species records. The presence of lizard orchid and noble chafer were confirmed for the first time in Hertfordshire this year.

Records are hugely valuable as it also means we are able to provide the evidence so necessary to protect wildlife in the face of housing and infrastructure plans. We scrutinised over 25,650 planning applications in the year, and commented on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans in order to stand up for wildlife.



LIZARD ORCHID

Connecting People with Wildlife

As we emerged from the Covid-19 restrictions, we were delighted to start holding in-person events once more and across the year held over 140 events attracting over 4,200 people, of which 34 were online. In addition, we delivered over 130 talks, workshops and training sessions for schools, universities, community and support groups, reaching over 2,800 people.



Building on our experiences of delivering family-orientated wildlife content during the

2020 lockdown, we were pleased to partner with Herts County Council again this year to provide a series of Wild Child resources to help primary school-aged children connect with nature. The project offered free access to downloadable activity packs, encouraging and supporting visits to ten of the Trust's nature reserves - [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildchild](https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildchild)

Wildsnaps

Returning for its second year, the Trust's photography competition, Wildsnaps, was launched in August. The competition, sponsored by Opticon and Jet Black Squares, saw over 240 entries and over 1,800 votes on the shortlisted images. The 30 shortlisted images were also part of an exhibition held in the Marlowes Centre in Hemel Hempstead. Congratulations go to the winner Will Jobbins for his stunning photo of a fence-post jumping spider, which featured on the front cover of our winter edition of Wildlife Matters.



The Trust's flagship community enabling project, Wilder St Albans, launched in the spring.

The initiative, delivered in partnership with St Albans City & District Council aims to create a Wilder St Albans by connecting and supporting local communities, enabling them to develop new skills and take action for wildlife. The first year of the project saw the creation of a Wilder St Albans online community where individuals and group can share, map and promote their local actions for wildlife. We also established three new working groups developing action plans for woodlands, grasslands and wetlands across the District. Find out more online - [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans](https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans)

King's Meads Murals

The A10 viaduct that crosses King's Meads had a wildlife makeover this year when we commissioned eight murals to be painted on its large concrete supports. The murals, created by talented graffiti artist, Demografix, show wild species which can be found on the reserve across the seasons, such as, the water vole, kingfisher and great crested newt. The murals were commissioned as part of the Restoring the Majesty of the Meads project, which is restoring the biodiversity of King's Meads and supporting the local community to discover and champion the wildlife on their doorstep. In addition to project funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Thames Water Community Fund, this art project is supported by the New River Line railway and passengers will be able to view the artworks on their journeys to and from Ware Station.



The Year In *Numbers*

Income

TOTAL **£2,429k**

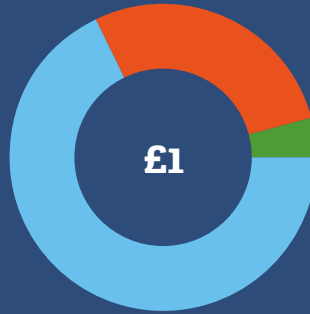


£1,170k	Membership Subscriptions
£572k	Donations, Gifts & Grants
£507k	Fees & Contracts
£87k	Legacies
£59k	Fundraising Activities
£34k	Investment & other income

Expenditure

TOTAL **£2,310k**

For every £1 the Trust spends...



68p	Conservation & Nature Reserves
28p	Raising Funds
4p	Governance

Thank you

We are very grateful to all our members, donors, grant funders and other supporters over the year.

Details of external funders can be found in our Trustee Report and Accounts at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk



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