

Amwell Nature Reserve

Former gravel pits which have been restored to a diverse wetland nature reserve which is now internationally important to nature conservation on account of the numbers of wintering water birds which visit the reserve.



Amwell Nature Reserve is a former gravel pit in the Lee Valley near Ware, which supports internationally important numbers of wintering wildfowl, along with outstanding communities of breeding birds and of dragonflies and damselflies. The site includes Great Hardmead Lake and Holycross Lake, which were excavated between 1973 and 1990 by Cemex (previously RMC Aggregates), and a variety of associated wetland, grassland and woodland habitats. The Reserve is of international importance for wintering gadwall and shoveler ducks. The site also regularly attracts wintering bitterns - this is one of the best places to see this elusive bird. During mid-winter smew can usually be seen.

The lakes and their marginal habitats attract breeding birds such as little grebe, great crested grebe, gadwall, pochard, tufted duck, little ringed plover, common tern, kingfisher, sedge warbler, reed warbler and reed bunting.

Seventeen species of dragonflies and damselflies have been recorded, making Amwell Hertfordshire's best site for dragonflies. These include hairy dragonfly, red-eyed damselfly, southern hawker, brown hawker, ruddy and common darter.

The diversity of wetland habitats present on the site support a wide range of plants including the nationally scarce marsh dock. An area of power station ash, imported from elsewhere in the Lee Valley, supports a colony of early and southern marsh orchids.

Amwell is one of the most important sites Hertfordshire for otters, following reintroduction here in 1991. Reptiles and amphibians include grass snakes, common newts and common frogs. Molluscs are particularly well represented at Amwell, with approximately 25% of all British terrestrial and freshwater species recorded here. The Reserve is also the richest site in the county for water beetles and water bugs.



Thanks to significant funding from East of England Development Agency and Growth Area Funding (Green Arc) in 2008, the reserve now contains 3 hides, several viewpoints and a seasonal Dragonfly Trail with a boardwalk, which enables you to view dragonflies close up hunting over open water.

To view a PDF of the Amwell leaflet [click here](#)

Amwell work parties

Make a difference to wildlife by taking part in one of our monthly work parties. Work parties take place at Amwell on the last Sunday of the month from September to March at 9:30am-12:30pm. Meet at the viewpoint. For more information contact [Jonathan Braggs](#).

For other volunteering opportunities within the Trust, [click here](#).

- [Get driving directions](#)
- [Find nearby public transport](#)

How to Get Here

Location

near Great Amwell Village

Directions

From the A10, leave at the junction signposted A414 to Harlow. At the first roundabout, take the B181 to St Margarets and Stanstead Abbots. On entering St Margarets and just before the railway, turn left up Amwell Lane. After 1 km look out for a sign on the left to the reserve. Park on the side of Amwell Lane. Walk east down the rough track, over the railway line. The railway line must be crossed via an unguarded level crossing and two kissing gates. Surfaces here are loose and uneven so take care. Then walk over the River Lee Navigation to a viewpoint overlooking the Reserve. To avoid the railway crossing, pedestrian access is available along the towpath from Stanstead Abbots (3/4 mile) or Ware (1 1/4 miles).

Public Transport Links

The nearest station is St Margarets, on the Liverpool Street to Hertford Line. From the station, walk east along the B181 to the towpath of the River Lee

Navigation, then walk north for 1km to the Reserve which is on the east side of the Navigation.

Walking Links

Map Reference

TL 377129

Visitor Guide

Size

40 hectares

Access to site

The Reserve can be visited every day of the year and access is free. The Dragonfly Trail is open May to September.

Access around site

Tracks around the Reserve are accessible to all. The paths are firm and level in most places, but after wet weather may be muddy and there may be some standing water. Stout footwear or wellies recommended. There are occasional gates and boardwalked areas. A steep (surfaced) bridge crosses the Lee Navigation, the footpath on the west side of the reserve crosses a river via a moderately humped (surfaced) bridge and there is also a moderately humped wooden Victorian bridge. The Dragonfly Trail passes through a grazed meadow (which in places may be uneven) and over boardwalked areas.

Walking time

Advice on what to wear/bring

Map of site (if available)