

NEWS RELEASE

11 May 2010

For immediate use

Green-winged orchids flying high

A survey by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has found record breaking numbers of a beautiful rare orchid flowering at a nature reserve in the Stort Valley.

Thirty six Green-winged Orchids were counted during recent survey work by Trust staff, a sixteen per cent increase on last year. The orchid is known in only seven places in Hertfordshire and has suffered a significant decline in the last 50 years. This particular variety gets its name from the green striped sepals - the 'wings' - on the flower. They are found in damp meadows, many of which have become unsuitable or have been destroyed.

Tim Hill, Conservation Manager with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust said, "We are delighted to find that numbers of Green-winged Orchids are increasing on this nature reserve. The reserve is cared for in partnership with a local farmer who cuts the meadow for hay when the flowers have flowered and set seed. After hay cutting the meadow is grazed by sheep. This method of management has been going on for hundreds of years. Such management is important as it provides income to the local economy and is also great for wildlife, as the orchids are clearly benefiting."

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working with landowners and other organisations to conserve and restore the whole of the Stort Valley as a 'living landscape' where habitats will be conserved and reconnected, allowing nature to thrive and spread. Tim Hill continues: "The Wildlife Trusts are thinking big. We need to look beyond the boundaries of nature reserves and work with others to conserve the wider countryside and ensure there is a place for nature now and in the future."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) is a charity dedicated to protecting wildlife for future generations. It safeguards and manages 44 nature reserves across the two counties and is at the forefront of developing long-term nature conservation strategies. It has over 21,000 members and is one of 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the UK.

The Stort Valley

The River Stort runs from Clavering in Essex and meanders its way for 24 miles through Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth, Harlow and Roydon before meeting the River Lee at Feilde's Weir, near Hoddesdon.



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Orchid guided walk

To enable people to find out more about orchids, the Trust is running a guided walk at its Amwell Nature Reserve on Sunday 6 June from 2pm to 4pm. To book, call 01727 858901 or go to www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

Restore, recreate, reconnect – Spring 2010 appeal

The Trust is currently appealing for help to continue large scale conservation work. This vision of a 'living landscape' will see existing green spaces reconnected with each other, to ensure wildlife has enough space to thrive. Donations to the 'Restore, Recreate and Reconnect' Spring 2010 Appeal can be made by calling 01727 858901 or online at www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

Connecting People with the Stort Valley Project

A partnership between Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, local authorities and other organisations which aims to get local people involved with their outdoor environment through a range of activities. For more on the Stort Valley and the nature reserves in the area visit www.stortvalley.org

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