

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate use

New hide is twice as nice!

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust will be celebrating the opening of a brand new 'double decker' wildlife-watching hide at Tewinbury Nature Reserve on Monday 13th September which makes watching wetland animals as easy as pie.

Visitors will get fantastic views down over the lagoon on the top level of the two storey hide. The lower storey also has great views and is fully accessible. With parking at Tewin Bury Farm Hotel a very short walk away, the reserve provides easy access to wildlife for visitors of all abilities.

The hide was made possible through grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and East Herts Council, as part of Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's Wetlands for Water Voles and People project. The project's Wetlands Awareness Officer Ali Hauser says: "What's great about Tewinbury Nature Reserve and our fantastic new hide in particular is how easy it makes wildlife watching - park your car, nip into the hide and start spotting!"

Kingfishers make regular appearances at the reserve, as well as a whole host of other wetland loving birds including warblers, reed buntings, pied wagtails and yellowhammers. Flocks of siskins and redpolls like to feed in the wooded areas during winter.

As well being great for bird watching, Tewinbury is also one of the best sites in the county for spotting water voles and is home to a wide range of other mammals too, including shrews, bats, harvest mice and otters. Ali continues: "If you want to see a water vole, keep your eyes peeled on where the reeds meet the water and in the channels between the reeds too."



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Notes for Editors

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

We are the leading voice for wildlife conservation in Hertfordshire and neighbouring areas. With 43 nature reserves spanning 1,900 acres, from beautiful woodlands and wetlands to rare patches of heath and orchard, we take practical action every day to help wildlife to flourish. The Wildlife Trusts are unique in being the only organisations that work to protect the full range of UK habitats and species, at a local level. <http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/>

Tewinbury Nature Reserve and River Mimram

Nestled in the Mimram valley, Tewinbury Nature Reserve is a haven for birds, wildflowers and a variety of mammals. For more details and exact location: <http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/NatureReserves/small/tewinbury>

The River Mimram is a valuable chalk stream with a rich aquatic flora and fauna, which rises near Whitwell, south of Hitchin and flows into the River Lee at Hertford.

Wetlands for Water Voles and People Project

Tewinbury Nature Reserve is one of five wetland havens identified across Hertfordshire within the Wetlands for Water Voles and People project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and partners. These are some of the best wetlands in the county and provide great opportunities to get close to wildlife. The water vole project is now in its final stages and HMWT is undertaking an evaluation survey to find out how successful it has been - <http://englandmarketing.co.uk/survey/hmwt/hmwt.htm>

Water voles

Water voles are the fastest declining mammals in the UK: 90% of the population has disappeared in the last 50 years as a result of habitat loss and the introduction of the North American mink. In Hertfordshire, water voles were once common but are now restricted to just a few wetlands in the Mimram, Lee, Beane and Chess Valleys and at Purwell Ninesprings.

Otters

Otters became extinct in Hertfordshire in the late 1970s, with the River Mimram reputed to have supported the last breeding female otter at Tewinbury Nature Reserve in 1978. The cause of this national decline was direct persecution, loss of habitat and the contamination of wetland systems with pesticides. In 1991, two groups of captive bred otters were released into Hertfordshire by The Otter Trust. It was hoped that they would eventually re-colonise other rivers in Hertfordshire.

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