

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate use

Rock and Vole!

It's national Wildlife Week and local children are being invited to give the elusive water vole a musical makeover in Hitchin this Saturday.

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) and community musician Hugh Nankivell will be at Purwell Meadows to help people write songs inspired by water voles and their wetland friends. A walk around the meadows will provide a chance to look for this elusive mammal as well as birds, dragonflies and butterflies before groups head back to Purwell Primary School to start composing. People will get to keep a CD of their songs too.

Ali Hauser, HMWT's Wetlands Awareness Officer says: "Water voles were once commonly seen throughout Hertfordshire, but they are now our fastest declining mammal, with 90% of the population lost in the last 60 years. They can be quite elusive so we may not see one during our walk but we can certainly see lots of signs that they leave behind. This event is an exciting and unique opportunity for people to enjoy their local wetland site, using its inspiration to make music!"

Hugh Nankivell, said: "I make up songs all the time and especially enjoy working with family groups to create music about anything and everything - penguins, plankton, baby black rhinos, volcanoes and goldfish are some recent subjects. I'm really looking forward to exploring the water vole's habitat!"

Adults are required to accompany children on the activities and booking is essential on either the morning session which runs from 10am-12pm or on the afternoon session from 1pm-3pm. Groups will be meeting at Purwell Primary School. For more information or to book, contact Ali Hauser at 01727 858901 or at water.vole@hmwt.org

Notes for Editors

Wetlands for Water Voles and People project



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President - SA Bowes-Lyon, PCA

The Rock and Vole event is part of a wider three year Heritage Lottery Funded project to raise awareness about water voles and their wetland habitats. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is coordinating the project and working in partnership with the Environment Agency, British Waterways, Lee Valley Park Authority and Herts Biological Records Centre. Purwell Meadows, owned by North Herts District Council and the adjacent HMWT reserve, Purwell Ninesprings are both valuable sites for water voles in north Hertfordshire.

Water vole decline

Water voles are the UK's fastest declining mammal. They are threatened by habitat loss, pollution and predation from the non-native American mink. Due to their rapid decline they have been named a UK priority species and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. This makes it illegal to kill a water vole or to disturb or destroy their habitat.

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust works to protect wildlife. We take practical action every day to help wildlife flourish, through the management of our 43 nature reserves and the protection of the species that live there. With long term strategies for the conservation and development of environments rich in wildlife, we want everyone to be able to enjoy and benefit from access to nature. In the face of climate change, the survival of our native wildlife now depends not only on retaining existing habitats but on the active expansion and reconnection of these green spaces. Our vision is of a living landscape, rich for wildlife and for people too. HMWT is one of 47 Trusts across the UK; together we are the biggest voluntary organisation in the country dedicated to protecting the full range of UK species and habitats for the future, with more than 750,000 members and 200,000 acres of wild spaces in our care.

Hugh Nankivell

Hugh's work as a freelance musician combines performance, composition, community and education work in a wide range of creative and performance situations. He has composed hundreds of pieces and songs for many different groups and contexts. Hugh has toured with many different groups nationally and internationally, most recently with the puppet company 'Faulty Optic' in France, November 2009.

Contact for further information and images:

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