

Solitary bees

Discover Aldbury Nowers'
most independent residents

P8



» **ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/2017**

Read about the
Trust's achievements
this year

» **MEADOWS IN BLOOM**

See how we keep
our meadows in
top condition! **14**

KEEP OUR
marvellous
MEADOWS
IN BLOOM

An evening with badgers

Wednesdays:
16, 23 & 30 August
8pm-late

We have lots of fantastic wildlife on our 40 reserves; some easily spotted as it flies across the skies or flutters amongst the flowers and some that requires a little more effort to see, sitting still and knowing where to look.

At some of our reserves we have whole families living underground – we are of course talking about our badgers! While undoubtedly tricky to see on a day to day basis, if you know where to look, it is possible to get a glimpse into these lovely mammals' lives.

Join us
for a magical
evening of badger
watching, hidden
deep in the
woods.

Join Volunteer Warden and badger expert, Michael Clark, as he gives an 'Introduction to Badgers' talk before visiting a purpose-built mammal hide hidden in Tewin Orchard Nature Reserve.

Booking essential. £10 per adult, £5 per child (7-15). Book online at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Wildlife through a lens

Saturday 21 October
7pm-9.30pm

An evening with wildlife filmmaker
Russell Savory – Berkhamsted Civic Centre.

A regular contributor to BBC's *Springwatch*, *Autumnwatch* and *The One Show*; Russell Savory has been photographing and filming wildlife for over 20 years. During this entertaining evening event, Russell will be talking about his 'up close and personal' approach to capturing wildlife on film, fully illustrated by examples of his stunning films and photographs.

Tickets £6 in advance, £8 on the door.
Book your ticket online now at
hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events





Summer 2017

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Herts and
Middlesex

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wildlifematters

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From the Chief Executive



Welcome to the summer edition of **Wildlife Matters**. At the centre of this edition you will find our annual review for 2016-17 which highlights just

a few of the fantastic things that you have helped to achieve over the last year. From protecting and enhancing habitats for wildlife on our reserves to standing up for wildlife at a local planning level, I am proud of the positive impact the Trust has had in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. I was also delighted to see that over 5,000 people attended our events; seeing so many people, particularly children, engage with nature is inspiring. There is so much more to do to give wildlife a better future, and this is only possible with the continued support of our members. Thank you so much for your interest. I hope to see you at one of our events, perhaps at the Festival of Wildlife in July (see p.15).

Lesley Davies

Gin is just the tonic for Hertfordshire's wildlife

A new gin by Puddingstone Distillery is being launched that will help to support Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

The gin is coloured by the flowers of the Himalayan balsam plant. Himalayan balsam is a non-native invasive plant that smothers our riverbanks and damages delicate river ecosystems. Hertfordshire is home to a number of globally rare chalk rivers and Himalayan balsam is a constant threat to the health of these rivers. Trust staff and volunteers have to regularly clear and dispose of large amounts of this invasive plant from our reserves in the late spring.

Ben Marston, Director at Puddingstone Distillery, says:

"Our new gin is not only reducing the amount of Himalayan balsam in the rivers, but also raising much-

needed funds to help support the Trust's conservation work.

At Puddingstone we create the spirit of the outdoors and our distillery is next to Tring Reservoirs Nature Reserve so partnering with the Trust makes a lot of sense."

The gin will be launched at the Trust's Festival of Wildlife at the end of July and will also be available to buy at puddingstonedistillery.com. For each bottle sold, Puddingstone will donate £2 to the Trust.



TRING RESERVOIRS WALK AND GIN TASTING

Thursday 10 August 7:00pm-10:00pm

TRING RESERVOIRS

To celebrate the launch of the new balsam gin, we are holding a special wildlife walk and tasting event together with Puddingstone Distillery. Enjoy an early evening stroll around Wilstone.

Booking essential. £20 per person. Adults aged 18 and over only. Book online at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events



Rare breeding birds make Panshanger Park their home

Two pairs of little ringed plovers have returned to breed at Panshanger Park, near Hertford.

Little ringed plovers are small wading birds that spend their summers in England and overwinter on Africa's wetlands. The birds are predominantly a coastal species but have been able to colonise inland as suitable wetland habitats such as gravel quarries, like those at Panshanger Park, and reservoirs became available.

The main threat to these birds is loss

of suitable habitat, something the Trust and owners of Panshanger Park, Tarmac, have been working hard to combat. By carrying out much needed conservation work, we have been able to maintain and enhance the habitat for breeding



wading birds, like the little ringed plover and lapwing. This work has included scraping back vegetation to create more bare areas on which these ground-nesting birds make their nests and creating more areas of open water to provide good feeding areas.

The work at Panshanger Park is part of a countywide strategy by a partnership including HMWT, RSPB, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Tarmac, to conserve wading birds, all of which are declining, through the provision of suitable habitat.



Panshanger Park partnership recognised at High Sherriff Awards

Tarmac, the Trust and the Herts Natural History Society have won a prestigious Hertfordshire High Sherriff Award for their successful working partnership at Panshanger Park, receiving the 'Highly Commended Award for a Voluntary-Private Sector Partnership'.

The awards celebrate and encourage partnership working between voluntary organisations and the public or private sectors.

Tarmac and the Trust are working

together to deliver education and engagement projects at Panshanger Park, making it a better place for wildlife and people by encouraging volunteering and educational activities. The Award recognises the important role of volunteers, including support from the Herts Natural History Society for the annual Festival of Wildlife, which is held at the Park and attracted over 1,500 visitors last year and takes place again this year on 29 and 30 July.

Harpenden welcomes new People and Wildlife Officer

The Trust, in partnership with Harpenden Town Council, has appointed Heidi Mansell as People and Wildlife Officer to help Harpenden's local community get the most out of their green spaces.

Heidi's new role, which is funded by the Town Council, will see her engage a wider range of volunteers to help look after the important local habitats, increase opportunities for children to learn outside of the classroom, raise awareness of the natural environment, attract new audiences to Harpenden's green spaces and improve habitat management and restoration.



CHARLOTTE HUSSEY

Local volunteer wins national River Champion award

A Wheathampstead volunteer has been awarded the title 'River Champion' by The River Restoration Centre for his work on the River Lea.

Patrick McNeill volunteers for Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and spends around half of each month monitoring and reporting on the condition of the River Lea. Over the five years he has volunteered on the Lea, Patrick has inspired his community to come together and embrace their local river and the Catchment Based Approach – a community-led approach that engages people and groups from across society to help improve precious water environments – through community talks and local engagement.

The River Champions Awards acknowledge the often unsung heroes of the conservation world. Volunteers play a vital role in the success of river improvement projects and the awards celebrate the outstanding efforts of individuals contributing to river restoration in their area. They aim to recognise those dedicating time outside of their day-to-day roles to contribute toward improving rivers for wildlife and people.

Patrick is known locally as 'The River Man' and works closely with the parish council and landowners. He has developed and delivered 15 projects to enhance the river, including the near complete eradication of Himalayan balsam from his town.



Critical tests lie ahead for vulnerable sites

As pressure increases to build new homes, wildlife sites which previously enjoyed protection are coming under threat

The Wildlife Trusts are working across the UK to protect wild places from an increasing number of potentially harmful developments.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites are designed to protect the very best of our wildlife. They are the essential basis for nature's recovery.

So whilst we work with developers wherever possible we will also campaign against developments that are simply in the wrong place.

Protections are never guaranteed and The Wildlife Trusts are often the last line of defence for these wonderful wild places.

The best solution of all would be for local authorities to plan positively for nature's recovery. This would be essential under our proposals for an Environment Act (see wildlifetrusts.org/EnvironmentAct).

How can wildlife and development get along?

- Protect existing wild places
- Create new ones
- Strengthen nature networks
- Integrate wildlife in new developments

All development should contribute to nature's recovery

Skylarks are safe at Rampisham Down. Elsewhere the fight continues

THREATENED

Lodge Hill, Kent

Kent Wildlife Trust is opposing a plan to build thousands of new homes on a site with one of the UK's largest populations of nightingales.

Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI is a nationally important area of ancient woodland and rare grassland. Its owner (the Ministry of Defence) and Medway Council want to build a new town on it.

Stephen Trotter, Director, The Wildlife Trusts England, says: "Lodge Hill is a test of whether the Government is committed to its stated aim of leaving the natural environment in a better state than this generation inherited it. We should be celebrating sites like Lodge Hill, not building on them."

Help at kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/lodge-hill.

Nightingales or new town: which will win?



KENT WILDLIFE TRUST

SAVED!



Rampisham is safe – but it took a two-year fight

DORSET WT

Rampisham Down, Dorset

After two years of campaigning by Dorset Wildlife Trust and others, Rampisham Down SSSI in West Dorset will not be developed into a solar power station.

The site is a legally

protected, nationally important area of rare acid grassland with skylarks, adders and many species of butterfly. The solar panels will now be sited on a less sensitive area nearby. More at dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk.

THREATENED

Smithy Wood, Sheffield

SHEFFIELD & ROTHERHAM WT



More than 1,000 people objected to swapping a bluebell wood for a motorway service station

When a proposed motorway service station threatened one of Sheffield's ancient woodlands, the local Wildlife Trust organised a protest in March outside the city hall.

More than 300 people showed their objection to building on the bluebell wood, which is a Local Wildlife Site and part of

Sheffield's green belt. The City Council also received more than 1,000 online objections, almost all citing the loss of local wildlife as the key concern.

The Council was due to make a decision on March 28th but instead delayed it. Keep up with developments at wildsheffield.com.

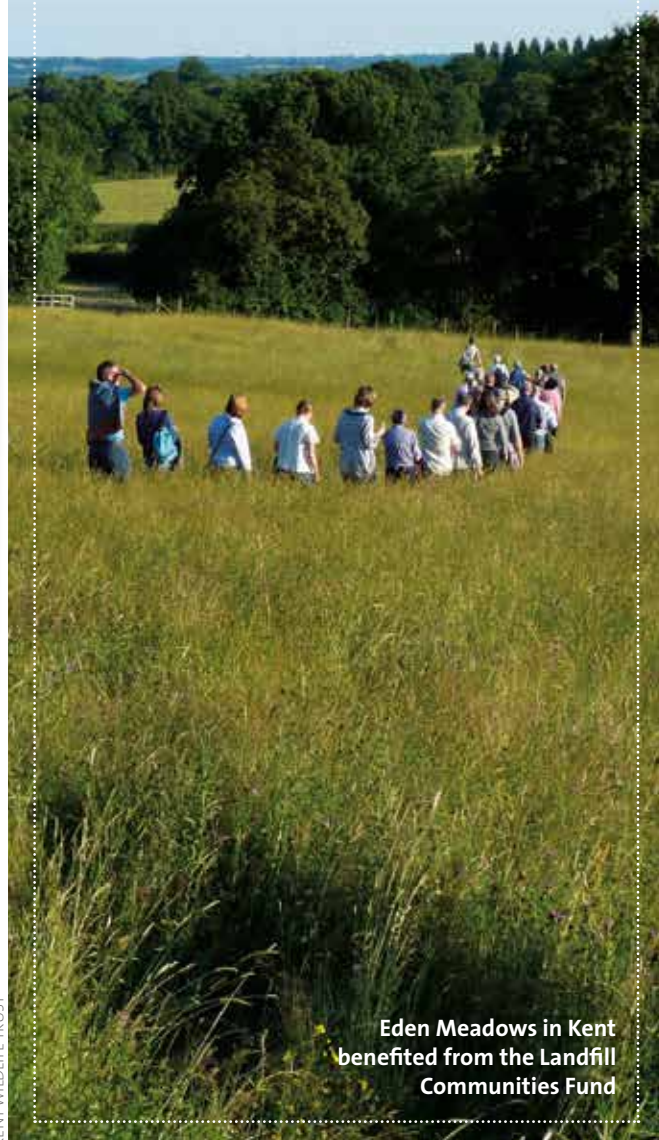
Wildlife Trusts save vital nature fund

The 20 year-old Landfill Communities Fund has been saved from the axe. The fund was threatened by Government proposals but the actions of representatives from across The Wildlife Trusts has led to a U-turn.

The Fund has supported 3,500 environmental projects, many of them with The Wildlife Trusts. People living near landfill sites have enjoyed better access to their local wildlife, and improved community buildings and recreational facilities.

"We now want to see the fund boosted, to support more projects that help wildlife and improve people's lives," said Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts.

Has your local area benefited from the Landfill Communities Fund? Share your story on social media using #TheLCF.



Eden Meadows in Kent benefited from the Landfill Communities Fund

KENT WILDLIFE TRUST



Solitary bee

Most people will be familiar with honey bees and bumblebees – a staple of summer as they busily move from flower to flower in our gardens. However, one type of bee is less well-known and, by its very nature, is a much less common sight – the solitary bee.

Here at Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust we are lucky enough to be surrounded by a wealth of wildlife expertise. We are always striving to learn more about the wildlife on our reserves and so we were very pleased last year when one of our volunteers, Stephen Howard, offered to get to know and photograph the solitary bees at Aldbury Nowers. The reserve is already well known for its butterfly population – over thirty species of butterflies can be found here – but it's also a great habitat for solitary bees.

There are about 250 species of solitary bee in Britain alone. A female solitary bee constructs and provisions her nest without the assistance of any worker bees. The variation in species means a wide variety in habitat needs; from gardens and woodland rides to tunnels in the ground and rotten wood, solitary bees can be found in many places if you know where to look.

Here, Stephen looks at three species of bee found on the reserve that have particularly interesting sets of behaviour and requirements.

⚡ Red bartsia bee

Melitta tricincta

The red bartsia bee is a variety of blunthorn bee, so called because the tips of their antennae are blunt, rather than pointed. The plant which this bee is commonly named after – the red bartsia – is a common



« Harebell carpenter bee

Chelostoma campanularum

The harebell carpenter bee is also known as the 'small scissor bee' because of the scissor-like appearance of its jaws. Females collect pollen exclusively from the Campanula family (commonly known as bellflowers) and use their mid and hind legs to brush the pollen into a 'basket' of hairs under their abdomen. Males are often found at night, sleeping inside the flowers of harebell and clustered bellflower.

This bee is predominantly black with a narrow and cylindrical abdomen which is possibly an adaptation to using small-bore beetle burrows as nest sites. These bees aren't restricted to chalk grassland but the plants available at Aldbury Nowers supports the species well.

Bees play an important role in the pollination of harebells. Before the flowers open pollen is transferred from the male anthers to tiny hairs on the immature female style, before the 'male' anthers wither. Pollen therefore does not self-fertilise the flower because the receptive surfaces of the female 'stigma' are not exposed until later, by which time most of the flower's own pollen has gone. Harebell carpenter bees collect the pollen to feed their young and accidentally transfer some of it to other, older, flowers which are already receptive to it.

S



ALL PHOTOS: STEPHEN HOWARD

plant of roadside verges, railway cuttings, waste grounds and other disturbed ground. These areas often have low-fertility soils, so red bartsia is partly parasitic, gaining extra nutrients from the roots of its nearby host grasses. While this plant is widely distributed, the bee itself is primarily restricted to red bartsia on calcareous grasslands in southern England, the predominant habitat at Aldbury Nowers.

Female bees collect pollen from red bartsia exclusively and can be difficult to spot. However, males are often seen flying around the plant looking for a female.

Nomad bees

Nomad bees are a 'cuckoo species' and lay their eggs in the nests of other bees. There are about 30 species of nomad bee in the UK, and all have

a wasp-like appearance.

Red bartsia bees are exploited by a nomad bee called the blunthorn nomad bee, which lays its eggs in red bartsia bee nests.

Several species of nomad bee, including the blunthorn nomad bee, have been found at Aldbury Nowers. Both the red bartsia bee and their nomad bees peak in July and August when the red bartsia is in flower.



« Red-tailed mason bee

Osmia bicolor

The red-tailed mason bee is also known as the 'two-coloured mason bee' due to the distinctive markings of the female. The females use empty snail shells as nests with each egg laid in its own partition which is provisioned with a ball of pollen and nectar (enough for it to grow to a full-sized larva and pupate without any further parental care). Finally, the shell is sealed with 'rubble' and leaf mastic and the shell is completely camouflaged under a mound of plant fragments.

Curiously, red-tailed mason bees are not the only bees to nest in snail shells at Aldbury Nowers – spined mason bee, *Osmia spinulosa*, also display this fascinating behaviour.



Thank You

Mary Ashwell, Gerald Salisbury, Ada Franklin and Thomas Kittle, all long-standing members, have very kindly left legacies to the Trust. It was very thoughtful and generous of them to have remembered the Trust in this special way. We are very grateful for all the support they have given to the Trust over the years, making such a valuable contribution to our conservation work.

Our thanks also for the kind donations the Trust has received in memory of Fred Young, Ann Smith, Anthony Mori, David Green, Arthur Holley, Michael Harverson, Graham Gower and Barbara Rizzi. These gifts will help us continue our work protecting the rich heritage of habitats and wildlife across our area, ensuring their memories live on, providing a healthy, vibrant and diverse natural world for future generations to enjoy.

Our thanks and condolences go to all their family and friends at this difficult time. Legacies and donations made in this memorable way make a valuable contribution to our work by safeguarding local wildlife and their habitats, thank you.



Save the date!

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's AGM will be held on Saturday 11 November at Mill End Baptist Church, Rickmansworth.

The formal AGM will start at 10am and will be followed by lunch and a guided walk of the Trust's nearby Stocker's Lake Nature Reserve.

We'd love to hear from you.
Get in touch with us at
membership@hmwt.org

Where the Wild Things Are Talk – can you help us?

Are you interested in how your local wildlife is faring? Finding out answers to questions such as "What's so special about chalk streams?", "Why do species and habitats need protecting?", "What conservation projects happen near you?" and "How you can help protect your natural heritage?"

The Trust has a great community talk, *Where the Wild Things Are*, which answers these questions, and discusses issues of the 21st century and the work of the Trust. We have a team of excellent volunteer speakers to deliver these talks to community

groups across Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

Are you part of a community group that would like to include this talk in your programme? For more information on how to book please visit: hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/talks, contact Wendy Hartnell on communitytalks@hmwt.org or call 01727 858901.

We are currently recruiting volunteer speakers to deliver this wildlife talk to community groups in North, South and West Hertfordshire. Please visit our website for more details.

NEW MEMBER EVENT

Fifteen new members recently joined Louise, People and Wildlife Officer for the Affinity Water sites of Hilfield Park Reservoir, Stocker's Lake and Springwell Reedbed, for a morning of small mammal identification and bird ringing at Hilfield Park Reservoir. The group split in to two and then swapped over to enable everybody to have a go at both activities. The traps captured a bank vole and wood mouse overnight, with more success from the volunteer bird ringers, who netted and ringed a variety of different species before releasing them – a song thrush, reed warbler, female blackcap and several blue tits. The event was a great opportunity to get up close to the birds and mammals that thrive in this private reserve, only accessible to HMWT members.



Working for Wildlife

We would like to say a big thank you to Eleanor Lewis, a member of the Trust, for selecting Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust as her favourite charity to receive a kind gift donation from Beazley Management Ltd. Gifts like these are a special way for you to connect, share and inspire others to safeguard a future for local wildlife and for everyone to be able to enjoy and benefit from access to nature. We are so grateful to Eleanor and Beazley Management Ltd for all their generous support.

Eleanor Lewis: "I asked Beazley to make the donation to HMWT because, with a lot of colleagues living in Herts and Middlesex, it's important to preserve our rich environmental heritage and not wake up one morning and wonder where it has all gone."



STAYING IN TOUCH Do we have your email address?

Email is a cost effective way for us to keep in touch with you. If you have an email address and you are happy for us to communicate with you we would love to send you the Trust's e-newsletter and other updates.

Gift Aid

Gift Aiding your membership and other donations means we reclaim your tax – at least 25p for every £1 you give us. If you are eligible for Gift Aid, or your tax circumstances change, please let us know by contacting

membership@hmwt.org *giftaid it*

APPLE DAY

AT TEWIN ORCHARD

Sunday 8 October
12:00pm-4:30pm

APPLE DAY

Sunday 8 October 2017 12:00pm-4:30pm
TEWIN ORCHARD

Join us for the annual Apple Day at Tewin Orchard Nature Reserve. Apple Day is a celebration of all things apple with guided walks, children's activities and the chance to taste the fruits – literally – of our labours!

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/appleday

FESTIVAL of WILDLIFE

In association with Herts Natural History Society

29 and 30 July, 10am-4pm at Panshanger Park, Hertford



Join us for a fun weekend

of walks, talks, family activities and conservation demonstrations.
Here is a little taster of our programme of events for the weekend:

Walks

Join our wildlife experts for guided wildlife walks:

Hunting dragons! – discover the dragonflies and damselflies of Hertfordshire

Wild Panshanger – an introduction to the wildlife of Panshanger Park

The Marvellous Mimram – a walk along Panshanger's chalk stream

Talks

Our friends from Herts Natural History Society are on hand to give an insight into Hertfordshire's wildlife:

Hertfordshire's Jaws!, the pike – learn more about the toothy predator living in our rivers

Savory snaps – filmmaker Russell Savory shares his tips for capturing wildlife on film

Osprey – get to know the impressive osprey; a regular visitor to Panshanger Park

Children's activities

We've got loads of fun stuff for the kids to do including:

Forest School, tractor tours, bug hunts, species spotting and storytelling

Plus – local artists, craft stalls, conservation groups, delicious food and much more!

FIND OUT MORE AT HERTSWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/FESTIVAL

Kindly hosted by



Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's

annualreview



2016-2017

Herts and
Middlesex



A BETTER
FUTURE FOR *wildlife*

Introduction

Over the past year the Trust has worked hard to protect and enhance wild places in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. With the support of our members and dedicated volunteers we have continued to help create a Living Landscape with an environment rich in wildlife for everyone.



A haven for endangered species

Our nature reserves are havens for wildlife and this year they have gone from strength-to-strength through long-term habitat improvements giving tangible benefits for wildlife. At Aldbury Nowers we have seen the return of breeding small blue butterflies – the product of over a decade of restoration work. Thorley Wash Nature Reserve achieved favourable SSSI status in summer 2016, a result of our three year programme of habitat improvements. At Lemsford Springs, satellite tracking technology has shown green sandpipers migrating non-stop to Norway to breed before returning to the reserve; a reminder that Hertfordshire is part of a global network of habitats.



Connecting people with nature

This year we have delivered an excellent programme of walks, talks and conservation activities attended by thousands of people keen to learn about their local wildlife. Over 1,500 people enjoyed our Festival of Wildlife which packed guided walks, children's activities and conservation demonstrations into a sunny July weekend. We also launched our new Go Wild Volunteers project to train event leaders to inspire more people to get out and enjoy wildlife. Our partnerships with local authorities and businesses continue to be great way of engaging with local people.

A voice for wildlife

From local to national level there are many threats to wildlife. This year alone we have responded to over 1,200 planning applications, helping to ensure that wildlife is properly considered in building developments. The result of the EU referendum undoubtedly creates an uncertain future for some of our most important wildlife legislation. Now, more than ever, the Wildlife Trust movement needs to be a strong voice for wildlife. With over 22,000 members, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is an important part of this national conversation.

Thank you

All of our work is only made possible with your support. A huge thank you to our members, volunteers, donors, grant-awarding bodies, partners and staff who have supported the Trust over the last year; with your support the wild places of Hertfordshire and Middlesex and the wildlife that depends upon them are better cared for and protected.

Thank you,

Mike Master
Chairman

Lesley Davies
Chief Executive

Nature reserves

Our work has gone from strength to strength with our team of staff and volunteers leading improvements and work parties to maintain and develop vital wildlife habitats on both our reserves and in the wider countryside

Some of the key successes on our nature reserves this year include:

Woodland projects

At Balls Wood 300m of woodland rides were improved to encourage honeysuckle, the larval food plant of the white admiral butterfly.

At Danemead some of the old hornbeams were re-pollarded and fences erected to allow cattle grazing to conserve the woodland pasture.



white admiral

Wetlands and orchard wildlife

Amwell and Marsworth saw reedbed cutting with positive effects demonstrated quickly when water rails and otters were caught on video camera. At Amwell we created new habitats for the little ringed plover, and at Stockers Lake and Broadwater Lake we improved the wetland habitats. Tewin Orchard has seen a busy year, with staff and volunteers undertaking pruning training and lots of tree and grassland maintenance, as well as a beekeeper setting up on site.

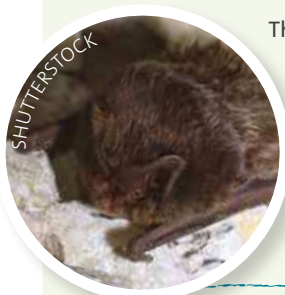


little ringed plover

Barbastelle project

The Barbastelle project kicked off in 2016, in partnership with Herts & Middlesex Bat Group, University of Hertfordshire, Environment Agency and Herts Natural History Society. The project is developing a strategy for surveying and conserving these internationally rare bats.

barbastelle bat



Water voles

We were delighted to see the ongoing success of the 2015 water vole reintroduction at Thorley Wash Nature Reserve where 180 voles were released and continue to thrive. They have colonised the reserve well, are breeding and have spread along 5km of the River Stort.

water vole



Wild highlights:

- Scarce emerald damselflies found at Hertford Heath for the second year running, suggesting they are now breeding there.
- New records of otters from the River Colne at Stocker's Lake and Stanborough Lake.
- Eels, classified as critically endangered, are spotted returning to our rivers thanks to the Slimy Wrighglers Project.
- Small blue butterflies were confirmed as breeding at Aldbury Nowers by Steve Howard.
- The secrets of our Lemsford Springs green sandpipers are revealed through pioneering research using satellite technology to track their migration to Norway.
- Hilfield Reservoir celebrated four black-necked grebe chicks fledging.

scarce emerald



green sandpiper

Wider countryside

Local authority partnerships

We continue to advise Stevenage Borough Council on the management of their green spaces, culminating in the review of the Biodiversity Action Plan first written in 2010. The Plan gives guidance for the Borough's 2,600 hectares of wetlands, woodlands, urban habitats and grasslands.

In Harpenden we have provided advice and guidance on green spaces through the town's ecology group and maternity cover for the Town Council's Green Spaces Officer. Such has been the success of this, that the Council has created a new role of People and Wildlife Officer and our partnership has been extended by a further three years to focus on environmental education, community engagement and increasing conservation volunteering.

Living Rivers

Eels are now classified as critically endangered and our Slimy Wrighglers Project aims to turn back the dramatic decline in their numbers. Together with the Environment Agency and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the first phase of the Project in 2016 saw the installation of two eel passes in the flood relief channel in the Lower Lea valley to help the eel migration through our rivers.

Habitat improvement work continued on a number of rivers, in partnership with the Environment Agency. On the River Stort backwaters, 30 volunteers were trained in restoration techniques, helping to deliver a management plan for 1km of the river which the Trust prepared with the landowner. Over 500m on the River Ash was improved through the selective removal of shading scrub, increasing habitat diversity by allowing the growth of marginal and instream vegetation.

The Trust has worked closely with Groundwork South on a successful application to the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme in the Colne Valley. We will lead two landscape-scale projects to prevent water voles becoming extinct, and improving wildlife habitats within fisheries.



 eel

Farmland and Local Wildlife Sites

We have provided **habitat management advice** to farmers across the area. Four farms covering 2,200 hectares were surveyed as part of a national partnership with Jordans Cereals and advice given to improve the ecological value of the farms as directed by the Jordans standard. The **Local Wildlife Sites programme** had another record year conducting over 50 surveys of woodlands and grasslands, covering over 440 hectares. This is thanks to our 11 volunteer surveyors who gave 200 days of their time. In addition to this, over the winter months the team visited 24 sites to carry out 10-yearly monitoring visits to measure gross change, provide species information, re-establish contact with landowners and provide management advice.

11 VOLUNTEERS 
SURVEYED 50 WILDLIFE SITES
COVERING OVER 440 HECTARES

JOSH KUBALE

Standing up for wildlife

Impact of comments on planning

We commented on seven **Local Plans**, some of which included our comments and are exemplary in the content of their ecological policies – these included East Herts, North Herts and Broxbourne. If approved they will provide significant improvement in delivering measurable and objective net gain in the planning process. Objections made to the Broxbourne Local Plan resulted in the establishment of an agreement with HERC to ensure that the Planning Authority has up to date ecological data.

We reviewed 1,250 planning applications and in most cases our objections and comments resulted in positive changes to the applications.

Trust objections to the plans for the A120 bypass ensured that the local barbastelle population has been properly considered using radio tracking studies. Not only did this generate greater understanding of the behaviour of the colony, it led to targeted and extensive improvements to the mitigation scheme to protect the colony.

1,250 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS REVIEWED**

High Speed Two

We have continued to press for the full and proper mitigation of the impacts of High Speed Two on the ecology of, and visitors to, Broadwater Lake Nature Reserve. We presented petitions to the House of Commons and House of Lords and early in 2017 appeared on BBC's *Inside Out* about the potential impacts to the nature reserve. We are a member of the HS2 Colne Valley Mitigation Panel and continue to make the case for mitigation.

Herts Environmental Records Centre

By the end of the year the total number of records are over 2.2 million. The HERC records is used by the Trust and local authorities to help ensure that wildlife is considered within the planning process, as well as by the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority to help inform their decisions. Data was used to inform 530 projects across the county, including six neighbourhood plans and 382 pre-planning application ecological reports, helping to guide the design and mitigation measures of the final planning applications.

HERC plays a key role in developing the ecological evidence base by supporting volunteer recording and working with other voluntary conservation organisations, including the Herts Natural History Society on the Mammal, Amphibian and Reptile Atlas Project.



cardinal beetle



2.2M **RECORDS**
in the records centre

tree bumblebee

Every Record Counts

Every Record Counts is a new project led by HERC in partnership with the Herts Natural History Society, Hertfordshire University and Tarmac, aims to encourage people to become involved in biological recording. HMWT is currently seeking vital funding to enable the project to go ahead which will offer training opportunities in a number of different species groups from birds to bees, ants and wasps, while providing mentoring and support to help build confidence in identification skills.

Engaging people

forest school



PAUL HOPE



PATRICIA RAYNER

Festival of Wildlife 2016

People and Wildlife projects

We were delighted to launch a new People & Wildlife Project with Affinity Water in 2016 that will improve important habitat for wildlife and increase community engagement and volunteering at Stocker's Lake, Springwell Reedbed and Hilfield Park Reservoir.

Our partnership with Tarmac at Panshanger Park continues well through the People and Wildlife Officer and Forest School. Forest School saw its 1,000th child and over 3,000 people came to our programme of events in the park.

Go Wild Volunteers

In February we launched our Go Wild Volunteers project with funding from Aviva Communities Fund and Tesco Bags of Help. The project will recruit volunteers to join our Go Wild Team and be trained and mentored to run a programme of public events and engagement activities.



apple day

Walks, talks and events

Over 5,000 people, including over 2,000 children, took part in our growing programme of walks, talks and events. Our main events were the Festival of Wildlife and Apple Day, both of which were popular and helped showcase local wildlife and the work of the Trust. The Festival, run in association with Hertfordshire Natural History Society took place in July at Panshanger Park and attracted 1,500 people who enjoyed walks, talks and activities lead by experts from the Trust and the Society. We are grateful to Tarmac for their sponsorship of the event.

In October, we enjoyed the fruits of Tewin Orchard at the annual Apple Day. Hundreds of people enjoyed the event, with guided walks to the reserve and activities for children. Our new event booking system allows us to prompt for donations at the point of booking and to introduce a better service for those who book and prospective Members to the Trust.

Our Local Groups have welcomed hundreds of people to their walks and talks, and in 2016, the Mid Herts Group celebrated their 21st anniversary. Over 1,400 people have enjoyed the talks given by our Community Speakers.

Grebe House Wildlife Garden

The Wildlife Garden has doubled in size thanks to funding from Tesco Bags of HELP, Amazon and Cllr Walkington. Vital practical help from our new team of wildlife gardening volunteers and regular work parties with Emmaus and HACRO showcases to the public what action everyone can take for wildlife.



Emmaus and HACRO volunteers in wildlife garden

Thank you

The Trust is extremely grateful for the continued support it gets through donations, legacies and grants from members and supporters. We are very grateful for the generous legacies we received from Mary Spencer Ashwell, Peggy Sheila Cunningham, Peter King, Mairi Patricia Mackenzie, Margaret Elizabeth North, George Frank Rogers and John Michael Fortnum Rogers.

Corporate support

We were pleased to receive the following ongoing support from our **corporate members**:

Platinum

- Bourne Leisure Group
- UK Power Networks (Operations) Ltd

Gold

- Johnson Matthey
- Thames Water Utilities
- Islandbridge Properties Limited
- Affinity Water
- The Grove Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort

Silver

- Cemex UK
- Tarmac

Bronze

- The Institute of the Motor Industry

We have received further support from our corporate partners through participation in Working for Wildlife Days, including Mace Group, Amgen UK, Britvic, Affinity Water, UK Power Networks and Bourne Leisure. In addition to this we received support via the national agreement with Vine House Farm for bird food sold, from Wildlife Travel Ltd for wildlife holidays booked by individuals living in Herts and Middlesex, from staff at The Institute of The Motor Industry who held a garden plant sale and casual day in aid of the Trust, a donation from AMCO Rail following some access work at Stanborough Reedmarsh, the National Grid who donated to the water vole appeal and from Beazley Management Ltd following a staff charity nomination.

The Trust also received support from John Lewis Welwyn as part of their Community Matters scheme, as well as from public collections at both John Lewis Welwyn and Watford branches following The Wildlife Trusts' Christmas Charity Partnership.



Grants and individual donations

External income from grants and individual donations have been particularly important in enabling improvement works on our reserves and other projects, along with other projects. HMWT are very grateful for the generosity of all our funders which include:

- Abbots Langley Parish Council
- Affinity Water
- Aviva Community Fund
- City of London Corporation (Green Arc)
- Environment Agency
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Friends of Tewin
- Harpenden Town Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget (Cllr Crofton, Cllr Walkington)
- Lea Valley Regional Park Authority
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- Miss S M G Ross Trust
- Mr and Mrs Shirvell
- Mr Bennell
- Mr K Moody
- Mr M Tilbe
- Natural England
- Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust
- Robert Kiln Charitable Trust
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Rural Payments Agency (DEFRA)
- Tarmac
- Tesco Bags of Help
- Thames Water
- The Friends of Tring Reservoirs
- Veolia Environmental Trust

Volunteers

The Trust is extremely grateful for the support of the hundreds of volunteers who enable the Trust to carry out its work. Our thanks go to each and every volunteer for their varied and ongoing support and without whom the Trust could not function. Special thanks go to our Local Groups who make a significant contribution to engaging members and congratulations go to Volunteers of the Year – Carol Newman and John Fish.

Financial review

Membership



Total memberships



Total members

Volunteers



Volunteers



Total volunteer hours



Total volunteer days



Total in-kind value

Events



Income

Membership subscriptions	£1,015k
Grants (restricted)	£394k
Fees and contracts	£412k
Donations, gifts and grants (unrestricted)	£60k
Donations and gifts (restricted)	£75k
Legacies	£63k
Fundraising activities	£46k
Investments and other income	£41k



Expenditure – where does every £1 go?

RAISING FUNDS
31p



GOVERNANCE 4p

CONSERVATION AND NATURE RESERVES
65p

These diagrams are an illustration of Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's income and expenditure of the year ending March 2017. For a copy of the full audited accounts which contain the detailed information required by law, visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/annualreview



Tweets from the field...

Social media highlights from the summer



🐦 @BillyBloodWorm snapped these colourful green-winged orchids last month at Hunsdon Meads

🐦 @Sh4rpy posted this fluffy chiffchaff taken at our Stocker's Lake reserve in April



🐦 This little insect is a cramp-ball fungus weevil, captured on film by @ryanclarknature at Aldbury Nowers

🐦 @apiumrepens has been enjoying bees in the garden for #30DaysWild!



🐦 @IFM posted this photo of a lovely sunny wildflower walk at our Danemead reserve



We love seeing your pictures from our reserves and hearing about your wildlife experiences in **Hertfordshire and Middlesex**. Get involved with the conversation on Twitter **@HMWTBadger** or Facebook **facebook.com/hertswildlifetrust**.





Meadow manage

In the warm summer sun Hertfordshire and Middlesex's beautiful meadows are bursting with floral colour, the air alive with clouds of butterflies and the buzz of busy pollinators. Caring for these meadows is a year-round job; from cutting and raking, to grazing and haymaking. Reserves Officer, Rob Hopkins, tells us what goes into managing Frogmore Meadow, a small but beautiful grassland reserve near Chenies, west Hertfordshire.



Small copper



Betony



Devil's-bit scabious

Frogmore Meadow is a beautiful example of a traditionally managed lowland meadow. A small reserve tucked away in the Chess Valley, the area has two meadows surrounded by mature hedgerows beside the River Chess. The reserve's damp, species-rich, unimproved neutral grassland is now a very scarce habitat in the UK – the 2016 *State of Nature Report* states that lowland meadow has suffered an

estimated 97% decline since the 1930s. Because of the rarity of this habitat, Frogmore Meadow is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Change in land use and agricultural practice has resulted in similar meadows being 'improved' with fertilisers and re-seeded with more productive grasses, or drained and used for arable farming. This means that our specialist meadow plant species are often outcompeted

by other plants that thrive in nutrient-rich habitat.

Frogmore Meadow has a very good range of grasses and flowers such as yellow rattle, greater bird's-foot trefoil, fen bedstraw, marsh thistle and ragged robin. The drier and more acidic parts of the meadow support betony, devil's-bit scabious and, in the autumn, vibrantly coloured waxcap fungi.

Frogmore Meadow has been managed

ment



Small skipper →

JOSH KUBALE

by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust for over thirty years, with the help of dedicated volunteers, particularly the late Gerald Salisbury. Its management involves haymaking which takes place around the beginning of July. This is highly weather dependent, as the possibility of five successive dry days is small. This is one of the reasons that grass is often cut and vacuum packed as silage without the worry about weather conditions.

We cut the grass after most of the flowers have set seed, using a reciprocating cutter which cuts cleanly through the base of the grasses. Throughout the following days the cut material is turned daily to ensure that it dries out evenly, known as 'tedding' to aid the drying out of the damp grass. If the weather is dry and sunny then three to four days after the grass has been cut we rake up the dry and sweet-smelling hay.

Once the dry grass has been taken off site we compress the newly-made hay into tight bales using our homemade hand baler. The neat bales are tied up and stored in a dry barn – the resulting hay providing valuable and nutritious winter fodder for our flock of Shetland sheep.

Hay meadows managed in this way usually have a huge diversity of flowers and grasses. A thing of great beauty in mid-June, the flowers are of great value for many nectar feeding insects. However managing an entire grassland reserve in this way would greatly reduce overall biodiversity as haymaking is potentially harmful to wildlife such as amphibians, small mammals and insects, like spiders. To keep the reserve

beneficial for all our wildlife we leave at least 50% of the grassland uncut and rotate the areas cut each year.

Conservation grazing

Towards the end of the summer we undertake the next important stage of management – grazing. Traditionally this is done after 1 August on Lammas Day; a custom which goes back to medieval times. Lammas Day is a festival to mark the annual wheat harvest, usually taking place between 1 August and 1 September, and is the

first harvest festival of the year. On dry meadows, sheep are often used to graze but on wetter meadows, like Frogmore, cattle are also used. This grazing will remove regrowth before the grasses stop growing in the autumn. Grazing is also beneficial as the animals' hooves lightly break up the ground and the thatch of dead grasses, creating bare ground where seeds can germinate. The cattle is taken off the grassland in the autumn to allow the grassland to rest and eventually regrow the following spring to repeat the process again.

KEEP OUR marvellous MEADOWS IN BLOOM

WE URGENTLY NEED

your support to provide a future for our local grasslands. We need funds to cover the cost of machinery hire, tools, livestock and staff time to manage our grasslands so that they continue to thrive as fully functioning, species-rich and diverse habitats. Your donation could help to cover the costs involved in our grassland conservation work this year. Please be part of this vital movement to conserve your critically important local grasslands and the wildlife that depends on them.

A gift from you today, no matter how small, will make a very real difference to your local wildlife. See how you can help by turning to the back of the magazine or visiting hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/appeal





My Wild Life

Laura Baker is Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Nature Trust's Reserves Manager. Here she tells us more about her role and the importance of the team behind our beautiful nature reserves...

How long have you been working for the Trust Laura?

I've now been with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust since October 2015, starting off as a Reserves Officer. In a year I progressed to Senior Reserves Officer and earlier this year I advanced to become the Reserves Manager, coordinating the Reserves Team.

How did you get into your role here?

I undertook a voluntary warden placement with the RSPB, which led to a traineeship and a role as a ranger with the National Trust. I then worked as Area Ranger for the National Trust in the New Forest, before moving to HMWT.

Many people undertake countryside management degrees or diplomas to get into working in this industry, however gaining work experience through day to day volunteering and traineeships is extremely important in order to build up the skills which we need in reserves teams. We look for a mixture of academic qualifications, practical skills and ecological knowledge as well as experience in working with the public.

At HMWT we have lots of opportunities for practical volunteering, as well as our annual trainee reserves officer placements which we advertise each June.

What do you do day to day?

I co-ordinate the Reserves Team by line-managing the Senior Reserves Officer, other Reserve Officers and Reserves Administration Assistant. My team's work is mainly practical but we need robust conservation plans and budgets to ensure



JOSH KUBALE

☛ dingy skipper



◀ cowslip

that our membership contributions, donations and funding is used to best benefit wildlife in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. I write and manage these areas and develop projects with our grants officer too.

There are a lot of elements to take care of on our reserves and I make sure that our tree safety management, livestock management and management planning for reserves is all up to scratch along with our habitats, species, and grant monitoring.

We have over 40 nature reserves across two counties so I ensure that the team has everything they need to take the best possible care of them and that we are operating collaboratively.

How about this time of year?

The majority of our practical reserves management work is carried out during the Autumn and Winter months, in order to avoid disturbing breeding wildlife. During the Spring and Summer we focus on species monitoring such as butterfly transects and breeding bird surveys, as well as condition assessments of our grasslands. The team are also busy managing the cattle which graze some reserves during the Summer and undertaking infrastructure repairs such as fencing.

Why is the Reserves Team's work so important for our local wildlife?

Our nature reserves are extremely important for wildlife in the counties of Hertfordshire and Middlesex, forming a vital part of the Living Landscape

alongside our river catchments and local wildlife sites.

There are cases in the urban and agricultural landscape where wildlife can breed, find food and overwinter. Our position in the UK means they are also valuable as stopovers for wildlife migrating across the country to, or from, Europe. Our reserves encompass a spectrum of habitats and are places where we can manage land for wildlife to the best of our ability, as well as allowing people to enjoy these places and learn about the importance of the species which live there.

The small size of some of our reserves means that the team have their work cut out to maintain habitat diversity at a smaller scale, for an optimum range of species. Without the hard work of the team, these habitats would change dramatically: our reed beds, grasslands and heathlands would revert to scrub and woodland, and the vital structural diversity and range of micro-habitats which each reserve encompasses would be lost.

Our team also ensures that these special places are accessible by the public, maintaining pathways and hides in order to allow people to enjoy spectacular views of wildlife, whilst ensuring it remains protected and undisturbed.

What part do volunteers play here?

Our volunteer teams are crucial to the work we do across Herts and Middlesex. Our voluntary Reserves Wardens work alongside our Reserves Officers to ensure day-to-day upkeep of reserves,

report any problems and also carry out habitat management and monitoring. Our practical volunteer teams get the job done, carrying out all sorts of tasks from grassland cutting and raking to boardwalk construction. We also rely on volunteers to help us with administration, daily checks of our livestock and for skills such as shepherding and ecological surveying. We couldn't do it without them!

Can you recommend any quick and easy ways to help local wildlife?

If you have a garden, don't be afraid to let it get messy! Wildlife needs lots of different "micro-habitats" to breed, feed and hibernate in. The messier your hedges, compost heap, beds or lawn are the more of these you will provide. Wildlife doesn't like it tidy!

What are your highlights of working with HMWT?

I love being surrounded by a team with such a broad knowledge of wildlife and I'm always learning from the people around me. Strolling through a flower and insect-filled Aldbury Nowers on a sunny day isn't too bad either!

What's your nature reserve pick for the summer?

Head to Aldbury Nowers to see the grassland and woodland edge alive with silver-washed fritillaries. Look for them in the sunny glades we have created in the scrub around the grassland and enjoy a little piece of paradise.



Hertfordshire's royal re

Hertfordshire is bursting with wildlife, history and beauty – if you're lucky you'll find all three at once. In the west of the county lies one such gem. Laura Baker, Herts and Middlesex Trust's Reserves Manager, looks back at the history of Aldbury Nowers, a reserve fit for royalty.

Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve is a 11.5 hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest situated on the Chiltern escarpment. The reserve comprises two areas of hillside linked by The Ridgeway and supports splendid wildflowers and over thirty species of butterfly. The warm south-facing slopes host the small but beautiful flowers of chalk grassland including common milkwort, common rock rose, clustered bellflower and lady's bedstraw. The chalk grassland found at Aldbury is one of the best remaining areas of this habitat in the county and therefore one of the finest butterfly habitats in Hertfordshire with Essex skippers, marbled whites, green hairstreak, brown argus, and scarce grizzled and dingy skippers.

clustered bellflower ➡



It is also very good for other invertebrates such as solitary bees and wasps.

Royal connections

Part of Aldbury Nowers is known as "Duchie's Piece" – the eponymous Duchie being the nickname of the

The Duke of Burgundy is one of the most rapidly declining butterflies in the UK and likes scrubby grassland and sunny woodland clearings – typically in very low numbers. There was a sighting in 2010 and colonies survive in the wider landscape, with one colony within a few miles of Aldbury Nowers. It is hoped that with continued management, the Duke of Burgundy will once again return to the site.



original owner's wife; Ethel Amy Farquar was nicknamed Duchie because "she dressed like a Duchess". Ethel and her Air Force Pilot husband, Capt. Arthur Farquar, moved from their native Canada to North London where they visited Aldbury often and eventually bought the village's Town Farm and much of the Stocks estate, which included Aldbury Nowers. 'Duchie' used to love to sit in the grass of Aldbury Nowers, count the wildflowers and pick wild strawberries along the woodland edge with her grandchildren, Frankie and Mark. The same grandchildren were asked to suggest a name when the Trust officially opened the site in 1991 and they chose to name it after their grandmother.

When Aldbury Nowers was opened in 1991, the wider reserve was presented to the Queen Mother to celebrate her 90th birthday and named "Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's Nature Reserve". The Queen Mother formally opened the newly-named reserve and following the ceremony she enjoyed a picnic under the trees alongside HMWT staff members and volunteers. The Queen

Reserves Roundup

Amwell

With support from Natural England, we completed improvement works to create fish refuges by felling waterside trees, created early successional

habitats through scraping, laid a section of hedgerow and produced a new dragonfly interpretation board.

Balls Wood

New dead hedges have been created around the ponds in Balls Wood

to better protect them and the wildlife in them.

Danemead and Willowmead

The whole Reserves Team spent a day opening up woodland areas at Danemead and carrying out tree safety

serve



The small blue butterfly is our smallest UK butterfly whose sole foodplant is kidney vetch. The small blue is rapidly declining and lives in small colonies. It disappeared from Aldbury Nowers for a time but returned to the reserve within two years of restoration work. There was an existing colony close to the reserve and the work that HMWT did connected these areas up, putting its Living Landscape vision into practice. Last year, small blue eggs were found on its food plant proving that small blues are now breeding on the reserve.



Mother's connection to Hertfordshire is strong – she spent much of her childhood in the village of St Paul's Walden, near Hitchin.

A decade of change

For a time the site became overgrown with scrub and it was hard to secure adequate grazing. However, since

September 2006, grants from SITA Trust and Biffa Award, through the Landfill Communities Fund, has enabled major chalk grassland restoration projects at both Aldbury Nowers and neighbouring Alpine Meadow.

Working in partnership with Butterfly Conservation, the National Trust and Natural England, our work has enabled

work at Willowmead removing trees along the reserve boundary.

Stocker's Lake and Broadwater Lake

In early spring the team undertook a programme of maintenance on the tern rafts ready for the nesting season.

Tring Reservoirs

At Marsworth Reservoir we continued with our programme of willow scrub removal in the reedbed to complement the work carried out in the main reedbed cutting rides with the truxor.

When to go...

The south facing chalk grassland slopes at Aldbury Nowers are one of the county's highlights during the spring and summer months with a combination of wildflowers, butterflies and a huge variety of other insects. Head to the reserve on a warm March day to see early butterflies such as brimstone and peacock. Visit slightly later, in April, to see the first orange tips emerge alongside the bright yellow tube like flowers of the early spring flower, cowslip.

A wander through the grassland enclosures during July and August should almost guarantee a sighting of the dark green fritillary – look out for them nectaring on flowers such as valerian or thistles. Silver washed fritillary can also be seen in the surrounding woodland glades. Chalk hill blues can be found fluttering low over the upper slopes together with common blue and brown argus, especially where there is wild marjoram for them to nectar on.

As summer fades into autumn there are still plenty of interesting things to see on the reserve. Devils bit scabious is quite late to flower and can often be seen in October in the southern part of the reserve. It is very attractive to small coppers and other butterfly species such as small whites. Common lizards can be seen making the most of any good weather and kestrels start to hunt over the grasslands.

intensive management on the reserve to take place, including: scrub control; creating edge habitat; grazing; cutting and raking; creating a mosaic of different vegetation structures; nectar sources; basking spots; connectivity of habitats and coppiced glade.

The work has improved overall butterfly numbers (the most notable increase being 1,700 in 2007 vs 3,953 in 2013) with priority butterfly species, such as the dingy skipper and grizzled skipper, rising year-on-year.* Between 2010-2011, 32 species of butterflies had been recorded at Aldbury Nowers; this number now stands at 34.

*Numbers are taken from yearly transects which typically take place weekly from April-September.



nature's calendar

Tim Hill, the Trust's Conservation Manager, highlights some of his favourite seasonal wildlife and makes suggestions for things to look out for and do through the months ahead...



JULY

A light that shines...

In our modern world, for all sorts of reasons, we spend less time in the countryside at dusk or after dark. Naturalists buck the trend somewhat, particularly those interested in bats, but there is another world which opens as the sun goes down. Many of our insects are nocturnal and perhaps the most iconic of all is the glow worm.

Confusingly, glow worms aren't worms at all – they are a beetle *Lampyrus noctiluca*, most often associated with grasslands. The life cycle of these insects is a fascinating one. After hatching from eggs, they spend a couple of years as predatory larvae, feeding on small snails. At maturity, when they can be up to 25mm long, the males develop wings enabling them to leave their natal home in search of a mate. Females do not develop wings so are not able to move far to find a partner. Instead they announce their presence with their own bodily beacon. The process by which they emit the yellow-green light is known as bioluminescence – the mixing of chemicals in special organs which produces light without heat. The light-emitting organ is located in the two rearmost segments of the female. When she finds a suitable place to announce her presence, usually on a plant stem, above the ground, she lights up and slowly moves her rear back and forth in a manner which males find impossible to resist. After mating she lays her fertilised eggs and both she and the male will die soon after, their lives successful, having created the next generation.



Tim is Conservation Manager for Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust



AUGUST

Green grow the rashes-O


Green grow the rashes, O

Green grow the rashes, O

The sweetest hours that e'er I spent

Are spent among the lasses, O.

I'm not a Scotsman but Robert Burns' songs have a special place in my heart. He was clearly a man who was connected with nature and 'Green Grows' is my favourite of all his works. August is one of the best times to enjoy the rashes – those wild meadows where wildlife thrives – at their peak as summer growth peaks. Not all our river valleys are accessible but the Stort valley is the exception with the towpath along the navigation. The towpath provides an elevated panorama from which the river, its floodplain and those rashes can be enjoyed. Where the valley is not farmed, the rich ground provides perfect conditions for the growth of wetland plants, creating fenland habitats. Here

 glowworm





JOSH KUBALE



SEPTEMBER

EMYR EVANS

Buzzard 📍

Look out, look up

Having watched birds for a long time, one of the best philosophies I've learned is to 'expect the unexpected'. This was never truer than on a family walk through Panshanger Park back in September 2000. My son was just two at the time so our walks were dominated by the delights of the things that he spotted – spiders were his speciality. Whilst I was engrossed by insects, Mrs Hill had the binoculars and wandered off ahead. On catching her up, she was looking intensely across the valley side and said excitedly, "I think there's an osprey perched in a dead tree". Indeed it was an osprey, only the second I had seen in the county – the first being at Amwell, many years before the Trust took it on. We watched it for as long as a two year old's patience allowed but it didn't move from that tree. It had probably fed well and at the time there was no access to Panshanger other the footpath



we were using so there was no disturbance.

Since 2000, Panshanger Park has hosted a migrating osprey almost every year, usually in the last week of August or first week of September. The time they stay varies from a few days to a couple of weeks – the Park providing a valuable place for birds to stop off, rest and fatten up before continuing their journeys to Africa. Until the Park was opened in 2014, birds would often catch fish then perch in dead trees on the north side of the valley where they could devour their prey undisturbed. With more activity in recent years the birds still catch their fish in the lakes but more often than not fly out of the park to feed. The sight of an osprey fishing is one of nature's most exciting sights and Panshanger Park in early September is now one of the most reliable places to see this in the south of England. If you would like to have a go at spotting an osprey this September, the owners of Panshanger Park, Tarmac have built a special watchpoint, with a seat on the north side of Osprey Lake. I'll see you there!



OCTOBER

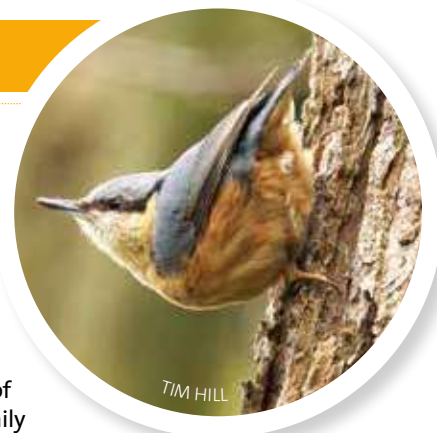
Give and you will receive

One of the most common questions I'm asked at The Trust is, "What should I feed the birds in my garden?" In October, it's a good time to think about providing the birds with what they need to help them get through the cold and short days ahead. If you help them they will return the favour in visiting your garden and provide the joy of watching wild animals going about their daily routines. The first thing to consider is water. Birds need water to drink and almost as importantly, to have a good bath every day. It's vital that they keep their feathers in good condition so that they provide optimum insulation when roosting. Bird baths come in all shapes and sizes but try to provide one with shallow edges which means that all sizes of birds can use it. Once installed, clean it regularly before topping up the water as, unfortunately, birds tend to have a habit of pooing as they bathe – not great for the next bird which comes along for a drink.

As far as food goes, calories count. Birds have to ensure they consume sufficient food to get them through the night, which in mid-winter is fourteen hours, during which time most birds are unable to feed. In a survey of favourite foods, nine out of ten birds prefer ... sunflower hearts. Gram for gram sunflower hearts contain more calories than any other bird food. It's not surprising then that if you fill feeders with a mix the birds will throw most of it on the ground in their search for sunflower hearts.

So, if you do only two things to help your local birds this year, first buy a bird bath and secondly get a good stock of sunflower hearts. If you buy from Vine House Farm – www.vinehousefarm.co.uk – you will also be helping conservation as the Wildlife Trusts receive five per cent of all their sales.

📍 Nuthatch



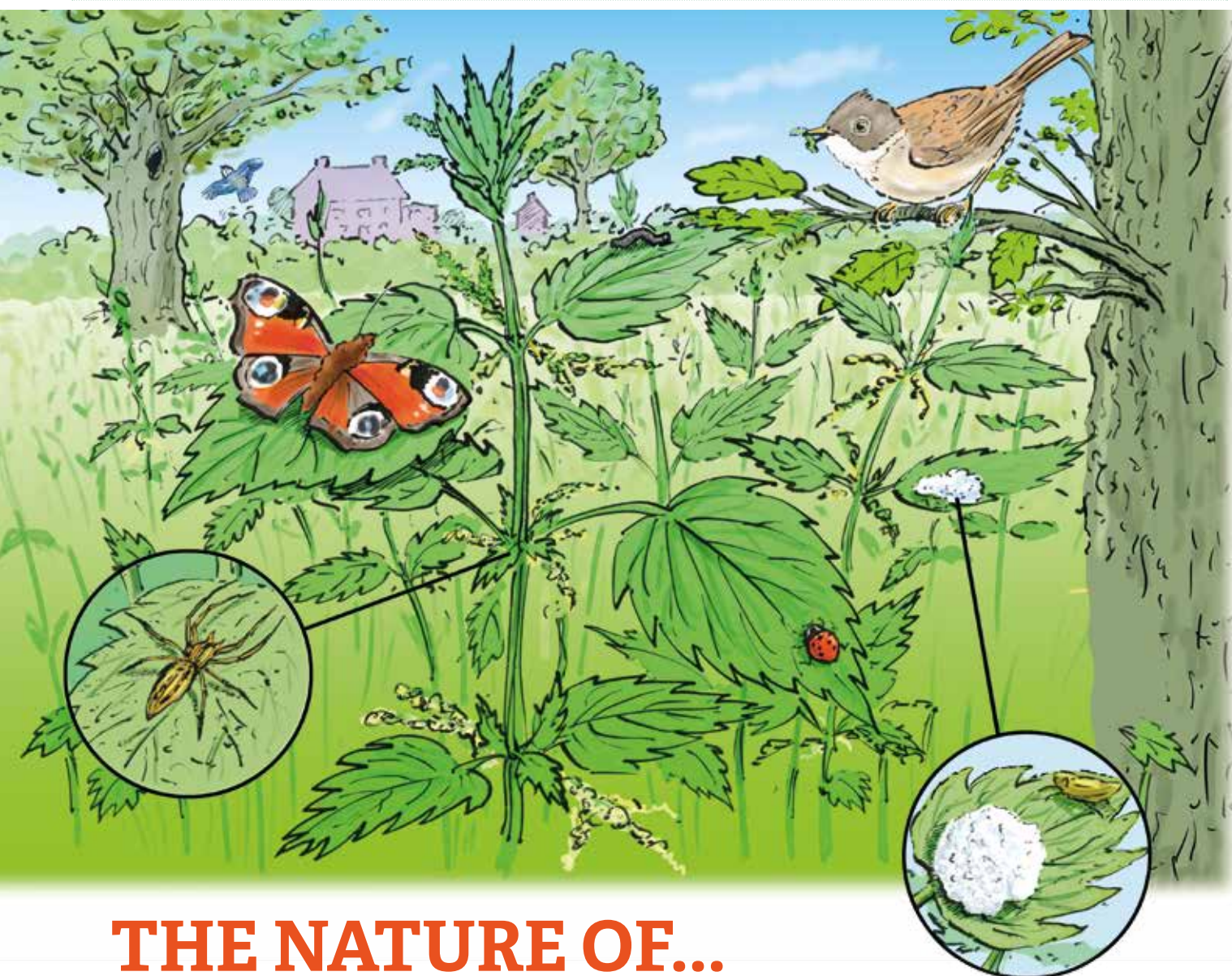
TIM HILL

a mix of reeds, sedges and rushes provide a backdrop for flowers such as purple loosestrife, ragged-robin, flowering rush and marsh marigolds. The diversity of plants supports huge numbers of insects which in turn provide food for birds and bats. Where the rushes meet the water, water voles make their homes and moorhens build their nests. These places are very special and sadly, increasingly rare. Enjoy them while you can.

📍 Ragged-Robin



LEE SCHOFIELD



THE NATURE OF... a nettle patch

Stinging nettles are usually avoided due to the unpleasant result of brushing past them, yet they sustain a rich and diverse fauna, offering a home to a surprising amount of wildlife.

Charlotte Hussey explores this miniature habitat.

The **stinging nettle** is a long-lived plant, usually occurring in dense stands. Found almost everywhere, nettles are able to thrive in a multitude of places from clay and peat to woodland and agricultural land – all the way from sea level to subalpine level. Nettles are distributed widely, largely due to human activity as the plant likes nutrient rich soil – the sort that has been worked on, often with fertiliser added at some point.

Established plants grow rapidly from May until July and can reach heights of up to 1.8m! The plants flower from July until September after which the

stems slowly die back as winter frosts take hold.

Stinging nettles developed their stinging hairs as a defence against grazing animals – this means that while mammals will receive a sting from the plant, other animals, most notably insects, can live undisturbed in the safe jungle of stems and leaves.

Over 40 species of insect are supported including **butterflies**, **beetles**, **hoverflies**, **earwigs** and **aphids**. The aphids found on the plant provide an early food source for **ladybirds** as well as woodland birds such as **blue tits**, **chiffchaffs** and **willow warblers**.

You may have seen patches of white froth on nettle leaves. This is called cuckoo-spit and is caused by the **frog hopper nymph** hiding from

its predators by surrounding itself in a mass of white froth secreted from its abdomen as it feeds from nettle's stem sap after hatching.

Some birds, such as the **whitethroat**, will make its nest in the dense nettle patch, feeding on **spiders** and the rich insect life present. In late summer the plant produces a huge quantity of seed which provides a great food source for our seed eating birds.

The nettle is the food plant to a number of **caterpillars** including **comma**, **red admiral**, **small tortoiseshell** and **peacock**. Butterflies lay their eggs on nettles so that their larvae have an instant meal upon hatching – caterpillars can then feed safely and their butterflies feed in large groups hidden under the leaves at the top of the nettle stems.

KEEP OUR marvellous MEADOWS IN BLOOM

In the warm summer sun our local meadows and grasslands should be filled with an array of wonderful wildflowers. When in full bloom, you can experience the wonders of these beautiful wildlife havens; the scent of delicate wildflowers; the sound of birds and buzzing pollinators, and the sight of fluttering butterflies above a multi-coloured blanket of wildflowers.

Unfortunately, changes in the way that land is managed has resulted in a loss of many of our diverse species-rich grasslands. Agricultural intensification, lack of management and a reduction in grazing has all led to scrub and woodland dominating our grassland sites. **Sadly, a staggering 97% of wildlife-rich grassland has already disappeared since the 1930s.**

This year the Trust needs to raise **£20,515** to keep our local meadows and grasslands blooming at their best. **Will you help us?**

Ten years ago Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust embarked on one of its most ambitious restoration projects ever; **to restore an overgrown and undermanaged grassland**

to its former glory. A decade on, Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve is now one of Hertfordshire's greatest species-rich chalk grasslands. Our conservation efforts at this reserve have resulted in the resurgence of the small blue, Britain's smallest resident butterfly, as well as the locally scarce dark green fritillary; it is now home to over 30 species of butterflies and many other pollinators too. **The restoration project at Aldbury Nowers has been a proven success. Now we must continue to protect this site and others like it for the future.**

Today, less than 1% of land in Hertfordshire remains as wildflower meadow. We urgently need your support to provide a future for our local grasslands. We need funds to cover the cost of machinery hire, tools, livestock and staff time to manage our grasslands so that they continue to thrive as fully functioning, species-rich and diverse habitats. It is only with your support that we can be equipped to actively manage our local meadows and grasslands so they can bloom at their best. **Please be part of this vital movement to conserve your critically important local grasslands and the wildlife that depends on them.**

A gift from you today, no matter how small, will make a very real difference to your local wildlife.

Thank you.

A clear success at Aldbury Nowers!

Conservation grazing is one of the best ways to increase species diversity in our grasslands

Monitoring our grasslands every year is a vital part of our work



By clearing encroaching scrub the locally scarce dark green fritillary can thrive in Hertfordshire once more



Your donation could cover the costs involved in our grassland conservation work this year so they can bloom at their best:

£15 could help us to replace one of our steel-tooth rakes, essential for our annual grassland cut and collection in the autumn



£50 could buy fence posts so that we can install or repair fencing on our nature reserves to help us manage important grazing livestock

£220 could help us run a volunteer work party to clear encroaching scrub and other invasive plants species to improve habitat conditions for rare grassland plants and wildflowers



£500 could help us undertake a grassland survey on one of our larger nature reserves to monitor the plant species present and help us assess the condition of the meadow

If one generous supporter gave us **£1,500** that could cover the hire costs of a large cutter-collector for our annual haycut on two of our larger grassland sites, once the wildflowers have set seed and before the wetter winter weather sets in

Yes! I would like to help Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust manage my local meadow and grassland habitats for wildflowers and other wildlife!

Here is my gift of (please tick)

☐ **£15** ☐ **£50** ☐ **£220** ☐ **£500** ☐ **£1,500** ☐ Other: £

I enclose a cheque payable to Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust OR please debit my Credit/Debit Card* (*delete as appropriate)

Name on card

Expires

Security code

Card number

/

(last 3 digits on signature strip)

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Help us to make the most of your donation to the Trust

Gift Aiding your donations means we reclaim your tax – at least 25p for every £1 you give us.

My Gift Aid declaration: Yes, I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay the difference.

☐ please tick

Please make sure you have signed and dated your kind gift, with thanks.

Title Initials Surname Signature Date

If you do not need a receipt and would like to help us save costs, please tick this box ☐

Keeping in touch

We hope you enjoy hearing from us. If you wish to change your communication preferences at any time please let us know by contacting fundraising@hmwt.org or 01727 858901.

Thank you for
your support!