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**RESERVES
TEAM**

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Autumn 2017

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Herts and
Middlesex

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wildlifematters

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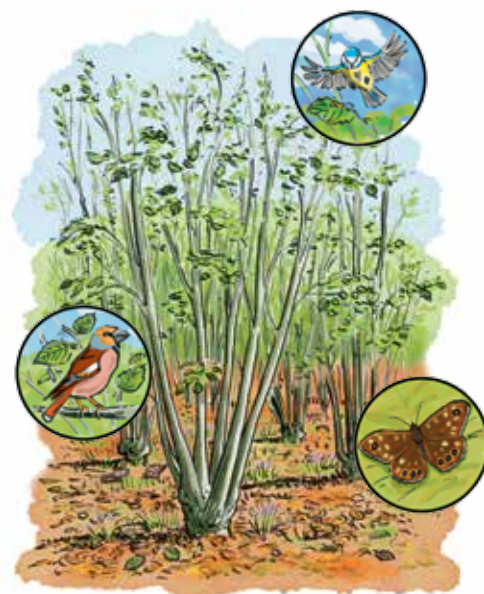
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From the Chief Executive



Welcome to the autumn edition of *Wildlife Matters*. The last few months have been a whirlwind of fantastic events, new records for the county, surveys and continued

hard work by our Reserves Team. Our Festival of Wildlife is growing bigger and better each year, with this year's visitor numbers doubling to 3000. It's a joy to see so many passionate people enjoying the nature on their doorstep, particularly young children who made natural creations, hunted for insects and had a brilliant wild day out. We are thrilled that our partnership with Puddingstone Distillery has been a roaring success with each bottle of special edition Himalayan balsam gin raising funds for the Trust. This summer has seen our local dragonfly numbers grow to an all-time high and the plume moth has once again been recorded in Hertfordshire – the first record since 1930! This autumn we were delighted that the restoration of Panshanger Park, a partnership between the Trust, Tarmac and Herts County Council, was recognised with the key national award – the Cooper Heyman Cup – at the Mineral Products Association's 46th Quarry and Nature Awards. With winter well and truly on its way, now is a great time to visit our wetland and woodland reserves to spot the influx of winter visitors making a new home for the next few months. With nesting season over our Reserves Team are busier than ever protecting our local wild spaces – say hello if you spot them hard at work while you're out and about. Thank you for your continued support of the Trust.

Lesley Davies

Hertfordshire's dragonfly species at an all-time high

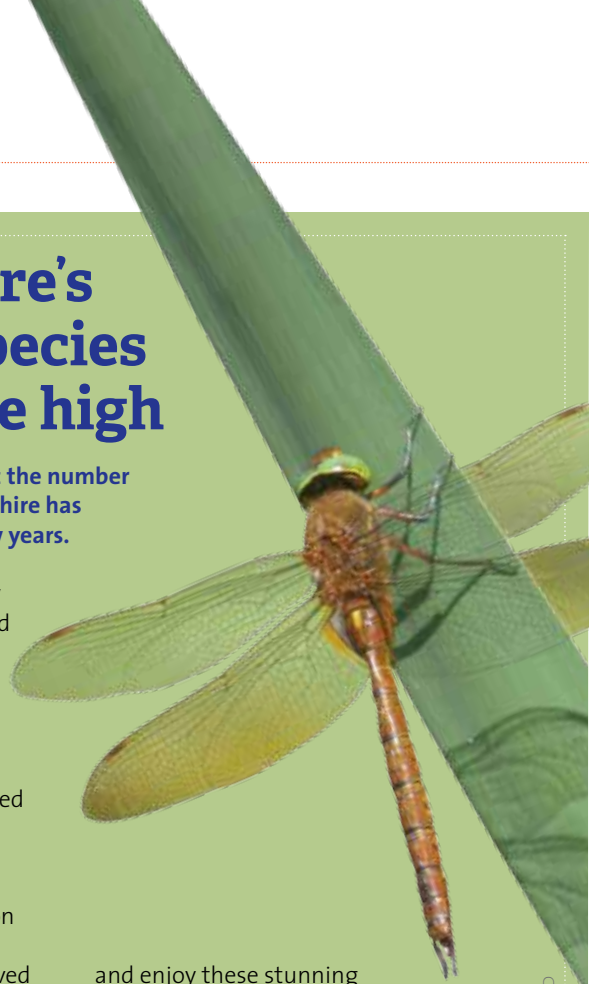
We are thrilled to announce that the number of dragonfly species in Hertfordshire has grown from 19 to 26 in just a few years.

Scarce emerald damselfly, willow emerald, scarce chaser, red-veined darter, lesser emperor, downy emerald and norfolk hawker have all colonised Hertfordshire (or recolonised in the case of the scarce emerald) in the last five years or so, with the small red-eyed damselfly and hairy dragonfly new since the 1980s. This is quite a turnaround for the county and can be attributed to a combination of maturing artificial wetlands, creation of new wetlands, improved water quality and climate change.

The Trust, alongside dedicated volunteers, has been working hard to ensure that the varied habitat needs of dragonflies are met, maintaining and creating suitable habitats at our nature reserves. To enable people to experience

and enjoy these stunning insects, there are now dedicated dragonfly trails at Amwell Nature Reserve and Panshanger Park.

The best time to see dragonflies is during the summer months. Look out for events in next year's *Go Wild* and on our website.



BARRY REED

New orchard project launched

Orchards East, a three year Heritage Lottery Fund project working across the eastern region, was launched in Hertfordshire at the Trust's Tewin Orchard Nature Reserve.

Led by the University of East Anglia, the Orchards East project team will survey and record traditional orchards across the East of England and research the history of fruit growing

in the region. The project will involve both the restoration of important historic orchards and the creation of new examples. Herts Environmental Records Centre, which is hosted by the Trust, is assisting the project by digitising historic maps to enable historic orchard sites to be better identified and surveyed.

Orchards East would welcome any information readers may have about historic orchards. They are also looking for volunteers who can help to track down and survey orchard sites and undertake research in local archives. Volunteers don't need any specialist knowledge, just an interest in and enthusiasm for orchards.

For further information, please contact rachel.savage@uea.ac.uk





Chalk Stream Discovery Trail opens

A nature trail at Tewinbury Nature Reserve has been opened in partnership with Tewin Bury Farm Hotel

The Chalk Stream Discovery Trail runs alongside the beautiful River Mimram – known as ‘the jewel in Hertfordshire’s countryside’. The Mimram is one of only 210 chalk streams in the world – 16 of which are in Hertfordshire.

We manage the nature reserve, which sits alongside Tewin Bury Farm Hotel, the owners of which have worked with the Trust to ensure that

the stretch of the Mimram running through their land is the best habitat it can be. The Chalk Stream Discovery Trail allows visitors to learn more about the habitat and the nature it supports.

The Trail is open every day for guests of Tewin Bury Farm Hotel and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust members. It can be accessed by collecting a key from the hotel reception.

Stocker's Lake



Local bat expert, Patty Briggs, has led a team of surveyors to carry out ‘harp trapping’ at Stocker’s Lake Nature Reserve as part of the Bat Conservation Trust’s ‘National Nathusius Monitoring Programme’. The team identified one bat as flying all the way from Latvia – a total distance of more than 1494km. The National Project has only recorded four other long distant migratory records so this is a very exciting development.

Festival of Wildlife and Apple Day



The Trust’s 2017 Festival of Wildlife was a roaring success. The Festival, which was held in partnership with Hertfordshire Natural History Society and kindly hosted by Tarmac, took place at the end of July in Panshanger Park near Hertford. This year saw visitor numbers double to 3000. Children and adults were able to learn about their local wildlife from a rich programme of walks, talks and activities led by experts from the Trust and the Herts Natural History Society. This year, other local conservation groups and wildlife artists joined us,

adding a fantastic new element for visitors to explore.

On Sunday 8 October, the Trust enjoyed the fruits of Tewin Orchard at our annual Apple Day. A record 1200 people enjoyed the event in Tewin Village and were treated to home-made cakes, a wide range of orchard apples, juice and preserves, along with guided tours of the orchard and children’s wildlife activities. Our thanks go to Councillor Ken Crofton for once again supporting this popular annual event.

Trust receives donation from Mayor



Hertford’s 2016 Mayor, Cllr Dr Linda Radford, presented the Trust with a donation of £3,705.86, raised from her nomination of the Trust as one of her two charity beneficiaries of the year. The Trust is hugely grateful for this support which will help us look after Waterford Heath Nature Reserve.



Barbastelle bats

In 2015 a planning application for the A120 bypass at Little Hadham became the catalyst for a major new project to find out more about our elusive, local barbastelle bat population

Development is one of the most significant pressures facing wildlife in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The Trust regularly reviews and submits comments to local authorities when planning applications come forward which may have significant impacts on wildlife.

In December 2015 Matt Dodds, the Trust's Planning and Biodiversity Manager, reviewed a planning application for the A120 bypass at Little Hadham in east Hertfordshire. Matt's review of the application showed that it did not take proper consideration of the impact on barbastelle bats. Barbastelles are one of the Trust's priority species and an important population had been identified by the Herts and Middlesex Bat Group in a nearby woodland, close to the application site.

Following objections from the Trust and the Bat Group, planning was delayed by Hertfordshire County Council to allow recommended surveys to be carried out by ecological consultants. During these surveys, several barbastelles were radio tagged and the data used to observe how they interacted with the existing road. This helped analyse potential impacts of the proposed scheme and resulted in the inclusion of additional mitigation measures such as habitat creation, light impact reduction, the creation of an underpass and ongoing monitoring of the barbastelle bat population.

Barbastelle bats – a priority for the Trust
The existing evidence of barbastelle bats close to the proposed bypass meant this scheme would be changed.

However, the Trust and the Bat Group realised that there was a wider lack of records for barbastelles across much of the rest of the county. Without evidence, barbastelle populations could be threatened by future proposed developments. With barbastelle bats classified as a European Protected Species (Annex II) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List, protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Trust is committed to their conservation and has identified barbastelles as one of seven priority species in the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.

Mapping barbastelles

The Barbastelle Bat Project has been set up in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Bat Group and aims to increase our knowledge of the bats' distribution in the county. In summer 2016, the Trust trained bat surveyors

in barbastelle detection and carried out a series of surveys at Tarmac's Panshanger Park which recorded some barbastelle activity, although not a maternity colony.

During spring 2017 eight static detectors were deployed in nearby woodlands in an attempt to pick up barbastelle activity and build a robust database of records. The surveys started positively with 60 new records generated before the middle of May. One exciting new find was at our Balls Wood Nature Reserve where three barbastelle contacts were made – a new record for the area.

Over the summer the project continued, with more concentrated efforts being guided by the earlier surveys. To date the project has generated 228 records and by concentrating on sites of high potential it is hoped that maternity colonies will be identified. If maternity colonies are found, the project aims to catch and radio tag individuals in order to find their maternity trees, foraging areas and commuting routes. Once the maternity trees have been located we can count how many bats are in the colony, mark the individuals with rings to facilitate population monitoring, and protect the trees themselves. All records gained will give a better insight into local barbastelle distribution, helping to conserve this rare species and mitigate against future risks.



DREAMSTIME

Barbastelle facts

- The barbastelle is one of the UK's rarest mammals.
- The barbastelle is a medium-sized bat that is easily identified because it is a very distinctive species, unlike any other in Europe.
- Barbastelles live in a colony but have individual flightpaths in many directions from the woodland roost. This ensures equal hunting chances.
- Barbastelles change roosts around once every three days, switching between the other roosts in the area that form the local colony.
- They have a fission-fusion society; a group in which the size and composition is constantly changing. The bats sleep together, physically touching for warmth, and then split to hunt alone.
- Barbastelles roost in very specific habitat, favouring peeling bark on dead trees, meaning that older woodland is required. Females and young bats secure the best habitat as the most vital and vulnerable members of society.
- All bats use echolocation to detect their insect food sources and many moths can hear this high-pitched sound, out-manoeuvring their would-be predators. When researchers from the University of Bristol analysed the barbastelles' echolocation calls in 2010, they found that barbastelles' are up to 100 times quieter than those of other bats, making them highly adaptable and successful in avoiding competition from other bats who have to feed on non-hearing moths.



NEXUS

Thermal imaging bat image

In September, the BBC *Inside Out* team visited the site together with all the contributors to the Barbastelle Bat Project. Nexus Imaging Ltd and Russell Savory filmed the bats using a thermal imaging camera to detect Barbastelle roosts and capture emergence of the bats.

Thank you The Trust would like to thank the [John Spedan Lewis Foundation](#), [Spear Charitable Trust](#) and [Christopher Laing Foundation](#) for their generous donations towards the cost of purchasing bat detectors and other equipment for the Barbastelle Bat Project, along with all the [volunteers](#) who are supporting the project.

New volunteers are welcome and anyone who would like to find out more about the Barbastelle Bat Project should contact Matt Dodds, matt.dodds@hmwt.org

Check your latest [Go Wild events](#) leaflets for bat events happening across Hertfordshire and Middlesex



Trusts launch vision for Living Seas

Report says the Government has a unique chance to lead the world in marine conservation

A new report by The Wildlife Trusts outlines how a radical approach to marine planning could bring our seas back to their former abundance.

The Way Back to Living Seas demonstrates that a joined-up network of Marine Protected Areas will safeguard marine wildlife and help the livelihoods of the many people who depend on the sea.

It suggests dividing coastal waters into five regional seas and then

managing everything that happens in them – from recreation to fisheries to aggregate extraction – in a way that balances the needs of wildlife and people. This does not happen at the moment.

Joan Edwards, Director of Living Seas at The Wildlife Trusts, gave a copy of the report to Environment Secretary Michael Gove when she met him in October.

“We believe that a healthy, wildlife-rich marine environment is valuable

in its own right and fundamentally important for human health, wellbeing and prosperity,” she said afterwards.

“If the Government takes the lead on this, within the next 25 years our seas will be more sustainable and well on their way to recovering their historic levels. This will benefit the wildlife that inhabits our seas and the prosperity and well-being of local communities and the UK that depends on them.”



An act for nature

The Wildlife Trusts are calling for an Environment Act: an ambitious piece of framework legislation that would give our wildlife a unique opportunity to recover

Imagine taking a train journey through the countryside in 25 years' time. From the window, you see red kites gliding across beautiful farmland and woods. Bees are buzzing in the vibrant field margins and thriving hedgerows.

You whizz past a vast wetland teeming with egrets, herons and, although you don't see them, water voles. There are no stories about flooding in the news – the recent heavy rainfall has been locked into the landscape, caught upstream.

Last week, when you went to the seaside on holiday, the beach was pristine: no plastic bottles, rockpools full of life. Seabirds were fishing just offshore. The fish'n'chip shop was doing a roaring trade selling local catch – since the seas have been recovering, both people and wildlife have benefited. Whales, dolphins, vast shoals of tuna –

they're a regular occurrence now.

When you arrive in the bustling city, the air you breathe is just as clean as it is in the countryside. Above the urban hubbub, blackbirds, robins and dunnocks are singing loudly. You stroll over a river: earlier this morning, an otter swam beneath this bridge, a fat brown trout in its mouth. In a park across the street, schoolchildren are having a lesson in the shade of the trees. They look happy and focused.

This doesn't have to be a dream. We have a chance to act now, together, and give wildlife a real chance to recover. If we're ambitious enough, we really could

Everything we value derives from nature



Stephanie Hilborne
OBE is Chief Executive
of RSWT

be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it.

A wildlife-rich world is important for its own sake, but we also know it is the foundation of our society and economy. Ultimately everything we eat and drink; the air we breathe; our fuel, clothes and shelter derives from the natural world. So does everything we value: our health, wellbeing and possessions.

Yet, we have taken it for granted; mined the natural world mercilessly. Isn't it time for us to enter a new era



ALEX MUSTARD

Common seal, Isle of Coll

“A healthy sea is vital for future generations”



Could there be a lot more nature in our lives by 2040?

WHAT YOU CAN DO
If you think there should be more nature in all our lives, write to your MP and let them know: all the details are on wildlifetrusts.org/environmentact

AMWELL RESERVE/MATTHEW ROBERTS

in our relationship with nature?

Acts of Parliament are an expression of what a nation values. Acts have ushered in healthcare and education for all, and made us safer in the workplace. The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and its successors have protected some vital rich wildlife sites. But we know this is not enough, and soon we won't have the safety net of the EU courts either.

The UK and each country within it needs visionary legislation that explicitly aims for nature's recovery on

land and at sea. Only Governments can ensure there is a long-term framework that puts nature back into our landscapes, townscapes and society.

We all deserve a world-class environment: clean air, clear water, a stable climate, healthy seas and thriving wildlife in the places we love. So do future generations. If we all make enough noise, and explain this is what we want, it can happen.



CHRIS GOMERSALL/2020VISION

Abberton's black honey bee HQ. The Trust hopes they will colonise the area

Rare black bees back in Essex

Essex Wildlife Trust is working to bring back the black honey bee. Once a native species, the bee was almost completely wiped out 100 years ago. Now a colony is back and buzzing at the Trust's Abberton Reservoir reserve.

Apis mellifera mellifera is one of around 28 sub-species of the western honey bee. The species flies in cooler weather than the non-native bees often imported to help pollination, so can be better at finding food.

Spirited support for Wildlife Trusts

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's annual beer festival in September premiered Malthouse Dormouse, a light, fruity ale from Leamington Spa brewery. It was inspired by the re-introduction of dormice this year in a Trust woodland. Money raised will support the Trust's work.

Not to be outdone, Herts and Middlesex Trust receive £2 for every bottle sold of Puddingstone Distillery's special edition Campfire Gin. The gin uses flowers from the invasive Himalayan balsam, removed from the neighbouring reserve.



BEV LEWIS

⚡ The inspiration for the new beer was unavailable for comment



The Tewin

Tewin Orchard and Hopkyns' Wood Nature Reserve provides a great natural habitat for wildlife.

Alongside the wildflowers, butterflies and birds, the site is home to a much shyer creature – the badger.

Michael Clark, Volunteer Warden at the reserve, has been surveying badgers since the 1960s and gives us an insight into these fascinating animals.

Badgers are one of the larger members of the mustelid family which includes ferrets, martens, otters and polecats. They can grow up to one metre in size and have hefty reserves of fat that they increase during the autumn ahead of going into torpor – a state of decreased physiological activity in an animal, usually by a reduced body temperature and metabolic rate – over the winter.

Badgers have a great sense of smell and, as with many mammals, they use scent to mark territory and communicate, having several scent glands which they use for identification. Whilst most nocturnal animals have

large eyes to help them see in the dark, badgers' eyes are fairly small which indicates that vision isn't as important as their other senses. Badgers' ears are also small in comparison to their bodies but they communicate using around 16 distinctive calls including growls, clucks, purrs and hisses. Badgers startle easily, suggesting that their hearing is relatively keen.

Badgers are omnivores but their food of choice is earthworms – they can eat up to 200 a night. If worms are not so readily available badgers are extremely adaptable and opportunistic, feeding on berries, fruit, nuts, insects, small mammals, fish and more.

A tidy home

Badgers use their long, powerful claws to dig underground burrows called setts where they live in large family groups or 'clans'. The boundaries to these setts are marked by latrines, this helps to avoid conflict with other badger clans. Setts can be hundreds of years old and are passed down through the generations, developing and growing depending on the needs of the clan at the time. Typically, clans will number around six adults, but can increase to over 10 depending on local resources. Badgers have



Badger watching at Tewin

Whilst living in a monitored nature reserve can reduce some threats for the resident badgers, they still retain their shy and cautious nature which needs to be respected by visitors to badger watch evenings at the Mammal Hide. In a world where we are so used to just 'switching on' what we want to see, the wait for the wildlife to come into view is quite a different experience, especially for impatient youngsters. Yet they come away with comments left in the diary such as 'the best thing my brother and I have ever seen' and many return time and time again.

The Mammal Hide at Tewin Orchard can be booked between March and mid-October. Visit the Trust's Tewin Orchard Nature Reserve page on our website for more information. Keep an eye on our summer *Go Wild* for special badger watching events too.

Sett



« MICHAEL'S BOOK

Michael's acclaimed study of the biology and natural history of the badger has been recently updated for the popular British Natural History Collection. It now includes a description of the controversy surrounding the culling of badgers in response to the prevalence of tuberculosis in cattle.

The new edition features a gallery of Michael's colour photographs and a foreword by Dominic Dyer, Director of the Badger Trust.

Badgers is now available at amazon.co.uk for only £15.99.



also been known to share their setts with foxes or rabbits.

Much like we tidy our bedrooms and change our bedsheets, badgers will drag out their old bedding – hay, grass and leaves – to prevent disease and lice. This means that they spend a lot of time collecting new bedding to replace the old, dragging material they find into their setts for warmth.

An occupied sett can be recognised by the tidy burrow entrances, marked with piles of used bedding and

nearby latrine pits where they leave their droppings. Most badger setts in woodland will show exposed tree roots at the entrances and some holes will take on the near perfect symmetry of the badger's curved back.

Mating

Badgers have an amazing reproductive technique called delayed implantation whereby the female badger (sow) can mate at any time after her cubs are born but still keep her birth time to the

spring. This means that badgers are able to give birth at the most suitable time of year to ensure the best chance of survival for their offspring.

Hibernation

Badgers don't hibernate in the technical sense, however do put on a lot of weight in the autumn to keep them with good reserves of fat when food is scarcer in the winter months. They also sleep deeper and longer and in very cold weather can stay underground for days at a time.



My Wild Life

Local Wildlife Sites are special places for wildlife and vital to the future survival of our native species. There are almost 2000 Local Wildlife Sites in Hertfordshire. The Trust provides advice to local landowners on their management, helps to ensure sites are recognised in the planning process and organises monitoring and surveying by our team of skilled volunteers.

Charlotte Hussey, the Trust's Communications Officer, went to meet **Andrew Harris to find out about his role as a Local Wildlife Sites surveyor and how others can get involved...**

Variety, or should I say biodiversity, is the spice of life

How did you become a volunteer?

I became a Local Wildlife Site surveyor in the summer of 2009 after Brenda Harold, another Trust volunteer and eminent local botanist, encouraged me to join the team. It was something I was interested in so I did not need a lot of pushing. I have never looked back since!

What does your surveying role involve?

The object of the surveying is to assess the ecological value of the sites according to their plants and other features such as veteran trees. It involves being part of a small group of enthusiastic people who go out, usually once a week, investigating different habitats. In winter this might be old green lanes with their ancient hedge banks and twisted hornbeams. Early spring is the time for woodland surveys followed by grasslands in late spring and summer. We walk over the site identifying plant species – trees, grasses and wild flowers. Someone will record the main habitats and features of the site on a map and take photographs of them. Other members of the group help to write up a report.

What are your favourite types of surveys?

Gosh, that is a difficult one to answer! I really like studying veteran trees with their various amazing shapes, all the nooks and crannies and the texture of their bark. It is great fun surveying them too, crawling through thickets and taking up all kinds of comical poses in an attempt to measure them. However, all types of surveys have their rewards and when so many of our species-rich habitats have been lost over recent decades I really enjoy finding something good that still survives in our area whether it is an ancient woodland, old meadow, or the wetlands which border our chalk streams. Variety, or should I say biodiversity, is the spice of life.

Do you need to be an expert to be a surveyor?

Certainly not, while we very much welcome the participation of those with experience of surveying – some

knowledge of plant identification is very useful – being an expert is optional! It is just as important to have an appreciation of the wonderful habitats in our area and a desire to protect them. Even if you consider yourself a novice, so long as you have an appetite for knowledge there will be opportunities to learn about plant identification and ancient trees. As a small group of volunteers we work together and support each other.

What advice would you give to people who would like to get involved?

Being a surveyor is a commitment but it is all the more important for that. Also, never be afraid to ask questions. I have always found everyone with experience in this subject to be very pleased to share their knowledge. And, as one who has just had to travel halfway across the county to retrieve his rather soggy possessions, don't get so engrossed in a fascinating survey that you forget to take all your things home!

Surveying highlight?

As far as plants are concerned, one moment which comes into mind was finding purple milk vetch, when we visited a beautiful piece of chalk grassland near Royston. Purple milk vetch is classified as 'Endangered' and included as a species "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity" under Section 41 (England) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; so it was a real find!

Something which really makes a survey worthwhile is when the landowner is enthusiastic about their site and really appreciates us being there to survey it. For instance, we once went to a fascinating alder woodland in the north of the county and were treated to tea in the owner's garden and given a pot of homemade jam to take away in gratitude. And of course one of the best things is to be out with a great group of like-minded people – it makes everything worthwhile. I would encourage anyone with an interest to contact the Trust and find out more.



If you are interested in joining the survey team, contact Carol Lodge at carol.lodge@hmwt.org



Our meadows will be blooming marvellous next year thanks to you!

The support you give to our fundraising appeals is always overwhelming. Our last campaign captured the hearts of so many of you. Thank you for all of your kind gifts. At the time of print you have helped us to raise over £12,000 with Gift Aid.

While we might not reach our original appeal target, it will still make an enormous contribution to our annual costs and, as ever, the continued generosity of our supporters is hugely appreciated.

As a result, our amazing Reserves Team has already been working hard to keep your local meadows and grasslands blooming at their best.

See what the team has already achieved for wildlife so far this year, all thanks to your continued support.

Conservation grazing and fencing repairs

Our 'living lawnmowers' include sheep, cattle and ponies. They have been busy grazing several of our reserves, including Thorley Wash, Blagrove Common, Patmore Heath and Gobions Wood, to name a few. They help keep on top of vegetation growth and prevent scrub encroachment. Look out for our 'flying flock' of Shetland sheep at Hexton this November.

Our flying flock of Shetland sheep have been paramount to our conservation grazing at Gobions Wood

Rob Hopkins

The Reserves Team and their volunteers have been improving fencing and other important site infrastructure on a number of reserves. They have repaired and installed more fencing at Aldbury Nowers, Alpine Meadow and Long Deans, and improvements have been carried out on the cattle pen at Thorley Wash. All of which means that our essential conservation grazing can take place on your local grasslands.



Grassland cutting

We have completed cutting, raking and haymaking at seven nature reserves, including Hexton and Blagrove Common. The cutting and removal of grass is vital to keep the nutrient levels low so that wildflowers can flourish on your local meadows.

I was able to buy three pitch forks, at a cost of £15 each, essential for our annual grassland cut and collection work this autumn

Luke Shenton

Further cutting and raking has been underway across Tewin Orchard, with more planned at Rye Meads, Purwell Ninesprings and Waterford Heath. Our volunteers have completed various tasks at Aldbury Nowers and Alpine Meadow, and our weekend volunteer group has also cut the meadow at Lemsford Springs.

A combined total of over 11 hectares of meadow and grassland have been cut as part of our annual haycut, ensuring that your local flora and the fauna they support can flourish. Visit our website at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/meadowsupdate to see the reserves team in action at Frogmore Meadow!

Scrub clearance

Thistle pulling has been completed at Rye Meads in preparation for the grassland cut, four work parties have cleared scrub from the meadow at Fir and Pond Woods, and two work parties have been cutting back scrub at Long Deans. We also completed further grassland restoration work at Patmore Heath and Hertford Heath to improve these habitats for wildlife.

Grassland surveys

Surveys have been completed on 11 of our grassland sites – excitingly southern marsh orchids were recorded at Thorley Wash for the first time this year. Although they're not categorised as rare in Hertfordshire, they are still relatively uncommon and so it's great that our management work has allowed the orchid to appear.

Thank you to everyone who has kindly donated to our meadows appeal. You have helped us improve your local meadows and grassland habitats so that wildflowers and other wildlife can flourish.





Tweets from the field...

Social media highlights from the past few months



Tewinbury visitor @lynher captured this young kingfisher on camera



Thorley Wash Volunteer Warden @merlinsleeps shared this photo of our grazing Red Poll cattle playing peek-a-boo in the long grass!



@harrisdigital snapped this green shieldbug in between rain showers



@ProfJGrey has been enjoying @PuddingstoneGin, created using invasive Himalayan balsam in partnership with the Trust



@MsQuizzical caught this juvenile green woodpecker in the grass in August



Thanks to @RonBaber for sharing this photo of a common blue butterfly at Danemead



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](https://www.facebook.com/hertswildlifetrust).





Direction Correction

Please note there is an error in the recently printed Reserves Guide. The postcode and OS map reference for Tewin Orchard is incorrect. The correct information is:
Postcode: AL6 0LZ
OS Map Reference: TL268 155

Where the Wild Things Are

How is your local wildlife faring? What is so special about chalk streams? Why do species and habitats need protecting? What conservation projects are happening near you? How can you help protect your natural heritage?

Our special community talk, *Where the Wild Things Are*, helps to answer these questions and discusses how the work of the Trust is making a difference.

If you are part of a local community group that would like to hear this special wildlife talk by our excellent team of volunteer speakers then get in touch. For more information on how to make a booking please visit: hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/talks or contact our volunteer Talks Administrator, Wendy Hartnell, on communitytalks@hmwt.org or call 01727 858901.

**BOOK
YOUR TALK
NOW!**

The Trust pays tribute to the late Mr Michael Harverson

Michael lived in Hertfordshire for 50 years, having moved from Kent where he was born and spent his childhood and teenage years. From a young age he was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable bird-watcher, later sharing this hobby with students at the school where he taught for almost 30 years. Many still remember the birdwatching trips he organised to Norfolk, Hampshire and Wales, a tribute to the wonderful legacy he has left.

He enjoyed holidays abroad, particularly France but also further afield to Australia, adding a keen interest in wildflowers and butterflies to his love of birdwatching. At home in Hertfordshire, one of his favourite places to watch wildlife was the Trust's Cassiobury Park Nature Reserve and on walks by the River Gade and the Grand Union Canal where, much to his delight, he would occasionally see a kingfisher or, more frequently, a little egret. In retirement he became an enthusiastic member of the Trust's Green Team, where he relished being involved in a variety of practical tasks, helping to protect local wildlife. Michael always enjoyed working at Aldbury Nowers where there are a great variety of flowers and butterflies to delight in. It became frustrating for him when his mobility lessened in later years, but he continued to enjoy his local wildlife, venturing out on his mobility scooter or simply watching the different birds on his garden feeders.

After many happy years living in Hertfordshire, Michael was convinced it was one of the loveliest counties for observing and enjoying a wonderful variety of scenery and wildlife – something we would agree with!

Because of his love of local wildlife, Michael chose to kindly support the Trust with a gift in his will.

He and his wife, Susan, have been members of the Trust for over 30 years and so it was very thoughtful and generous of him to have remembered our work in this special way, for which we are very grateful. When Michael sadly passed away, his wife Susan and the rest of his family and friends generously also made donations to the Trust in his memory. It is through our local conservation work that we can help to ensure that the wildlife and wild places Michael cared so much for throughout his life are protected for the future.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Albury Parish Council

Our thanks to everyone at Albury Parish Council for their generous donation of £759 to the Trust following a fundraising event at the village hall. The parish council raised the funds at a special talk by expert wildlife photographer Russell Savory. Money raised will go towards our work at Patmore Heath Nature Reserve in Albury.

Edge Grove School

We were delighted to receive the support of students and teachers from Edge Grove School who were able to raise a whopping £1,237 for the Trust at their sponsored 'Walk the Walk' event. Their dedication and hard work is inspiring, well done!



Beekeeping courses

Bees are so important to our environment; these pollinating insects are essential for seed production – both for wild plants as well as flowers, vegetables and fruit.

Our friends at the Hertfordshire Beekeeper's Association are running beginners' beekeeping courses in the spring. Aimed at those looking to start beekeeping, the course covers important theory and practical training over six sessions. They start in March so that those looking to start beekeeping right away can introduce a colony of bees in April to June. To book please contact Mike Goodhew at training@hertsbees.org.uk.

Interested in beekeeping but want to find out more before committing to a course? Try our one day Introduction to Beekeeping Workshop next spring. More information will be available in 2018.





In remembrance

The Trust has received kind donations in memory of **Graham Gower, Tony Havercroft, Alan Johnson and Doreen Jones.**

In the last year legacies have been used to care for our nature reserves, helping us to continue protecting our rich natural heritage. Legacies have also helped us produce your brand new Reserves Guide, bringing even more people close to the wildlife on their doorstep.

Our thanks and condolences go to all their family and friends.

CELEBRATION GIVING

The Trust would like to congratulate **Dave and Jen** of Todd's Green on their Golden Wedding Anniversary in August, and wish **Brian Stone** a very Happy 70th Birthday. Our thanks go to them and their friends and family for donating to the Trust in lieu of presents.

If you have a special celebration coming up and would like to ask your friends and family to support a cause close to your heart, then please get in touch with us – we'd love to hear from you! Please call us on 01727 858901 or email becca.gibson@hmwt.org.



EMMA MATTHIAS

Raffle draws great support

We'd like to thank all the companies who donated to our Summer Raffle Draw, which was held at our annual Festival of Wildlife event in July and raised over £400 for local wildlife. Special thanks goes to expert wildlife photographer Russell Savory, who donated our very special first prize – the chance to join him on one of his wildlife photography and filming days, witnessing first hand all that goes into capturing the amazing wildlife footage and images AND a limited edition signed print – what a prize! Congratulations to all this year's winners!

If you or your business can support our next raffle draw by donating a prize please get in touch on 01727 858901 or email us at fundraising@hmwt.org.

Britvic's help at Hertford Heath was thirsty work!

Staff from Britvic joined us at Hertford Heath to help remove brambles and clear scrub that were shading out the smaller wildflowers, such as heather. This reserve is home to both a wide range of wildlife and a high level of visitors. It is essential that habitat work like this is completed – not only to keep optimum conditions for the wildlife, but also to accommodate access for people to come and enjoy the reserve.

Working for Wildlife Days like these are great for staff teams from local businesses to help with. You can see the positive impact of your efforts immediately, with it improving over time as our native plants, in this case heather, are given the room they need to flourish.



CHARLOTTE HUSSEY

Thanks so much for arranging such a fab day – everyone on the team really enjoyed it and felt connected to the value of giving back. Much appreciated!

Rachel Dies, Senior Employee Communications & Engagement Manager

Utilities company brings the power to Tewin Orchard

UK Power Networks have supported our annual harvest at Tewin Orchard for the past four years, and this year was one of our biggest harvests yet.

As with any wildlife habitat, the success of our orchard reserve is largely down to dedicated management and habitat restoration work. One key result of this activity is our autumn harvest when our fruit crops are ready to be picked and processed.

UK Power Network staff, as well as a number of local community groups, helped collect an impressive amount of apples which were then carted off to be processed and pressed into fresh apple juice – this year we managed to produce 850 bottles – and a range of preserves, all sold to raise money for the Trust's habitat management work.

Juice and preserves can be bought directly from our offices at Grebe House in St Albans.

Visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/workparty to organise your Working for Wildlife Day or contact the fundraising team on 01727 858901 or email fundraising@hmwt.org to discuss your requirements.





Fabulous fungi



Fungi are natural 'recyclers', feeding on dead organic matter to release nutrients back into the environment and supporting plant life on poor soils by aiding nutrient absorption through plant roots. This role is vital in the never-ending food chain of many different habitats – without fungi, the natural world would not function and any deterioration in fungi can have a real impact on ecosystem health.

Hertfordshire and Middlesex is full of fungi, if you know where to look. Now is the best time to get out and investigate, particularly when the weather is damp and warm. **Charlotte Hussey** tells us the best reserves for spotting some fungi for ourselves!



« Jelly ear fungus

Old Park Wood

Look to deciduous trees, particularly elder, for the **jelly ear fungus**. This ear-shaped

fungi is mainly seen in winter and spring, and has a jelly-like texture ranging from very soft when young to tough and finally hard when dry.

If you come across fungi that looks black and burnt on an ash tree, you may have found **King Alfred's cake**, also known as coal fungus. Legend tells how King Alfred left his cakes in the oven for too long when hiding from the Danes, burning them to a crisp and earning this fungus' namesake. The mushrooms either grow dark brown or black with the black variety sometimes used for lighting fires as, once the inner flesh is dry, it can be easily lit and burns slowly.

Where is it?

Harefield, Middlesex

Postcode: UB9 6UX

Map reference: TQ 049 913



King Alfred's cake

CHRIS LAWRENCE



Oyster mushroom



Gobions Wood

This ancient woodland is one of the best places in Hertfordshire to see fungi, with over 558 species recorded here.

Look out for – or sniff out – the stinkhorn mushroom. The **stinkhorn** is fascinating, emerging from an underground 'egg' which often disappears as the mushroom matures. The mushroom is initially covered with a green slime which, as you might predict, is foul smelling. This stinky slime attracts insects such as flies who feed on the mushroom and then spread the spores via their feet.

The **oyster mushroom** grows on trees in shelf like clusters and is so called as it has an oyster shaped cap. It grows on hardwood trees, particularly beech. This mushroom is now widely available to buy and eat but was first cultivated during World War I in Germany for sustenance.

Where is it?

Potters Bar, Hertfordshire

Postcode: AL9 7AF

Map reference: TL 249 040



LEE BIRNS

Stinkhorn 7

SHUTTERSTOCK



Blackening waxcap

**Frogmore Meadow**

Many people associate fungi with dark and damp woodland but our bright and open meadows can also host a good variety.

Keep your eyes peeled for **waxcap** fungi while walking through Frogmore Meadow in the Chess Valley. Waxcaps are great indicators of unimproved grassland as they are intolerant of modern agricultural practices such as ploughing and fertilising.

Where is it?

Chenies, Hertfordshire

Postcode: WD3 6ER

Map reference: TQ 022 988

**Hertford Heath**

Wood woollyfoot is often found under bracken on heathland making Hertford Heath the perfect place to spot this woodland mushroom. It has small white hairs covering the bottom half of its stem, earning its woollyfoot nickname.

Once you get your eye in, you'll start to see fungi in places you might usually overlook. No more than one cm across, the **twig parachute** is a tiny mushroom that is so small, it often grows on dead twigs. It frequently grows above head height on conifers and broadleaf trees and even on dead bramble.

Where is it?

Hertford, Hertfordshire

Postcode: SG13 7PW

Map reference: TL 351 108

SHUTTERSTOCK



Wood woollyfoot



Twig parachute

Fungi facts

Estimates of the world's number of fungal species run into the millions, outnumbering all other known living organisms put together – in the UK, there are over 4000 larger fungi species.

Orchids cannot germinate without the help of fungi.

It is possible for some mushroom spores to be dormant for a hundred years and then grow successfully into mushrooms.

Mushrooms can release up to 2.7 billion spores a day.

A fungus known as the honey fungus is the largest living organism on the planet. It is believed to be about 2400 years old and covers over 2000 acres.

Chicken of the woods >>

**Danemead**

As you bound through the woods this winter, keep an eye on fallen

branches for the **hairy curtain crust**. This tough fungus grows in wavy, individual brackets. The upper surface of the brackets is distinctly hairy, particularly when young. The colour of the fungi varies with age and location, as well as on individual brackets, with it often appearing banded due to dark green algae.

Perhaps one of our best known fungi, **chicken of the woods**, is a bright yellow orange bracket fungi which can grow to 30 to 40cm in width. Known by many as an edible mushroom, it is actually a parasite found on a variety of tree types including oak and willow. When found on yew trees it absorbs toxicity making it very dangerous to ingest.

Where is it?

Danemead, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

Postcode: EN11 8GG

Map reference: TL 346 077

>> Hairy curtain crust

SHUTTERSTOCK



Please  **DO NOT PICK FUNGI** on our nature reserves; it is valuable to the wildlife on our sites and can also be deadly when misidentified and eaten



Mushrooms can release up to 2.7 billion spores a day.

A fungus known as the honey fungus is the largest living organism on the planet. It is believed to be about 2400 years old and covers over 2000 acres.



Keep birds well fed this winter

As the days grow darker and colder you may be considering feeding the birds in your garden or, if you already do, increasing the amount of food that you put out.

Natural foods such as hawthorn and berries, that were so plentiful over autumn, are quickly depleting, and our native birds are in hot competition for what's left with the influx of winter migrants such as fieldfare and redwing.

Many people put out an increased amount of food, resulting in more birds being able to feed and a reduction in energy spent fighting to get to a single feeder. Another great way to help birds through harder months is to increase the fat content in the food you put out.

Sunflower hearts are a favourite

year-round and have a great fat content. In the winter they are particularly beneficial as birds can get straight to the fat and not use precious strength taking the black husk off. Suet is also very high in fat and can give your local birds the energy boost they need at this time.



VINE
HOUSE
FARM



Every time you buy bird seed direct from
Vine House Farm you are supporting
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Vine House Farm also supply
**bird feeders, nest boxes, wildlife
camera kits and children's gifts**
– take a look at the full range online...

To order, visit www.vinehousefarm.co.uk





Fun in the woods!

The Panshanger Park Forest School opened in February 2015 and has already seen over 1000 children pass through its doors.

Forest School is designed to build up children's skills and confidence of working and playing in the natural environment and is offered to schools and home educated children, as well as three to five year olds in Nature Tots sessions.



Becky always has lots of fun games and activities. We love Forest School with her so much



I love running outside and climbing trees



I had so much fun and learnt new things, I can't wait to come back!



We looked under rocks and in trees to find loads of bugs



I was amazed at how we could bend wood to make a bow!



Find out more by visiting our website hertswildlifetrust.org.uk
The Panshanger Park Forest School is a Tarmac initiative delivered in partnership with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust



Fir and Pond Woods

Fir and Pond Woods is a diverse reserve, steeped in the history of old Enfield Chase, and comprises of a mosaic of important habitats for local wildlife.

Fir and Pond Woods is widely thought to be the best remaining part of the ancient Enfield Chase – an area once covered by woodland and used as a royal deer park. It was first recorded as Enfeld Chace in 1325, from the Middle English ‘chace’ – a tract of ground used for breeding and hunting wild animals. Queen Elizabeth I is believed to have hunted on the chace as a Princess. In the reign of Henry II the chace spanned an area of about 12 miles from the City of London and in 1777 the area – by then 8,349 acres – was divided up and ceased to exist.

Woods, ponds and meadows

Fir and Pond Woods contains a mosaic of habitats supporting a wide variety of wildlife. The reserve has some fine examples of oak hornbeam pollard and coppice, which would have marked ancient parish boundaries from the original dividing of Enfield Chase. The older trees of the woodland provide great habitat for birds like great spotted woodpecker, which excavates standing deadwood to create nesting holes. Keep your eyes peeled for other woodland birds such as nuthatch

and treecreeper. Now is the perfect time to spot visiting fieldfares and redwings, searching for berry-laden bushes over the winter. Look out for fungi throughout the autumn and winter including the wide-brimmed parasol and the brightly coloured, shiny waxcap. In late summer you might catch a glimpse of the purple emperor butterfly high in the tree canopy where it feeds on aphid honeydew, very occasionally flying to seek food sources lower down. During the spring woodland plants carpet the floor. A particular highlight is the tiny purple-veined white flowers of wood sorrel, with its three heart shaped leaves and five petals folding in at night and reopening in the morning.

Medieval ponds are dotted around the woodland, historically used for easy access to fresh fish. Nowadays they attract an impressive number of dragonflies and damselflies, with sixteen of Hertfordshire’s species having been recorded here. The ponds are also valuable habitats for frogs and other amphibians, and for waterbirds including coot, moorhen and little grebe.

Great spotted woodpecker



MIKE SNELLE

Nuthatch



TMHIL

At the southern end of Pond Wood lies an acidic meadow with woodland on three sides and Turkey Brook on the fourth. Acidic grassland is scarce in this area and one of the Trust’s priorities for action. Large numbers of ancient ant hills here indicate that the meadow has never been ‘improved’ with machinery, creating invaluable habitat for a number of species. The meadow is rich in invertebrates, including butterflies and grasshoppers. On a warm summer’s day, butterflies including gatekeepers, small coppers and marbled whites can be seen in abundance.

Reserves Round up

Hexton Chalk Pit

A moth that has not been recorded in Hertfordshire since 1930 has once again been spotted – the plume moth, *Merrifieldia leucodactyla*, also known as the thyme plume due to its diet of wild thyme. Our management keeps the calcareous grassland open which encourages thyme; thanks to our

volunteers’ hard work wild thyme is thriving on the reserve and has saved the plume moth from going locally extinct.

Amwell

We have cut rides in front of the viewpoints to improve views for birdwatching and a pair of swallows nesting in the Gladwin Hide earlier this year successfully raised two

broods of chicks that fledged in August.

Hilfield Reservoir, Springwell Reedbed and Stocker’s Lake

All three habitat management plans have been submitted to project partner Affinity Water so that work can commence to improve these sites for both wildlife and people. Additionally a programme of events has been agreed for the autumn and



Marbled White



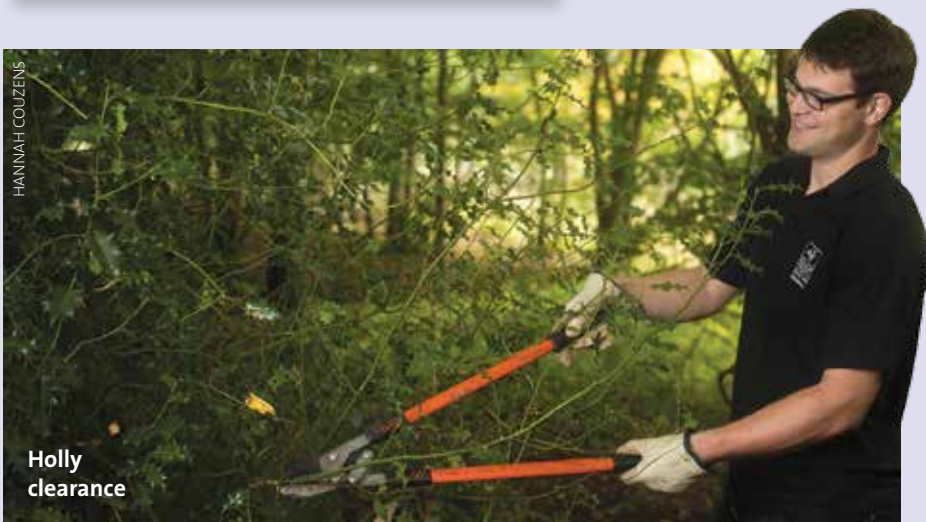
We would like to extend a special thank you to **David Gompertz** who this year stepped down as the reserve's Volunteer Warden. His dedication over the years has helped the site continue to flourish for wildlife.

Managing Fir and Pond Woods

The Trust's dedicated team of volunteers work hard to care for Fir and Pond Woods. Throughout the winter volunteers undertake the labour-intensive task of clearing areas of holly from the wood. Though a native plant, holly grows quickly and can overcrowd many other plant species. Clearance is managed carefully to ensure that some holly patches remain to retain its benefit to wildlife without dominating. Our Reserves Team and volunteers also work hard to keep paths open and scrub under control, as well as carrying out daily checks on the sheep when the herd is on-site from late summer to early autumn. The grazing of the ancient meadow allows specialist meadow plant species to continue to thrive such as tormentil, sheep's sorrel, heath bedstraw and mouse ear hawkweed.

HANNAH COUZENS

Holly clearance



winter including a wildfowl workshop at Stocker's Lake and a gull roost watch at Hilfield Park Reservoir.

Thorley Wash

Conservation grazing has continued on the site, with cattle fencing repaired thanks to funding from Tesco Bags of Help. Our Volunteer Warden, Robert, found southern marsh orchids over the summer

– the first orchids found on the reserve since the 2012/13 restoration project. They had been listed on the original SSSI citation, notified in 1986.

Lemsford Springs

We have been cutting watercress and begun willow spiling works along the banks between the river and lagoon to prevent erosion.

Future conservation

The Trust hopes to secure funding to restore a wet fen meadow at the southern end of the reserve. Ten years ago the fen area was used as a willow plantation to provide material for cricket bats. When the Trust took over the reserve's management in 1974 this use ceased and a project is now being considered to restore the habitat to its former use. Grazing would be an important part of such a project and would require fencing, a bridge and kissing gates. Watch this space...



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...



NOVEMBER

Redd Alert

In life, it's impossible to be aware of those formative moments as they happen and how sometimes they influence the future. One of these moments for me was as a boy when I joined my Grandpa on a trip to the River Edw, a tributary of the Wye in mid-Wales. His quarry was, as always, brown trout. Having fished for them for years, he was something of an expert in their ecology and was keen to pass that on. I'm sure it's that early experience of rivers and fish that shaped what I was to do in my conservation career. What fascinates me most about trout is their spawning behaviour, which usually

starts in November. By this time of year the female, or hen, is gravid (being full of eggs). When she feels the time is right, she will seek out gravels in the river bed and create a nest for her eggs, known as a redd. Convulsing her body back and forth, she pushes the gravel out of the way to dig a shallow pit varying from the size of a beer mat to a tea plate. When she's happy with the redd she will release some of her eggs. The male fish, or cock, will then release sperm over the eggs to fertilise them. After this the hen will push gravels over the eggs, covering them loosely. Depending on the temperature of the water, the



DECEMBER

Merry Christmas!

*The holly and the ivy
When they are both full grown
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown
O the rising of the sun
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ
Sweet singing of the choir*

Of all the Christmas carols, this is one of my favourites, summing up the festive season both culturally and ecologically. This first verse includes two important food plants for birds, the

change to longer days, the joy of deer careering through the countryside and that lovely memory of voices heard from afar. Not bad for eight lines! Holly is a component of most woods in our counties, occupying the shrub layer below the canopy, providing cover for mammals such as those deer mentioned above. In mid-winter the glossy green leaves and post box red berries make it a favourite, albeit prickly, base for many a door wreath. The berries are an important resource for blackbirds and thrushes, providing nuggets of nutrition during short, dark days. Holly is a favoured habitat for one of our rarest and smallest



Tim is Conservation Manager for Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust



JANUARY

Gull o'clock

If you normally leave home as it's getting light in January, take a look skyward. I guarantee there will be a scattering of gulls overhead, making their way purposefully to somewhere unknown to us. If you look up again anytime from 2pm onwards there will be gulls again, heading the other way. This is the ebb and flow of the gull tide – these times I like to think of as 'gull o'clock' and you really can set your watch by their movements. So what are they doing and where are they going?

There are five species of gulls which are regular in our counties; the great black-backed, lesser black-backed, herring, common and black-headed. Up until about 10 years ago, gulls were only a wintering bird here but, more recently, lesser black-backed and black-headed have become established as breeding species. It's during the winter that all our species are at their most numerous, moving inland from coastal breeding colonies. During this time their basic needs are food and somewhere safe to spend the night. They find night-time refuge on our reservoirs and large gravel pits, spending the hours of darkness floating around on the water where predators are unable to get to them. There are a number of key roosting places for gulls in our area – the Chingford reservoirs in the Lea Valley



« Black headed gull

and Hilfield Park Reservoir near Bushey. This is where most of the gulls we see flying southwards in the afternoon are heading. In the depth of winter they spend up to 14 hours bobbing about on the water roosting until, as the initial glow of dawn appears, they will take flight leaving the reservoir to head off to their favoured feeding areas – rubbish tips, fields and playing fields which may be over 30 miles from their roost. It's this morning flight which we see as we're leaving home. We know it's time to get a move on, it's gull o'clock!



FEBRUARY

Common toad



A Long Walk Home

As we celebrate Valentine's Day, showering our loved ones with cards and gifts, deep in the wild parts of our counties, toads will be thinking about love too. Triggered by hormonal changes, toads will be coming out of hibernation and some will begin their journeys from wintering places back to their breeding grounds. Come February, the toads' journeys begin – walking back to their natal wetlands. This journey may be anything up to three miles! Unfortunately in our modern world some traditional toad migration routes have been severed by roads, meaning their journeys are fraught with danger and many never make it home, squashed under the wheels of cars. If you

are keen to spot a toad on migration, have a look from the middle of the month on drizzly nights, when temperatures rise above 8°C. In Hertfordshire, we are currently in the midst of a county-wide survey to find out how toads and all our amphibians are faring. You can find out more or contribute to the survey by reporting your sightings by visiting www.hnhs.org/article/mammals-reptiles-and-amphibians-new-countywide-survey. If you really want to help toads, the best thing you can do is to dig a pond in your garden – it will also provide habitat for a wealth of other animals too!

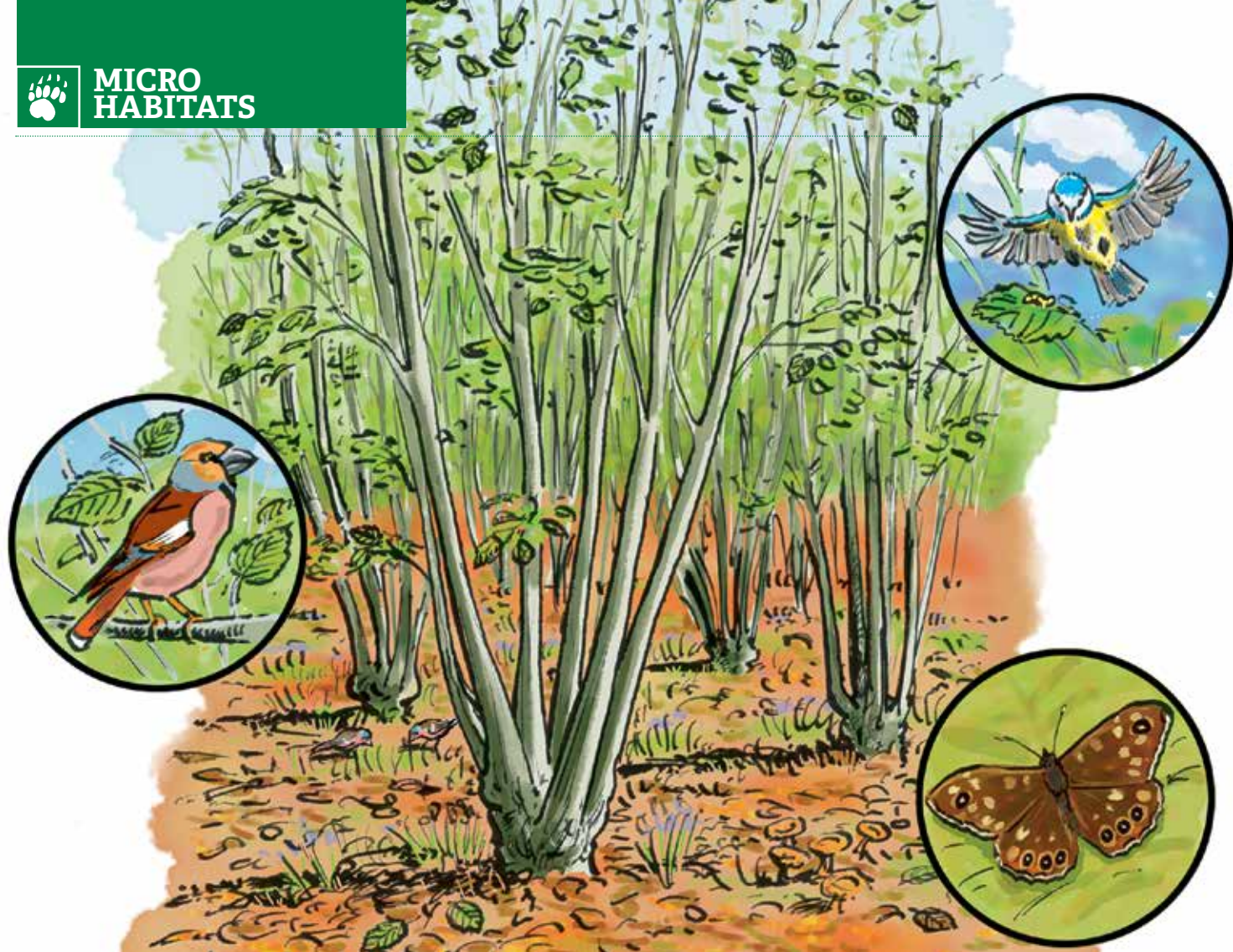
eggs will hatch in 60-100 days. After this the fish are known as alevins and they live amongst fine gravels, initially getting nourishment from the remains of their yolk sac. When this is gone, the fish are known as fry.

In the last few years I have had the pleasure of working with Bob Dear and Feargal Sharkey at the Amwell Magna fishery, a stretch of the River Lea adjacent to the Trust's Amwell Nature Reserve. They have been restoring the river and as a result of increased flows and habitat enhancements, 58 redds were counted in 2016, a record for the river. I look forward to the count this year.

Firecrest



wintering birds, the firecrest. It's always worth looking carefully as these diminutive birds are easily overlooked as they dart amongst branches and leaves searching out spiders and other invertebrate prey. Ivy is not quite as showy a plant but it too provides a vital habitat for wildlife. In September the flowers are abuzz with insects feasting on the wealth of nectar and by mid-winter the berries are ripe providing more food for wintering thrushes such as redwings and fieldfares. Woodpigeons are rather fond of them too! The loose wrap of ivy on our trees and buildings gives many creatures a safe place to spend the night – safe from disturbance and the biting cold of open spaces.



THE NATURE OF... a hornbeam

Hornbeam trees are native to the south and east of England, confined to ancient woodland. In Hertfordshire and Middlesex we have an abundance of this tree as hornbeam can tolerate the heavy clay soils of our area; London clay covers a large amount of south-east Hertfordshire.

Hornbeam is sometimes known as 'hardbeam'; horn means hard and beam was the name for a tree in old English. In the past, its strength and hardness lead it to be used for butchers' chopping blocks and cogs for windmill and water mills. Historically the timber of hornbeam was known as 'rangewood' due to its hard, highly calorific, slow burning nature – the wood fuelled the cooking ranges of old.

Coppicing

Traditionally used as a method of gaining straight, fast growing timber, coppicing – cutting trees close to ground level – encourages new stems to grow from the base. Coppicing provides fantastic benefits for woodland ecology by greatly increasing light levels following cutting, while encouraging regrowth on previously shaded woodland floors. Varying light levels and a range of

different aged trees offers habitat requirements for a variety of species.

Hornbeam responds well to coppicing and, while untouched Hornbeam can live to be around 300 years old, estimates put some of our ancient Hornbeam coppice stools (the original tree stump) at 700 years old. These older stools grow to be gnarly and rotten, offering a great place for **invertebrates** to live and **fungi** to thrive.

A year-round haven

Small **mammals** and **birds** can benefit from the tree year-round, due to the deciduous broadleaf retaining some of its leaves throughout the winter offering opportunities for shelter, nesting and foraging.

Hornbeam seeds are a favourite of **hawfinches**. The birds use their large, powerful beaks to break open the small, hard seed. Hawfinches will take them

from the tree and also feast on fallen seeds on the woodland floor.

A strong heart

As hornbeam grows in diameter the cells closest to the centre of the tree die, becoming hard wood that is still structurally sound – this is known as 'heartwood' due to its location in the centre of the tree.

Life from death

As hornbeams grow older, deadwood poles form and birds such as **woodpeckers** and **blue tits** nest in their hollows, while **saprophytic fungi** live on dead or decaying matter. Various beetles feed on the different stages of rotting heartwood, right through from the start of decay to the more developed pockets of rot – or rot holes – later on. This decaying heartwood also benefits many invertebrates such as **ants** and **flies**.

We work hard to expertly manage your local nature reserves – but we need your help to carry on...

Our nature reserves may appear to be self-managing however, like the majority of 'wild' places in Britain, they are semi-natural habitats, requiring a great deal of time, investment, expertise and good old fashioned hard graft to keep them in good condition; and a great deal of help from our supporters.

You can help our Reserves Team to continue to protect and improve your local nature reserves for wildlife.

A donation from you today could help fund the equipment, vehicles and machinery they need this year.



IMAGES BY HANNAH COUZENS

Yes! I want to help protect my local nature reserves and the wildlife they support in Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Here is my gift of (please tick)

☐ £50 ☐ £100 ☐ £150 ☐ 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)

giftaid it

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!*

Please help us raise **£24,000** to fund the essential equipment our Reserves Team needs to manage your local nature reserves

Hand tools

As part of our traditional woodland management, we must cut back vegetation in order to encourage regeneration for your local wildlife to thrive.

£3 pair of rigger gloves
£15 long-armed lopper
£50 handsaw



Surveying kits

Our Reserves Officers and dedicated volunteers use specialist survey equipment to monitor species on our sites, and feed their vital records to the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre.

£7.50 survey marker
£10 quadrat
£36 weatherproof clipboard



Heavy machinery and equipment

Using heavy-duty mowers allows us to cut large, flat areas of grassland across our sites, creating more good quality habitat for your local wildlife.

£35 brushcutter blade
£1500 reciprocating mower attachment



Volunteer training

It is vital that our Reserves Team and volunteers get the training, equipment and support they need to keep your nature reserves at their best.

£35 FSC training course
£40 first aid training



Power tools

Our Reserves Team and volunteers carefully manage the vegetation growth on your local nature reserve to prevent scrub or bramble spreading too quickly and engulfing other vulnerable habitats.

£15 new chainsaw chain
£50 25l chainsaw oil
£550 new chainsaw



PPE

Our Reserves Team and volunteers need personal protective equipment (PPE) to be safe at work and put all our informed habitat management techniques into practice.

£25 visor and ear defenders
£100 steel-toe waders
£500 dry suit



IMAGES BY HANNAH COUZENS

Vehicles & equipment maintenance

Our hardy vehicles and trailers are vital to get our team, livestock and tools exactly where they need to be.

£100 livestock trailer service
£700 service and repair two mowers



YOU CAN
DONATE ONLINE
at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/appeal
OR CALL US ON
01727 858901
TO DONATE OVER
THE PHONE