

wildlifematters

Summer 2021



Herts and
Middlesex

News from your local Wildlife Trust and from around the UK

What's Inside?

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**Protecting Wildlife
for the Future**

Welcome



My love for nature has been integral to my life since I was a small child and I've realised how much I measure the year's progress through the lens of the natural world – from hearing my first chiffchaff in the spring to seeing a marbled white butterfly flitting around knapweed in the summer to spotting a flock of redwings as winter returns.

The last year has underlined more than ever our intrinsic connection to nature, as more people have been spending time outside. We've seen many new members join the Trust, showing that they care about their local wildlife. At the same time, our nature reserves have seen an increase of visitor numbers – with them comes an increased pressure on these beautiful wild places so we urge everyone to show respect to wildlife and each other when they visit.

I hope that every visitor to one of our nature reserves leaves inspired, keen to do more for their local wildlife. Whether that's becoming a volunteer with the Trust, lobbying their MP to stand up for wildlife, submitting sightings to our Records Centre or making their garden wildlife-friendly, all these actions add up and make a difference. Now more than ever, we all need to do our bit for nature.

The recognition of the need for nature's recovery on a landscape-scale is evident. The Wildlife Trusts collectively are campaigning for 30% of land to be managed for nature by 2030, which can only be achieved by creating new habitats and stopping the decline in the extent and quality of existing habitats. That's why the Trust's planned purchase of Astonbury Wood and other recent initiatives (read more on page 27) are all such positive steps towards a Wilder Future.

None of this would be possible without your support – our members are critically important to achieving this vision and for this I would like to thank you.

Thank you!

Cover: Green-winged orchid
© Paul Lane



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Design: TGDH www.tgdh.co.uk
Printed on FSC © Certified Stock

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4 ways to get involved



Volunteer

Could you donate your skills and time to help look after wildlife? You can find all open positions at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering



Donate

If you can spare a few pounds, please consider donating to help protect wildlife on your doorstep at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/donate



Shop

Our online shop stocks a range of wildlife items and gifts. All proceeds go towards our work. hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/shop



Campaign

Stand up for wildlife and make your voice heard at wildlifetrusts.org/our-campaigns

More info online

Discover wildlife

Donate

Join an event

Do

Wild News



A Wilder Future for St Albans

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are working in partnership with St Albans City & District Council and St Albans Environmental Action Group to create a *Wilder St Albans*.

The project was launched in May and encourages the local community to take positive action for wildlife across the district. The project's dedicated People and Wildlife Officer, Heidi Carruthers, is working with community groups, individuals, schools and businesses to make space for wildlife in every part of St Albans.

Heidi said: "*Wilder St Albans* is an exciting project and a great example of how communities and organisations can come together to make a real difference and play their part in nature's recovery."

A dedicated project webpage helps St Albans residents get involved in *Wilder St Albans* by providing resources, ideas and inspiration on what they can do to help wildlife in their gardens, neighbourhoods, businesses, schools and communities. The *Wilder St Albans* Facebook Group provides a space for people to share ideas, ask questions, learn from one another and showcase what they have done for wildlife.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more about *Wilder St Albans* at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbans and join the *Wilder St Albans* Facebook Group at facebook.com/groups/wilderstalbans.

Get ready for Wild Snaps!

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is launching Wild Snaps photography competition on World Photography Day

To celebrate World Photography Day on 19 August, we are launching our second *Wild Snaps* competition. Hobby photographers are invited to submit their best local wildlife images, helping to showcase the best of amateur wildlife photography across Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

Wild Snaps first launched in 2020 and gathered 250 entries. The best 30 were put to a public vote in which over 820 people chose their favourite wild snap. Get your camera ready and get snapping to win fabulous prizes!



FIND OUT MORE

Online

For more information and to enter the competition from 19 August, visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildsnaps.



JOSH KUBALE

New Hide dedicated to Hertfordshire Naturalist

In March we opened a new birdwatching hide at Wilstone Reservoir and named it in memory of the Trust's late Nature Reserves Manager.

The new bird hide, funded by the National Lottery Heritage fund, is named to commemorate Paul Thrush, that the Trust's former Nature Reserves Manager and the impact he had on wildlife – and people – during his time at the Trust.

Visitors to the new hide will be able to enjoy stunning views across Wilstone Reservoir, part of Tring Reservoirs Nature Reserve. The reservoirs are one of the best birdwatching spots in southern England and boast huge numbers of birds particularly winter visiting waterfowl and wading birds.

Paul Thrush was Reserves Officer and later Nature Reserves Manager at the Trust from 2007 – 2016. He sadly passed away in 2020.



Ultrasonic Bat Gin

We have partnered once again with Puddingstone Distillery to produce a one-of-a-kind gin, this time using an ultrasound distilling method inspired by bats.

Inspired by the flight of native bats through the British countryside, this bold gin uses a unique ultrasonic process and pot distillation to extract flavour and aroma from local hedgerow plants including elderflower, along with Bramley apple and mint.

For each bottle sold, Puddingstone Distillery will donate £2 to Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to support our work protecting bats and other wildlife across the county.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

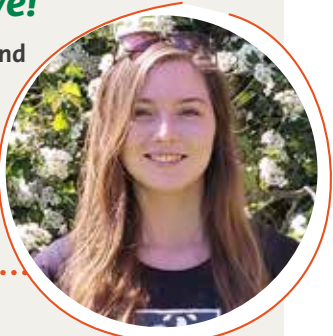
Read more about our work with Puddingstone Distillery and conservation of bats in Hertfordshire and Middlesex at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/going-ultrasonic

Keep an eye out for the launch of Ultrasonic gin at puddingstone-distillery.com/ultrasonic

Hello and Goodbye!

The Trust welcomes new faces and says goodbye to old colleagues.

Ellie Smith is supporting the Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC) as the new Data Officer.



Alicia Sanctuary has replaced Frieda Rummenhohl as Communications Officer. The Reserves Team has welcomed two new colleagues with **Gareth Bird** as project manager and Alex Popple as Assistant Reserves Officer. Alex had completed his Reserves traineeship in 2019 with the Trust and we're very pleased to have him back on the team.



A few of our colleagues have left the Trust to venture onto new pastures. We thank **Dr Tom Day, Josh Wells, Anna Daniels, Astrid Biddle, Tom Gibbs** and **Hannah Papapetrou** for all the great work they have done for the Trust over the years and wish them the very best for the future.

Could you become a Trustee?

We are looking for people with a passion for wildlife conservation and as the ability to think strategically to help us pursue our vision of a wilder future for Hertfordshire and Middlesex. We are particularly interested in hearing from people with a background in nature conservation, business, communications or community engagement.

As a Trustee, you would join the Trust's Council which oversees our charity's governance. Your main contact would be with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

You will need to attend quarterly Council meetings, the AGM and Committee meetings.

You will also have the opportunity to participate in site visits, meetings with partner organisations and workshops. Trustees can be appointed for up to three, three-year terms.

This is a voluntary role but all reasonable expenses properly incurred will be reimbursed.

If you'd like to become a Trustee, please contact us at info@hmwt.org for an information pack.

Closing date: Thursday 29 July 2021
Interviews: Thursday 5 August 2021

Save the date - AGM 2021.

Our AGM this year will be on Saturday 18th September. More information and booking will be live on our website from the 25th August.

UK NEWS

UK UPDATE

The trouble with wind

Turbines harness wind for renewable energy, but what is the cost to our wildlife?

We are facing two inextricably linked crises — nature's loss and climate change. We cannot solve one without tackling the other and therefore, our efforts to make progress must recognise and reflect their connection, including in our seas. Healthy seas are critical to tackling both climate change and achieving nature's recovery.

It is widely supported that dramatically reducing our carbon emissions, particularly from burning fossil fuels, is a critical step to tackle climate change. Transitioning to alternative energy sources, including marine renewables (renewable energy sources based in our seas), will be part of this package. Offshore wind farms are often put forward as the best solution.

However, in reality offshore wind farm development cannot be considered truly green, as it does have a damaging impact on the environment. It can cause loss of important marine habitats where fish, such as

Underwater noise generated during installation can prevent species such as harbour porpoise from using important feeding areas

sandeel, live, which fuel the food web for other fish, birds, porpoises, whales and dolphins. The blades of turbines also pose a collision risk to many bird species. As a result of these impacts, we are already seeing the decline of wildlife in some of our precious Marine Protected Areas.

The scale of ambition for the development of new offshore wind farms by 2050 is staggering, with up to 140GW of offshore wind power currently projected: an incredible 14-fold increase on the 10GW of offshore wind we have in place today. While The Wildlife Trusts recognise that offshore wind will contribute to the UK achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the blinkers must come off if we are to avoid industrialisation of our seas at the expense of the marine environment.

The marine environment has been impacted by human activities for decades.

Given a chance to recover, it can and will play a leading role in tackling climate change; absorbing and locking away huge amounts of carbon from the atmosphere for centuries and beyond.

Now is the time for balance — solutions to climate change cannot make the ecological crisis worse. We must consider how we can reduce our energy demands so that less offshore wind is required.

The Wildlife Trusts supports the sustainable development of marine renewable energy and is working closely with Government and industry to find solutions to achieve net zero by 2050 and enable nature's recovery. However, this can only be done by everyone working together to find creative and innovative solutions — this may mean that more research and development work is needed by industry to find new ways of building offshore wind farms that benefit marine ecosystems. If we can put man on the moon, there is certainly hope that we can find sustainable solutions to offshore wind farm development.

Find out more about The Wildlife Trusts' work on offshore development at wildlifetrusts.org/development-sea

UK UPDATE

Flying start to 30 by 30

We've already raised almost £8 million towards our 30 by 30 ambition to kickstart nature's recovery across 30% of our land and seas by 2030. These vital funds will support projects to make new homes for wildlife, join up wild places and promote natural solutions to the climate crisis.

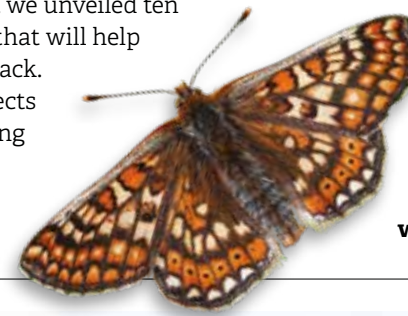
This spring, we unveiled ten new projects that will help nature fight back. The new projects include reviving ice-age ponds in Norfolk, transforming

a 42-acre former Carlisle golf course into an urban bee and butterfly oasis, and quadrupling a Wiltshire nature reserve to help the rare marsh fritillary butterfly thrive.

Of the £8 million total raised so far, over £900,000 has been given by members of the public.

Thank you to everyone who has already supported our campaign to bring nature back.

Find out more and support the campaign at wildlifetrusts.org/30-30-30



Peat extraction is devastating peatlands across the world, yet many retailers are continuing to sell peat-based products

Promise for Peat

The Government has announced plans to phase out the use of peat in horticulture, including a consultation on banning the sale of peat and peat containing products in the amateur sector by the end of this Parliament.

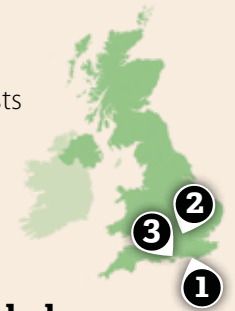
Ten years ago, the Government set a voluntary target for the horticulture sector to end sales to gardeners by 2020. This deadline was missed, and a recent Wildlife Trust survey

revealed that only one of 20 leading garden retailers contacted planned to eliminate peat from its shelves this year. Whilst the Government's announcement is welcome news, it must be backed by action and lead to a ban of peat sales.

See the announcement in full at wtru.st/gov-speech

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Help for kelp

A new byelaw now makes it illegal to trawl with bottom-towed fishing gear within an area off the Sussex coast. This landmark decision will give Sussex's important kelp forests the chance to recover, providing a home for a wide range of wildlife. Find out more at wtru.st/help-kelp

2 Fishing friends

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working with anglers in the Colne Valley to improve wetlands for wildlife, including the rare water vole. Fisheries look after many lakes and rivers, and by offering training and support, the Wildlife Trust and their partner, the Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative, are helping them further enhance these habitats for wildlife as well as people. For more info go to wtru.st/hmwt-angling



3 Seagrass saviours

A new partnership launched by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust aims to restore the Solent's seagrass beds. As well as providing a home for wildlife, seagrass protects coasts from erosion and absorbs carbon up to 35 times faster than tropical rainforests. See more at wtru.st/solent-seagrass

Anglers for wildlife



RIVER COLNE LYDIA MURPHY



SHUTTERSTOCK

Colne Valley Rivers & Wetlands Officer Lydia Murphy tells us about the Trust's projects in the Colne Valley and why angling and nature conservation can go hand in hand.

List the attributes of a typical fishery and this would tick boxes for many nature reserves – naturalised wetlands, often with a diverse range of habitats in one site, usually low footfall and largely undisturbed. The few human visitors prefer to keep a low profile and remain quiet and still for much of the time. Regular patrols can identify issues or changes in the environment that may affect the health of the site, such as changes in water quality or health and safety concerns. Dedicated teams of volunteers give many hours of their time maintaining and managing the fishery, often for decades.

In the Colne Valley, a region famous for its coarse fishing and home to a large network of gravel pit lakes and river systems, angling clubs play a significant role as guardians of the natural environment. Anglers often serve as stewards of rare habitats such as fen meadow, reedbeds, meadow grassland and wet woodland. Without management by angling clubs, many of these would fall prey to neglect.

Just like fish, other wildlife benefits from good water quality, a healthy and diverse invertebrate community and a variety of aquatic and wetland habitats – exactly the activities managed by anglers. This is why the Trust is running

a partnership project together with the Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative (CVFC), which represents the interests of angling clubs in the Colne Valley. The project celebrates and encourages the role anglers play as stewards of wetland environments and helps clubs maximise the potential of their fisheries for both fish and wildlife.

Central to the project is the Angling and Nature Conservation course, which anglers can attend to improve their knowledge and skills in topics as diverse as fish biology and health, fisheries legislation, algae and silt control, wetland habitat management, ecological succession, and how to

write a good site management plan. The course is accredited by the AQA Unit Award Scheme, meaning anglers that attend receive a formal certification. Following the course, the anglers work with the Trust and CVFC to produce management plans for their fisheries to enhance habitats for fish and wildlife and maintain these into the future. Funding available through the project can also be used to purchase equipment and materials to help anglers implement these management plans.

This project continues to prove just how valuable fisheries are for our local wildlife, not only due to their physical attributes, but because of the sentiments and motivations of the individuals who look after them. Many anglers, when they go fishing, value seeing the wildlife in and around lakes and rivers just as much as the fishing itself. This has been reflected in the

management plans produced through the project, with restoration of wildlife and habitats featuring alongside fishery objectives for many clubs. Take one example of a club's vision for its lake fishery, from West Hampstead Angling Society in Rickmansworth:

"At the heart of our vision...is the restoration to the lake of some of the local wildlife...We will deliver a habitat that not only secures [the lake] as an excellent angling venue but also a first-class habitat for wildlife.

We foresee members regularly spotting water voles living in the replanted bank side vegetation and kingfishers, once again, nesting in the raised banks."

This project shows just how much the angling community and the conservation sector can help each other and the dividends that are returned working in partnership.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Further information about the Colne Valley project can be found at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/colnevalley.

Most importantly, working together reminds us that, whatever our individual interests, we who love the outdoors and the natural world have much more in common to share than we have differences to divide us.

The Trust is delivering this project as part of the Colne Valley – Landscape on the Edge partnership thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the HS2 Additional Mitigation Fund.



21 Colne Valley anglers trained in fisheries and wetland management



14 Fisheries sites engaged in management planning



4.4km of river and lake habitat managed sympathetically for water voles by angling clubs

Anglers for water voles

The water vole is the UK's fastest-declining mammal. There is a handful of established populations in the In the Colne Valley, one of which is on a fishery. Eight more angling clubs engaged in the project are doing their bit to help water voles. Felling over-shading tree growth along rivers and lakes helps to maintain good water quality, high quality fish spawning grounds and diverse invertebrate communities for fish to feed on, as well as clearing areas for anglers to fish safely. This management, by increasing light onto the river and lake margins, also encourages the growth of the marginal swamp vegetation which water voles need to thrive.

More than 4km of river and lake habitat is currently being managed for water voles, vastly improving habitat connectivity for this rare mammal. The Trust supports the clubs with theoretic advice as well as practical action.



WATER VOLE PAUL THRUSS



Did you see us on Countryfile?

Earlier this year, Lydia met with Charlotte Smith from BBC Countryfile to show her around the Colne Valley highlighting the success of the project. You can catch up with the show at bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0oot18b.

Days Out

NATURE RESERVES



1. Hexton Chalkpit

In the North of Hertfordshire, just south of the Bedfordshire border, lies an unassuming nature reserve which often only reveals its true nature at second glance. Once an active quarry, today Hexton Chalk Pit is one of the finest chalk grasslands in the county. It's small but perfectly formed, an undulating landscape of hollows and humps carved out of the chalk which underlies this part of Hertfordshire.

The bare chalk has been colonised naturally by fine-leaved fescue grasses and is home to plants such as horseshoe vetch, yellow wort, milkwort and rockrose. Five species of orchid and the uncommon slender tare can also be found here. An interesting mix of trees and shrubs including sweet briar, hazel, blackthorn, dogwood, wild privet, field maple, oak and hornbeam grow around the margins of the chalk grassland.

If you're up for a flutter, then visit in the height of summer – butterfly spectacles don't come any better than what happens

at Hexton Chalk Pit every July. The thin soil supports one of the finest and rarest habitats we have, chalk grassland. Chalk grasslands are home to specialist plants such as the horseshoe vetch, the plant on which the chalkhill blue butterfly lays its eggs and then becomes provides vital food for its caterpillars. In sunny, warm summers, thousands of chalkhill blues can be seen, covering the rich grassland in a fluttering cerulean shroud.



JOHN BRIDGES

GOLDCREST



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/hextonchalkpit

Why now?

Visit Hexton Chalkpit in July to take in the beauty of butterflies and chalk-loving flowers.



Know before you go

SG5 3JP, HEXTON

OPEN AND FREE AT ALL TIMES

Please be aware there is no parking at this reserve. Parking is available on the layby close to the entrance.

Wildlife to spot

Chalkhill blue butterflies, orchids and slender tare.

PAUL THURSH



JOSH KUBALE

2. Tewinbury

A charming reserve in the Mimram Valley, just outside of Welwyn Garden City, Tewinbury is a fantastic place to enjoy the summer and spot a range of wildlife.

Step out into a tranquil view of the River Mimram and

observe warblers singing in the reeds. Tewinbury boasts many different kinds of habitats such as wet meadow, tall fen and swamp, alder carr, willow scrub, willow pollards and chalk stream. The diversity

in habitats at this reserve allows wildlife to thrive, and even some of our rarer species have made a home in the reedbeds, such as the enchanting water vole.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/blagrovecommon

Why now?

Venture to Blagrove Common this time of year to soak up the scent of meadowsweet and sightings of common spotted orchids.



Know before you go

SG9 0RG, SANDON

OPEN AND FREE AT ALL TIMES

Please be aware there is no allocated parking at this reserve. Parking is available on the edge of the green or in layby on Beckfield Lane

Wildlife to spot

Common spotted orchid, meadow brown, meadowsweet, southern marsh orchid.



3. Blagrove Common

As one of the few remaining unimproved marshy grasslands in Hertfordshire, Blagrove Common (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) is blooming beautiful in the summertime. The reserve is bisected by a stream and varies from marshy to dry neutral grassland. Walk through the common and enjoy the meadowsweet flowers unleash their syrupy scent.

Common spotted and southern marsh orchids are abundant in this reserve, attracting day-flying moths with their perfumed smell. Visit Blagrove Common in the height of summer to enjoy a sweet attack on your senses.

The Trust has recently secured ownership of Blagrove Common after many years of management on behalf of the previous landowner.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/tewinbury

Why now?

Summer is the perfect time to watch the sun glisten on the clear chalk stream rivers.



Know before you go

AL6 0JB, NEAR HERTFORD

OPEN AND FREE AT ALL TIMES

Parking is available at the HMWT car park at Tewin Bury Farm Hotel

Wildlife to spot

Cetti's warblers, reed bunting, reed warbler, southern marsh orchid.



Meet Our cold-blooded wildlife



AMY LEWIS

Breathing through their skin, smelling with their tongue and circulating “cold blood”; People & Wildlife Officer Dave Willis takes us up close to the reptiles and amphibians of Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

There are few more thrilling encounters than those with our native reptiles and amphibians – whether it is the discovery of frogspawn in your pond, heralding the start of spring, a grass snake gliding across a river or one of our newts decked in its courtship finery, these can spark lifelong

fascinations. Even though Britain’s climate places certain challenges on its cold-blooded inhabitants, the country is home to 13 native reptile and amphibian species, eight of which can be found in our area.

As cold-blooded animals – which means that their body temperature

depends on the temperature of their surroundings – reptiles and amphibians need the warmth of spring and summer to be active, feed and breed.

Reptiles and amphibians can be found out and about throughout the spring and summer, the latter in cooler, damper places – lacking the scales of reptiles, they are at risk of drying out if they get too warm. Amphibians are known to lead a double life, as they spend much of it in the water.

Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)

This large, smooth-skinned frog with a dark patch behind its eye is a familiar visitor and resident in our garden ponds. Breeding in early spring, the females lay clumps of up to 3,000 eggs which can be seen close to the surface of the water. Following development as tadpoles, they will grow legs and leave the water to become adults and repeat the cycle.

Size: 8-13cm

Where to see them:
Garden ponds to which they return to breed in spring, woodlands and grasslands

Common toad (*Bufo bufo*)

Brown, warty and crawling, these toads appear in large numbers at ponds in early spring where they mate and the females lay strings of eggs among aquatic vegetation. The young animals develop as tadpoles and then all leave the water at once in the early summer. Spending most of their lives on land, they favour damp habitats and eat invertebrates.

Size: 8-13cm

Where to see them:
Outside of their breeding period, common toads spend much of the year feeding in woodland, gardens, hedgerows and tussocky grassland.



PHILIP PRECE

How to tell them apart

Frogs and toads look very similar at first glance, but there are a few tell-tale differences.

Skin

frogs have smooth and seemingly slimy skin with a yellow to brown colour and a distinctive brown patch behind the eyes. Toads’ skin is dry and somewhat warty, dry-looking skin with a brownish colour.

Location

toads spend most of their life away from water and only return to their

breeding pond to reproduce whereas frogs are rarely seen too far away from water.

Legs

frogs have long legs which allow them to jump about 20 times their body size. Toads, on the other hand, have much shorter legs and walk or crawl rather than leap.

Shape

frogs look slimmer and much more athletic while toads are somewhat thickset and squat.

Spawn

frog spawn (eggs) is laid in gooey clumps whereas toad spawn are long strings.



Online

Read more about frogs and toads on our blog at hertswildlifetrust.org/blog/wild-home/frogs-and-toads-how-tell-difference

Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

Our largest newt, these animals are warty and black. Specially protected by law, this rare and declining animal has a stronghold in Hertfordshire. These newts prefer large, fish-free water bodies, with clusters of ponds close to deciduous woodland or other hibernation sites. In the spring, they move to ponds where the males will perform a courtship dance for females. Female newts lay eggs on leaves of water plants which they fold over and stick down with their hind feet.

Size: up to 17cm

Where to see them:
Clusters of large, open, fish-free ponds close to deciduous woodland

Smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*)

Our most widespread newt species and the one most likely to be found in garden ponds. Spending the winter hibernating underground or in piles of logs or stones, it is often the first newt species to be seen. In the spring, the males sport wavy crests from their head to their tail during the breeding season, with large dark spots on their bellies. Females remain

muted brown year-round. The small olive-grey eggs are deposited on the underside of leaves.

Size: 7-11cm

Where to see them:
Garden ponds.
Widespread across the county – if you see a newt, it's likely to be a smooth newt



Palmate newt (*Lissotriton Helvetica*)

Similar in size to the smooth newt, this species is less common here and favours acidic soils. The males develop large leaf-shaped hind feet in the spring, and both sexes have a tell-tale filament at the tip of their tails. Their diet is the same as smooth newts and their eggs are indistinguishable.

Size: 7-9cm

Where to see them:
Good quality ponds on heathland.

Grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*)

The grass snake is the UK's longest snake, and is completely harmless to us. During the summer, it can often be spotted swimming in water. As Hertfordshire's only egg-laying reptile, females use the warmth generated by rotting vegetation to incubate their eggs. These hatch in the late summer and the young snakes feed on invertebrates before spending the winter somewhere safe. When threatened by a predator, the grass snake often 'plays dead', perhaps making itself less appealing to eat.

Size: 90-150cm

Where to see them:
Widespread and found in a range of habitats in association with water.

Common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*)

Living up to its name, this is the UK's most common and widespread reptile and can be found across many different habitats. Look out for it basking on a warm stone in the summer heat. Also known as the 'viviparous lizard', it incubates its eggs inside the body and 'gives birth' to live young rather than laying eggs. Young lizards have a beautiful metallic blue colour. Common lizards can shed their still-moving tail to distract an attacking predator, helping them to make a quick getaway.

Size: 10-15cm

Where to see them: Heathland, grasslands. They love edge-habitat, where they can nip under cover.

PETER ELTON



Discover

King's Meads Nature Reserve near Hertford is a great place to spot almost all of Hertfordshire's reptiles and amphibians. Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/kingsmeads.

Did you know?

Grass snakes live between 15 - 25 years.

Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*)

Despite appearances, the slow worm is neither a worm nor a snake but a legless lizard. They are a gardener's friend and you might find them on your allotment or garden in your compost heap where it feeds on slugs and other pests. Similar to the lizard, slow worms incubate the eggs internally, 'giving birth' to live young.

Size: 40-50cm

Where to see them:
Gardens, allotments, meadows and grasslands



CHRIS LAWRENCE



JOHN BRIDGES

Wild Community

Find out how people have been champions for wildlife in Hertfordshire



Tommy and Lottie celebrating 1 year in partnership

A huge thank you to Tommy & Lottie for kindly donating over £100 to the Trust after a successful first year in partnership. Tommy & Lottie, an ethical and sustainable, nature-inspired clothing brand, are passionate about our natural world. Wanting to do more to help protect local wildlife, they designed a bespoke Bee Collection that raises a donation from each item sold to support the Trust's work and protect our wonderful wildlife. Thanks to a brilliant first year, new items have been added to the collection including a bee backpack.



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more about the partnership and shop the Bee Collection at tommyandlottie.com



Ruby's litter pick for wildlife

During the February half-term, Ruby (7) wanted to make a difference in her community and help protect animals and local wildlife by raising money. She decided to challenge herself to do a sponsored litter pick in her local area so that it would be clean and safe for wildlife. Our wonderful wildlife champion Ruby collected two huge bags worth of litter and raised an incredible £40 to support our work. Not only did Ruby make her local community proud by helping wildlife, she also achieved one of her Brownie badges for all her hard work. Thank you Ruby, you're amazing!



Donate

If Ruby has inspired you to take action for wildlife too, please get in touch with our Fundraising Team at fundraising@hwmwt.org.

Farewell to Jane

Since training as a volunteer water vole surveyor in 2008, Jane Archer has skilfully and diligently surveyed on the Rivers Chess and Gade. She has also mentored, supported and organised other volunteers in her time. After nearly 13 years, Jane has decided to call time on her 'wader-wearing' allowing her to focus on her involvement with the conservation of bats. Jane has been a great supporter of the water vole conservation project within Hertfordshire and her commitment will be greatly missed. Without doubt, she has done more water vole surveys any other volunteer.

Thank you for all your hard work, Jane! x



JOSH KUBALE



Giving back to wildlife Roaring Meg Honey

Aberdeen Standard Investments are working hard to improve the biodiversity of their retail investments and Roaring Meg retail park in Stevenage is a great example of this. They have planted bee-friendly flowers and supported bee hives at the site – and those bees have been very busy producing 170 jars of honey in 2020. To make the most of the bees' hard work, the staff team have been selling the honey and have raised just under £900 to support the Trust. Thank you!



In memory of Len Barron

Our thanks to library staff and regular visitors at Harefield Library in Hillingdon who have donated to the Trust in memory of their dear friend and colleague Len Barron. Len had worked at Hillingdon Libraries for over 20 years and was as well known for his love of wildlife and literature.

From a young age, Len's particular wildlife passion were birds and he was a keen and knowledgeable ornithologist. His interest began in the mid-60s when he was at junior school and on a school trip to Selborne Wildlife Centre in Hampshire. Len had particular affiliation with Old Park Wood Nature Reserve in Harefield and would be very happy to know that donations will go directly to his local Trust, supporting the local wildlife and wild places that he loved. Len will be very much missed.

In remembrance

We would like to thank long-standing members Mary Marwood and Jean Hird for kindly leaving a gift in their will to the Trust. We are extremely grateful for their support over the years and for thoughtfully remembering the Trust in this special way. Our thanks and condolences to the friends and family of Ann Hirst-Smith, Sylvia Oliver, Georgia, Andrew Cox, Damian Henry Cordrey-Fuller, Shirley Avery, Iris Oakes, Paul Thrush and Rita Hayes for kindly donating to the Trust in their memory. These donations make a lasting contribution to our local conservation work and help ensure that the wildlife their loved ones cherished is protected for years to come.



Donate

Could you leave a gift in your will for the Trust? Get in touch with us at fundraising@hwmwt.org.

5 places to see Orchids



BEE ORCHID

Orchids are often thought of as huge, exotic blooms hanging high up in the tree canopies of steamy, tropical forests. In fact, there are 21 species of wild British orchids you can discover in Hertfordshire and Middlesex, some of which are sporting rather unusual looks – with some resembling small monkeys, bees or even human figures!



Remember to tread carefully when getting up close and personal with orchids, they are often in grasslands where other precious wildlife lives.

See them for yourself



TERRY WHITTAKER

SOUTHERN MARSH ORCHID

1 Amwell

Southern marsh and early marsh orchids can be found at this reserve in June and July. Beautiful bee orchids have also been spotted here – look in the short grassland around the Dragonfly Trail for the best chance to spot them.

Where: Near Ware

2 Blagrove Common

Blagrove is a fantastic site for orchids and the marshy areas by the stream boast large numbers of early marsh, southern marsh and common spotted orchids and a variety of their hybrids.

Where: Near Royston



PAUL THRUSH

PYRAMIDAL ORCHID

3 Frogmore Meadows

This traditional meadow is a great place to see common spotted and southern marsh orchids.

Where: Near Chenies

4 Hexton Chalk Pit

Five species of orchid are found at this chalk grassland reserve including bee orchid, pyramidal orchid and the delicate fragrant orchid.

Where: Near Hitchin

5 Hundson and Eastwick Meads

These wonderful wetland meadows are one of only a few sites in Hertfordshire to spot green winged orchids along with a host of other wildflowers, such as meadow buttercup, pepper saxifrage and adder's tongue fern.

Where: Near Harlow



Discover

Discover orchids for yourself by visiting one of our nature reserves. Plan your trip online at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/naturereserves.

Did you spot any orchids?

Share your best photos with us on social media!

@HMWTBadger Hertswildlifetrust Hertswildlifetrust

Meet Hertfordshire's local wildlife gems

OX-EYE DASIES: JOSH KUBALE



Beyond nature reserves, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust helps to look after hundreds of often hidden havens for wildlife scattered across the county. Local Wildlife Sites Officer Carol tells us why Local Wildlife Sites need our help and protection.

It's no secret that nature reserves alone cannot ensure the survival of our wildlife. At the Trust, we are working towards a *Living Landscape*, an interconnected network of wild spaces that help wildlife move between habitats, such as gardens, parks, golf courses – and Local Wildlife Sites.

Local Wildlife Sites are sites with 'substantial nature conservation value'. They are defined areas, identified and selected for their nature conservation value, based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species at a national, regional or county-level. From a small patch of wildflower meadow to an ancient woodland covering several hectares, Local Wildlife Sites vary in shape and size and can be found on both private and public land. Many sites are even more important as they are home to Hertfordshire Species of Conservation Concern, identified in the 2020 *Hertfordshire's State of Nature*. In Hertfordshire, there are over 1,800 Local Wildlife Sites covering

more than 13,000 hectares – that's more than 15 times the land the Trust's nature reserves cover.

As such, Local Wildlife Sites provide the most important refuges for wildlife outside legally protected land, such as nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). Local Wildlife Sites are vital to the future of our wildlife and are just as worthy of being positively managed as are our nature reserves.

The status and protection of Local Wildlife Sites remain fragile. Without any legal protection, there is no obligation on private landowners to manage their land appropriately for the wildlife it calls home. We, and a myriad of our threatened native species, therefore rely on the goodwill of landowners in order to ensure that Hertfordshire's future is as rich in wildlife as possible.

This is why the Trust is leading on

the *Hertfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Partnership*, together with other members including Natural England, Herts Environmental Records Centre, Hertfordshire Ecology, Countryside Management Services, Environment Agency and the Herts Natural History Society. Together with a team of trained voluntary botanical surveyors, we carry out over 50 surveys annually. We engage with the landowners and managers and advise and support them to improve their sites for wildlife. Our volunteers also monitor the sites to assess any changes and ensure that the sites are recognised in the planning process.

Thankfully, a good number of landowners are keen to work with us and do what they can

Hill End Pit, a chalky grassland habitat in the North of Hertfordshire is owned and managed by North Hertfordshire District Council. The Council recommended appropriate scrub and grassland management in their greenspace action plan for the area and the site has now become more species-rich for chalk grassland plants and insects.

Whilst there is some protection through Planning Policy – the National Planning and Policy Framework contains policies on "locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity" – which can help steer development away from Local Wildlife Sites in most situations, the protection is not absolute and is open to judgement by Local Planning Authorities.

Planning Policy does allow the Trust to construct an argument to defend a site when responding to planning applications, often supported by the precedent of planning decisions, which has a very good chance of being upheld by planning authorities and the planning inspectorate.

Sadly, the regulations are not always able to be used to their best effect, such as in a recent local example at Smallford Pit (read more below).

At the Trust, we hope that the new Environment Bill, currently making its way through the parliament, will strengthen the protection of Local Wildlife Sites in the planning system. Under this new legislation, a standard and repeatable way of measuring pre- and post-development biodiversity value will be mandated. All planning decisions will then need to demonstrate a so-called measurable net gain, which means an increase of at least ten per cent in habitat unit value. The Environment Bill could therefore provide a new relevance for Local Wildlife Sites together with higher levels of protection. We hope that this will see an incentive for the expansion of Local Wildlife Sites and even provide funding for better management of existing sites where applicable. Even when the net gain approach is mandated, the principle of avoiding damage to sites of importance for wildlife must still come first, and this is the point which we always stress in our planning responses.



DID YOU KNOW?

Astonbury Wood is a Local Wildlife Site too! Read more about our plans for this ancient woodland on page 22.



STEVE BROOKS

The Sad Story of Smallford Pits

The fragility of Local Wildlife Site protection was highlighted recently by the case of Smallford Pits in St Albans. This 61-hectare former landfill site had become one of the county's most important Local Wildlife Sites, home to dragonflies,

great crested newts (a European Protected Species) as well as other rare and protected wildlife. It was much loved site and used by the local community.

Without statutory protection, we were unable to halt its destruction when large parts of the site were cleared and the ponds drained, despite involving the police, the

Environment Agency, other wildlife experts, the local community and Councillors. It is heart breaking to see this happening before our eyes. This example highlights why it is so important to find, survey and protect our existing Local Wildlife Sites – and that they receive the protection they deserve, as the wildlife havens they are.



We did it!

Thank you for protecting Astonbury Wood

In May, we launched an ambitious public fundraising campaign and asked for help to raise £104,000 by the end of July to buy and care for Astonbury Wood, near Stevenage.

We are incredibly excited to say that thanks to you, the local community and a whole host of other generous donors, we have reached our target and can start to secure the future of this wonderful woodland.

We have been completely overwhelmed by the amazing response to this campaign and how passionate people have been about protecting Astonbury Wood. Over 1,300 people have donated and word of our campaign spread across the UK. From Scotland to Cornwall as well as the local community in Stevenage, it was clear to see that everyone wanted to ensure this woodland was protected for years to come. Thanks to this wonderful

support, we reached our target by mid-June. We cannot begin to express how thankful we are to everybody who donated and helped spread awareness of this campaign. We want to thank you, our amazing members and supporters, for helping to ensure that Astonbury Wood is protected for people to enjoy, today and in the future.

An ancient woodland with a bright future

Astonbury Wood is a magical place for both people and wildlife. It's an irreplaceable ancient woodland bursting with wildlife, sitting just outside the heart of Stevenage. It has existed for hundreds of years and is home to a unique community of animals, plants and fungi only found in these special wild places. With its sweeping bluebell carpets, choirs of songbirds, small stream and ponds, this woodland is one of the richest habitats in Hertfordshire. Providing a home to rare, threatened and treasured wildlife like our English bluebells, bats, birds and beetles.



GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

Ancient woodlands were once widespread throughout the country, but now only a fraction remain and our in desperate need of careful management. Today thanks to you, one of these havens for wildlife will not disappear and will be protected for the future.

We want this woodland to continue to be an amazing place for both people and wildlife. Once we have purchased the site, our expert team of staff and volunteers will be able to care for this beautiful woodland and the unique wildlife that calls it home, ensuring everyone can enjoy this wild place for years to come.

Your stories

You all had different reasons to support our appeal, but what unites us is how much everybody cares about precious wild places like Astonbury Wood. This is why we would like to share with you some of your personal stories and the wonderful memories you have of this incredible woodland:

Linda

"Astonbury Wood is an incredibly important place to me. I visited the woods as a child with my school. I was already a complete child of nature, but my day there fuelled a lifelong passion for wildlife and inspires me as a wildlife artist."

Diane, Letchworth Garden City

"I love Astonbury Wood and used to accompany classes there in the old days."

Tina, Stevenage

"I love walking through these woods."

Kerrie

"Astonbury Wood was our saviour through all lockdowns - myself, hubby and our three children (5-13) absolutely love this wood. So pleased you have the opportunity to save these woods."

Alison, Dunstable

"Astonbury was the first true carpet of bluebells that I saw, aged 40, with my young family, at an open day with woodland crafts and folk music. A very special memory of a beautiful haven."



BROWN LONG EARED BAT

Carol, Borehamwood

"Glad to help preserve this beautiful and ancient woodland and its yearly carpet of bluebells for everyone to continue to enjoy."

Ms Young, Stevenage

"First place I ever saw a kingfisher and the children loved their visits with the school. Beautiful place."

Thank you. You are the reason that Astonbury Wood now has a future.



SPECKLED WOOD

You can still help!

Our Astonbury Woods campaign will stay open until the end of July. All donations will be directed to support the Trust's work for wildlife at Astonbury Woods and our other nature reserves.

Community Gardening

Come together with your community to make more space for nature.



Add bird boxes and bee hotels

Help wildlife find move into your shared garden, by providing homes! Find that DIY expert in your community and get building.

Set up a community compost heap

These work really well, helping to reduce waste sent to landfill as well as provide a home for wildlife and compost for mulching.

Plant native trees

Many parks and shared spaces have room for a few trees and people love planting them. Set up a crowdfunder to buy a few and plant them together with your neighbours.

Make a small pond

A source of water is really important for wildlife, for drinking and bathing. People will be drawn there too if you pop in a bench.

Grow plants for bees

Everyone knows bees are in trouble and wants to help them. Grow herbs like lavender, oregano, rosemary and chives.

Grow vegetables

Many people want to grow veg but lack the confidence. Start with courgettes, beans and strawberries. Teach people how to sow seeds and raise crops themselves.

Garden organically

Use a combination of companion planting and wildlife gardening to move away from using chemicals, helping your community to learn how to garden in a wildlife-friendly way.

Create mini habitats

Make log, leaf and stick piles for wildlife to live in, and leave seedheads and long grass over winter. Children will love making (and exploring!) homes for wildlife.

Twice a year, I meet up with other members of my local community to plant up and tidy the planters on my local high street. While we work we chat, discuss planting methods and the best plants for bees. Some of us take clippings home to compost. Many of us end up in the pub afterwards. It's a lovely thing to do, both for the community, the local wildlife and ourselves. Thanks to Covid we missed a session last year, but we have a date in the diary for summer and I'm looking forward to getting back to work.

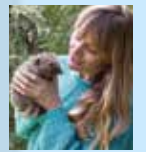
Community gardens and gardening help bring communities together. They can be on virtually any patch of land, from large planters on a main road like the ones I tend, to a park or church grounds (or a section of them) — I've even seen community gardens set up in raised beds on a little corner of pavement. The space doesn't matter, it's what you do with it that counts. Whether you

grow veg, flowers or focus on wildlife gardening there's plenty of reward to reap from your efforts. You'll learn more about planting for nature, and can then pass this knowledge on to other members of your community, young and old. As a result, you'll bring more nature to your and others' doorsteps.

If you want to start gardening with your local community then start with your local park. There may already be a 'Friends of' group set up that you can join, but if there isn't then set one up yourself — other 'Friends of' groups should be able to help you. You'll be amazed how many people in your community want to come out and help improve the area, and you'll make new friends, too!

For more tips on how to make green spaces wilder, visit:

[wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects)



Kate Bradbury is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone and Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.

30 by 30

The decade we save our wildlife

TOM MARSHALL



Hedgehogs have undergone massive long-term declines

We know the natural world is in crisis. Every year we're overwhelmed with new statistics about the shocking losses in the wildlife around us, like last summer's news that a quarter of UK mammals face extinction. For decades we've worked hard to protect the few wild areas that remain, saving species in nature reserves and even bringing some back from local extinction. But to turn the tide, it's time we raise our ambitions.

The Wildlife Trusts are calling for at least 30% of our land and sea to be

connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030. This goal is essential if we are to truly see a recovery in our natural world. Evidence suggests that at less than 30% cover in a landscape, habitat patches are too small and fragmented. They become isolated and the wildlife populations living in them begin to decline. Giving 30% of the UK to nature is the bare minimum that nature needs to survive, but we're still far short of this goal.

Imagine living in a country where we make space for nature, finding ways to live alongside wildlife rather than

clearing it to make room for ourselves. Restored wildlife-rich fens, resounding with the bugling calls of cranes and the booms of breeding bitterns. Diverse uplands that are a wonderful mosaic of colour and life, where hen harriers soar over carpets of heather, curlews call from boggy pools and pine martens leap between the branches of woodlands. Towns and cities blossoming with trees and flowers, where hedgehogs roam between parks and gardens bringing nature into all of our daily lives. Together, we can make this a reality.



TERRY WHITTAKER 2020/VISION

WATER VOLE

Wilder St Albans



Do

Learn how you can get involved in Wilder St Albans at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbens.

Expanding nature reserves aren't the only way to achieve our 30 by 30 vision. Gardens and other urban spaces can be a fantastic place for wildlife if you let them. This is where our new Wilder St Albans project comes in. Its aim is to encourage and empower individuals, community groups,

local businesses and schools to take their own action towards the 30% of land for wildlife target on their own local patch. One part of this new project is the planned reintroduction of water voles to the River Ver between St Albans and Redbourn. The UK's fastest-declining mammal will make a comeback to St Albans following a 30-year absence.

See page 4 to find out more about the project and our partners.

These are just some of the many Wildlife Trust projects working towards 30 by 30. Find out more and get involved at wildlifetrusts.org/30-30-30



DOUGLAS MCNAB

Beane Marsh



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/beanemarsh.

Not only has the Trust's newest nature reserve, thanks to the efforts of the local community, Beane Marsh in Hertford, increased the space managed for wildlife by nearly five acres, but it also boasts an extremely rare and valuable habitat – floodplain grassland. Despite its relatively small size, the site

boasts a mosaic of habitats – from wetter areas of fen and swamp to semi-wet, marshy margins and dry grassland.



PAUL HARRIS 2020/VISION

Jordans Farm Partnership



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Find out more about the partnership at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/jordans-farm-partnership

The Wildlife Trusts and Jordans Cereals farmers work together to make space for wildlife on their farms. Farmland covers more than 70% of the UK's land area and therefore farmers are critical in helping bring about nature's recovery. There are eight passionate farmers growing oats for Jordans in

Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Each of these farmers works with one of our expert farm advisors to build a farm action plan, which helps the farmer to manage at least 10% of their land for wildlife.

#30by30

**Your
Wild
SUMMER**

Conservation Manager **Tim Hill** tells us about his favourite seasonal wildlife highlights and suggests ways to enjoy the natural world this summer.



BEN ANDREW

Nesting harvest mice

Small enough to fit in a matchbox, harvest mice are Britain's smallest rodents. They live in hedgerows, reed beds and other areas of dense vegetation, such as tall grasses and cereal crops, but due to their diminutive dimensions, they are rarely seen in the wild. If you look carefully towards the end of summer, when the vegetation thins out, you may be able to spot their nest, an intricately woven sphere of stems about the same size as a tennis ball. This is natural engineering at its best, the nest woven around the upright stems of plants, usually about 50 cm above the ground.

If you want to find a nest, think like a harvest mouse and what you will need to bring up your babies – food such as grain and insects, and shelter. When walking in the countryside, the tall scruffy vegetation between fields and hedgerows is a good place to look. Harvest mice also like wetlands so check out the tall vegetation alongside rivers, ditches and ponds and I would recommend a visit to our Fir and Pond Wood or Rye Meads nature reserves as a good place to start.



BERTIE GREGORY 2020VISION

Peregrines need practice

Peregrine falcons have started to breed in our towns and cities because there are plenty of tall buildings with suitable ledges to nest on and an abundant supply of their favourite food – the feral pigeon.

Adults will be sitting on the nest from late March or April. Whilst the nest won't be visible from the ground, look out for the adults perched or flying and exclaiming their 'keearr' calls above. Panic-stricken pigeons flapping for cover are a sure sign of a peregrine in the area. The chicks grow quickly after hatching and about six weeks later, they will leave the nest and perch nearby, testing their wings. They will hang around for another two months or so while the adults teach them to hunt and handle prey in flight.



HOW TO SPOT A JUVENILE PEREGRINE FALCON

Look up

Tall buildings make great urban alternatives to cliffs.

Look down

If you regularly see feathers and prey remains at the base of a tower block, it could well be home to a family of urban peregrines.

Listen

Hungry young birds call noisily to attract their parents' attention. They have a shrill cry.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Damselflies

High summer is the season of the damselfly and spending time at any wetland will enable you to experience their beauty and learn how they differ from dragonflies.

Out on patrol

No summer outing would be complete without experiencing a mindful moment watching damselflies as they flutter silently over and around ponds and rivers. Their aerial manoeuvres are incredible with their ability to fly forwards, backwards, up and down, quickly changing direction to hunt their prey or avoid capture by a predatory bird.

These adaptable insects can be found at all our wetlands, feeding on other smaller insects such as flies, midges and even each other. If you thought

butterflies were the only insects worth a second glance, these multi-coloured, iridescent predators are a joy to behold.

What to look for

There are 11 species of damselflies breeding in Hertfordshire. Found in almost every habitat, these masters of the air bring a splash of colour throughout the summer. They are also known as the 'birders' insect', providing interest during the sometimes-quieter time of year for bird watchers, after the excitement of the spring and before the autumn migration begins.

Know the difference

As a general rule, damselflies are slimmer and rest with their wings folded, while the stockier dragonflies keep their wings spread outwards, like an aircraft. The exception to this rule are the emerald and willow damselflies which hold their wings in a shallow V-shape. The earliest damselflies, the

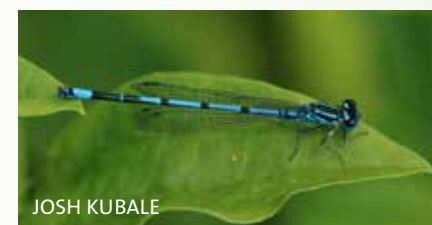
large reds are on the wing during April, while the last common darter of the year might still be flying on a warm October day, with the latest in my own experience being in early December! The highest species diversity is found during June and July. Like most insects, damselflies are at their most active in warm sunny conditions so pick your day wisely. Close-focusing binoculars will come in handy, as they are tiny and may fly off if you get too close. Finally, of course, take care at the water's edge, it's easy to get carried away when watching these summer jewels.



SEE THEM THIS SUMMER

**Amwell
Stocker's Lake
Hertford Heath**

3 species to spot



JOSH KUBALE

Azure damselfly

A regular visitor to gardens, the azure damselfly is on the wing from May to September.



DAVID MARTIN

Banded demoiselle

Resident of slow-flowing streams and rivers, its flight is fluttering and butterfly-like. The males have dark blue bands on their wings.



MARGARET HOLLAND

Large red damselfly

Often one of the earliest damsels to appear in April, it likes to rest at the edge of garden ponds.



See

The fluttering of damselflies darting from reed to reed on riverbanks

Smell

The sweet heady scent of meadowsweet at Thorley Wash or Frogmore Meadows

Hear

The buzzing song of grasshoppers as they try to attract a mate.

Feel

The warmth on your skin in the heat of the midday sun

Six ways to experience and enjoy summer



1. Take on the Summer Reading Challenge

This summer, libraries across Hertfordshire will be encouraging families to visit their local library and take part in the 2021 Summer Reading Challenge. The Reading Agency, the challenge organisers, have teamed up with the World Wildlife Fund for a very special nature-theme 'Wild World Heroes' that will inspire children and their families to stand up for the planet. Library staff will be on hand to help you register for a summer of reading fun. Why don't you get even closer to nature and take your reading outside?



Pop into your local library to find out more!

2. Go batty

Those warm summer nights provide the perfect opportunity to go in search of flying mammals. Bats are the only mammal in the world capable of true flight – other animals that are said to be able to fly – such as the American flying squirrel – are actually just gliding, not able to sustain flight. Due to their secretive nature, bats have traditionally suffered a rather bad rep but are, in fact, as fascinating as they are mysterious. From wetlands and grasslands to woodlands, the 12 bat species found in our area inhabit different habitats.



EMMA BRADSHAW



Join one of our bat walks

at King's Meads and Home Farm Glamping this summer. Find more info on the back cover of this magazine or at hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events.

3. All aglow



SHUTTERSTOCK

Dusk falling earlier through August brings the opportunity for an experience with one of nature's true wonders – bio-luminescence – courtesy of glow worms. 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, up to 25mm long, the males develop wings, enabling them to leave their natal home in search of a mate. Females do not have wings so are not able to move far to find a partner. Instead, they announce their presence with their own bodily beacon, located in the rear end. 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.



Panshanger Park

Panshanger Park is one of the best places to look for these illuminating insects.

4. To infinity and beyond!

Located as we are in the built-up south of England means that at night-time we rarely experience true darkness. Fortunately, there are parts of Hertfordshire which, although not truly 'dark sky', provide an opportunity to experience the true wonder of the universe. My favourite place is Therfield Heath. Keep an eye on the weather forecast, pick a clear night and head up to this highpoint to be there well after sunset. Towards the end of summer and with the help of binoculars or a telescope, you may be lucky enough to see the Andromeda galaxy, Jupiter, Saturn and Mars with a supporting cast of the Great Bear and Orion's Belt. Looking out into the vastness, I guarantee that you will feel humbled and possibly just a little emotional at the beauty of the world and our small part of it.

ED MARSHALL MILKY WAY WINGLETANG ST AGNES

LAPWING

5. Mud, mud, glorious mud

Whilst we may think of high summer being July, for many migrant birds, it starts the beginning of the autumn migration as they finish breeding and begin their journeys back to their wintering grounds in Africa. July and August are the months to head to those wetland nature reserves such as Amwell where mud is a priority offering. Here we are able to drop the water level in the lake to maintain a marshy margin where invertebrates abound. Migrant wading birds which may have bred in northern Europe will now be

heading south and will need food along the way, much as we use motorway services. Spend a few hours at the viewpoint at Amwell and with a little luck, you should see common and green sandpipers, redshank, little ringed plover and if you're really lucky scarcer migrants such as dunlin or ruff. One wading bird you're almost guaranteed to see is lapwing – a sizeable flock usually gather in the late summer after breeding. Listen out for their lovely 'pee-wit' calls as they chat amongst themselves.

6. Sleep outside

Spending a night under the stars is a great way to connect to the outdoors. Head out on a camping (or glamping) adventure and cook on a campfire, take long walks and gaze at the starry night before going to sleep serenaded by the sounds of nature. You don't even have to go far: if you can't get anywhere this summer, your garden can provide just the right setting for this summer adventure!



PAUL THURTON

MEADOW SWEET

Go Wild *Events*

We are delighted to be offering a range of in-person and online events over the coming months, from workshops to walks, with something for all ages. Discover new events and our top picks near you. Booking is essential for all our events and places are snapped up quickly! Don't delay and book your place today!



FIND OUT MORE

Online

Visit hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events for full listings and booking.

Get Closer to Nature In Person

Home Farm Glamping events

ALDENHAM

Visit this beautiful glamping site for an afternoon exploration of the nature trail or a dusk batty experience. We will be searching for bats hunting using detectors in the evenings. During the day we'll search for pollinators such as butterflies and bees, and also check the refugia around the site for frogs, toads and even maybe a grass-snake!

Adults £10, Children £5. Children must be accompanied by a paying adult.

Hornbeam Wood Hedgehog Sanctuary

HARPENDEN

Visit the sanctuary to learn basic hoggy facts – where they live, what they eat, problems they face and why they're in decline. Meet a rescue hog (if available) and find out how to help hedgehogs in your garden.

Adults £8, Children £6. Children must be accompanied by a paying adult.

Life at the Lake

STOCKERS LAKE AND PANSHANGER PARK

Come and discover what lives at Stocker's Lake and Panshanger Park,

from cool camouflaged creatures to fascinating floating flora! Drop in for this series of fun educational activities each week in the summer holidays, with a different watery theme to explore each time. Expect topics including predators and prey, plants and adaptations. We will have creatures to study and other activities to help you dive into different and exciting aspects of lake life.

Free

King's Meads Nature Reserve

WARE

Explore this wonderful wetland meadow reserve on the edge of Ware with an expert. Join us to search for damselflies and dragonflies during the day, or explore the meads after dark and listen to the bats swooping over the water and meadows hunting insect prey with the help of detectors.

Free

Panshanger Park

HERTFORD

A variety of events over the summer, from family volunteering days, long rambles around the park and shorter visits to the Great Oak. Drop in to our

pop-up visitor centre on selected days and discover the wonderful wildlife to be found at this accessible park between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford.

Free

Bring nature into your home - online

Learn to Sketch Workshops

These monthly online sketching workshops continue to be hugely popular – grab your pencils and join Martin for a relaxing couple of hours sketching wildlife in the comfort of your home. We will be concentrating on mammals, ducks, birds of prey and more over the next few months.

Free

Identification Talks

We have a great range of talks planned for the rest of the year, including Andy Holtham's Tree Gall Identification workshop, a talk by the Trust's Matt Dodds about the successes of the Barbastelle Bat Project, and a fascinating talk about the wonderfully overlooked Slime Moulds from renowned local photographer Andy Sands!

Free



Sunday 26th September Chess Valley Challenge

Challenge yourself, friends and family to walk the 10-mile Chess Valley Way and raise funds for the Trust on this sponsored walking event. This lovely self-guided walk between Rickmansworth to Chesham is an ideal way of exploring the beautiful Chess Valley. Discover the beautiful River Chess, walk through our stunning Frogmore Meadow Nature Reserve.

Adults £15, Children £5 (under 16), Family £35, Team £75
(6 adults) hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/chessvalleychallenge