

## The State of Nature

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### > Aerial acrobats

Learn about our superb swifts 20

PROTECTING **WILDLIFE** FOR THE FUTURE



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## CHESS VALLEY CHALLENGE

WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN TODAY?

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- HOUSEMARTIN
- MEADOW BROWN BUTTERFLY
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- RED KITE
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Panshanger Park

Celebrate the wildlife of Hertfordshire and enjoy a fun day out with the whole family!

[hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/festival](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/festival)



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Spring 2020

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# wildlifematters

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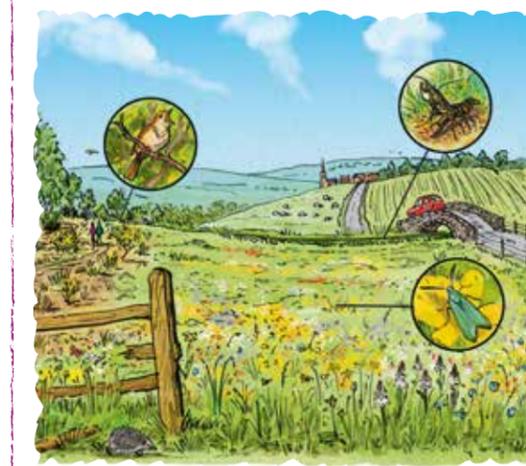
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Water vole © Terry Whittaker 2020VISION



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## Welcome to the Spring edition of Wildlife Matters.

March 2020 saw the publication of an important document which will help shape the priorities for action for wildlife over the coming years, the Hertfordshire State of Nature Report.

Over the last 8 months the Trust has been working hard to crunch the numbers on over 2.8 million species records to create a detailed report on what has happened to our local wildlife over the last 50 years. This is the first time such a report has been compiled and we are hugely grateful to the Herts Ecological Records Centre and to all the volunteer species recorders that made it possible.

Some of this report makes for difficult reading. On average we have lost 3 species every 2 years and many more are threatened, but there is hope here too. This report should be seen not just as a story of changes to species and habitats, but of society's changing relationship with wildlife. Increasingly people are becoming disconnected from wildlife in their everyday lives. More space is needed for wildlife, both physical and emotional, if we want future generations to be able to enjoy the wildlife experiences that we treasure.

The report comes at a time when the planet is facing an ecological crisis and a climate emergency. The two are inextricably linked and mean that there has never been a more important time to stand up for wildlife and to take action. One thing is clear, which is that everyone can play their part and we are talking to farmers, businesses, community organisations and local authorities about the various roles they can play. Your support enables us to take this leading role and work towards creating a Wilder Herts and Middlesex.

Spring is the perfect time of year to get out and about to see wildlife and wild places, and I hope that you are inspired by the magazine to explore some of our nature reserves which are looking at their best with butterflies flying in flower-rich meadows and dragonflies darting around over wetlands. We love seeing your pictures so please do share your wildlife sightings and photographs with us.

*Lesley Davies*



## On Wild Trax

Over the past three years, the Wild Trax project, a partnership project between Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and the Natural History Museum in Tring, has engaged over 2,800 young people in Tring and Aylesbury with nature.

Wild Trax was devised in response to concerns that young people are becoming increasingly disconnected from wildlife and experiencing issues with their health and wellbeing.

The project aimed to help young people aged 11 to 18 enjoy the outdoors, develop new skills and use their passion to benefit nature. The project has delivered two community wildlife projects, 50 outdoor experiences and nine workshops. Within the Wild Trax project, the Trust has supported Tring School's Outdoor Classroom Groups with educational activities as well as wildlife gardening advice and field trips to nature reserves including Wilstone Reservoir where the pupils learned how to make elderflower cordial.

The three-year project was funded by the Rothschild Foundation and kindly supported by Dacorum Borough Council and Opticron who helped purchase vital equipment for activities such as binoculars. We are grateful for the wonderful Wild Trax Officers who implemented the programme, our project partners and everyone who supported and participated.



Tring School Wild Trax Celebration

Find out more about this project at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildtrax](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildtrax)

## Trust office becomes a home for swifts

The Trust has installed four nest boxes at our head office in St Albans to provide nest sites for swifts in spring.

As part of our Go Wild in the Garden project funded by the National Lotteries Communities Fund, the boxes were fitted for free by Andy Gardner Specialist Tree Care. One box was kindly donated by Trust supporter Rose Goss. Come spring, the Trust will play swift calls to encourage the birds to take up residence. Find out more about swifts on page 20.



2019.12 new swift boxes up Grebe House

## An outstanding local naturalist

We are thrilled that long-standing Trust supporter Trevor James has been awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List for his services to nature conservation in Hertfordshire.

Trevor is the author of *Flora of Hertfordshire* and *Beetles of Hertfordshire*. He has dedicated his life to recording plant and beetle species. As a county recorder, he has collated more than one million records, creating a lasting legacy for wildlife in this county. Trevor continues to serve the Hertfordshire Natural History Society and the British Naturalists' Association.

Congratulations, Trevor!



Martin Maylin & Emma Mattha

## Hedgehog events raise awareness and funds for wildlife

A partnership project between the Trust and Harpenden-based Hornbeam Wood Hedgehog Sanctuary has raised more than £1,300 for wildlife and helped spread awareness about the risks facing hedgehogs.

Participants learned about the preferred habitat and diet of hedgehogs, why they're in decline and how to help them in their own gardens. They were able to meet a rescue hog and find out about basic hedgehog care and handling. The proceeds from the workshops were split equally between the two charities. Following the workshops' huge popularity, more dates will be available this year.



Learn more about hedgehogs on page 16 and find an event at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events).



BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN AT MORLEY FIRTH © JOHN MACPHERSON/2020VISION

# A big splash for UK seas - our 2019 marine review

Together, the Wildlife Trusts form the UK's largest marine conservation organisation. Our Living Seas teams are the eyes and ears of the UK's coast.

Throughout 2019, with the help of over 5,000 volunteers, they did wonderful things for the wildlife in our seas.

Careful monitoring revealed some fantastic good news stories around our shores, from bumper breeding seasons to amazing discoveries.

A new citizen science project logged 320 sightings of cetaceans off Yorkshire's east coast, including minke whales, bottlenose dolphins and harbor porpoises. There was good news for seals too, with Cumbria Wildlife Trust counting a site record of 483 grey seals at South Walney, including seven pups. Elsewhere, an individual seal, nicknamed Tulip Belle, was discovered commuting between the Isle of Man and Cornwall.

Lara Howe, Manx Wildlife Trust's marine officer, says: "It shows that seals will swim great distances for food and a place to pup, highlighting the importance of a network of Marine Protected Areas around the UK, so that wherever marine wildlife goes there are healthy seas to support them."

Our fight to secure this network saw a huge victory last summer, with

the designation of 41 new Marine Conservation Zones.

2019 also saw a welcome boost for some of our struggling seabirds. On Handa Island, Scottish Wildlife Trust counted 8,207 razorbills, the highest number since 2006, though the population is sadly still in trouble. In North Wales, Sandwich terns had a bumper year, with 800 chicks fledging compared to just 180 in 2018.

Sadly, it wasn't all good news. Several Wildlife Trusts reported an increase in disturbance. Jet skis, kayakers, boats and drones have all been recorded causing distress to marine wildlife like dolphins, seals and seabirds.

Plastics, ocean litter and discarded fishing gear also continue to devastate marine wildlife, though Wildlife Trusts around our shores cleared up huge amounts of litter, including 2.5 tonnes picked up by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.

All of this was made possible by the fantastic support of all our volunteers and members.

For more amazing stories head to [wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-19](http://wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-19)

## 2019 in Numbers

Over 5,000 volunteers supported coastal Wildlife Trusts with beach cleans, surveys and shore-based events.

More than 200 sharks, skates and rays were tagged as part of Ulster Wildlife's SeaDeep project, helping us monitor these vulnerable animals.

Two giant gobies were among 1,310 species recorded in just 24 hours as Devon Wildlife Trust's Wembury Marine Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary.

27 tonnes of litter and fishing gear collected by fisherman for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Fishing 4 Litter.



### Get involved

We need to put nature into recovery on land and at sea. Join us on our campaign for a wilder future:

[wildlifetrusts.org/wilder-future](http://wildlifetrusts.org/wilder-future)

## 100 miles wider

Space for nature should be at the heart of our planning and farming systems. This is the only way we can create a Nature Recovery Network, enabling wildlife to thrive across the landscape and bringing nature into our daily lives.

But current proposals for developing the land between Oxford and Cambridge do not have nature at their heart. Without proper assessment, government cannot know whether the area could support the current proposals for housing, road and rail and stay within environmental limits for nature, carbon and water.

Special habitats are under threat, including ancient woodland and grazing marsh, which supports rare and declining wading birds like curlew and redshank.

The Wildlife Trusts have created an alternative vision for this land: 100 miles of wilder landscape in which people can live, work and enjoy nature. By protecting and connecting the wildest places, we can introduce a new way of planning that has nature and people's wellbeing at the centre.

Find out more [wildlifetrusts.org/100-miles-wilder](http://wildlifetrusts.org/100-miles-wilder)



REDSHANK © TOM MARSHALL



## New leader for The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are delighted to welcome Craig Bennett as their new Chief Executive Officer.

One of the UK's leading environmental campaigners, Craig joins The Wildlife Trusts from Friends of the Earth, where he was Chief Executive.

In a conservation career spanning over 20 years, Craig has led a movement to end peat cutting on important moorlands, helped secured better wildlife legislation through The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and, more recently, led successful campaigns to highlight climate change and to protect and restore bee populations.

Craig Bennett says: "The Wildlife Trusts are an extraordinary grassroots movement that is uniquely placed to work with local communities to make this happen and ensure a wilder future, and I could not be more pleased to have been asked to lead them at this incredibly important moment." [wildlifetrusts.org/new-leader](http://wildlifetrusts.org/new-leader)

## An insect apocalypse

A new report, *Insect Declines and Why They Matter*, commissioned by an alliance of Wildlife Trusts in the south west, concluded that drastic declines in insect numbers look set to have far-reaching consequences for both wildlife and people.

The report concludes: "if insect declines are not halted, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems will collapse, with profound consequences for human wellbeing."

[wildlifetrusts.org/urgent-action-insects](http://wildlifetrusts.org/urgent-action-insects)



© ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION  
Marsh Frillary

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are working for you across the UK



### 1 Inspirational youth

Over the last year, over 2,800 young people aged 11-25 rolled up their sleeves to help nature thrive in their local area. The Grassroots Challenge project, led by Ulster Wildlife, gave young people the opportunity to unleash their passion, creativity and potential to make a real difference to their environment and community. [ulsterwildlife.org/news/inspirational-youth](http://ulsterwildlife.org/news/inspirational-youth)

### 2 Attenborough appeal

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust launched an appeal to raise £1 million to safeguard Attenborough Nature Reserve, a wild oasis at the edge of Nottingham that's home to large numbers of wildfowl. The appeal was supported by Sir David Attenborough and raised over £900,000 in the first month. [nottinghamshirewildlife.org/lifetimeappeal](http://nottinghamshirewildlife.org/lifetimeappeal)

### 3 Spooky sighting

A ghost slug was discovered in the gardens of Devon Wildlife Trust's Cricklepit Mill. The origins of this mysterious species are uncertain, but it's thought to be a native of Ukraine. Since ghost slugs were first discovered in the UK in 2007, there have been a scattering of sightings, mainly from South Wales. It's a predator of earthworms and may cause problems for our native worms if it becomes established. [devonwildlifetrust.org/news/ghost](http://devonwildlifetrust.org/news/ghost)



© PHIL SANSUM  
Ghost Slug



# Hertfordshire's State of NATURE



The Trust's Head of Living Landscapes, Dr Tom Day, has authored Hertfordshire's State of Nature Report and talks about the good, the bad and the future for wildlife in the county.

Wildlife is in trouble – globally, nationally and yes, locally. 2019 saw the publication of an update to the national State of Nature Report, after the 2013 and 2016 reports, once again showing us that we're going down a very dangerous path. While most people would agree that wildlife should be cherished and protected, it continues to struggle

and we continue to become more disconnected from it. This is why, for the first time, we are bringing together the story of Hertfordshire's wildlife over the last 50 years.

### A local view

From the urban centres of Watford and Stevenage to the rolling arable

farmland around Royston and Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire\* is a county of contrasts. From the chalky grasslands of the Chiltern Hills in the west to the woods of Broxbourne, from the wetlands of international relevance for wildlife in the Lea Valley to our precious chalk streams scattered throughout the county, we have got some truly

stunning wild places which are home to wonderful local wildlife. While the national State of Nature Report touches on key issues relevant to this county, there is a need to have a closer look at some issues in a local context and to understand how Hertfordshire fits with the national picture of nature conservation and what contribution it can make towards addressing a global crisis.

Over the past year, we've been busy combing through species records

collated through the *Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre* (HERC) which is hosted by the Trust. Almost three million individual species records covering the last 50 years were identified, summarised and analysed. 10,863 different species have been recorded in Hertfordshire since 1970, most of which were invertebrates and plants. Of those, we were able to assess the conservation status of 7,696 thanks to sufficient data and knowledge. 1,524 species – 20 per cent of all species

assessed – were identified as being *Hertfordshire Species of Conservation Concern* – species that are threatened or extinct in Hertfordshire. 563 of those were able to be assessed for population or distribution changes over the last 50 years.

\*We only had access to data collected in Hertfordshire and thus, the State of Nature Report only covers Hertfordshire. Middlesex is covered by GIGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London). However, there are similarities between Middlesex and parts of Hertfordshire so many learnings in the report can inform our work in Middlesex.

### What's the verdict?

Unsurprisingly, many results in our local report correspond with findings on a national level: we are finding ourselves in a biodiversity emergency. Nearly one-fifth of species are threatened with extinction in Hertfordshire. 76 species have been lost altogether since 1970 – that's more than three every two years. Most of those regional extinctions took place on grassland and heathland, followed by woodland. Almost half of the wildlife which we were able to assess for population changes have declined. Merely twelve percent increased in numbers.



© GUY EDWARDS 2020VISION

**EXTINCT**

### Burnt orchid

This rare and distinctive wildflower can only be found in chalk grassland. Its last known location was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



© CHRIS GOMERSALL 2020VISION

**EXTINCT**

### Nightingale

This iconic bird known for its beautiful song was once widespread in Hertfordshire, thriving in high quality woodlands with a healthy scrub layer. It no longer breeds in the county.



© CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE

**DECLINED**

### Green tiger beetle

This agile and iridescent beetle is one of our fastest running insects. It hunts other invertebrates on the ground by sight. It has declined together with its heathland habitat. Scrub encroachment and nutrient enrichment reduce the bare open areas in heathland that are crucial for this beetle to survive.



© LUKE MASSEY 2020VISION

**DECLINED**

### Marsh tit

Despite its name, it is primarily a woodland bird. It has undergone a marked decline recently, probably mainly related to changes in woodland structure, similarly to most of Hertfordshire's other declining woodland species.



© DANNY GREEN

**DECLINED**

### Hazel dormouse

This iconic woodland mammal has declined so much in Hertfordshire that it is potentially on the brink of extinction here. The reasons for its decline are a complex mixture of factors, summarised by loss and fragmentation of habitat, reduction in habitat quality and a changing climate.



# The State of...



## GRASSLAND & HEATHLAND

Semi-natural grassland – meadows and pasture under less intensive management – and heathland are some of Hertfordshire’s most threatened habitats and nearly half of the species associated with this habitat have declined.

**<13<sup>ha</sup>** of heathland in Hertfordshire



## WOODLAND

Although woodland cover has increased – it now covers some ten per cent of the total land area of Hertfordshire – wildlife associated with this habitat continues to decline.

**26** woodland species have gone extinct



## RIVERS & WETLAND

Hot summers and dry winters as well as over-abstraction of water has led to a deeply worrying water situation of dried-up chalk rivers and suffering wetlands.

**3x** less wetlands than national average



## FARMLAND

While farmland already provides relatively poor habitat for wildlife, intensified agricultural management and the use of herbicides and pesticides have made it unsuitable for most wildlife.

**55%** of all land in Hertfordshire is arable farmland



## URBAN WILDLIFE

Urbanisation is one of the drivers of biodiversity loss, yet with a disproportionately larger urban area in Hertfordshire compared to the national average, our gardens, parks and allotments in our towns and cities are becoming increasingly important wildlife refuges.

**17%** of all land in Hertfordshire is urban



### Black-necked grebe

The only place in the South of England where this rare water bird breeds is Hilfield Park Reservoir. Between five and ten pairs breed here regularly – the national population of black-necked grebes is estimated at 32-55 pairs – making this bird and the site extremely relevant in a national context.



### Pasqueflower

Our county flower, also known as ‘Easter flower’ named after the time it blooms. You can only find it on a handful of ancient chalk grasslands across the whole UK. One of these is on Church Hill, part of Therfield Heath near Royston, adjacent to the Trust’s very first nature reserve, Fox Covert. Church Hill boasts the country’s largest population of pasqueflowers.

### The national context

In many ways, Hertfordshire deviates from the national average. More than half of all land in Hertfordshire is arable farmland – compared to 40% national average – and 17% is urban – compared to 7% national average. Both environments make for poor habitats; wildlife does not actively seek out human settlement but survives in green patches within our towns and cities.

Agricultural management is cited by the national State of Nature Report as the single biggest driver of biodiversity loss in the UK. So it is not surprising to learn that Hertfordshire’s Biodiversity Intactness Index (BII) – an international index that assesses the abundance of wildlife – is well below the national average of 81%, which is already low compared to other countries.

Despite this, we have identified 25 species for which our county carries a special responsibility in the national context – a high share of their UK-wide populations are based in Hertfordshire which means that our local actions can have a significant impact on national populations as a whole.

### There is still hope

Yet, not all is doom and gloom. Of the species that we were able to assess for population changes, twelve per cent noticeably increased in the last 50 years and more than one-third were more or less stable. Concerted conservation efforts have increased populations of bitterns and other wading birds such as lapwing and water voles, the latter of which would probably be extinct from the county otherwise.

Besides the Trust, there are a number of organisations in Hertfordshire who work for wildlife, farmers and landowners who are creating wild spaces on their land, local authorities who implement habitat creation schemes and, of course, our members and supporters without whom our work would not be possible.

This report marks the beginning of a whole new story for our wildlife in Hertfordshire. Not only does it highlight what we have lost over the last 50 years, but it also shows us what great wildlife we have left to protect. If we all muck in together, we can reverse the trend and create a Hertfordshire where people and wildlife can thrive together.

This study was kindly supported by funding from the Christopher Laing Foundation and the Spear Charitable Trust.



BITTERN © JAMIE HALL



Read the full report at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/StateofNature](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/StateofNature)



BEE OVER TREFOIL © TIM HILL

## Creating a buzz in Hertfordshire

Thanks to our wonderful supporters we have raised over £15,000 towards our meadow management work so that we can help bees and pollinators thrive in Hertfordshire. These donations have made a huge difference to our work this winter.

Thanks to your support we have been able to graze our Herdwick sheep at Aldbury Nowers and cattle at Frogmore Meadows, cut back overgrown bramble and control scrub at the edge of our grasslands. These are just a few of the ways in which you have helped to protect our wildflower meadows and keep them in the best condition for our bees and pollinators.

This work is only made possible thanks to your support, and for that, we cannot thank you enough.

## Become a fantastic fundraiser



Help protect local wildlife by sparing a few hours as a volunteer fundraiser.

There are lots of ways you can help, from bucket collections and supporting our events to helping us in the office.

Find out how you can support us today by visiting [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering) or by contacting Hannah at [fundraising@hmwt.org](mailto:fundraising@hmwt.org) or on 01727 858 901.



## LARGER THAN LIFE ADVENTURES



## Special discount

As a thank you for your support, you can get a **15% discount** at Cotswold Outdoors, Snow+Rock, Cycle Surgery and Runnersneed. Use the code **AF-WILDLIFE-M5** in-store or online (T&C apply).

## Wildlife champions

Class 3T at St Mary's school in Ware made our 2019 Christmas extra special. Instead of receiving gifts from their teachers they decided to donate the money to help wildlife. By wearing something green for their 'Go Green for Wildlife' day, St Hilda's School in Harpenden raised over £140 for the Trust. A huge thank you to all of our wildlife champions who helped raise vital funds for the Trust. Your support means the world to us.



If you have a fundraising activity in mind or would like to find out more about how you can help raise funds for wildlife, contact Hannah at [fundraising@hmwt.org](mailto:fundraising@hmwt.org)



## A budding artist

Eight-year-old Aila was inspired by Wildlife Matters' autumn cover photo and drew this fantastic blue tit in flight.

We think it is amazing, thank you so much for sending it in!

If the artists in your family get inspired by our work, we would love to see your artwork!



Get in touch via [info@hmwt.org](mailto:info@hmwt.org)



## In Remembrance

Our thanks to **Archie Lang** who kindly left a gift in his will to the Trust. Archie was a long-standing member of the Trust and a dedicated volunteer warden at Cassiobury Park in the 90s. We are extremely grateful for Archie's support throughout the years and for his gift, which will help us continue our work.

We would also like to thank the friends of **Jeanine Wright** for kindly donating to the Trust in her memory. Jeanine was a valued member of the Trust who shared with us a passion for protecting local wildlife. These gifts made in this special way will help us ensure the wildlife that she cherished is protected for years to come.



We were sad to hear the news in October that **Brenda Barratt** had passed away. Brenda had been a supporter of the Trust for many years, from 1999 to 2016, providing invaluable advice and guidance as Company Secretary and as a member of our Health & Safety Committee. Our condolences go to Brenda's friends and family and we

would like to thank them for their generous donation to the Trust in her memory.



# Go Wild Events

**We are delighted to be offering a huge range of events throughout the year. From workshops and talks to guided walks, there's something for all ages. Discover new events and our top picks near you.**

**Booking is essential for most of our events and places are snapped up quickly! Don't delay and book your place today! Visit [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events) for full listings and booking.**

## Get Closer to Nature

Discover our nature reserves and further afield on one of our popular donation-based guided walks. Improve your identification knowledge or just enjoy a stroll in the fresh air! This is a small selection of the variety of events found on our website.

**Sunday 12 April** | 10am – 12.30am

### Easter Sunday Wood Anemones Walk

**HODDESDON**  
Take a gentle three-mile woodland walk

to see the spectacular display of wood anemones in flower. The walk will also pass through the Trust's Danemead Nature Reserve and return along the ancient Roman road, Ermine Street.

**Friday 1 May** | 6am – 8.30am

### Dawn Chorus at King's Meads

**WARE**  
Join us for a special early-morning birdsong walk. We will be listening out for resident wildlife and also newly arrived migrants such as chiffchaff and blackcap.

**Sunday 10 May** | 9.30am – 11.30am

### Hidden World of Hedgerows

**STEVENAGE**  
Step into a world before the era of the car and discover Stevenage's ancient hedgerows.

Join us for a lovely springtime walk which takes in an ancient hedgerow thriving on the edge of town with mature trees, plants, berries and fungi, home to small mammals, insects, birds and moths, some of which we will look out for and identify.

**Saturday 16 May** | 10am – 1pm

### Restoration, Geology and Mineral Extraction Workshop

**PANSHANGER PARK**  
Take a guided two-mile walk from the Tarmac offices to discover the different restored areas across Panshanger Park and the restoration techniques being used to maintain it for wildlife.

**Sunday 17 May** | 2pm – 4pm

### Wader Day

**AMWELL**  
Join us on *Hertfordshire Wader Day* for an opportunity to spot and identify wading and other summer birds at Amwell Nature Reserve.

This will also be an opportunity to learn more about the Lee Valley Wader Strategy and the work we are doing in the valley.

**Tuesday 2 June** | 10.30am – 12pm

### Wild Wellbeing

**HARPENDEN**  
Take a peaceful walk through Harpenden Common, with a focus on being fully present in the natural surroundings and enjoying an awareness through all your senses. You will be guided through a series of activities to help you practice the skill of mindfulness. Suitable for adults only.

**Saturday 20 June** | 10am – 12pm

### Mid-Summer Stroll at Thorley

**THORLEY WASH**  
Explore Thorley Wash Nature Reserve with a wildlife expert. We will be listening to birdsong, watching for water voles and finding out more about this special wetland nature reserve.

**Saturday 11 July** | 11am – 1pm

### Family Butterfly Discovery

**HILFIELD PARK RESERVOIR**  
Hilfield Park Reservoir is a wonderland for butterflies including ringlets, meadow browns, white-letter hairstreaks and marbled whites. This is a special event for families, with arts and crafts, spotter sheets and other butterfly bounties to take home.

## Wild Experiences, Talks and Workshops

We have teamed up with a variety of local partners to provide these exciting and diverse events, bringing you and your family closer to nature.

**Wednesday 15 April** | 6.30pm – 9pm

### Talk: The Wonderful World of Wild Bees

**HARPENDEN**  
Join the Trust's Senior Reserves Officer and bee enthusiast, Josh Wells, for an illustrated talk about the wild bees that you can find in Hertfordshire, how they live and how to help them. General admission £5, Concessions £4



WHITE-TAILED BUMBLEBEE © PENNY FRITH

**Wednesday 15 April, 27 May, 17 June, 15 July** | 2pm – 3pm

### Discover Hedgehogs

**HARPENDEN**  
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are delighted to be working in partnership with Hornbeam Wood Hedgehog Sanctuary to offer this hour-long introduction to hedgehogs. Learn basic facts – where they live, what they eat, problems they face and why they're in decline. Receive practical advice about how to help hedgehogs in your garden. Meet a rescue hog (if available) and find out about basic hedgehog care and handling. £8 adults (over 16), £6 children. Children must be accompanied by a paying adult.



CHESS VALLEY CHALLENGE © JOSH KUBALE

**Saturday 13 June** | 10am

### Chess Valley Challenge

**RICKMANSWORTH**  
Take part in our second sponsored ten-mile walk through the Chess Valley, from Rickmansworth to Chesham. Discover the beautiful River Chess, walk through our stunning Frogmore Meadows Nature Reserve and explore lovely old villages and country pubs, all while helping to raise funds for wildlife. Adults £10, Children £5 (under 16), Team £50 (6 adults)

**Sunday 3 May** | 5.30am – 7am

### Dawn Chorus Walk with Breakfast

**TEWIN ORCHARD**  
Learn to identify birdsong on this gentle early morning stroll from Tewin village to Tewin Orchard Nature Reserve and back again. At the end of this three-mile walk, enjoy a hearty cooked breakfast at the Rose and Crown pub in the heart of Tewin village. £15 per person including breakfast

**Tuesday 12 May** | 7pm – 9.30pm

### Talk: Hugh Warwick "Hedgehogs and Reconnecting Britain's Fragmented Wildlife"

**ST ALBANS**  
Join us for an entertaining evening talk by Hugh Warwick, ecologist and renowned author of "A Prickly Affair: The Charm of the Hedgehog" and "Linescapes: Remapping and Reconnecting Britain's Fragmented Wildlife". Hugh is spokesperson for the British Hedgehog Preservation Society and helps manage Hedgehog Street. The evening will be a chance to hear Hugh talk about his work, ask questions and get books signed. General admission £10, Concessions £8

**Wednesday 6th & 20th May** | 10am – 4pm

### Photographing Nature Workshop

**LEAVESDEN COUNTRY PARK, ABBOTS LANGLEY**  
These workshops are for enthusiastic photographers looking to learn more about the technical side of photography to improve your nature and wildlife images. Each workshop will cover different aspects and both will allow time to take images outside and then discuss them.

Each workshop is £39 per person. Suitable for adults and young people aged 14 and over.

**Saturday 9 May** | 10.30am – 3.30pm

### Learn to Sketch Birds Workshop

**LEMSFORD SPRINGS**  
Spend the day at Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve with local artist Martin Gibbons. Martin will guide you through quickly drawing a bird's key features and how to ensure you get the proportions right. Using pens, pencil and paper, learn the techniques to draw birds in the field. Starting with shape and form, Martin will guide you from the basics using pen and watercolours to adding colour and depth to your sketches. £25 per person



HIMALAYAN BALM GIN © JONAH MADDOX

**Thursday 4 June** | 7pm – 10pm

### Wild Gin Tasting

**TRING**  
Take an early evening stroll around the edge of Wilstone Reservoir and discover this beautiful nature reserve with your knowledgeable guide. We'll look out for wildfowl on the water and might spot hobbies hunting over the fields. Then return to the nearby Puddingstone Distillery for a fascinating talk from their Director Ben, who will give an insight into the history of gin and how it is made. The evening wouldn't be complete without trying a couple of delicious cocktails from the gin menu along with some samples. This event is truly a "wild" gin tasting! £25 per person. Over 18s only.

**Saturday 27 June** | 4pm – 6pm

### Summer Smartphone Safari

**ST ALBANS**  
Learn to use your smartphone to take stunning wildlife photographs with professional photographer Jeanette. We will start in the Trust's wildlife garden and take a stroll through Verulamium Park. There, we will seek out the beautiful colours of summer and learn how to take photographs of the plants, flowers, trees and landscape along the way. Finish at the Ye Olde Fighting Cocks pub where Jeanette will explain how to get the best from the free apps available to improve your images and have a chance to ask questions and socialise. £15 per person. Adults aged 18 and over.



SMARTPHONE SAFARI © FRIEDA RUMMENHOHL

**Thursday 9 July** | 10am – 3.30pm

### Summer Tree Identification Workshop

**CASSIOBURY PARK**  
This workshop will show you how to identify trees in summer. Start the day with an indoor lesson of tree identification with the help of guide books, keys and samples. Test your knowledge on a walk around Cassiobury Park and identify the trees in the park and nature reserve in the afternoon. £7 per person



BLACKTHORNE



# The secret life of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle

© AMY LEWIS

As the evenings get milder and the days get longer, a gentle snuffling and rustling can be heard from the hedgerows and the undergrowth as one of our most beloved mammals awakens from their winter slumber...

Hedgehogs live alongside people - their habitats span suburban gardens, parks and cemeteries as well as woodlands and grasslands – making for potentially easy wildlife encounters provided you're up for a late night, as they are mostly nocturnal. These animals are natural explorers and may travel more than a mile per night and their territory can extend to over 25 acres. Not only can hedgehogs roam far,

but they can move quickly too. Despite their tiny size, they can run up to four miles-per-hour which is faster than human walking speed.

Hedgehogs are great garden helpers and they'll happily Hoover up those pesky slugs. Also on the menu are beetles, caterpillars and earthworms that make up the majority of their diet. Their unique look might be a contributing factor to their

popularity making identification easy. The European hedgehog is the only hedgehog species in Britain out of 14 worldwide, rendering special identification skills unnecessary.

They haven't always been welcomed though. In days gone by, the hedgehog was said to suck milk from cows and was even regarded as vermin. Today, hedgehogs are much loved and have been legally protected in the UK for nearly 40 years. Sadly, they are struggling and since the turn of the century, we have lost half of them in the countryside and nearly one third in our towns and cities. There are now thought to be fewer than one million left in the UK, the picture being similarly bleak in Hertfordshire, as surveys have found.

The main causes for their decline are loss and fragmentation of habitat, and a decrease in food sources accelerated through the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers. Our cities and towns have become more and more hedgehog-un-friendly with impermeable gardens, vanishing and over-tidy green spaces and busy roads.

All is not lost, though. Since hedgehogs are increasingly using suburbia as homes, your garden is the perfect place to give Hertfordshire's hogs a helping hand. As they're coming out of hibernation, now is the perfect time to create a hedgehog-friendly environment. Small changes can make a big difference for our prickly friends.

## The facts

- Hedgehogs are covered in up to 7,000 spines, which are really modified hairs
- A group of hedgehogs is called an 'array', which you will rarely encounter, as they are solitary animals
- Hedgehogs are one of three mammals in the UK that hibernate - alongside bats and dormice
- Hedgehogs got their name from their foraging habits - as they shuffle through the undergrowth, they grunt like little pigs



## Make your garden hedgehog-friendly

### Accessibility

This is the first step. Make sure hedgehogs can get into and out of your garden by creating a so-called hedgehog highway, cutting a 5" x 5" hole at the bottom of your fence. Get together with your neighbours to encourage them to do the same - share your hog!

### Food

Now that hogs can visit your garden, make it attractive for them by offering food. As they'll have used up their fat resources over winter, hedgehogs will be desperate for a snack. You can provide specialist hedgehog food or wet cat food. If you prefer a more natural approach, avoid using slug pellets and pesticides in your garden and the hedgehogs will take care of the "pests" in their own way.

### Home

As one of only three mammals in the UK that hibernate during winter, your hedgehog will need a home for the colder season – by creating it now, you can make sure it'll be ready to move into in autumn. Log and leaf piles and purpose-built hedgehog homes make great nesting places for hedgehogs, so don't be too tidy in your garden.

### Water

If you have a water feature or a pond, make sure that hedgehogs – and other animals – can get in and out. Hedgehogs are great swimmers but they struggle to climb out of steep-sided ponds and may drown. Provide a ramp from a plank wrapped in chicken wire or create shallow areas at the edge so they can scramble out.



For more information about how you can get active for hedgehogs and other wildlife visit [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)



GARDEN POND © SANDRA UNDERWOOD



## 1 King's Meads

In the Lee Valley, between Hertford and Ware, lies Hertfordshire's largest remaining water meadow.

King's Meads is considered one of the most important places for wildlife in the county. Sitting snug on the River Lee, it is well connected with other nature reserves such as Amwell and Rye Meads, and plays a crucial part in establishing a Living Landscape – a series of inter-connected habitats.

Made up of than ten different meads, each with their own unique character and habitat, King's Mead is home to a huge array of wildlife. The New River, an artificial waterway created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to provide an ever-growing London population with fresh drinking water, starts here and flows all the way to Islington.

Ditches and small rivers criss-cross the site, traditionally flooding the meads, to create pools that attract wading birds. The ditches are the perfect routes for otters to pass between the River Lee and the New

River and provide a home to water voles which build their underground burrows there. Look out for barn owls and bats wheeling over the floodplain at dusk.

Visit early in spring and listen to a warblers' singing contest. Chiffchaff, blackcap and sedge warblers try to outperform each other to win over females. Listen closely and you might be lucky enough to hear a grasshopper warbler with its distinctive cricket-like song.

Make sure to visit Chadwell Bank, a beautiful chalk grassland area south of the reserve, later in spring towards summer. Not only does this offer the best views over the whole reserve, it will also be teeming with wildflowers and butterflies at this time of year. Look out for the bright yellow common rock-roses, and the purple of the small scabious and knapweed. Orange-tip, brimstone

and ringlet butterflies can be spotted swirling around the wildflowers.

King's Meads boasts a rich natural heritage. Thanks to funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Thames Water Utilities Limited and the Environment Agency we will soon be announcing plans for an ambitious new programme of improvements and activities at the site. Watch this space!

### Know before you go

**Location:** SG12 9XD, between Hertford and Ware  
**Open:** Open and free at all times

Find out more at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/kingsmeads](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/kingsmeads)

## 2 Gobions Wood

**Why now?** In spring, Gobions Wood is a rainbow with wildflowers of all colours carpeting the woodland floor.

### Know before you go

**Location:** AL9 7AF, north of Potters Bar  
**Open:** Open and free at all times

**Wildlife to spot:** Wildflowers such as bluebells, moschatel, wood anemone and wood sorrel. Woodland birds including great spotted woodpecker and long-tailed tits

### The lowdown

A beautiful ancient woodland with grassland and ponds, Gobions Wood is a great place to visit in spring. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Gobions Wood was part of a popular landscaped garden, which was subsequently transformed into a more natural woodland and grassland. Today, the main lines of the original landscape layout are still visible.

Gobions Wood features several walkways to take in the varied character of the site. Make sure you visit the bluebell woods in the eastern part of the reserve in April or May. See if you can spot the *moschatel* between the bluebells – don't look up, but bring your gaze down to the ground. Also known as townhall clock, *moschatel* is a small wildflower whose long stalks feature exactly five flowers, four of which face in four different directions – like a townhall clock.

Whilst on your walk, pause a moment and listen out for spring singers. You should be able to hear a symphony of woodland voices from chiffchaff, blackcap, nuthatch, long-tailed tit and the drumming sound of a great spotted woodpecker.

Find out more at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/gobionswood](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/gobionswood)



## 3 Fox Covert

### Why now?

Fox Covert will be teeming with woodland birds and you don't want to miss the nearby pasqueflowers in bloom around Easter.

### Know before you go

**Location:** SG8 9NT, southwest of Royston

**Open:** Open and free at all times

**Wildlife to spot:** Woodland birds including chiffchaff, blackcap, song thrush and nuthatch. Birds of prey such as buzzards, red kites and sparrow hawks soaring overhead, white helleborines on the woodland floor and purple pasqueflowers on the adjacent Church Hill.

### The lowdown

Fox Covert, our very first nature reserve, is a small wildlife gem in the north of Hertfordshire. It sits within Therfield Heath near Royston which boasts a beautiful chalk grassland, rich in wildlife, that can be accessed from the



reserve. Therfield Heath is the only place in Hertfordshire where you can still find pasqueflowers. Church Hill, adjacent to Fox Covert, is covered in this beautiful purple flower in spring.

Visit the beech woodland on an early spring morning and immerse yourself in the song of woodland birds. Listen to blackcaps, song thrushes, chiffchaffs, willow warblers and different species of tits such as blue and great tits try to win over a mate. Watch buzzards and red kites soar on thermal currents overhead.

Find out more at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/foxcovert](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/foxcovert)





# Aerial acrobats

As the days are getting warmer and the nights shorter, we're anticipating the return the swift and its screaming flight, the epitome of British summer..

Swifts are incredible aerial acrobats, spending nearly their whole life on the wing – some will not touch down for years. They feed in flight by catching aphids, spiders, beetles, moths and even dragonflies. They drink and bathe, sleep and even mate on the wing. They fly closer to the sun than any other bird, feeding and resting at altitude.

Swifts spend most of their lives in Africa and only migrate the thousands of miles to England for a short six to eight weeks to breed, before making their way back in late July. You may wonder why they come here in the first place when so many of our summer days are rain-soaked, making it seemingly more difficult to catch insects to feed their young. The answer is simply that it works for them – and has done so for millions of years. Our northern summers have a great advantage for swifts: long daylight hours allow them to forage for 16 hours a day.

Several unusual adaptations enable them to cope with our "British weather". The eggs and chicks of most small birds are vulnerable to cold temperatures, so extended feeding forays by the parents during incubation could cause the nest to fail. On the contrary, swift chicks are well adapted to being left alone in cool weather. Chicks can enter a torpor, a state of lowered metabolism, to conserve energy, letting the parents forage for food longer and further away. In the first few weeks of their lives, swift chicks can build up fat reserves and can survive several days without feeding, which greatly enhances their chances of fledging in variable weather conditions. Once they

have left the nest, young swifts will immediately begin their journey south. With a life expectancy of up to 21 years, one single bird can accrue over a million kilometres during its lifetime.

Although most swifts don't breed until their third or fourth year, the migration is deeply ingrained in their genes and young birds will make their way to the UK every summer without ever touching down during those years. Breeding birds will nest in crevices in walls or under roof eaves. Once an adequate site is found, the young birds pair up and start to bring in feathers, wisps of grass, tree seeds and flower sepals. If you watch closely, you may see them 'wing-slapping' potential nest sites to check if these are already taken.

The apparent joie de vivre of swifts is breath-taking and has inspired many a poem:

*Their lunatic limber scamming frenzy  
And their whirling blades  
Sparkle out into blue*

Ted Hughes, 'Swifts'

You can hear their piercing 'shreeee' before you see them, swooping low over rooftops, chasing each other around buildings.

Ted Hughes also wrote the often-quoted lines about their return in summer:

*They've made it again,  
Which means the globe's still working, the Creation's  
Still waking refreshed, our summer's  
Still all to come*

Most swift-watchers can relate to this anxiety about whether or not 'our' swifts will return in May. Since Ted Hughes' poem was published some 40 years ago, concerns for the swifts have escalated, with an alarming decline of more than 50% since 1995.

For thousands of years, swifts have lived alongside humans. What has changed? Our homes and houses used to suit them, open eaves, loose tiles and holes in the walls providing the perfect nest cavities.

Modern construction techniques are leaving eaves sealed, tiles fitted without gaps and walls built with no holes. Renovations on old buildings are seeing those features removed, taking away crucial spaces urgently needed.



© NICK UPTON

COMMON SWIFT © ROBIN CHITTENDEN/NATUREPL.COM



### Swift champions

Thankfully, an inspirational movement of swift champions is coming to the rescue; around 90 local groups are taking action for swifts across the UK, among those are groups in Tring and Hertford, running surveys to find breeding sites, working to prevent nesting holes from being blocked, installing nest boxes, sharing information with their communities.

In a partnership with the Trust, Stevenage Borough Council has implemented a nest box scheme in Stevenage which will see the installation of over 70 swift boxes as part of the council's social housing renovation. Dacorum Borough Council is also following our advice and are putting up boxes on renovated social housing in Hemel Hempstead the Trust is also working with Affinity Water at Hilfield Park Reservoir Nature Reserve where three triple boxes have been installed on a building close to the reservoir in November.

Our own office in Verulamium Park in St Albans will hopefully see breeding swifts in years to come, too, as we have installed nest boxes. To attract these sociable birds, we will play swift sounds in spring. We hope that swifts can become an inspiration for how we can share our living and work spaces with wildlife, to the benefit of us all.

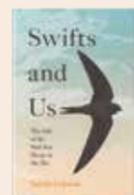


Discover Stevenage's Swifts Wednesday 24 June, 6pm  
Book via [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events)



### Five ways to help swifts

- 1** Ensure nesting holes are kept open when carrying out roof renovations or insulation
- 2** Put up a swift box on your house. Make sure it's at least five metres high
- 3** Stop using garden chemicals to support a healthy insect population
- 4** Keep records of swifts entering holes in buildings and tell your local record centre
- 5** Find out more about swifts and how you can help protect them at [wildlifetrusts.org/swifts](http://wildlifetrusts.org/swifts)



**Swifts & Us: The life of the bird that sleeps in the sky** by Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Sarah Gibson will be published by William Collins this spring.

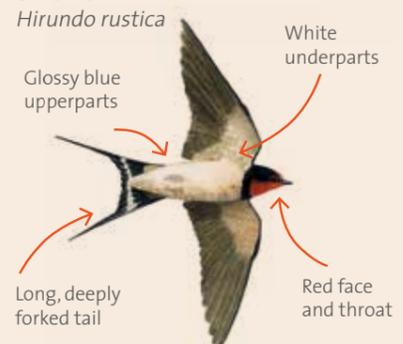
## How to distinguish swifts

Swifts are not hirundines (the family of birds that includes swallows and martins), but they have a similar appearance and lifestyle, so are often confused with them

### Common Swift *Apus apus*



### Swallow *Hirundo rustica*



### House martin *Delichon urbicum*



### Sand martin *Riparia riparia*



## Common toad

### *Bufo bufo*

During the first mild and damp evenings of the year, common toads will come out of hibernation and begin a mass migration in search of a mate. Their journey is up to three miles – an equivalent walk of 50 miles for us humans – and will take them back to the ponds in which they started their lives as a little tadpole.

They share many similarities with frogs. The best way to tell them apart is to look at their skin: frogs have moist and slimy skin whereas toads have dry and warty skin. Contrary to frogs, which live in and near water, toads spend most of their lives in woodlands, grasslands, hedgerows and even gardens. If you see something hopping through your garden, it will be a frog – because toads walk.



© DAWN MONROSE

© CHRIS SHIELDS

# Nature's Calendar

## March - June

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.



Emerald Damselfly

### March

#### Dilly with the daffs

*I wandered lonely as a Cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and Hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden Daffodils,  
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

**William Wordsworth 1807**

Perhaps Britain's best loved poem, Wordsworth's words evoke the joy of finding daffodils in the grey, barren March landscape. As winter ends, there is nowhere better to enjoy their sunshine than a morning dilly-dallying at the Trust's Stocking Springs Wood Nature Reserve near Wheathampstead. The daffodils here are the true wild variety, a rarity in our counties, with paler petals and shorter than the garden variety. The flowers themselves are more drooping, nodding as you pass as if they're acknowledging their own beauty – I'm gorgeous and I know it! Their scientific name *Narcissus* seems very apt.

 After you have dillied with the daffs in March, I thoroughly recommend you go back in May and bumble through the bluebells.



Wild Daffodil  
© ROSS HODDINOTT/2020/VISION

### April

#### Stone suckers

As a child, one of the creatures that scared me most was the sea lamprey, scouring away the flesh of my calves with their hundreds of teeth in my nightmares.

The circular mouthparts of a lamprey are a wonder of nature but truly scary! It was to my surprise that through working with fisheries I found out that we have lampreys living in the chalk rivers of Hertfordshire.

These are brook lampreys (*Lampetra planeri*), the diminutive relation of the metre-long species found in the ocean. Brook lampreys rarely grow to more than 15cm long and for most of the year are never seen. They breed in April, when water temperatures reach 10°C, so this is the best time to catch a glimpse of them. Brook lampreys live in burrows in silty areas of the river until they migrate upstream to gravelly areas to spawn. They will build a nest by using their sucker-like mouthparts to move stones, creating a hollow in the river bed 20-40cm across and about 5cm deep where females will deposit over 1,000 eggs after mating. Once their work is done, the adults will almost immediately die.

Larvae will drift again downstream until they find a more silty part of the river to burrow into, which they won't leave for the next five years or so, feeding on tiny particles washed their way. Once reached adulthood, the brook lamprey does not feed at all, their mouthparts are used for nest building only.

 If you would like to go in search of brook lampreys, head for gravelly sections of the Rivers Rib or Mimram. They have also been seen in the River Beane near the Trust's Waterford Heath Nature Reserve.

### May

#### Bee boring

 Over the last few years I've done a lot of talks on wildlife gardening. At these gatherings I'm often asked what simple things can people do for wildlife.

My stock answer is "bee boring!" I'm not advocating dullness here, but I am suggesting literally 'boring' for bees. Many of our solitary bees favour nesting in small cavities and last year, I was inspired to help my local species by creating a 'bee block'. All I needed was some timber offcuts – which I had from recent building works at home – and a drill with an 8mm drill bit.

I bored and bored and bored some more, perforating my wooden block on front and sides to a depth of about 50mm and screwed the block to a fence close to where we sit. Within a day, the first red mason bee was investigating the holes thoroughly. After a few minutes, out from the holes came a shower of sawdust – the bee was tidying up! It flew off and came back weighed down with bright yellow pollen, deposited it in the hole and repeated this process many times before it reversed into the hole to lay its eggs. The chamber was sealed with mud, then the bee did all over again until the hole was full of little cells.

Over the course of the next few weeks, almost every hole was used. We became quite obsessed with watching the bees. So, my advice for May is bee boring – be warned though, it could become a habit!



Red mason bee  
© TIM HILL

### June

#### Rare gems

Hertford Heath is a gem of a reserve and in its tiny ponds, if you look carefully enough in June, a scarce emerald can be found.

This is the scarce emerald damselfly (*Lestes dryas*) - a species so rare that it was thought to be extinct not long ago. We have another species of emerald damselfly in Hertfordshire, the common emerald (*Lestes sponsa*) which actually isn't that common! The preferred habitat of both are pools or ditches with dense standing vegetation. At Hertford Heath, they inhabit what are known locally as the sphagnum ponds. As the name suggests these are moss-lined pools and in recent years they have almost dried out in high summer. Both species share the characteristic habit of holding their wings out slightly from their body in a shallow v-shape. Telling the species apart is not easy and relies on extremely good close-up views with binocular, telescope or long camera lens, the differences are subtle.

 Venture out on a warm sunny day, be patient and look very closely. They can be hard to spot, but with a bit of luck you will be rewarded.



Scarce Emerald  
© TOBY HILL



# The Nature of... the past

The Trust's new State of Nature report highlights the plight of nature in Hertfordshire. Since 1970, we have lost more than three species on average every two years and nearly 20% of the wildlife assessed in the report was declining.

Often we don't notice what we are losing. This might be due to the so-called *shifting baseline syndrome* – wildlife is declining so gradually that it simply escapes our attention; our children will grow up never knowing the abundance of wildlife that their grandparents considered normal. It is only when we stop and think about it that we realise we used to have many more wildlife encounters on a daily basis than we do now.

When was the last time you spotted

a little hedgehog scuffling through your garden at night? Were amazed by all the bright colours of a wildflower meadow with a backdrop of rolling hills? Listened to the sheer power of the dawn chorus early in the morning? Taken in the coconut-like scent of gorse in a heathland?

These are experiences that are becoming less frequent. Hedgehogs are becoming rarer, their numbers have plummeted since the 1950s. Our wildflower meadows are less colourful, 97% of them across the country have been lost since the Second World War. The dawn chorus is dying down, less powerful and less widespread, as bird numbers continue to decline, and we only have a few hectares of heathland left in the county.

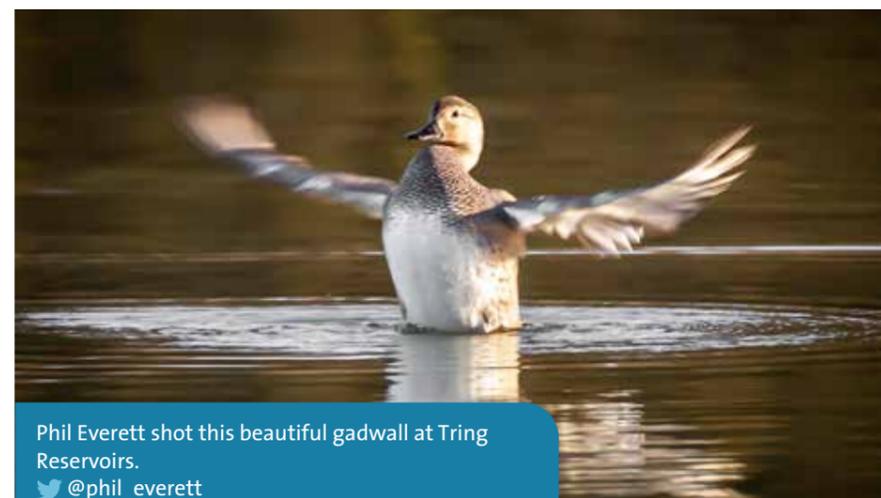
You won't hear the iconic song of a **nightingale** in Hertfordshire anymore. It is one of 76 species that went extinct from the county since 1970. So are

**burnt orchids** – a beautiful white orchid with a deep crimson – a seemingly “burnt” – tip. So are **cistus forester moths** – an iridescent green moths that thrives on sunny chalk grasslands. So are **white-clawed crayfish** – the UK's only native crayfish that was driven out of Hertfordshire by the non-native signal crayfish.

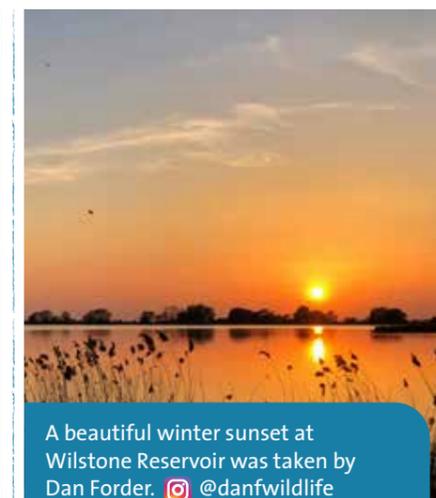
Thanks to you we are able to work hard to counteract this trend. With your help we can still create a wilder future for Hertfordshire and Middlesex. We may not be able to reclaim our lost wildlife, but thanks to you, we are able to protect the wildlife that we do still have.

Read more about Hertfordshire's State of Nature at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/stateofnature](http://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/stateofnature)

# Your photos...



Phil Everett shot this beautiful gadwall at Tring Reservoirs. [@phil\\_everett](#)



A beautiful winter sunset at Wilstone Reservoir was taken by Dan Forder. [@danfwildlife](#)



This little egret, snapped by Rose Newbold at Lemsford Springs, is playing hide and seek. [@RoseNewbold](#)



How many snipe can you spot in this photo, taken by Stuart Fox at Amwell? [@StuartFox1](#)



Katy's patience has paid off with a fantastic view of the bittern at Amwell Nature Reserve. [@KatyKingfisher](#)

Share your wild wanders!

[Hertswildlifetrust](#)

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