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PROTECTING **WILDLIFE** FOR THE FUTURE



## Welcome to the summer edition of *Wildlife Matters*.

There have of course been some huge changes to our working and personal lives over the last few months, but whilst all this has been happening, birds have been nesting, butterflies have been emerging and wildflowers blossoming.

We've still been managing our nature reserves, albeit without our usual team of volunteers whose work had to be put temporarily on hold, and thanks to our social media have seen an increase in reports of wildlife sightings such as water violet at King's Meads, and grasshopper warblers at Thorley Wash. There have been some really heart-warming moments underlining that now more than ever, the connection to nature is important for everyone, such as the engagement with our Wild at Home activities. Sadly however, there have been challenges for our nature reserves with an increase in vandalism and litter. What both ends of this spectrum of understanding and caring about wildlife really bring home to me is how much we need to raise awareness of the precarious existence of so many of our species and habitats, the urgent need for action to give them a positive future and how important a healthy natural environment is to us as people.

Our fundraising and ways to bring in new members has certainly been hit hard and this will have major financial implications for the Trust this year and in future years. That's why we decided to launch the appeal to help us recover from this situation and make sure we can continue to work for wildlife and people.

Back in the spring edition of *Wildlife Matters*, we featured the new Hertfordshire's State of Nature report which set out the species and habitats for conservation focus. Whilst we were not able to hold the launch event planned to take place with our partners, from local authorities to farmers and businesses, the need to turn plans into reality remains critical and I'm delighted to say that two new initiatives will be starting this year. Wilder St Albans will run in partnership with St Albans District Council and St Albans Environmental Action Group, and the King's Meads habitat restoration and community engagement project will start in



the summer, funded by Thames Water, Environment Agency and the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

I wrote to all our members in April about how the Trust was faring during this time and it was wonderful to see the number of positive responses that came back; it really showed just how much the wildlife in Hertfordshire and Middlesex means to our members and in these challenging times, it's so lovely to hear from you. Please do share your wildlife moments, whether on a nature reserve, in your garden or out on a walk.

May I take the opportunity to thank you for your continued support and to wish you well.

*Lesley Davies*



Summer 2020

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Herts and  
Middlesex

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# wildlifematters

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## A swift move in Dacorum

Swift boxes in Hemel Hempstead, installed in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council this spring, have already seen new tenants move in. Conservation Manager Tim Hill reports one box already being occupied.

Following a swift box scheme in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council and the installation of swift boxes at the Trust's office in St Albans, the nest boxes in Hemel Hempstead are the latest in a series of new homes for these endangered birds across Hertfordshire.

The nest boxes have been installed in Hemel Hempstead as part of the council's social housing renovation plan. All tenants were very positive towards the installation and were delighted to be playing their part in providing homes for these threatened birds.



Find out how you can help swifts in your home at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/actionforswifts](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/actionforswifts).

## Wilder St Albans

An initiative between the Trust, St Albans District Council and St Albans Environmental Action Group has been developed to create a Wilder St Albans.

The project aims to increase the habitats across St Albans – the Trust's office is located in the city's Verulamium Park – and the wildlife they support by facilitating and coordinating a programme of practical action by the local community. These actions will also form part of the natural solution to the climate crisis in St Albans. The project is designed to bring the local community together to work collaboratively to benefit wildlife across the St Albans District and to help the community connect with the wildlife on its doorstep.

A dedicated People & Wildlife Officer will work with St Albans residents, local communities and organisations to empower them to take action for wildlife so that together, we will create a Wilder St Albans where people and wildlife can thrive alongside each other.



© JOSH KUBALE

THE TRUST'S OFFICE AND WILDLIFE GARDEN IN ST ALBANS

## A new face for King's Meads



King's Meads Nature Reserve now has a dedicated People & Wildlife Officer. The Trust has welcomed David Willis at the beginning of July.

David will oversee the "Restoring the Majesty of the Meads" project (as reported in last year's summer edition) which has been made possible by support from the Heritage Lottery,

Thames Water and the Environment Agency. The aim is to restore the 235-acre site near Hertford for wildlife and to work with local residents, schools and community organisations to make it a vital part of the local community.

Located between Hertford and Ware, the reserve is one of the largest and most diverse floodplain grasslands in Hertfordshire and is regionally and nationally significant for its wildlife, including hundreds of wildflower and bird species, and 19 kinds of dragonfly.

## A warm welcome

During the lockdown, we have welcomed other new colleagues to



the team. Sam Walker has joined us as Business Support Officer



(Health & Safety) and Lydia Murphy has taken up her role as Colne Valley River & Wetlands Officer.

# Harpenden's young people are **helping to improve the Common for wildlife**

A partnership between Harpenden Town Council and the Trust is giving local teenagers the chance to get involved in practical wildlife conservation.



As part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), a voluntary conservation programme for young people aged between 14-24, 19 student volunteers carried out practical

conservation work on Harpenden Common to create new habitats and protect the Common's wild places.

Not only have the students helped maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Common, but they have also learnt practical skills – such as how to use hand tools safely or why habitats need to be actively managed. Nearly all reported an increased confidence in their own abilities, working as part of a team, willingness to try new things and listening to others. Many said they felt a greater sense of being part of the local community and that they wanted to do more for nature conservation.

One of the students said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and have gained a newfound respect for woodland areas and also the outdoors! Being out in the cold was something I have always tried to get out of. I can't believe that I have done that and I have not minded the fact that each week I got so muddy. I am actually proud of myself. This whole volunteering experience has been invaluable."

Both Harpenden Town Council and the Trust are excited to build on this pilot in the future and offer more opportunities for young people. For more information please contact Heidi, People and Wildlife Officer in Harpenden via [heidi.carruthers@harpenden.gov.uk](mailto:heidi.carruthers@harpenden.gov.uk).

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## Responding to COVID-19

COVID-19 has meant that the Trust has had to make major changes to the way we work.

In March, we closed our offices and all staff moved to working from home. All volunteering activities were suspended and some of our sites and viewing areas closed to the public. Our events programme was put on hold and most of our fundraising and membership recruitment activities stopped.

But the Trust team has still been hard at work finding new ways to communicate with our members and the public, protect our sites and develop the measures we need in place to support a phased return to vital conservation and engagement activities.

We launched Wild At Home, offering weekly inspiration, learning opportunities and creative activities to keep all ages busy and connected to nature. We have had a wonderful response to this. You can still catch up with all the details on our website - [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildathome](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildathome).

A new programme of online workshops and other activities is being developed. We are also looking at how we might be able to deliver a limited programme of our regular events as restrictions ease further. You can find out more about what is on offer and how to book online - [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events).

Our planning work has been particularly busy with many new

applications to respond to and Herts Environment Records Centre have continued to process new wildlife sightings and deliver commercial data searches.

With the development of new safety protocols, our staff team are looking after our nature reserves and some habitat and species surveys have restarted. Our Living Rivers and local project teams have been busy planning for the coming year and getting ready to get back out on site to deliver their activity programmes.

The suspension of our volunteering programme has been particularly difficult for everyone. We miss all our amazing volunteers who do so much for our local wildlife. Where we can do so safely, we have started to reintroduce limited volunteer tasks and we hope to be able to expand this further in the coming months.

As ever, our priority remains to keep all those involved in our work safe and well, so we will continue to follow the government guidance and keep everyone informed. This is a fast-changing situation. You can find the latest updates on our dedicated webpage – [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/coronavirus).



## UK UPDATE

# Leading the change

I was delighted to start in the role of Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts this spring (even if it was in rather odd circumstances given the Covid-19 lockdown).

I've long seen The Wildlife Trusts as the most powerful movement for nature in UK. Made up of 46 individual Wildlife Trusts, ranging from those covering urban areas, to county Wildlife Trusts, groups of counties, the devolved nations and finally island Trusts — we are embedded into the heart of our communities.

Together, we care for over 2,300 nature reserves ranging from Camley Street Natural Park right by London's Kings Cross station, to the spectacular Skomer and Skokholm islands off the coast of Pembrokeshire. In total, we directly manage or provide management advice on 332,697 hectares (822,112 acres) of land for nature. We all play our part — but it's worth mentioning that this collective effort amounts to even more land cared for than by the National Trust!

But what matters to me most is that our federated structure means that the majority of this is close to where people live; over 60 per cent of the UK population live within three miles of a Wildlife Trust nature reserve. And it's clear that, during the Covid-19 lockdown, millions of people have come to a new realisation of just how important local nature is to them.

I sometimes wonder if, over the last 100 years or so, the nature conservation movement in the UK has focussed a

little too much on the identification, categorisation and conservation of rare species and habitats, and not enough on the abundance of nature everywhere, and the preservation and restoration of ecosystem processes.

Don't get me wrong; we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the conservation pioneers that identified the first nature reserves and protected these sites for future generations. But we all know that nature conservation is no longer enough; we now need to put nature into recovery.

Much as we like to imagine we live in a green and pleasant land, the truth is that the UK is currently one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

I'm 48 years old and the science is clear; in my lifetime 41 per cent of wildlife species in UK have suffered strong or moderate decreases in abundance. Species that were once common have become rare and with that the role or function they are performing in our ecosystems has also declined.

We've all experienced it. As a five year old, if I left my bedroom light on at night with the window open it would be swarming with moths 30 minutes later. Now, I'd be lucky to see one. Similarly, when we went on family holidays and drove up the A1 for five hours, the windscreen would be covered in squashed insects by the time we arrived at our holiday destination. Now, there might be one or two.

At The Wildlife Trusts, we want to see 30 percent of our land and sea being managed for nature's recovery by 2030. That's the bare minimum needed to restore nature in abundance to the UK and to start getting our ecosystems working properly again; capturing carbon, pollinating crops, storing water, rejuvenating soils and cleaning our rivers.

We want to work with farmers and other land managers to create a Nature Recovery Network, using field margins, river valleys, hedgerows, roadside verges, railway cuttings and back gardens to protect, connect and restore nature across our countryside, and into our towns and cities.

And we want a comprehensive package of policy measures put in place to help this happen. That includes improvements needed to the Agriculture Bill, the Fisheries Bill and the Environment Bill (all of which are going through parliament in the next few weeks and months) but also better use of planning policy to make sure new developments help nature's recovery, rather than speed its decline.

Our vision is one where nature is in full, healthy abundance all around us; skies filled with birds, snowstorms of butterflies and moths, armies of invertebrates, vast expanses of wetland and wild landscapes, and seas teeming with life.

And our vision is also one where there's a positive relationship between humanity and nature, rather than constantly behaving as if we are almost enemies.

This won't happen overnight, but it could happen over the next decade if all of us, people, politicians and business leaders put our minds to it.

And if it does happen, it will be thanks — in a very large part — to your support as one of The Wildlife Trusts' 850,000 members.

**Craig Bennett**  
Chief Executive,  
The Wildlife Trusts  
[@craigbennett3](https://twitter.com/craigbennett3)



## UK UPDATE

# Tuning into wildlife during tough times

The Wildlife Trusts created a range of online nature activities to encourage everyone to tune in to wildlife at home throughout the coronavirus lockdown — and to help people find solace in nature during tough times.

Wildlife Trusts across the UK provided new ways of helping us feel more connected to the wider world and each other, via their online and social channels. Wildlife experts who are usually found leading school visits, events or talking to visitors on reserves turned to leading wildlife-spotting tours through their gardens, blogging about the life cycle of oil beetles or sharing

heart-warming sounds of a dawn chorus on a sunny April morning.

There was a clear demand for new ways to experience nature from home, with more people than ever tuning into our wildlife webcams — a 2,000 percent increase on this time last year.

From the reactions and messages received on social media, it was apparent that people were treasuring the wildlife they found close to home. For example, hundreds of people got in touch to tell us when they spotted their first butterflies, or to share new visitors to their gardens. These are joyful moments that people hold dear during difficult times.



## Natural solutions to the climate crisis

The climate crisis continues to be one of the most pressing concerns in modern times, linked inextricably with the ecological crisis faced by our wildlife. The Wildlife Trusts are working to emphasise natural solutions, which are essential to fighting the climate crisis, as

well as allowing our wildlife to recover. By restoring precious habitats like seagrass meadows, saltmarshes, wetlands, woodlands and peatlands, we can repair the natural processes that store carbon and create more space for nature. [wildlifetrusts.org/climate-emergency](https://wildlifetrusts.org/climate-emergency)

## UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts brought wildlife to homes across the UK



### 1 Birdsong bonanza

Cheshire Wildlife Trust shared daily recordings of birdsong in the run up to International Dawn Chorus Day on the 3rd of May. In total they introduced the songs and calls of 30 different species, helping people enjoy this fantastic spring spectacle wherever they were.



### 2 Skomer Live

With Skomer island closed to visitors, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales brought all the action and excitement of island life to us. Live webcams filled our days with puffins, whilst the island team joined up with presenters Iolo Williams and Lizzie Daly to provide weekly round-ups of the seabird season so far.

[wildlifetrusts.org/wtsww-videos](https://wildlifetrusts.org/wtsww-videos)

### 3 Wildlife TV

Essex Wildlife Trust introduced a packed schedule of digital content, bringing Essex's wonderful wildlife and wild activities straight to people's homes. Videos included wildlife safaris, top tips for wildlife gardening, and even some mystery and drama with the Mammal Detective.

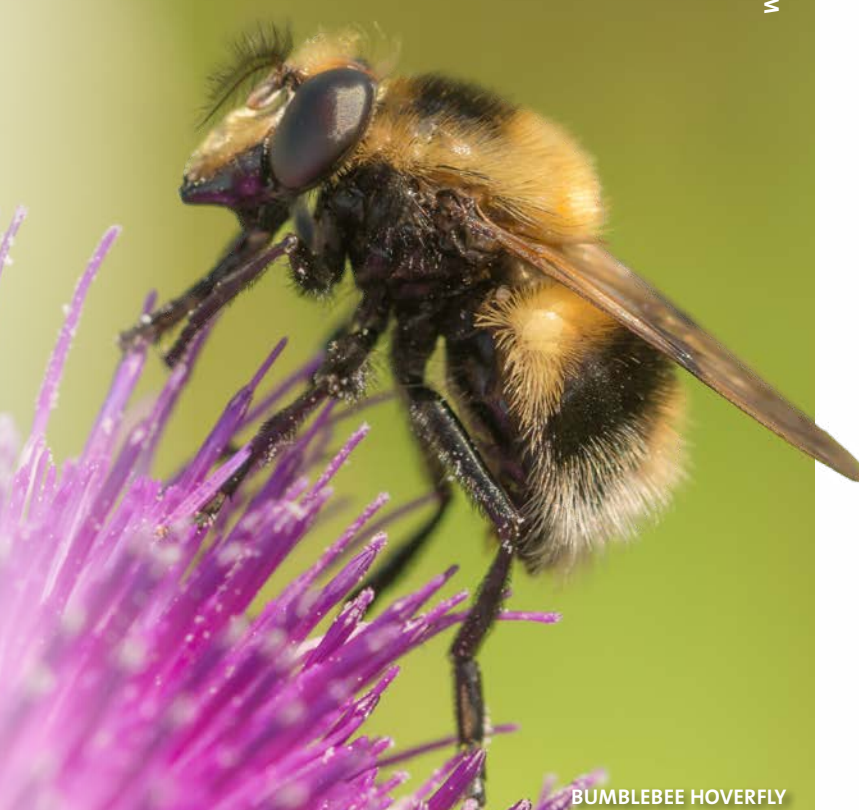
[essexwt.org.uk/news/WildlifeTV](https://essexwt.org.uk/news/WildlifeTV)



# Wanna-bees

That's a bumblebee! Or is it? Senior Reserves Officer Josh Wells delves into the weird and wonderful world of the masters of disguise.

We all know that looks can be deceiving. If you venture out into the natural world, you may find that not everything is quite as it seems. In the pursuit to eat and not be eaten, our wildlife has evolved fascinating strategies to secure their place and survive. Many animals and plants use a cunning masquerade, pretending to be something they are not. Have you been confounded by these sneaky wanna-bees?



BUMBLEBEE HOVERFLY

## Bumblebee hoverfly

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but this hoverfly has an agenda. Females lay their eggs in the nests of bumblebees and wasps, where the larvae feed on a delectable mixture of waste products and bee larvae until they reach adulthood.

This hoverfly isn't content with stealing the style of just one bumblebee. It comes in two forms: one mimics the red-tailed bumblebee and the other mimics white-tailed bumblebee species. Search for them on thistle and bramble flowers.

## Bee orchid

This flamboyant flower, pictured on the front cover, may be small, but it is a true wonder of nature. The bulbous lip at the bottom of the flower evolved to look like a bee, complete with stripes and even a thin coating of fur. The deception doesn't stop there: bee orchids also emit a female bee scent. Originally, these tricks would have lured unsuspecting males with one thing on their minds. They would try to mate with the orchid and end up pollinating it. The particular bee species that the bee orchid targets doesn't exist on the British Isles anymore and thus, British bee orchids have evolved to self-pollinate.

## Dark-edged bee fly

The long legs and preposterous proboscis of this little wanna-bee is a dead giveaway. The dark-edged bee fly is a common fly species in our region and although it looks like a little ginger teddy bear, it has a slightly sinister agenda. Females parasitise the nests of mining bees, hovering in front of each nest hole before flicking their body forwards to fire eggs close to the chamber. When the larvae hatch, they crawl inside and fasten onto young bee grubs. They drain them of their fluids, spending winter in their new home before emerging as adults the following spring. Bee flies have little impact on solitary bee colonies and are important pollinators.



© CHRIS LAWRENCE RT

DARK-EDGED BEEFLY BOMBYLIUS MAJOR

### Vestal cuckoo bee

Although the vestal cuckoo bee is most definitely a bee, it isn't quite what it seems. It is the buff-tailed bumblebee's doppelgänger and evolved similar features specifically so that females can sneak into the nests of their close cousins and lay their own eggs.

Once inside, the vestal cuckoo bee takes on the nest scent so she isn't attacked as an intruder. Then, the vestal cuckoo bee dominates or kills the host queen before laying her own eggs, which the buff-tailed bumblebee colony cares for as if they were their own.



© PENNY FRITH

VESTAL CUCKOO BEE



© HILFIELD JK

LUNAR HORNET CLEARWING

### Lunar hornet moth

Although completely harmless, the lunar hornet moths can present a fearsome sight to the inexperienced, as it resembles more a hornet than a moth. This enables it to put off a hungry predator. It is one of the largest of the so-called clearwings, a family of moths specialised in mimicry. They're best looked for in July, when the adults emerge and rest on the trunks of sallow and willow trees.



© SHUTTERSTOCK

GOODEN'S NOMAD BEE *NOMADA GOODENIANA*

### Nomad bee

Another great pretender is the genus *Nomada*. Similar to the vestal cuckoo bee, nomad bees are, in fact, bees and also nest parasites, with their mining bee cousins high up the list of preferred nests. Due to their bright yellow and black markings, nomad bees can easily be mistaken for wasps.

*Nomada* is derived from Greek and means "roaming" or "wandering" – in spring, they can be seen "roaming" low on the ground looking for someone else's nests.

## Take action for insects



These marvellous mimics are fantastic examples of wildlife being able to adapt. One thing they can't adapt to, however, is the scale and rate of the impact that we humans have. As a result, it is thought that 41 per cent of insect species are threatened with extinction. Support our beloved bees and wanna-bees and take action for insects at [wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects](https://wildlifetrusts.org/take-action-insects).



# At home with nature

We put a lot of effort into making our gardens wilder, and rightly so. But what about our houses and flats themselves? In a world where the wild places are shrinking, every inch of space we can make for nature is vital.

Whether it's the joyful song of a robin drifting through an open window, or the colourful flash of a peacock butterfly just beyond the glass, it's always a delight to glimpse the wild world just beyond our walls.

But our wildlife is in trouble. Natural habitats are shrinking, becoming fragmented and isolated by roads and other developments. With every tree that is lost, there are fewer natural cavities in which bats and birds can roost and nest. Nature no longer has the space it needs to thrive.

Nature reserves are invaluable, but to keep these protected areas from becoming wild oases in an impoverished landscape, we need to use every single space to help wildlife. Our gardens, streets, road verges and even houses can become part of a wild network, creating vital green corridors and stepping stones that connect larger wild spaces.

Every home, new or old, can play a part. The Wildlife Trusts have a vision for future housing and work with some developers to make new builds as green as possible, with built-in features that complement the habitats around them. But existing homes can do their bit, too. With just a few mostly inexpensive adjustments, we can make our roofs, walls and even windows a little more wildlife-friendly.

From bee bricks and bat and bird boxes that provide safe roosting and nesting spots, to walls blooming with climbing plants, there are lots of great ways to turn the outside of your house into a wildlife sanctuary. The best results will come when they complement the surrounding landscape, so take a look at the habitats around your house and choose the best features for your location – bats are more likely to use a roost close to a hedgerow or line of trees, and birds need to be able to find enough food to feed their hungry chicks.

Together, our homes and gardens take up more space than all of the UK's nature reserves put together. So let's make every inch count! 🍀

 **Visit our website** for handy guides to helping wildlife, from building bat boxes to attracting bees [wildlifetrusts.org/actions](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions)

## Window-mounted feeders

Even with no garden you can still feed the birds. A window-mounted feeder gives them a helping hand and lets you enjoy their antics from your armchair.

## House martin nest cups

Invite house martins to move in under your eaves with a specially made nest cup. They're especially useful when martins can't find enough mud to build their own.

## Hanging baskets and window boxes

Wildflower-filled hanging baskets and window boxes make the perfect pit stop for passing pollinators.

## Hedgehog holes

Hedgehogs can travel over a mile each night as they forage and look for mates. A 13cm x 13cm hole in your fence helps keep the hedgehog highway open.





### Bat boxes

By fixing a bat box to your wall you can provide the perfect resting spot for your local bats. It's important to avoid directing any artificial lighting onto the box.

### Swift box

Modern houses leave little space for swifts to nest, but swift boxes create a home for these summer visitors. Broadcasting a recording of their calls encourages them to move in.

### Green wall

From a simple climbing plant to a trellis laden with different species, a green wall adds colour to a house, creates vital habitat and helps regulate pollution and rainfall.

### Water butt

Using less water helps keep our wetlands healthy, so set up a water butt to catch rainfall. You can use the water to clean your car and water your plants.

### Window stickers

Placing stickers on your windows gives birds a better chance of spotting the glass, reducing the chance of a fatal collision. You can buy them or cut out your own.

### Bee box

Bee boxes offer nesting space for some species of solitary bee. If you're having work done on your house, you can even fit a built-in bee brick!



## The 2.6 Challenge

In April, the 2.6 Challenge got people to get active across the country. The campaign was set up by the organisers of the London Marathon – the world's biggest annual one-day fundraising event – to help charities struggling from the impacts of the Coronavirus due to cancelled fundraising events.

Alongside other supporters, including four-year old Cecily and the whole Robinson family, the Trust had its own team and even Bertie the Badger took part! From spotting 26 species in the garden and running 2.6km to eating 26 hobnobs and even unicycling for 260 metres, everyone completed their own challenge based on the numbers two and six.

Thanks to everyone who got involved, for running, cycling, eating, dancing, pogo-sticking, unicycling, walking, star-jumping, reading, identifying, hand-standing and of course donating. Together we raised over £1,200 for wildlife!



If you would like to fundraise for the Trust and help protect wildlife, get in touch with Hannah at [fundraising@hmwt.org](mailto:fundraising@hmwt.org) or on 01727 858 901.



© ROSS HODDINOTT2020VISION

## In Remembrance

We would like to thank Arthur Roy Mayes and long-standing members Dennis Rose and Elizabeth Firth 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 Josephine Bennett as well as Betty and Robin Hipgrave 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.

# Help wildlife at home



In the past couple of months, we have spent a great deal of our time at home. Did you know that you can raise vital funds for wildlife from the comfort of your home? Here are some easy ways you can support the Trust.

## Recycling for Good Causes

From old bank notes to jewellery, your unwanted goods can raise funds for wildlife. Download a freecycle label from the Recycling for Good Causes website, write 'Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust' on the dotted line and use an envelope no bigger than A5 in size.

[recyclingforgoodcauses.org](https://recyclingforgoodcauses.org)

## Vine House Farm

Attract more wildlife to your garden and support your local Wildlife Trust in one fell swoop. Vine House Farm donates £10 for every new customer and 4% of every purchase.

[vinehousefarm.co.uk](https://vinehousefarm.co.uk)

## Donate your birthday

Create a Facebook fundraiser and ask friends and family to donate to the Trust instead of receiving gifts.

[facebook.com/fund/hertswildlifetrust/](https://facebook.com/fund/hertswildlifetrust/)



## Easyfundraising

Fundraise by shopping online at no extra cost to you! Visit your favourite online shop through the Easyfundraising website and retailers will automatically make a donation with every purchase.

Start supporting local wildlife today at [easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/hmwt](https://easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/hmwt)



## Amazon Smile

While we recommend supporting local businesses wherever possible, if you do shop with Amazon, you can use Amazon Smile and choose to support the Trust. Amazon will donate a percentage from every purchase you make.

[Smile.Amazon.co.uk](https://Smile.Amazon.co.uk)

## Supporter perks

Don't forget that you can receive a **15% discount** at Cotswold Outdoors, Snow+Rock, Cycle Surgery and Runnersneed. If you have taken up exercise in lockdown, you can stock up on gear with the code **AF-WILDLIFE-M5** in-store or online (T&C apply).





# Spring into summer

After the much celebrated dawn chorus in spring, a more subtle symphony triggers the soundtrack of summer. Ian Carle, Records Centre Manager at Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC) follows the chirping chorus of bush-crickets and grasshoppers.

The buzzing of grasshoppers in a meadow is probably one of the most evocative sounds of our summer, a sweet symphony reminiscent of long warm summer nights and hot days spent outside.

Just like birds, grasshoppers and bush-crickets have their own song unique to their species. The male grasshopper uses a calling song to attract a female. Once she is nearby, the male changes its song as part of an elaborate courtship routine. The quality

of the song is crucial to win over the female – there is scientific evidence that a male with a ‘good’ song is more likely to attract a female.

These songs are known as stridulations, made by quickly rubbing two body parts together — a leg against a wing (grasshoppers), or one wing against another (bush-crickets). There are over 25 species of these spring-legged soloists in the UK, of which six grasshopper and seven bush-cricket species have been recently recorded in Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Their songs can range from short scratchy bursts to a continuous high buzz.

These unique sounds are a better way to identify the species than visual cues: some grasshoppers in particular can have a wide range of colour variations – a common green grasshopper is always green, right? Wrong! Sometimes common green grasshoppers can be all brown! The most common colours are combinations of greens and browns. Meadow grasshoppers have perhaps the widest range of variation and can sometimes even be vivid pink! The rather unusual hue is owed to a genetic mutation that stops the production of the usual pigment and causes an over-production of another.



## Did you know?

- Bush-crickets have their ears on their front legs, grasshoppers' ears are on their abdomen
- Some Bush-crickets and grasshoppers can jump 50 times their body size
- Bush-crickets and grasshoppers smell with their antennae



MEADOW GRASSHOPPER

## Who's who

Bush-crickets and grasshoppers belong to the same order Orthoptera – from Greek meaning ‘straight wing’ – but are two different families. Although they look similar, there are a few tell-tale characteristics that help distinguish them.

The easiest way to tell a grasshopper from a bush-cricket is by their antennae: grasshoppers have rather short antennae, whereas bush-crickets have extremely long thread-like antennae that can even be longer than their body.

## A year in the life

The lifecycle of bush-crickets and grasshoppers consists of three stages. None of our species can survive the frosty winter months. In summer, they lay eggs which overwinter and hatch in the spring. Female bush-crickets have a long sword-like structure called an ovipositor which they use to lay single eggs inside suitable vegetation, such as the cracks of bark or under moss or lichens. Grasshoppers tend to lay their groups of eggs in a protective pod either in grasses close to the soil surface or in the surface of the soil itself.

Once the eggs hatch, a tiny worm-like individual is born. The youngster quickly sheds the egg membrane and becomes a recognisable mini form called a nymph. In this stage, it goes through several more moults before eventually becoming an adult, restarting the cycle.



The most likely grasshopper to find in your garden is a field grasshopper, as it likes areas of short grassland. If you have a patch of longer grass then you may be lucky enough to find meadow grasshopper and possibly lesser marsh grasshopper. Patches of long grass may also be home to Roesel's bush-cricket, and you may find speckled bush-cricket or dark bush-cricket in areas of nettle and bramble. If you have trees or shrubs nearby, you might find oak bush-cricket and a recent arrival on imported trees – southern oak bush-cricket.



© TOBY HILL

ROESEL'S BUSH CRICKET



© IAN CARLE

FIELD GRASSHOPPER



# wild AT HOME

Communications Officer Frieda Rummenhohl reflects on the Trust's Wild At Home project.

On 23 March, the country comes to a standstill. Lockdown. We are told to stay at home as much as possible. Going out for the sake of being outside, immersed in nature, is not deemed essential and we shall not drive anywhere to exercise. For many, this means not being able to access their favourite wild patch, at a time when they need it the most.

For the Trust, this means cancelling all our events, volunteer work parties and more. All of a sudden, we are not able to bring people to wildlife anymore, to engage them with the natural world, to spark a passion for the environment. This is when Wild At Home is

formed. Starting on 30 March, the campaign provides a weekly wildlife fix straight to people's inboxes. From marvellous mammals and wonderful wildflowers to underdogs and wildlife without borders, the weekly themes revolve around how people can explore and take action for wildlife, be creatively inspired with arts and crafts challenges as well as tutorials, learn mindfulness with nature and much more. The feedback we receive is overwhelmingly positive. For many, it turns out, it's not just a weekly email, but it's a lifeline to stay connected with wildlife within their own four walls.

Here are some of my personal highlights from three months of going #WildAtHome.

With Wild At Home, we wanted to provide a space for exploration, learning, creativity and fun, with a focus particularly on the wildlife on your doorstep and immediate neighbourhood – and there is plenty, whether you live in an urban area (the whole of week 11 was dedicated to City Dwellers!), a village or small town.

During April, May and June, when the lockdown restrictions were at their hardest, every Monday morning, some 10,000 people received activities and inspiration straight to their inbox with different weekly themes. Spotter sheets provided handy identification help for daily exercise walks. I personally found the Wildlife TEDtalks, given by our knowledgeable conservation colleagues, hugely fascinating and they did prove popular with you. In the weekly blog posts, you could read up on recommendations for nature books or ID apps, gardening tips, wildlife identification aids and much more.

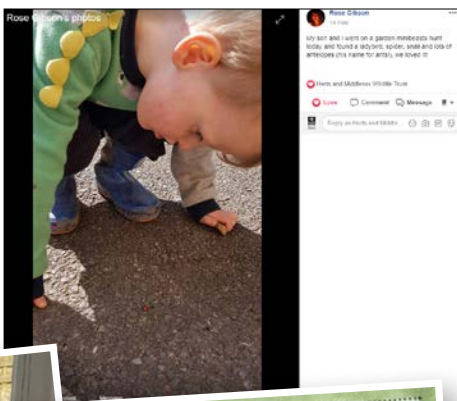
During the lockdown, many people found solace in the arts and crafts, the same is true for engaging with nature. Our arts and crafts challenges asked you to make birds' nests, draw your favourite minibeasts, write a nature poem or even bake something nature inspired. And boy, did you deliver! We received so many submissions from big or small, with beautiful drawings, delicious-looking hedgehog cookies and flower origami.



*"[Wild At Home] has been very much appreciated in opening our eyes afresh to the wildlife around us and helping us occupy family members during the long hours of lockdown".* **Alan**



“Thank you for thinking of our carers. It’s even more important at the moment to connect with something calming and beautiful. What a great idea!”  
**Carers in Herts Team**



“[Thanks] to you and the team for the [...] emails. I do enjoy them, especially the quizzes. Keep up your good work”.  
**Lynne H.**

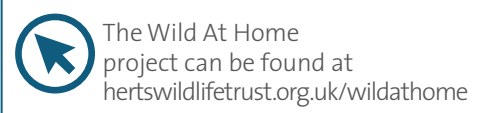
(Re)connecting with nature often goes hand in hand with a desire to help wildlife. This is why we empowered and engaged you to take direct action for wildlife in your garden and on your doorstep. Whether it’s sowing wildflowers in a corner of your garden, creating a hedgehog highway or building your own birdfeeder, small changes in your garden can make a big difference for wildlife. Those small actions make us feel good, but they also increase the chance of wildlife visiting our gardens – win-win!

The lockdown in the UK has happened at a time when nature has been busy: the ever-changing appearance of trees with new leaves and buds, the magnificent dawn chorus and the cautious popping up of wildflowers in our meadows. Many of us had a lot of time to take notice of nature and enjoy all those changes more than we normally would. If you’re anything like me, then a daily contact with nature has been a much-needed respite from Coronavirus worries. It was a pleasure to go on a morning walk and listen to the bird song or take part in No Mow May and let my lawn grow. It is not surprising that nature can help us cope with difficult situations better. After all, it is proven to be beneficial for our mental health. Together with Harpenden’s People & Wildlife Officer Heidi, Wild At Home has offered simple activities to improve your wellbeing with nature.

Just like the Coronavirus will most likely be a part of our lives for a while, we believe that the Wild At Home project is here to stay. All activities, Wildlife TEDtalks, quizzes, spotter sheets and blogs will still be available on our website. We will continue to do our best to inspire you to explore, discover and love wildlife in your neighbourhood, albeit not through weekly Wild At Home emails.

A big thank you goes to everyone who has contributed to and participated in Wild At Home!

Stay safe and stay wild!





# Goodbye to two conservation heroes

We are deeply saddened to report the deaths of two great conservationists, Paul Thrush and Trevor James. Both are a great loss to conservation and our thoughts are with their families and friends.

## Paul Thrush (1981 – 2020)

Paul was Reserves Officer and later Nature Reserves Manager at the Trust from 2007 – 2016. Paul gained a BSc in Countryside Management from the University of Lincoln and was a Ranger for Lee Valley Park Authority and Ealing Council before joining the Trust in 2007 as a Reserves Officer. Paul left Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in 2016 and went to join Devon Wildlife Trust at their Seaton Jurassic centre.

Paul's enthusiasm for wildlife was infectious and many of our members will remember Paul from his fantastic guided walks and Trust events. As well as a keen conservationist, Paul was also an accomplished photographer



and artist and his wonderful photographs feature heavily in Wildlife Matters and across the Trust's website.

Paul's time at the Trust was typified by his kindness, his willingness to help others and his boundless enthusiasm. Paul had a big impact on making Hertfordshire and Middlesex a wilder and better place. One of the Trust reserves under Paul's care was Aldbury Nowers and he was instrumental in turning the reserve into the precious wildlife haven it is today. Paul's memory will live on in the hearts of his friends and colleagues and in the vibrant, flower-filled slopes of Aldbury Nowers, surrounded by birds and butterflies.

## Trevor James (1947 – 2020)

Trevor was Hertfordshire's long-time recorder for flora and beetles and an outstanding all-round naturalist. Throughout his life, Trevor made a remarkable contribution to the study, understanding and recording of wildlife in the county where he lived for most of his life. He actively promoted 'citizen science' through his own volunteering and the generous practical help and encouragement he offered so that less experienced enthusiasts could develop their skills.

His landmark achievements are two exceptional books: Flora of Hertfordshire (2009) and Beetles of Hertfordshire (2018). The former, which covers almost 2,000 species then recorded, raised the bar for



information and standards of presentation in a county-level publication. His book on beetles is unique in the UK and provides information on all 2,483 beetle species recorded in the county at the time of publication.

With his wife Chris, Trevor was a revered organiser of the Herts branch of the British Naturalists Association. He also served on the Herts Natural History Society management committee and was a former Chair. In the 2020 New Year Honours, he was given the British Empire Medal for services to nature conservation in Hertfordshire – an award which he received in person from the county's Lord Lieutenant in March.

Trevor's contribution, not least as county recorder for both plants and beetles for more than 40 years, has been immense. His contribution to national wildlife recording was no less impressive. To say he will be sorely missed is an understatement.



## Chalkhill blue

*Polyommatus coridon*

The chalkhill blue is found on chalk grasslands in southern England. It is on the wing from July to September. The blue males are most conspicuous as they fly around searching for the more secretive, brown females, and can sometimes be seen in huge numbers fluttering over flowers, or congregating on animal dung. The larval foodplant is horseshoe vetch and the adults often feed on knapweeds and scabiouses.

# Nature's Calendar

## July - October

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

### July

#### Say No Mow

It's fair to say that my own lawn will never win any horticultural prizes.

But come July, my award is a back garden buzzing with bees, the lawn awash with bird's-foot trefoil, self heal, cat's ear and white clover. It wasn't always this way. When we moved in nearly 10 years ago, the lawn was a typical grassy desert which also became the dumping ground for rubble and other associated materials from our building work. After months of being well and truly trashed, the garden was cleared leaving a mosaic of bare ground with remnants of grass. We decided not to seed or turf and the next year, flowers started appearing alongside large areas of moss. Excited by the potential, I started varying the mowing regime, leaving uncut those areas that showed promise for flowers and cutting the more grassy areas, thereby benefiting low-growing species such as black medick and speedwells. July is now a feast for the senses with the gentle murmur of bees against a back drop of yellow, purple, green and white. There is no greater pleasure than lying down amongst it all and losing myself in nature. So, why not have a go yourself – say no mow!



### August

#### From Earth to Air

Black ants (*Lasius niger*) are ubiquitous, making the most of almost any habitat, urban or country.

For most of the time they can go unnoticed, but come the heat of August, there are days when they become the talk of the neighbourhood – flying ant days, a time of fascination to us and a time of plenty for birds and other predatory insects.

Black ants spend most of the year underground within their nest or foraging through their local environment, mostly invisible to us. Their community is driven by a caste system where every ant has a specific role within the nest. Each nest has a single queen and worker females tending to her, her eggs and larvae and those that rove in search of food. When the colony reaches a certain stage, the queen starts laying eggs which will develop into males and virgin queens. These drones and princesses are the ants that develop wings and collectively are known as alates.

When the weather is just right, usually warm and humid, the alates emerge and take to the air often in dense swarms. Such synchronous emergence optimises their chances of finding mates and reduces the risk of predation – there's safety in numbers. After mating, males die whilst the females go in search of a nesting place – before which they bite their own wings off – to establish a new colony. The sperm she received during mating will fertilise every egg in her lifetime, many thousands of individuals.



## September

### Search for Big Foot

September is one of the best months for bat-watching and - listening.

With winter not far away and temperatures dropping, bats need to build their weight up to ensure that they survive through months of hibernation. They eat many thousands of insects to layer up fat reserves and are therefore very active. September is also the month when bats begin mating. Males are trying to make themselves as attractive as possible and have a range of special calls to attract females – think love me tender interpreted in a series of buzzes, clicks and clops!

The best place to experience bats as they munch and mate is almost anywhere – where there might be daytime roosts such as cavities in buildings and where there is food – airborne insects. At home, you are most likely to see common pipistrelles flying around the garden, but it's worth venturing further afield for greater variety.

In spring, I came across a Daubenton's bat over the River Lea, as it was feeding just before sunset providing the best views I've ever had of what is commonly known as the water bat, a name given due to its habit of feeding over ponds, lakes and rivers. It was a joy to watch it flying back and forth picking insects off the water with its huge feet.



This September, why not visit your local lake or river and see if you can spot a big-footed bat?



Watch the video on our YouTube Channel!  
[YouTube.com/HMWTBadger](https://www.youtube.com/HMWTBadger)

## October

### The Sky at Night

If you go outside at 10 pm this month, just listen. With patience, you might hear a high-pitched seep-seep noise.

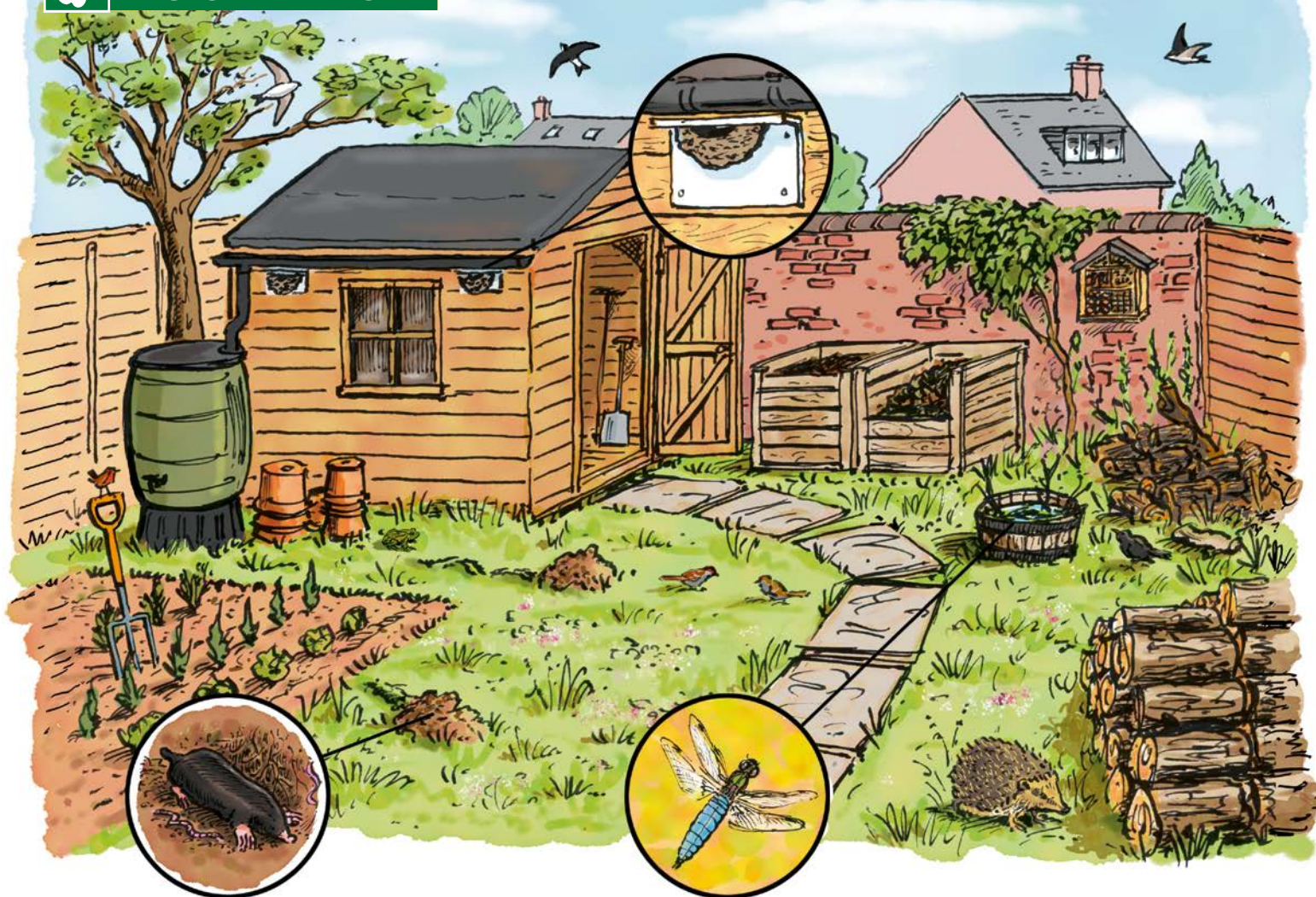
Those are the calls of redwings flying overhead – migrant thrushes arriving from the continent to spend the winter here.

Noc-migging – the study of nocturnal migration – is a relatively new practice and redwings aren't the only birds passing over as we sleep. At its purest, it involves standing outside and listening, but there is a range of technology to unlock the wonders of the night. During the Great Herts Garden Bird Count, organised by Herts Bird Club in April, night-time calls of birds heard included water rail, whimbrel, curlew, ring ouzel, egyptian goose, common scoter, green sandpiper, little grebe and a stone curlew! Who would have thought there was so much going on when most of us are tucked up in bed?



Whatever you will hear this month, make sure to log anything you discover via the Herts Bird Club website – every record counts!  
[hnhs.org](https://www.hnhs.org)





# The Nature of...gardens

Together, they make up an area larger than all of The Wildlife Trusts' nature reserves combined. From a small courtyard to a large open space, our country's gardens have a huge potential to help wildlife thrive.

While a fully-fledged wildlife garden with a pond, a bug hotel and other wildlife features can no doubt provide the highest value for wildlife, it is remarkable to see how nature will find a way to thrive if you let it. The best thing is that you don't need to be a busy bee to make your garden wildlife-friendly so lean back, relax and watch nature take over!

A little garden spider builds its web in a corner of the shed undisturbed. That old barrel slowly fills with rainwater, eventually transforming into a little hoverfly lagoon or even a pond. Was that a broad-bodied chaser dragonfly whizzing past?

Stop mowing a part of your lawn for a while and you will notice wildflowers carefully poking their heads out as if to say "is it safe to come out now?". Soon you might find yarrow and white clover and more colouring your own little wildflower meadow, frequented by bumblebees and bees. The buzz doesn't stop under the surface: a mole might be digging its way through the garden on an everlasting hunt for more

earthworms – both are beneficial for aerating heavy soils and improving drainage, although the former doesn't enjoy the best of reputations among most gardeners.

That stack of terracotta pots in the corner might well be the new home for a toad – which, contrary to popular belief, spends most of its life away from water and only returns to a pond for breeding. As night falls, a little hedgehog snuffles its way out of a pile of firewood, stored for colder days, which it made its home.

Your compost heap is teeming with life which transforms kitchen scraps into fertile soil. It's full of fungi and invertebrates such as snails and ground beetles, much to the delight of local birds who will never reject an easy meal. Your shed, too, might become the new home to a family-to-be of house martins. Not only will they prey on insects in your garden, thus creating a healthy balance, but they are also a joy to watch, as they wheel through the skies performing breath-taking stunts.

# Your **photos...**



This stunning silver-washed fritillary was found by Andy Symes at Therfield Heath. [@symes\\_andy](#)



Fynn spotted this beautiful bee orchid hidden amongst the Southern Marsh and Common Spotted orchids at Oughtonhead. [@FerrettingF](#)



A juvenile peregrine falcon has been seen at St Albans Cathedral. [@AlisonDeb](#)



Phill shot this acrobatic tern at Tring Reservoirs. [@DistinctlyAver3](#)



Several blackcap fledglings perching on a branch, photographed by Ruth at Stanborough Lakes. [@RuthWatoo858506](#)



Colin Meager came across this beautiful marbled white butterfly and many others on a walk at Aldbury Nowers. [@cricket8572](#)



**Share your  
wild wanders!**

[f](#) Hertswildlifetrust

[@HMWTbadger](#)

[Hertswildlifetrust](#)

# Go Wild Events

Due to the current situation, we have had to temporarily suspend our regular programme of guided walks, workshops and talks. However we are delighted to be offering alternative ways to get closer to and learn about wildlife through our new online programme of live talks and Q&A sessions.



Book your place at [hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events](https://hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/events)

All online events are free to attend but donations are welcome.

Thursday 23rd July | 2pm – 3pm

## ONLINE

### Gardening for Wildlife

Learn about what you can grow in your garden for wildlife. Rob Hopkins, Assistant Reserves Officer, will explain what plants are best for pollinators, where to grow them and other tips and hints to make your garden as wildlife-friendly as possible. There will be plenty of opportunities to ask questions and seek advice.

Thursday 30th July | 2pm – 3pm

## ONLINE

### History of Panshanger Park

Panshanger Park is a 1,000-acre site situated between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. Owned by the Cowper family from the late 17th century to the early 20th century, the Panshanger Estate was shaped around the Mimram Valley following advice from Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphry Repton. Join us for an illustrated talk about the history of the park, its people, and the visit of Queen Victoria.



© ANDREW PARKINSON 2020/VISION

Thursday 6th August |

2pm – 3pm

## ONLINE

### Wonderful World of Wild Bees

Join us for an entertaining talk about the fascinating lives of bumblebees and solitary bees. The Trust's Senior Reserves Officer and bee enthusiast, Josh Wells, will be presenting a talk on wild bees that you are likely to find in Hertfordshire, how they live and how to help them.

Thursday 13th August | 2pm – 3pm

## ONLINE

### Learn About Badgers

This interactive, family-focussed event will focus on teaching children about badgers, what they look like, where they live and how to care for them. There will be lots of opportunities to ask questions, participate in quizzes and watch videos of them filmed at our badger hide at Tewin Orchard. Chris Wood, Chair of Herts and Middx Badger

Group will be hosting the webinar, along with special guests.

The income from this event will be split between the Trust and Herts and Middlesex Badger Group.



Never joined an online webinar? Here is a selection of feedback comments from our recent online events:

*"Talk was very clear and informative and at a good pace. Q&A was good too."*

*"A wonderful way of engaging people whilst you are unable to hold physical events."*

*"It was well prepared and well presented. I felt involved because of the Q&A in the second part of the session."*

*"Loved it, the virtual platform worked seamlessly. Liked the poll and the ease of sharing documents at the end of the event."*

*"I learnt a lot and felt like a community. I enjoyed it and would do it again."*

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