

---

# Hertfordshire Natural History Society Management Committee Report for the year April 2010-March 2011

## **Aim and purposes**

Hertfordshire Natural History Society promotes the study and recording of the flora and fauna of Hertfordshire and encourages a wider interest in natural history including the conservation of wildlife, habitats and geological features for the purpose of environmental protection or improvement.

## **Objectives and activities**

The objectives of our activities are to:

- encourage people to observe wildlife and keep records
- co-ordinate a network of county recorders covering the main taxa and groups to co-ordinate and collate wildlife records and provide expert advice
- organise field work and surveys on specific topics to extend our knowledge and to monitor changes
- analyse and archive the records and information
- publish information, articles and papers on natural history subjects in our journal and where appropriate books on specific topics
- provide information to support wildlife conservation
- encourage networking and exchange of views by hosting conferences each year, one on birds, one on general natural history
- support specialist activities within the Society including Herts Bird Club, Herts Moth Group and Herts Flora Group
- support members taking part in individual projects and countywide surveys making use of modern technology to monitor and record wildlife in the county and its changing fortunes
- work closely with other like minded organisations such as Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the Herts and Middlesex branch of Butterfly Conservation and London Natural History Society
- promote the conservation of flora, fauna, habitats and geological features, particularly relating to Hertfordshire.

## **Achievements and performance**

### **Wildlife recording**

We continued to encourage both amateurs and professionals to collect and submit records of wildlife in the county. The websites were the main focus of activities. Thousands of records were submitted

through the Herts Bird Club website. The new facility for submitting records of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and dragonflies through the HNHS website went live in April and 638 records were submitted through the year. Many records were also submitted direct to the relevant recorders in either electronic form or on paper.

The recent sightings facility is very popular, attracting people to visit the website, submit records and go out to watch and seek out birds and other wildlife. The website regularly attracts over 200 visitors each day. The photograph gallery on the birds website has received hundreds of high quality and interesting photos of birds seen in the county and is an exciting and informative aspect of the site. During the year we established photo galleries for other taxa and groups including, mammals, butterflies, dragonflies and flora.

The county recorders were busy, helping with identification and verification of records of more unusual or difficult species. The Herts Flora Group and Herts Moth Group each held a series of field meetings to gather records and to encourage new volunteers to gain experience. The County Recorders held two meetings, including a workshop to discuss collecting records in electronically and converting paper records into digital form,

We have worked closely with the Herts Biological Records Centre (HBRC) at County Hall and staff at the Centre have added the archive of bird records to their database. At least one member of HBRC staff now attends our Recorders' Committee. Ken Smith chairs the HBRC steering group on data acquisition with membership drawn from the Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and academia. However in the current financial climate the long term future of the records centre remains uncertain. Ronni Edmond-Brown attends a national Biodiversity group which includes biological records centres and Natural England.

We are still looking for new recorders for Orthoptera and Mollusca following the retirement of John Widgery and Pryce Buckle, to whom extend our thanks for their work over many years. Recording arrangements for fungi are being discussed with the Herts Fungi Group.

### Surveys and projects

*Herts Bird Atlas 2007-2011* Volunteers continued to make good progress with the survey work for both the national and countywide aspects of the Bird Atlas 2007-11. The winter survey work was completed and we hope to complete the breeding season work in summer 2011. Chris Dee, the project leader, has set up a web-site displaying the latest results in the form of distribution maps. Some work to fill gaps and collect further evidence of breeding may be required in 2011/12.

*Dragonfly Survey 2008-2012* The newly appointed recorder for Odonata, Roy Woodward, is co-ordinating the Hertfordshire contribution to this national survey organised by the Dragonfly Society.

### Monitoring developments at Heartwood Forest

Volunteers from the Society are working with the Woodland Trust to monitor the survival of the recently planted 200,000 saplings to form the new woodland at Sandridge and the resulting changes in wildlife, including plants, butterflies and birds.



*Monitoring the first phase of tree planting at Heartwood Forest. Photo Linda Smith.*

*Tree Sparrow Recovery Project* Volunteers from Herts Bird Club continued to provide supplementary feeding for Tree Sparrows at Tyttenhanger and monitor the breeding colony. We have also secured funding from Hertfordshire Environmental Forum as part of their Biodiversity Action Plan.

*London Flora Survey* Members of the Herts Flora Group are assisting with London Natural History Society's re-survey of flora of the London area.

### Publications

*Transactions of the Herts Natural History Society 2010, Volume 42* Technical advances have now brought down the cost of full colour printing bringing it within reach of our publications. So the committee decided that time was right to update the design of the transactions. Jack Fearnside of LTD Design Consultants generously revamped and reformatted both publications in B5 size and full colour throughout. We were very pleased with the result.

*The Hertfordshire Naturalist 2010* (edited by Stuart Warrington) was distributed in October. Topics for the main papers included: beetle recording in Hertfordshire, 2008-2010; an insight into the 2009 Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) butterfly migration in Hertfordshire; an annotated checklist of the mosses and liverworts (bryophytes) of Hertfordshire, recorded since 1960; first update of the *Flora of Hertfordshire* with new County records and corrections; the effects of a mid-June haylage cut on the breeding success of the Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) in 2009 Bunkers Park, Hemel Hempstead; a Hertfordshire wildlife site case study: Templewood Vale, Welwyn Garden City; bats and buffer zones; a study of weed biodiversity in arable fields in west Hertfordshire and the lesser water boatmen (Corixidae) of Hertfordshire.

*The Hertfordshire Bird Report 2008* (edited by Ted Fletcher) was published in December. In addition to the systematic list of birds, the report included a paper on breeding season densities of Common Buzzard in Hertfordshire; notes on Great Reed Warbler at Amwell Nature Reserve; Icterine Warbler at Wilstone Reservoir and Richard's Pipit over Miswell Farm; reports on nest recording, bird ringing and the Breeding Bird Survey in Hertfordshire in 2008; The Hertfordshire Bird Atlas; the Herts Rare Birds Panel; first and last dates of migrants and the Hertfordshire Red Data List for Birds, 2010.

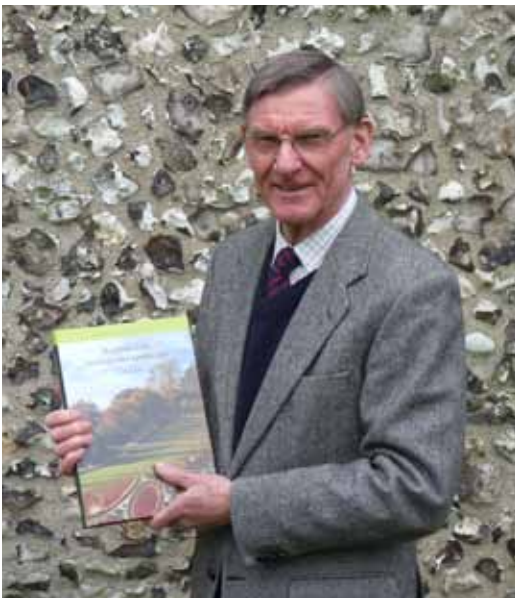
A monthly summary of birds seen in the county (edited by Alan Gardiner) drawn from records submitted through the website and the British Trust for Ornithology's Bird Track system is published on our website.

### Books

One of the Society's major achievements this year was the publication of the long awaited book describing the geology of the County and its relationship with society and natural history. We are delighted that in December, after 25 years of work by John Catt and the Herts Geological Society, the Society published *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape*. The book is divided into ten chapters each by local



Chapter authors at the book signing event at Verulamium museum, from the left Peter Banham, John Catt, Trevor James, Haydon Bailey, Chris Green, Rob Sage, Jack Doyle and Allan Cheshire. Photo Miles Irving.



John Catt with a copy of his book *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape*. Photo Linda Smith.

experts and illustrated by photographs and over 200 specially drawn maps, diagrams and figures. It gives a comprehensive account of the county's concealed bedrock geology: chalk, palaeogene deposits, neogene period, the quaternary and landscape development; soils, agriculture and plant ecology; prehistoric archaeology and human occupation; hydrogeology, water supply and waste disposal; mineral resources and church building stones.

We hosted three book launch/distribution events which were very enjoyable, with John and other contributing authors on hand to sign copies. The events were self financing from the savings in book distribution costs (see photos).

Publication was only made possible with generous financial and/or practical support from many people and organisations. We received over £7000 of sponsorship plus a loan of £2,000 from the Geologists' Association and practical help with design work and publicity. Our thanks go to everyone who contributed, including Linda Smith (who organised the fundraising, production, publication, marketing and distribution), the sponsoring organisations and generous individual donors from HGS.

We have now published six books which provide a small but significant income and a substantial focus for the Society.

#### Future HNHS books

This year we agreed in principle to publish a book on Hertfordshire's Wild Places. We hope the book will be published next year.

The Herts Bird Club intends to produce a new Avifauna based on the results of the five-year countywide bird survey started in 2007 and a complete update of birds recorded in the county. The last *Hertfordshire Breeding Bird Atlas* was published by HNHS in 1993 and the *Birds in Hertfordshire* by Gladwin and Sage dates from 1986.

## Conferences

### Autumn Conference and AGM

A bright autumn afternoon welcomed the Society's 2010 autumn meeting and AGM to Haileybury College on 30 October. Luckily the Ayckborn Theatre was spacious enough for the gratifyingly high attendance, 110 members and guests, although every available seat and chair was brought into use. Our Chairman Trevor James welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the speakers. First on was David Curry from the Hertfordshire Orchard Initiative. He told us about the work of the group in both promoting traditional varieties of apples and pears and revitalising our orchards and enhancing their value for wildlife.

Ken Smith described the survey work to monitor the woodland development at Heartwood and the resulting impact on wildlife over the years. The Woodland Trust is converting land north of Sandridge into a new forest. Volunteers planted almost 100,000 saplings at the site last winter. Surveys for sapling survival, breeding birds, butterflies, flora and veteran trees are underway. HNHS and the Woodland Trust are setting up a formal monitoring group to co-ordinate the activities.

Peter Oakenfull and Michael Clark (see photo) gave a delightful account of their studies of Hazel Dormice in Hertfordshire woods, and particularly the establishment of Dormice in Hailey Wood. The final talk was on bats and woodlands by Daniel Hargreaves of the Herts Bat Group. He explained the work of the Bat Group and how much there is to learn about woodland bats. He described how radio tracking has enabled roosts in small holes in trees to be discovered. He showed amazing video footage of large numbers of bats roosting in what appear to be only small holes in modest sized trees. Our new County Dragonfly Recorder, Roy Woodward, gave us an update on the current National Dragonfly survey and appealed for help with the Survey next year.



*Peter Oakenfull and Michael Clark talking about Dormice. Photo Alan Gardiner.*



*HNHS Chairman, Trevor James and Secretary, Linda Smith at the AGM. Photo Alan Gardiner*

The Annual General Meeting, chaired by Trevor James, was held as part of the Society's Autumn Conference (see photo).

### Herts Bird Club Conference

Twin themes of Hertfordshire's wetlands and garden birds drew an audience of about 150 to the Rothamsted Research conference centre on Saturday 26 March. The conference was chaired by Herts Bird Recorder, David Bilcock (see photo) and the well presented talks covered a range of topics so there was something for everyone.

We started with a success story. Tim Hill described the practical work done by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to restore some of the county's most important wetlands to make them suitable for Bitterns and other wildlife. These included Amwell NR, Tring Reservoirs, Stanborough Reed Marsh and Rye Meads.

The worrying story of one of the world's most endangered waders – the Spoon-billed Sandpiper – was told by Nigel Clark from the BTO. His studies have shown an unrelenting decline of this rare species from the far east, under threat from habitat loss in South Korea and Japan and trapping for food in Myanmar.



*Mike Ilett, David Bilcock and Ken Smith at the Bird Club conference. Photo Linda Smith.*



Tom Gladwin (right) receives his 1875 award from Trevor James. Photo Steve Chilton.



Jim Terry (right) receives his 1875 award from Ken Smith. Photo Alan Gardiner.

Tim Harrison, Garden BirdWatch co-ordinator at the BTO, told us how the information collected from recording birds in our own gardens builds up into a fascinating set of statistics. This shows how familiar birds fared during the recent cold spells. Depressingly Hertfordshire's number one garden bird is Woodpigeon seen in almost 100% of Hertfordshire gardens.

Mike Ilett, a member of the Herts Rare Birds Panel, showed us the more unusual and interesting birds seen in the county in 2010, including the amazing 'invasion' of Waxwings.

In a round up of progress with the survey work for the Herts Bird Atlas, Chris Dee encouraged us all to get out and get records of proved breeding to fill the many gaps in the data collected so far. The raffle raised £200 towards the Herts Bird Club sponsorship of the Hawfinch in the BTO Bird Atlas 2007-11.

Then the afternoon rounded off with Graham White asking if the Lee Valley was still good for ducks. His analysis of records collected over the last decade showed the winners and losers and how the various water bodies and wetland habitats favour different species.

We would like to record our thanks to Tim Hill for organising both events and to Society members for their support.

#### HNHS 1875 Awards for 2010

The annual 1875 Award recognises an outstanding Hertfordshire naturalist and/or someone who has made an outstanding contribution to natural history in Hertfordshire on a voluntary basis. This year the awards went to Tom Gladwin – an outstanding Hertfordshire Naturalist and Jim Terry – for his outstanding contribution to natural history in Hertfordshire (see photos).

#### Support for specialist groups

Our website provides a focus for interest in natural history in the county. Our site hosts the Herts Bird Club and the Herts Moth Group websites and this year we added a website for the Herts Flora Group. We also created web pages as a focus for other specialist areas, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and dragonflies and will add addition pages as needed. We also co-ordinate a diary of wildlife events, meetings and field trips on behalf of all natural history and wildlife groups across the county. The diary of events is published on our website and distributed in paper form as appropriate.

#### Financial review

The accounts of the Society are on page 92.

As far as the financial affairs of the Society are concerned the past year was one of consolidation and we ended the year with a more liquid financial position.

Non book publishing costs reduced from £15158 to £10433 mainly as the bulk of the expenditure associated with upgrading our website came to an end.

Printing and distribution of our publications, *The Herts Bird Report* and *The Hertfordshire Naturalist*, remains the major cost items. However the Society is now in a position whereby subscriptions and dividend income basically covers the annually on-going costs, with capital items being financed from other income such as the sales of past publications, donations and Gift Aid.

The major one off expenditure for the year was associated with the publication of *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape*. The success of this publication is due to the generous donations received and the adoption of new printing technology which has meant the Society had avoided having to finance a

large stock of books, as has previously been the case. It is expected that by next year end the expenditure should have been completely covered and the temporary cash flow loan repaid without recourse to the Society's long term assets.

Summary of prior year book publishing sales	Number sold	Proceeds
Flora	63	£2,080
Moths	14	£345
Dragonflies	25	£168
Mammals	47	£261
HBBA	29	£164
Birds of Tring	8	£18
Transactions		£159
	Total	£3,195

In accordance with the Society's policy all stocks of books are valued at nil for balance sheet purposes. Sales from past publications where costs have been recovered are applied to the Commercial Fund and sales where there are still unrecovered costs are applied to the Non Commercial Fund (Moths-Flora-Geology).

The Committee, having reviewed the accounts, has decided to maintain the subscription levels at those set in 2004.

## Volunteers

The Society is managed and run entirely by volunteers. We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to keep the Society going, in particular the county recorders and those moderating the websites, Jack Fearnside, Alan Gardiner, Steve Chilton, Steve Blake and Graham Knight.

## Structure, governance and management

The Society is a registered charity, governed by a formal constitution last amended in 2002. The 12 Trustees of the Society are elected each year at the Annual General Meeting and form the Management Committee. During the year the Management Committee met three times. The average level of attendance was 85%.

The membership of the Society stood at 391 at 31 March 2011. It had increased during the year, with a turnover of only 8%, which is good.

## Administrative Information

The Society's registered address is 24 Mandeville Rise, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7JU. Members of the management committee are elected at the AGM in October or November each year and each serve a term of one year.

The Management Committee: elected at the AGM in October 2009 and 2010.

Role	2009/10	2010/11
Chairman	Trevor James	Trevor James
Treasurer	Ken Pearman	Ken Pearman
Secretary and Registrar	Linda Smith	Linda Smith
Chair Herts Bird Club	Ken Smith	Ken Smith
Chair Recorders' Committee	Ronni Edmonds Brown	Ronni Edmonds Brown
Editor Herts Bird Report	Ted Fletcher	Ted Fletcher
Editor Hertfordshire Naturalist	Stuart Warrington	Stuart Warrington
Special Projects (webmaster)	Alan Gardiner	Alan Gardiner
Special Projects (events)	Tim Hill	Tim Hill
Special Projects	Peter Delaloye	
Special Projects (recording)	Sarah Scott, co-opted April 2009	Sarah Scott
Special Projects		Steve Chilton
Special Projects		John Murray

# Hertfordshire Natural History Society

## Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2011

Income – 31 March 201	£
Subscriptions	6,392
Dividends and interest	2,015
Sales <i>Herfordshire Geology and Landscape</i>	14,937
Sales other publications	3,195
Meetings	1,805
Donations <i>Herfordshire Geology and Landscape</i>	7,425
Donations	3,619
Gift Aid reclaim	3,285
<b>Total income</b>	<b>42,673</b>

Charitable expenditure	
Printing and distribution	
<i>Herfordshire Bird Reports</i>	2,884
<i>Field Notes</i>	72
<i>The Hertfordshire Naturalist</i>	2,719
AGM	£350
Other costs	£214
Costs of <i>Herfordshire Geology and Landscape</i>	23,127
Meetings	1,305
Subscriptions paid	224
Website development	2,120
Transaction charges	91
Administration	262
Insurance	192
Expenses	<u>33,560</u>

Distribution of grants:	
<i>BTO Atlas</i> , Hawfinch page	500.00
Tree Sparrow Project	479.00
<b>Total all expenses</b>	<b>34,539</b>

Operating surplus/(deficit)	8,134
Increase in fixed investments	1,941
Net surplus for the year	10,075
Brought forward from previous year	34,367
<b>Reserves</b>	<b>44,442</b>

### Balance sheet as at 31st March 2011

Fixed assets: investments	40,984
Current assets, bank accounts	49,048
Liabilities:	
Creditors	
BSBI	2,000
Geology	<u>2,000</u>
Rothamsted (Bird Club conference)	606
Total	4,606
Deficit in current assets	
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>44,442</b>

Represented by:	
General fund	12,404
Des A (Non-comm. publications)	15,068
Des B (Comm. publications)	13,931
Bird Club	2,039
Tree Sparrow Project	0
Restricted funds web design	£1,000
	<b>£44,442</b>

### Notes

Investment funds	Opening balance 2010	Increase	Closing balance
M&G Charifund	£39,043	£1,941	£40,984

### Donations

A donation of £2500, received during the year has been split between a restricted fund for web design and the general publication fund, in accordance with the donor's wish.

### Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape

The Society has been holding donations in its non commercial fund since 1960 towards publication of this book:

Costs to date	£23,195 (inc. web transaction charges)
Donations	£7,425
Sales	£14,937

The carrying cost of £833 at the year end includes the cost of a third print run of 150 books, of which 138 were unsold. The final costs to the Society should be minimal.

### Subscriptions paid

Mammal Society, Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust, Campaign for Protection of Rural England, Just Giving (final payment), Virgin Money Giving (one time set-up payment of £117.50).

### Grants

BTO, the final instalment of £500 is due April 2011.

Tree Sparrow Project. Expenditure on bird food has extinguished the allocated fund and further charges were made against the general fund.

### Creditors and capital movements

BSBI, the loan of £2000 towards the cost of the *Flora* is repayable from the sale of books, once the Society has recovered its own costs. At year end the shortfall was still £1902 so the loan repayment was not triggered.

The Geologists' Association made an interest free loan of £2000 to assist with publication of the Geology book, this is due to be repaid in November 2012. Provision for repayment is being made.

During the year the loan of £5000 from two Committee members was repaid.