Management Committee of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society

Report for the year April 2024 to March 2025

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.

Achievements and Performance

The HNHS reached its 150th anniversary on 23 January 2025. The main focus of celebrations was an exhibition 'Wild About Hertfordshire' in the Keeper's Gallery at St Albans Museum which opened on 20 March with a well-attended launch event. The exhibition featured the Society's Victorian past, its current role in wildlife recording and future challenges facing Hertfordshire's species and habitats. A successful programme of school holiday wildlife talks and a 150th anniversary lecture took place at the Museum before the exhibition closed in July. It received more than 17,000 individual visits and drew many favourable comments.

The 2024 Autumn Meeting and AGM in November was well-attended and included talks on the changing status of Hertfordshire's butterflies and the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county, due to be published in the autumn of 2025. The 2025 Gerald Salisbury Lecture was given in February by entomologist Adrian Dutton on his survey work at Panshanger Park revealing its national importance for saproxylic beetles (species associated with the habitats of dead and decaying wood and old trees). The Bird Conference in March drew a capacity audience for talks on the history of the British Trust for Ornithology's annual Breeding Birds Survey and latest results from a long-running study of Green Sandpipers at Lemsford Springs.

A ten-year Herts-wide survey of mammals, amphibians and reptiles, which had been extended because of restricted data collection during the Covid outbreak, finished at the end of 2024. The results will be published by HNHS as a county atlas. Survey work for a new atlas of dragonflies and damselflies has entered its fourth year.

Wildlife Recording

Most wildlife records collected and collated by the Society and its network of county recorders are submitted electronically. This facilitates data sharing and dissemination. Almost four million records have been collected by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) since 2013, most of which have been submitted through the Society.

We encourage volunteers and professionals to collect and submit wildlife records through our own websites, or using national schemes, chiefly iRecord, BTO Birdtrack and the Mammal Society. The HNHS currently provides its own website recording portals for birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles, and dragonflies. Social media opportunities for exchanging information and image sharing are maintained through Facebook, BlueSky Social

and Flickr. Records can also be submitted to the relevant county recorder by email or on paper.

Surveys and Projects

Dragonfly and Damselfly atlas survey: In 2024 Odonata were on the wing in Hertfordshire between 11 April, when the first Large Red Damselflies, *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, were reported from Rye Meads Nature Reserve, until 3 December when at least four Common Darters, *Sympetrum striolatum*, were seen at Symondshyde Great Wood.

Although there were no surprises during the year, 29 species were recorded, including a handful of records of all the scarcer species that probably now breed in the county, at least on an occasional basis. Beautiful Demoiselles, *Calopteryx virgo*, were recorded in small numbers at several localities, including some new sites. All smaller rivers and streams are now worth checking for this species. Scarce Emerald Damselflies, *Lestes dryas*, were seen at Hertford Heath, and Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies, *Ischnura pumilio*, were again reported in both spring and autumn at Park Meads, Kingsmead. Southern Migrant Hawkers, *Aeshna affinis*, were seen in Easneye Woods on 24 July and at Hertford Heath on a number of dates in August. Lesser Emperors, *Anax parthenope*, were reported from seven different sites and Scarce Chasers, *Libellula fulva,* from six. Downy Emeralds, *Cordulia aenea*, were at Hilfield Park Reservoir in May and June, and Red-veined Darters, *Sympetrum fonscolombii*, were seen on farmland near Ware on 27 May and Hilfield Park Reservoir on 25 June.

The 2022-2027 Dragonfly Atlas project is just short of 11,000 records of 31 species collected during the first three years (the total count from the previous survey in 2000-2005 was 15,000 records of 22 species). Early indications suggest that most of the 19 species that were considered likely to be breeding in Hertfordshire at the time of the previous survey are stable or increasing, in some cases the number of records received and the number of tetrads in which they have been recorded already exceeds the totals from the first survey. However, two species do seem to have declined; Emerald Damselflies, *Lestes sponsa,* quite significantly and Brown Hawkers, *Aeshna grandis*, less so but a notable drop. Blue-tailed Damselfly, *Ischnura elegans*, and Ruddy Darter, *Sympetrum sanguineum*, may have declined slightly, but proper comparisons will only be possible when the current survey is complete. Please submit all records of dragonfly and damselfly species that you may have via iRecord, the HNHS website or by emailing Roy Woodward at dragonflies@hnhs.org

All records are useful, including those of species considered common and widespread. Records from gardens and any private land to which observers have access to are especially welcome.

Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles atlas (Herts MARA): The Hertfordshire Mammal, Amphibian and Reptile Atlas (MARA) survey concluded at the end of December 2024 after ten years. The MARA team (Jenny Jones, Chantal Helm, Ian Flack and Dave Willis) has begun writing species accounts for the forthcoming HNHS atlas. This will include all Herts records since 2000 including those from the survey. Datasets now being checked and analysed include those submitted via the HNHS web site plus records provided from specialist groups (Hertfordshire and Middlesex Bat Group, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Badger Group, Hertfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group) and Hertfordshire records submitted via the national recording schemes. Thanks go to the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) for their help with the project.

During 2024 the MARA team investigated areas where there were gaps in tetrads for more common species. This involved walking footpaths, searching the fields using binoculars and looking for signs (tracks, droppings). Footpaths used were preferably also those that passed ponds and areas of woodland. For some squares, members of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Bat Group helped to undertake car transects along quiet rural roads (driving slowly with the passenger using a bat detector) and occasionally stopping to investigate promising habitats such as churches, woodland edges and ponds. Undertaking evening bat surveys meant that other nocturnal mammals observed could be added for the atlas.
Areas targeted included Widford and Hunsdon (TL41), The Hormeads, Pelhams, Meesden and Anstey and areas around Potters Bar and Dancers Hill. For this latter area Common Pipistrelle was the most frequent bat detected although Soprano Pipistrelle was also recorded. Rural areas in the northeast of Hertfordshire were more productive. Species recorded included: Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Grey Squirrel, Mole, Rabbit, Brown Hare, Fox, Badger (including setts), Muntjac, Fallow Deer, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Natterer's Bat and Barbastelle.
During 2024, over 400 records were submitted through the HNHS web site. Most of the mammal species known to be present in Hertfordshire were observed during the year. Species not recorded in 2024 and without confirmed records in the first half of 2025 include House Mouse and Hazel Dormouse. The House Mouse is associated with buildings but can be found in other habitats. The main problem explaining a lack of records could be that Wood Mice also frequently inhabit houses and pest control officers called out to problems do not generally identify the species. The Yellow-necked Mouse also frequently enters homes.
Hazel Dormouse appears to be currently extinct in the county. The MARA team have re-surveyed woodlands where they were previously recorded (using the standard nestbox tubes) without any positive signs being found. But there is always hope they may still be present. Some surveyors now use Hazel Dormouse footprint tunnels that have a higher detection rate compared to nest tubes and can easily be installed within hedgerows or brambles. These have been used to find dormice in Suffolk and Kent and might produce more encouraging results. Earlier this year Martin Hicks of Herts Ecology, reviewing planning applications, read a report from an ecology consultant who had concluded, through use of the footprint tunnels, that Hazel Dormice were living in hedgerows in the Hemel Hempstead area. However, the consensus from further specialist consultation was that the tracks were probably Edible Dormouse or '*Glis*' an introduced species known to be present in the area.
Among species of interest recorded during 2024 were Roe Deer observed at Hemel Hempstead, Kings Langley, Flamstead, Flaunden, Felden, Sarratt, Maple Cross and Rickmansworth and Polecat at Barley, Pirton, Kings Walden, Stevenage, Hatfield, Hertford and Harpenden. Harvest Mice (either nests or caught on camera) were recorded from Hexton, Broxbourne, King's Meads, Purwell Ninesprings and Rusling End.
Water Shrews were found at Kings Meads, Broxbourne, Panshanger Park, Withey Beds and Tring Reservoirs. In 2025 a dead Water Shrew was recorded on a patio near Gustard Wood Common despite the nearest mapped pond being 2km away. The species is, however, known to travel up to 3km away from water. Water Voles are continuing to recover and were recorded from the River Chess, Grand Union Canal, River Gade, River Ver, River Mimram and River Lea with a recent record from Bayfordbury. Otters are also continuing to spread through the county with records from: Wilstone Reservoir, River Stort (lakes), Grand Union Canal (Berkhamstead), River Gade, River Mimram, River Ash and locations along the

River Lea including the lakes by the river. A surprise this year was a video of an otter feeding on fish in a Stevenage Garden Pond! Otters in urban area remain very unusual.
Dry conditions may have meant that animals were searching more widely than usual for food. This was true for Badgers with records of animals entering people's gardens where they had not been seen before. This was likely due to warm weather having dried the soil and reduced the number of earthworms, obliging badgers to travel further for food and water. Road casualties, monitored by the Badger Group, remain high in Hertfordshire.

Herts Invertebrate Project HIP: The group held seven field meetings in 2024. The first visit of the season was to Hertford Heath in April. After a quick look at the heathy area the group spent the rest of the day in the less frequently visited area called Goldingtons. The highlight of the day was found by Stuart Warrington, *Helochares punctatus* a nationally scarce water beetle.
A trip to Therfield Heath in May proved productive. Ian Carle found the Red Data Book Tachinid fly *Gymnosoma nitens* and Reg Mellis found its shieldbug host species *Sciocoris cursitans*, a Herts Species of Conservation Concern. June's visit to Archers Green HMWT Nature Reserve saw the list of special finds dominated by moths. Ian Carle found Eyed Rush Moth (*Glyphipterix thrasonella*), a species associated with rushes, that is a Herts Species of Conservation Concern and was only the third Herts record this century; William Bishop recorded Burnished Sorrel Moth (*Monochroa tenebrella*) another HSCC associated with Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and Rory Dimond found Latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*) a NERC Act species. In July the group was joined at Ashwell Quarry & Springs HMWT Nature Reserve by HIP royalty, former Hertfordshire land bug recorder Joe Gray, back for a visit to his old county. Joe found Maple Seed Dot (*Etainia louisella*) a Herts Species of Conservation Concern. Gail Ashton found Latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*). August's trip to Aldbury Nowers HMWT Nature Reserve coincided with some rare hot weather; David Carr found *Pardosa monticola,* a second Herts record for this wolf spider, and Lesser Bloody Nosed Beetle (*Timarcha goettingensis*), a Herts Species of Conservation Concern. Ian Carle found *Pseudomalus violaceus* a nationally notable species of jewel wasp. The final two visits of the year were to Panshanger Park and Waterford Heath HMWT Nature Reserve in September and October respectively. Stuart Warrington located *Leopoldius signatus,* a nationally notable Conopid, hunting its wasp prey around ivy at Panshanger. At Waterford Heath, David Carr recorded *Crustulina guttata,* a second Herts record for this comb footed spider, and Stuart Warrington found *Microplontus campestris*, a weevil associated with Ox-eye Daisy as well as *Graptodytes granularis,* a tiny water beetle. Both are Herts Species of Conservation Concern.
Thanks go to everyone that joined HIP for field meetings and to Gail Ashton, William Bishop and Ian Carle who helped to organise the programme.

Monitoring at Heartwood Forest: The number of species records at Heartwood Forest continues to rise and data from monitoring activities are reported to the Heartwood Monitoring Group (HMG) meetings held in Autumn and Spring each year. The Herts Environmental Records Centre receives most data sets either directly or they are accessed from iRecord and national data bases. This year members were circulated with information supplied by HERC for entering data into a specific iRecord 'Activity' feature set up to show the boundaries not just for Heartwood Forest but for its various 'Compartments'. The group

hopes that people will input their records through the Activity at Compartment level, allowing comparisons to be made over time across the site.
The frequency of monitoring varies with the different groups, especially now the tree canopies have closed in many of the earlier plantings. Fixed-point photography, for example will continue at three-year intervals and small mammals every two years. Annual monitoring will continue to take place for birds (through monthly walks, breeding bird surveys and checks on owls and kestrels using nest boxes), flora, fungi, moths, butterflies and other invertebrates. Surveys of reptiles and many individual observations from people walking though the site add to the overall database for the site. Results from a number of these activities have led to management recommendations that have been passed on to the Heartwood Working Group (and the Woodland Trust) to improve habitats for particular species.
The breeding bird survey visits in April and May indicated a decrease in total numbers of birds compared with 2024. Changes in habitat, such as a decrease in scrub as trees have matured, may have accounted for this. Highlights in May included two Cuckoos, and a notable count of Garden Warblers, with six seen or heard, predominantly around the arboretum and areas of scrub in natural succession. A good number of Willow Warblers, Whitethroats, and Yellowhammers were also recorded. However, Linnets, Wheatears, Whinchats, and Stonechats favour open habitats filled with arable weeds and disturbance, so their numbers have declined as the canopy has forest canopy has spread.
A report was made from the monthly bird walks in 2024 highlighting changes in the numbers of individual species being recorded and advising group members on which to look out for in particular seasons.
Over 20 new species of moth were recorded during the year. As Heartwood matures, so it supports increasing populations of interesting and local species. The planted Aspens now hold good populations of Light Orange Underwing, a day flying species during April, Lead Coloured Drab, flying in March, Seraphim (named because, like the seraphim, it has an extra pair of wings) and Poplar Lutestring, newly recorded this year in June. Singletons were also recorded in March of the Small Brindled Beauty and the Blossom Underwing for the second year running, suggesting that these ancient woodland specialists are now resident. In the meadows, the population of Grass Rivulets continues to expand. The beautiful day and night flying moth, the Scarlet Tiger, a new species record this year, was seen in numbers in June and is clearly also resident. In June, males and a female Four Spotted Footman were recorded, a scarce migrant species in Hertfordshire. The first Brown Tails were also found. The caterpillars of this species live gregariously in nests and have highly irritant hairs. They are not as bad as the Processionary Moth but Heartwood now has the doubtful honour of having colonies of both species of seriously irritant moths in the UK.
Invertebrates (other than butterflies and moths) recorded in the Arboretum showed that the trees and shrubs there are providing good habitat for new species records for the site and for the County! In the Arboretum *Cryptocephalus rufipes*, new to the County, is a leaf beetle found on *Salix purpurea* and a relatively recent arrival in the UK (2018 in Essex); *Idiocerus similis*, a Leafhopper strongly associated with *Salix purpurea,* was previously known in Hertfordshire only in the Lea Valley and last recorded in 1964; the Keeled Pine Spinner (*Acantholyda posticalis*) on Scots Pine is almost certainly a new county record for this Near Threatened species of sawfly. *Orellia falcata*, a nationally notable fruit fly associated with Goat's-beard, and *Putoniella pruni* gall on a Blackthorn hedge were also new

to the site. *Oncopsis carpini* associated with Hornbeam was found in Langley Wood, also new for Heartwood.
Annual fungal forays continue to add to the number of species recorded over the years at Heartwood and records go into the Herts and Beds Fungi Group database. The October foray yielded a total of 40 species from recording in the car park (6), along the Lane (6) through to Langley Wood (16) and Pudlers Wood (14). The Bioscan DNA Hub, based at the University of Hertfordshire's Bayfordbury campus has been used to identify some of the fungi collected.
In 2025 the flora monitoring group will spend more time on baseline surveys in the eastern part of Heartwood, including the most recently acquired and planted area and the Roundwood coppiced area (reported in last year's *Hertfordshire Naturalist*). It will continue to monitor the flora in the wetland area where the invasive New Zealand Pygmyweed, *Crassula helmsii,* is unfortunately increasing and carpeting the margins of the pond.
The Woodland Trust nominated the Heartwood Monitoring Group for the National Biodiversity Network's Group Award in November 2024. The group was pleased to be one of five finalists selected from ten nominations and came third, with a comment from the CEO of the NBN Trust "A very organised recording programme. In-depth and comprehensive recording".

The Herts Flora Group: Held six field meetings at botanically diverse sites, starting in April to coincide with the usual dazzling display of flowering Pasqueflower on Therfield Heath near Royston. Increasingly, the group tries to hold some meetings in conjunction with landowners and/or conservation agencies to promote discussion and feedback on management and future prospects. In May we had the good fortune to help with surveying hay meadows and heathland that form part of the Knebworth Woods SSSI and contain one of the largest, and still expanding, colonies of Green-winged Orchid in Britain. Similarly, a visit with Natural England staff to a newly established National Nature Reserve in the vicinity of Hexton enabled a preview of extensive work planned on arable reversion and tree clearance to create a mosaic of native woodland, scrub and chalk grassland. Work continued to verify plant reports received via iRecord and surveys were done using the new online BSBI recording app. Alla Mashanova and Ian Denholm served as tutors on an online plant identification course coordinated by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). They and fellow county recorder Astrid Biddle assisted with a FISC (Field Identification Skills Certificate) test based at the University of Hertfordshire's field campus at Bayfordbury (following a mock test in 2023).

Notable findings in 2024 were:

- The second ever county record for *Galium parisiense* (Wall Bedstraw) at Panshanger Park near Hertford. This species seems likely to spread as in neighbouring counties.
- The first record of *Myosurus minimus* (Mousetail) for 20 years in a field corner near North Mimms.
- A private lawn near Braughing that yielded a single plant of *Himantoglossum hircinum* (Lizard Orchid) in 2020 now has 15 plants, proof that singletons can be cross-pollinated within a flowering spike to produce a colony.
- A completely new site near Harpenden for *Dactylorhiza incarnata* subsp. *incarnata* (Early Marsh-orchid), a species that has declined greatly in the county.

- Rediscovery after many years of *Neottia nidus-avis* (Bird's-nest Orchid) near Great Offley, curiously in open turf beside a wood rather than in the wood itself.

Wild about Hertfordshire – the HNHS 150th anniversary exhibition

More than 17,000 individual visits were recorded for the exhibition, which took place in the Keeper's Galleries at St Albans Museum between 20 March and 6 July. The main purpose of the exhibition, curated by David Utting, was to raise public awareness of the Society's 150-year history and its central role recording wildlife in Hertfordshire. The county's most celebrated species and habitats featured strongly.

Chalk streams and their special wildlife were celebrated with beautifully modelled sections of the River Ver, showing the underlying geology. Purpose-built by Lee Wood of Ember Designs, the model was generously sponsored by Affinity Water. The importance of geological studies in HNHS history was further recognised through a display of chalk fossils. This was organised by Haydon Bailey of Hertfordshire Geological Society, which is marking its 50th anniversary as an independently run group. In the same gallery visitors were able to view a striking display of winners from the Hertfordshire Bird Photograph of the Year competition and a video on the county's changing wildlife. This contrasted species that have become scarce or extinct in the county during the past 30 years with new – and sometimes invasive – arrivals. Another focal point was a giant banner, designed by Chloé Harmsworth, providing a colourful guide to wildlife recording and encouraging viewers to become involved.

In a corridor linking the two galleries, visitors encountered photographs of iconic county wildlife, from beetles and dragonflies to orchids, trees and fungi. There was also a 'listening post' to hear recordings of the distinguished Herts. natural historian the Revd. Tom Gladwin reading extracts from memoirs looking back at more than 70 years of change.

The second gallery featured a display of historic volumes dating back to 1479 from the Society's exceptional collection of rare botany books. They come from a 19th century bequest by an HNHS founder member, Alfred Reginald Pryor and are normally kept in a climate-controlled archive by University College London. Panels displayed behind the books provided accounts of five remarkable figures from HNHS history: John Hopkinson, the Society's long-serving first Secretary; Victorian entomologist Eleanor Ormerod who was the first female county recorder; 1930s *Transactions* editor and anti-blood sports campaigner, Bertram Lloyd; Eileen Gibbs who revived the Society's fortunes after the Second World War; and the all-round naturalist and author Trevor James, who died in 2020.

Painted cutouts of a Victorian naturalist firing a shotgun and contemporary wildlife photographer, designed and built by Ellie Evershed and her father, Rupert (Chair of Herts. Bird club) graphically illustrated the way that methods for identifying birds and mammals have changed in 150 years. A nearby TV screen carried the live-stream of ledge-nesting Peregrine Falcons from St Albans Cathedral until the shocking destruction of their eggs in April by a human intruder. Happily the camera was switched-on a few weeks later after three more eggs were laid and successfully hatched. Displayed nearby were feathers collected below Peregrine nests by HNHS member Andy Day, showing the range of avian prey caught by parent birds.

Time-series photographs in the gallery showed the impressive growth of Heartwood – Hertfordshire's 'new' forest – since the first of 600,000 native trees were planted in 2009. Another forward-looking exhibit anticipated the publication of Hertfordshire's first Local

Strategy for Nature Recovery and challenged visitors to write post-it notes listing one thing they would do to help nature.
Children were prominent among those who responded, filling a large board with their ideas. Staff and volunteers at the museum also created a box of animal dressing-up clothes for young visitors. Other family-friendly activities included a hunt for hidden model mice, made by local artist Pauline O'Dell, a mammal footprints quiz and an outdoor wildlife-spotting trail. Warm thanks go to all who contributed to the exhibition's success, especially the Museum curator, Sarah Keeling, and her team.

Publications

Transactions of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society 2024, Volume 56

Part 1: The Hertfordshire Bird Report 2023 was published in November 2024. Thanks go to the editor, Clifford Smout and his team.

Part 2: The Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024 was published in December 2024. Thanks go to Stuart Warrington and his editorial helpers David Utting and Agneta Burton.

Events

Wildfest 2024

Wildfest, a family-friendly celebration of local wildlife organised by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, returned to Cassiobury Park, Watford for a second time in July. Thanks go to the volunteers who staffed an HNHS / Herts Bird Club stall, selling county wildlife atlases and providing free materials about the Society and Hertfordshire wildlife

Autumn Meeting and Annual General Meeting

The Autumn Meeting in November heard both good and bad news about butterflies from county recorder, Andrew Wood, who reviewed records over the decade since survey work finished for his atlas *Butterflies of Hertfordshire and Middlesex* (2017). Several species had been seen in the county after years of absence, including the Brown Hairstreak. Others had recovered from a decline in numbers, including the Small Blue and Small Heath. However, numbers of the once-abundant Small Tortoiseshell had fallen markedly. Common Blue, Grizzled Skipper and White Admiral, had become scarcer, while numbers of Chalkhill Blue – an emblematic Herts species – were below the peak figures recorded during the survey.

The conference also listened to a progress report on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hertfordshire which identifies priority species and habitats and the action needed to help them to thrive. Preparation of strategies is a statutory requirement for English authorities under the Environment Act 2021. Marc Wilcox of Hertfordshire County Council described how local councils were working in partnership with landowners, the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and other groups to map the most important wildlife locations. These included existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves, but also 'opportunity' areas with potential to become significant for their biodiversity. Priority species were being identified with the help of the county recorders. Videos of the main conference presentations can be viewed on the HNHS YouTube channel.

Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture

Entomologist Adrian Dutton gave the 2025 lecture in January, explaining how trees preserved more than 200 years ago for their landscape value have made Panshanger Park an internationally important site for beetles that depend on dead and decaying wood. His recent survey work at the 1,000-acre site near Hertford had confirmed the presence of several rare 'saproxylic' beetles while discovering others not previously recorded there. Out of 114 species he trapped during 2022, 45 had an official conservation designation because of their scarcity. Since 2000, 146 species of saproxylic beetle have been recorded at Panshanger Park and 166 since 1951. Among the most rare species is a Darkling Beetle *Pentaphyllus testaceus* that has only been located at four UK sites.

The lecture at Welwyn Civic Centre was jointly organised by the HNHS and Welwyn Natural History Society. A video recording is available on the HNHS YouTube site.

Herts Bird Club / British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Conference

The 2024 Hertfordshire Bird Conference drew a capacity audience at Affinity Water's headquarters in Hatfield in March to hear talks on Green Sandpipers and the British Trust for Ornithology's 'gold standard' Breeding Birds Survey. Former HNHS and Herts Bird Club Chair, Ken Smith reported on a remarkable 42-year old study of Green Sandpipers at Lemsford Springs – waders that live in Hertfordshire for all but their short Scandinavian breeding season. Radio tagging has found that almost all the migrating birds breed in Norway and Sweden. They typically reach their breeding territories in four to five days and the female birds typically start their return journey after just 42 days. The males remain longer to feed their fledglings.

The conference also heard from James Heywood, national organiser of the British Trust for Ornithology's Breeding Birds Survey (BBS). The 30-year old survey uses volunteer surveyors to record all the birds they find while walking along line transects in randomly selected 1km squares. Tens of millions of birds have been recorded since the survey began, providing valuable trend data on wild bird populations. The results inform Government policy, and feed into the annual State of Nature report on biodiversity. The data has also been used in pan-European reports and the BBS methodology has been adopted in other European countries.

In his annual review of Herts bird sightings, Graham Knight highlighted the appearance of Lesser Grey Strike at Lilley in May. A Black-winged Stilt was the first seen in the county since 1998. It was also the first year that Nightingales bred since 2017, although the nest is thought to have failed. Videos of the main presentations can be found on the HNHS YouTube channel. Thanks go to Affinity Water for hosting both this conference and the Autumn Meeting.

The HNHS Awards for 2024

The Society's Trevor James Award for an outstanding Hertfordshire naturalist was presented posthumously in 2024 to the late Stephen Lings (1961-2024). Based at Redbourn, he was county recorder recorder for bees, wasps, millipedes and centipedes. But, as noted in his obituary in the 2024 *Hertfordshire Naturalist,* his achievements as a natural historian, wildlife illustrator, energy efficiency expert and pioneer of ethical 'green' business models went far beyond that. A life-long enthusiasm for insects, was marked by leading roles in the Amateur Entomologists' Society and the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS). His award was received at the Autumn Meeting by his partner, Jane Pickering.

The winner of the 1875 Award for an outstanding contribution to natural history in the Hertfordshire was bat expert and educator, Roger Havard. He has become a familiar figure at outdoor wildlife events during the past 30 years introducing visitors to bats and their habit – often holding a non-flying 'rescue' Pipistrelle, in his gloved hand. He has visited primary schools across the county to share his enthusiasm for bats with children. Roger was Chair of the Herts and Middlesex Bat Group for a number of years and is a long-time participant in its bat rescue and care service. He is also a licensed Natural England Bat Roost Visitor.

Financial review

The Society's 2023-24 accounts, as approved by the 2024 AGM, can be viewed at *https://www.hnhs.org/contact-us/hnhs-management-committee*.

Volunteers

The Society is managed and run entirely by volunteers. We are grateful to all our volunteers for their continuing hard work, not least the county recorders, the editors of our two journals and those moderating and updating the websites.

Members' news

We record, with sadness, the death of leading Hertfordshire entomologist Raymond Uffen who was county recorder for Hymenoptera aculatea (bees, wasps and sawflies) from 1993 to 2016. An obituary appears in this issue of the *Hertfordshire Naturalist*.

Structure, governance and management

The Society is a registered charity, governed by a formal constitution.

The Trustees of the Society and other members of the Management Committee continue to be elected each autumn at the Annual General Meeting. In November 2024, 13 members of the Society's Management Committee were elected at the AGM, all of whom serve as trustees (see table below). Astrid Biddle was co-opted in December 2024 as a non-Trustee member of the committee.

During the year the Committee met five times, in May, July, September, December and February. Membership of the Society is stable at just over 500, including family members.

Members of the Management Committee elected in 2023 and 2024

Role	2023/24	2024/25
Chair	Peter Tallantire	Peter Tallantire
Treasurer	Chris Ruis	Chris Ruis
Secretary and Registrar	David Utting	David Utting
Membership Secretary	Martin Ketcher	Martin Ketcher
Chair of Recorders' Committee	Veronica Edmonds Brown	Veronica Edmonds Brown
Editor, Hertfordshire Naturalist	Stuart Warrington	Stuart Warrington
Events	Tim Hill	Tim Hill
Herts Bird Club	Rupert Evershed	Rupert Evershed
Recording	Agneta Burton	Agneta Burton
Recording	Ian Carle	Ian Carle
Recording	Alex Waechter	Alex Waechter
Special projects	Chantal Helm	Chantal Helm
Special projects	Chris James	Chris James

All elected committee members are also trustees of the charity.
Chris Ruis resigned from being Treasurer in February 2025. HNHS Chair Peter Tallantire kindly agreed to act as Treasurer until a replacement could be found.
Astrid Biddle, county co-recorder for Flora, was co-opted as a committee member in November 2024.

Administrative information
The Society's registered address is 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AL.

HNHS Management Committee
Draft dated August 2025 for presentation at the Society's AGM