

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/78M

78th Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 250 Sandridge Road, AL1 4AL and online via Zoom conferencing

Present: Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Rupert Evershed, Chantal Helm, Tim Hill, Chris James, Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary).

1. Apologies and committee membership: Martin Ketcher, Chris Ruis (Treasurer), Alex Waechter & Stuart Warrington.

Hanna Grimsdale, an ecologist working with Affinity Water, had been invited to observe the meeting with a view to becoming a co-opted member, but was unable to attend because of a prior commitment. She hoped to attend future meetings.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2024 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: Tim reported progress with County Council-led process of agreeing a strategy by the end of March 2025. Task groups had been established on engagement, mapping and priority setting. County wildlife recorders were being asked to nominate five 'priority' species for Hertfordshire. An engagement plan had been published and Herts residents were being surveyed about priorities. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) had mandated county nature recovery plans without funding to carry them forward next year. Tim felt it was still worthwhile way to improve partnership links, particularly with the County Council and Herts Highways.

3. Policy on internal financial controls

Peter introduced a revised draft of the policy. Unplanned expenditure above £1,000 would require prior committee approval. Arrangements for the Society's Stripe account for receiving online payments were now included as well as PayPal. The policy was unanimously approved. It was noted that a list of the Society's assets worth more than £100 would need to be compiled.

Action: David, Chris

Peter Tallantire noted that the Society's bank accounts with Lloyds and Santander needed their mandates updating. This was straightforward in the case of Lloyds and it was agreed that Peter Tallantire, Chris Ruis, David Utting, Tim Hill and Martin Ketcher should be the approved signatories. The procedure required by Santander for mandating the same signatories was more onerous requiring approval and personal data from the entire management committee. It was decided it would be simpler to close the Santander account and transfer its balance and subscription Standing Orders to the Lloyds account. The committee also agreed Peter Tallantire's suggestion that he and Chris Ruis investigate whether the Society could introduce Direct Debits for subscriptions by opening an account with the Charities Aid Foundation's CAF Bank.

Action: Peter Tallantire, Chris Ruis

4. Plans for celebrating the 150th anniversary in 2025

Exhibitions: David had made progress planning the celebratory exhibition at St Albans Museum (March – June 2025). He had confirmation that UCL requirements for displaying some of the Society's rare botany books could be met. It was agreed that the next stage should be a sub-group visit to the museum to view the Keeper's Gallery space. This would be followed by a site meeting to discuss main aims for the exhibition and the potential exhibits. David would contact the museum with potential dates. He thanked those who had sent him additional ideas to be added to his list.

Action: David, All

Chris J. had agreed to make preliminary inquiries about the possibility of an autumn 2025 exhibition at North Herts Museum in Hitchin.

This might make use of the museum's own natural history collections as well as whatever exhibits were designed for the St Albans exhibition

Action: Chris J, David

Anniversary edition of *The Hertfordshire Naturalist*: David had been researching the online Transactions archive and the Society's archives kept at County Hall in order to write a new HNHS history. The results would feed into discussions about the exhibition(s) as well as providing an article for the 2025 Herts Naturalist. Conversations about the special issue contents, including a deadline, could wait until Stuart had recovered from current illness.

Action: David, Stuart

HNHS strategy to 2050: Peter was leading work on this with a view to presenting proposals at the 2025 AGM. The committee might want to commission a survey of members and the general public to help think about its future. However, this would not be possible until the key strategic issues had been identified. It was suggested that the Society should consider its role in the context of increased wildlife recording via national websites. Its 'niche' in relation to HMWT, BNA Hertfordshire, RSPB groups and other local natural groups should also be considered. Likewise, the extent to which HNHS membership was designed for beginners (including young people), more experienced naturalists or both.

Action: Peter, All

VIPs: Tim suggested that Nicholas Buxton, recently appointed High Sherriff of Hertfordshire would be a 'wildlife friendly' contact to help promote the 150th anniversary celebrations. Likewise Lord (John) Verulam, who is an HNHS member.

5. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024

David read out a summary of expected contents provided by Stuart:

Recorder Reports: Spider Report 2023 (David Carr). Water Bugs 2020-2023 (Stuart Warrington). Water Beetles 2019-2023 (Stuart Warrington).

Obituary: Doug Marriott (D. Carr & D. Utting)

Main Papers received: Martin Ketcher – Water Voles in the Lee Valley. S.Warrington, A Dutton & others – The Beetles of Panshanger Park.

Papers potentially offered: Adam Hillier – bat diet, Heartwood. Robin Cole – Tewin riverflies. Keith Davies – Nematodes. Ian Denholm, Alla Mashanova, Agneta Burton – Heartwood flora. Nick Pierpoint – Bourne Gutter 2023/4.

David said the article he was co-writing with Erika Delbecque of UCL on the HNHS rare book collection should be completed for the 2024 issue. It was agreed to ask Stuart for a final deadline for articles.

Action: David, Stuart

Reports

Treasurer: In Chris R's absence, Peter reported that the finances were in good health. Payment of £5,800 for the new Moth Group website was the main recent item of non-routine expenditure and would appear in the 2023-4 accounts. In 2024-5 he anticipated income would be around the typical level of £16,000 and expenditure around £10,000 excluding any significant one-off costs associated with the 150th anniversary which would be considered by the management committee in due course.

Membership Secretary: Martin was unwell but had emailed expressing support for a proposal from Rupert to simplify the 'Join us' pages on the HNHS and Bird Club websites. Tom Speller, the Bird Club webmaster, had also indicated approval. This would replace most of the text on the website pages with a 'Join or renew now' button linked to the landing page on the MemberMOJO site. Information about the different subscription options would appear on the MemberMOJO page, including a link to further information about Gift Aid. David thought it should be possible to implement the website changes

without referring it to Chris Dee, although he would need to be sent HTML code for the button link to MemberMOJO. It was agreed that whatever final wording was agreed, it should be the same on both websites.

Action: Martin, David, Rupert + Tom Speller

Secretary: David reported the sad death, in November 2023, of Doug Marriott, aged 92, who was county spider recorder from 1994 to 2016. As already noted, an obituary would appear in the *Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024*. Since the last meeting, David had completed refresher training courses in safeguarding for children and for adults at risk. He had removed some out-dated terminology from the HNHS Safeguarding Policy. He had also renewed the Society's annual insurance policy.

He reported a website problem affecting verifiers' access to recent mammal, amphibian and reptile records. This had not been resolved so far despite an appeal by Chris Dee to the national user group for Indicia software. No records had been lost and everything could be accessed by the MARA team via a different route. David requested help in widening the pool of wildlife photographers submitting images for the website front page. He also reminded the committee that nominations were needed for the 2024 HNHS Annual Awards. It was agreed that nominations be requested (via the website) for discussion at the next MC meeting in July

Action: David

b) Recording and monitoring

MARA: Chantal said the emphasis during the last year of the survey was on filling gaps in coverage. Monthly survey sessions were taking place until the end of the year. She would send David details so they could be posted on the website. The MARA team leaders had begun writing sections of the Hertfordshire atlas. It was agreed that they should talk to Jack Fearnside as early as possible about the likely contents and a completion timetable, to get an indication of publication date and costs.

Action: Chantal, David + Jack Fearnside

Invertebrate Group: Ian said monthly field meetings would be taking place until October. A 'What's App' group had been created for those taking part to provide support with identification and other issues.

6. Meetings and events

- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture, Wednesday 28 February. Tim said the lecture on European Beaver reintroduction by Sarah Brockless, from Spains Hall Estate in Essex had been well-received, but the audience could have been larger. He suggested that timing of the lecture might usefully be moved nearer to New Year or even before Christmas.
- Herts. Bird Conference, Saturday 2 March. The conference had attracted a capacity audience. The format featured three main presentations. Thanks went to Affinity Water for hosting the event. David regretted that the choice of date meant he was unable to attend and assist in the usual way. Acknowledging that the Bird Committee had not been offered much choice of dates by Affinity, he said it would be helpful if he could be consulted in future.
- Wildfest 2024, Cassiobury Park, Watford, Saturday 13 July. Tim said he and David would be running an HNHS stall at this HMWT event. David agreed to contact local HNHS members to see if they could also offer help.

6. Publications

There were no current matters to discuss, other than those already raised

8. AOB

None

Next meeting: 7.30pm Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AL (and online by request)

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
13 May 2024