

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/83M

83rd Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 15 April 2025, online via Zoom conferencing

Present:, Astrid Biddle, Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Hanna Grimsdale, Rupert Evershed, Chris James, Martin Ketcher, Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) and Stuart Warrington

Apologies: Apologies were received from Tim Hill and Alex Waechter

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 February 2025 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) Bank accounts: Peter said efforts to close the Society's Santander account had been further frustrated by the bank putting a temporary freeze on payments out of the account. This was an unintended consequence of Chris Ruis's resignation as Treasurer, which meant the signed mandate for closing the account no longer aligned with the Charity Commission's records of HNHS trustees. Santander had, however, agreed to a two-week delay in implementing the freeze, which allowed all bar some £1,500 to be transferred to the Society's Lloyds Bank account. Peter had opened a new 90-day notice deposit account with Lloyds, so the transferred money would gain interest.

Two subscription renewals had reached the Santander account, despite previous requests for members to switch standing orders and other payments to Lloyds. Martin said mostly long-serving members were affected, who had paid standing orders to the Alliance and Leicester before it was taken over by Santander. He had written personal letters to those who were not on email to make them aware of the need to switch to Lloyds.

- b) Social media: David said the 150th anniversary exhibition and accompanying media coverage had provided good opportunities to raise the Society's profile on Facebook and the new BlueSky Social account, currently managed by Nic Wilson. Postings had been 'amplified' by the Bird Club and St Albans Museum. There was a continuing need to find someone willing to manage HNHS social media activity in future and ensure regular postings. Hanna said she would help where she could in suggesting content. It was agreed that she and David would discuss this further.

Action: Hanna, David

- c) Treasurer vacancy: A replacement for Chris Ruis was still needed. All committee members would help the search for a suitable candidate. The search might usefully be extended to volunteering sites that seek to match suitable individuals with trustee vacancies.

Action: All

3. 150th anniversary celebrations

- a) Exhibition: Peter said the exhibition at St Albans Museum was proving a great success. The launch reception on 20 March, attended by 120 guests including the Mayor and Mayoress of St Albans, had gone well. It had also attracted really positive publicity in local newspapers, radio and websites including BBC News. He thanked David for his hard work in planning and curating the exhibition and everyone who had contributed.

David said he was delighted the plan had come together so well, including the 3-D model of the River Ver, showing the underlying chalk strata and surrounded by photos of typical chalk stream species. He was grateful to the designer, Lee Wood, and to Affinity Water who had provided generous sponsorship. Other designers whose work gave the exhibition its impact included Chloé Harmsworth's giant 'journey of a wildlife record' banner and Ellie Evershed who, with her father Rupert, had created three life-size wooden cut-outs. Committee members also praised the video exhibit that contrasts increasingly rare or 'Herts extinct' species with new arrivals in the county. Museum staff had the anecdotal impression that the exhibition was proving more than normally popular, including the dressing-up, quizzes and other activities included for families and children.

The deplorable incident on 7 April when Peregrine eggs laid on a ledge at St Albans Cathedral were destroyed by a human intruder had led the HMWT to switch off the live video feed that was being shown in the exhibition on a monitor. It was intended to replace temporary text about the incident with a new interpretative board relaying the HMWT's statement about the incident and on-going police investigation. David said the opportunity might also be taken to reinforce points made elsewhere in the exhibition about the impact on wildlife of negative human activities and behaviour.

Action: David

The net cost to the Society of staging the exhibition was expected to be around £6,750, including sponsorship of £2,000 from Affinity Water.

- b) Activities for children and families: Agneta said attendance at her 'Mosses under the Microscope' morning for children and families on 10 April had been disappointing – as it had been for other Easter holiday activities taking place at the museum during a sunny week. Communication had also been poor, as the organiser was on sick leave. David thanked Agneta and said he would contact the organiser to check that sessions arranged for 17 April with Graham White (animal poo) and Roger Havard (bats) were going ahead as planned. He would also inquire whether a 'photo-booth' cut-out, designed by Ellie Evershed, was attracting enough visitors in its current position on the ground floor.

Action: David

- c) HNHS history lecture: David reminded the committee that he would be giving a 150th anniversary talk at the museum on Wednesday 14 May (7pm) titled 'Discovering Where the Wild Things Are'. This would contrast the recording work and striking HNHS personalities before the First World War with the Society's current role and activities. Tickets for the talk (£10, or £6 online) could be booked on the Museum website (shop.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/). Despite the unwelcome charge he hoped MC members would attend.

Action All

- d) Hertfordshire Naturalist 2025: Stuart said that following an editorial board meeting with Agneta and David he had emailed county recorders asking them to nominate key Hertfordshire species and habitats to be described and illustrated in the 150th anniversary issue. As most had not, so far, replied he planned to re-send his email to individuals and repeat his request at the next Recorders' Committee meeting.

Action: Stuart, Ronni, all Recorders

He was seeking photographs for inclusion, including historic images of habitats that had either been severely modified or disappeared in the past 150 years. Chris and Astrid offered to help with this. Astrid also noted that archive aerial photographs could be bought from Historic England for £30 each. David suggested that it might be worth specially commissioning some modern-day photos of habitats, as most local wildlife photographers tended to concentrate on species.

Stuart added that he planned to include biographical portraits of distinguished natural historians who had lived and worked in Hertfordshire during the past 150 years. He mentioned the 20th century entomologists Robert B. Benson and F.W. Edwards.

It was agreed that committee members should look again at the list of potential contents that Stuart provided for the February MC meeting (annexed to these minutes below) and consider how they might contribute.

Action: All

4. Mimram Green Corridor – request for HNHS support

Martin invited views on a request for HNHS logo endorsement for a project to identify and seek protection for a continuous 'green corridor' following the course of the River Mimram. The plan had been instigated by the parish councils in Welwyn and Tewin. He had offered to help them with wildlife surveying, but had also been approached with this request for HNHS support. It was agreed that the

Society could not allow its logo to be used until the aims of the project were clearer. However, the organisers should be encouraged to make use of HNHS and other wildlife records held by HERC. They could also investigate how far their aims for the Mimram valley were likely to be reflected in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Herts. Martin agreed to pass on the committee's view and suggestions.

Action: Martin

5. Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: update

In Tim's absence, it was noted that the strategy report was not now expected to be published before the autumn. Further consultations on a draft were taking place.

Reports

Chair / Treasurer: Peter reported that the Society's finances were in continuing good shape and that the accounts for 2024/25 were expected to show total funds of around £100,000. There was a short discussion about significant items of potential future expenditure, including a re-design and software upgrade for the HNHS website and publication of a mammals, amphibians and reptiles atlas. Neither of these would occur until at least 2026/27. But with costs rising for publication of the Herts Naturalist and Herts Bird Report, subscription charges might need to be reviewed in the medium-term. Peter proposed that long standing member Christine Shepperson and co-author of the last Dragonflies and Damselflies atlas of Hertfordshire should be given honorary membership in recognition of her many years' service to the Society. This was agreed by the Committee.

Membership Secretary: Martin said membership was increasing over the year and had reached 495, including family members. The total number of subscriptions to date was 425. Renewals were continuing to come in. David said there had been one or two new membership applications every week since the 150th anniversary exhibition opened.

6. Recording and monitoring

Herts Invertebrate Project – Ian said the group was about to start its programme for the season and had decided to use iRecord to capture all records and information. It was suggested that there were regular photos and reports of notable finds posted on the Group's WhatsApp that might be shared more widely on the Society's social media pages. David offered to join and see if he could help.

Action: Ian, David

HERC – David read a report provided by Alex. Added data on butterflies, dragonflies and from iRecord had brought the total county record count to 3.9m. Much work had been carried out in support of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. One of the main challenges had been to find a balance between protecting HERC's commercial activities while giving the LNRS access to data it would publish under an Open Data license. She anticipated that more information would become publicly available on the county's Local Wildlife Sites and habitats. This was likely to have both positive and negative for HERC and recording.

HERC was, meanwhile, supporting the Heartwood Monitoring Group in setting up a new iRecord Activity where all records from the site could be found. Alex would also be offering county recorders a further training session on QGIS mapping in the autumn.

7. Meetings and events

- Herts Bird Conference 2025 (Saturday 8 March). Rupert said the event at Affinity's Hatfield offices, had been very well attended and successful.
- HNHS 150th anniversary exhibition launch (Friday 20 March) See above.
- HNHS exhibition holiday talks for children and families (Thursday 10 and 17 April). See above
- Exhibition lecture on HNHS history (Wednesday 14 May) See above

- 150th anniversary Autumn Meeting and AGM. Peter said Tim had reached agreement with Affinity Water that the conference would take place on Saturday 18 October. Nicholas Buxton, who would become High Sherriff of Hertfordshire, had agreed to attend.

8. AOB

Peter noted that nominations would be needed for the 2025 HNHS Awards. David agreed to circulate a confidential list of existing proposals and suggestions.

Action: David

Next meeting: 7.30pm Monday 14 July at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans and online

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
22 April 2025

Annex to the minutes:

Possible contents for 150th anniversary Herts Naturalist (compiled by Stuart Warrington)

A history of the Society and natural history,

Selection of notable people associated with the society, John Hopkinson, Sir John Evans, Eleanor Ormerod, AE Gibbs, Eileen Gibbs, Bertram Lloyd, Sir Edward Salisbury ...

David Utting (c. 8000 words)

People

Famous naturalists who resided in Herts, Albert Piffard (1890s), H.L.G. Stroyan & V.F. Eastop & F.V. Theobald (aphids, Rothamsted), F.W. Edwards (Diptera), R.B. Benson (Hymenoptera, Symphyta), J.P. Doncaster (entomology), Charles Oldham (birds), Prof AE Boycott (plant ecology, molluscs) John Dony (botany), Bryan Sage (birds, entomology), G.C.D. Griffiths (Diptera), C.B. Williams (Entomology, Rothamsted), Raymond Uffen, Trevor James,

Famous Sites, 150 years ago and now

Rothschild Reserves [Aldbury Nowers, Bricket Wood & Common] <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us/rothschilds-list#list>

Amwell, Tring Reservoirs, Therfield Heath, Rye Meads, Northaw Great Wood, Broxbourne Woods
Ashridge Estate, Northchurch Common, Aldbury Common.
River Mimram, River Lee catchment,
..... *more ideas?*

Species

New to Science [eg TYPE specimens .. (BMNH collections can be searched online)]
New to Britain [Scarce Tufted-sedge *Carex cespitosa*; 3 Beetles *Dermestoides sanguinicollis* Dan Asaw
Sherrardspark Wood, *Agrilus sulcicollis* TJ James, *Corticus fasciatus* Cassiobury Park
... *other taxon groups?*]
Rare in UK but good population/sites in Herts [Pasque Flower, *Elater ferrugineus*,]

Species Changes, 150 years ago to now

Birds, lost and gained
Mammals – gained muntjac, gained grey squirrel, lost red squirrel,
Possible article based on Tom Gladwin's memoirs drawing out changes during his lifetime and/or June Crew.