



# NEWS

November 2019

## Hertfordshire Natural History Society – Herts Bird Club

This newsletter is being sent out with copies of the *Hertfordshire Bird Report 2018*. Congratulations again go to the editor, Clifford Smout, and his team for producing the report in less than a year.

### Autumn Conference and AGM

Saturday 9 November

An encouragingly large audience attended the Autumn Meeting on 9 November, again kindly hosted and supported by Affinity Water. Participants enjoyed presentations on the spiders and dragonflies of Hertfordshire and took part in the Society's Annual General Meeting.

Hertford-based enthusiast **Christopher Benton** entertainingly urged the conference to show more love and "less of the Halloween" for spiders before introducing a personal selection of species he has recorded across the county. These range from the familiar Giant House Spider *Tegenaria gigantea* and the Garden Spider *Araneus diadematus* to more elusive species that he has become skilled at coaxing out of walls and crevices, using an electric toothbrush! He reported on the discovery of *Segestria florentina*, a species new to Hertfordshire, whose 22mm female body length makes it a candidate for Europe's biggest spider. Its iridescent mouth-parts have led to its media denigration as the 'Green-fanged Dracula' spider.

#### New Damselfly and Dragonfly survey

County recorder **Roy Woodward** announced plans to launch Hertfordshire's second countywide survey of damselflies and dragonflies, starting next year. It will be 20 years since the first five-year survey which resulted in the publication in 2008 of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Hertfordshire* by Alan Reynolds, Tom Gladwin and Christine Shepperson.

Roy highlighted significant changes in the county list of recorded species since 2008. White-legged Damselfly is the only species that appears to be in decline. Meanwhile, the number of confirmed or probable breeding species has increased from 19 to 26, including Willow Emerald Damselfly, Norfolk Hawker, Lesser Emperor, Scarce Chaser and Red-veined Darter. Southern Migrant Hawker, Vagrant Emperor and Downy Emerald have also been recorded without evidence of breeding.

The new survey will need as many Hertfordshire dragonfly and damselfly records to be submitted as possible, including all the common species. It will be based on 1km squares.

*For further news visit: [www.hnhs.org](http://www.hnhs.org)*

#### 1875 Awards for 2019

Congratulations to **Barry Trevis** and **Alan Gardiner**, the winners of this year's 1875 Awards. Barry, recognised as 'an outstanding Hertfordshire naturalist', is the long-time voluntary warden of HMWT's Lemsford Springs nature reserve and part of a scientific team studying wintering Green Sandpipers and tracking their migration. He is also a distinguished bird ringer and ringing trainer.

Alan's award is for an 'outstanding contribution to natural history in Hertfordshire'. Our current county bird recorder, Alan has played a major part in the development of online recording through the Bird Club website and in helping to verify the rapidly increasing number of records being submitted. He also co-organises the project to conserve the county's last colony of Tree Sparrows at Tyttenhanger.

#### Have we got poos for you!

Do not miss **Graham White**, RSPB Head of Reserves Ecology and an enthusiastic 'coprologist', speaking about the role of scat, spraint and dung identification in wildlife conservation. This year's Gerald Salisbury Memorial lecture is at 8pm on Wednesday 27 November in the Civic Centre, Prospect Place, Welwyn, AL6 9EN

#### Subscriptions due on 1 January 2020

Please note that all HNHS and Bird Club subscription renewals fall due on 1 January. **Geoff Hill**, our Membership Secretary, has done a great job chasing late payers this year. But it would be really helpful if we could reduce the amount of time and effort this takes. If you have not already set up an annual standing order, please consider doing so. Rates for 2020 are unchanged: Family £22, Individual £18, Bird Club only £12, HNHS receiving only the *Hertfordshire Naturalist* £12

#### New Chair and Treasurer

The HNHS elected a new Chair, **Peter Tallantire**, at the AGM and a new Treasurer, **Dan Fletcher**. Warm thanks go to **Agneta Burton**, who has chaired the management committee for the past four years.