



Hertfordshire
Natural History
Society

November
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HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY AND BIRD CLUB NEWS

This newsletter accompanies *The Hertfordshire Bird Report 2021*. Congratulations, once again, go to Clifford Smout and his editorial team for reviewing the relevant records and completing the report in less than a year. Particular thanks go to Jack Fearnside for designing the report.

Wildlife in Hertfordshire's 'new' forest

We are pleased to announce that the Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture will be returning as a 'face-to-face' event next year for the first time since the start of the Covid pandemic. Prof Brian Legg and fellow members of the Heartwood Monitoring Group will talk about the flora and fauna of the forest outside St Albans where more than 600,000 native trees and shrubs were planted over nine years on previously arable farmland. The 347-hectare site, owned by the Woodland Trust, incorporates four patches of ancient semi-natural woodland that are famous for their bluebells. A native tree arboretum has been planted as part of the forest and a community orchard. There is also a small wetland area with seasonal pond. Thirteen years of careful monitoring by county recorders and other volunteers have yielded fascinating insights into the woodland's growth and development, including changing patterns of wildlife sightings as it evolves. Heartwood's growing importance within the county as habitat for relatively rare as well as typical Hertfordshire species is now beyond doubt – as the lecture will demonstrate. The Gerald Salisbury Lecture is jointly organised by Welwyn Natural History Society and HNHS and will take place at 8pm on Wednesday 22 February 2023 in Welwyn Civic Centre, Prospect Place, AL6 9ER. Admission: £3 for non-WNHS members.

Ernest Leahy (1942-2022)

Members will be very sad to know that the popular Hertfordshire wildlife artist Ernest Leahy has died, aged 79. Ernie was a keen birder and long-standing member of the society. He was also a generous contributor of illustrations to the Herts Bird Report and of his watercolour pictures to raise money at conferences.

No change to 2023 subscription rates

Continued stability in the Society's finances means there will be no change in subscription rates for next year. These are £22 for a family (two adults plus children under 18) and £18 for individuals. Full membership includes being sent both the *Hertfordshire Naturalist* and the *Herts Bird Report*. The membership fee for individuals wishing to receive only the *Bird Report* or the *Herts Naturalist* is £12. We ask members who are UK taxpayers to sign a Gift Aid declaration, enabling the Society to claim an extra 25p for every £1 subscribed. **Please note that all subscriptions, no matter when you paid this year, fall due on January 1 2023.** Our new membership system will reinforce this by sending out automated reminders to everyone before and after New Year. The new system means you can renew by card payment online. However, please remember that bank transfers and standing orders save the Society transaction fees – as do cheque payments.

Avian 'flu precautions

There is growing concern over the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) whose presence has been confirmed in more than 60 wild bird species since October. Seabirds have been worst affected but wildfowl are at risk as are predators such as Buzzard and Red Kite. We urge wildlife watchers and bird ringers who come across dead or sickly birds to follow safety advice provided by the British Trust for Ornithology (bto.org). Dead wildfowl, gulls and birds of prey should be reported to Defra's special helpline (03459 335577). Avian flu presents a low health risk to humans, but it is inadvisable to touch dead birds or live birds that appear to be infected, their droppings or any nearby water. Handling carcasses to obtain the ring details from dead birds should not be attempted without protective gloves.