

# Hertfordshire Natural History Society Management Committee Report for the year April 2016-March 2017

## 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

### Highlights

During an active year, the Society published *Butterflies of Hertfordshire and Middlesex*, the latest in its acclaimed series of county wildlife atlases. Work continued on the mammals, amphibians and reptiles atlas survey that is due to be completed in 2019. Planning began for an intended 'digitisation' of the Society's published *Transactions* that will result in a searchable, online archive dating back to its foundation in 1875. Other highlights included near-completion of a significant upgrade to the Herts Bird Club website to match changes made in March 2016 to the parent HNHS site, including the introduction of map-based record submission. The Society also collaborated with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) and Tarmac plc to stage a successful two-day Festival of Wildlife at Panshanger Park. Membership showed an increase over the year from 449 to 463.

### Wildlife recording

The vast majority of wildlife records collected and collated by the Society and its network of county recorders are electronic. This facilitates data sharing and we are proud to report that out of almost 2.3 million records collected by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) since 2013 some 67 per cent were submitted through the Society.

The Society's websites remained the main focus of its record-gathering activities throughout the year, with opportunities for additional information and image sharing provided through Facebook, Twitter and Flickr. An upgrade to online recording via the Bird Club website – due to go 'live' in summer 2017 – was based on the Indicia system developed by the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) which is designed to support electronic data sharing.

We continue to encourage volunteers and professionals to collect and submit wildlife records through our websites, or using national schemes such as BTO Birdtrack, the Mammal Society or the iRecord phone app being developed for the NBN. Records can also be submitted to the relevant county recorder by email or on paper.

### Surveys and projects

#### *Mammals, amphibians and reptiles atlas (Herts MARA)*

The countywide survey that underpins this major project began in 2015 and will continue until 2019. Field meetings and intensive 24-hour 'bio-blitzes', surveying specific locations, helped to increase the number of records received to 2,500. A training day led to a further 20 tetrad monitors being recruited to ensure good coverage across the whole of Hertfordshire. The Society funded the purchase of a static bat detector to help monitor the presence of Barbastelle and other bats. Survey results, including the species so far recorded in each tetrad, can be found on the atlas website at <http://mammal-atlas.hnhs.org>. Thanks go to the project's organisers, Chantal Helm, Ian Flack, Jenny Jones and Dave Willis, for its continued progress.

***Herts Invertebrate Project*** The project was set up in 2015 to improve the monitoring of invertebrates and encourage newcomers to recording to develop their confidence and skills. During the year, surveys were conducted at ten Hertfordshire sites: Nomansland Common, Thorley Wash, Panshanger Park, Rothamsted, Therfield Heath, Northaw Great Wood, Gaddesden Meadows, Fir and Pond Woods, Amwell Nature Reserve, and the Box Moor Estate. The meetings generated an array of invertebrate records, including sightings of relatively rare Silver-washed and Dark Green Fritillary butterflies. We would like to thank the organisers, Joe Gray and William Bishop.

***Monitoring at Heartwood Forest*** The joint Woodland Trust/HNHS Heartwood Monitoring Group met twice in the year to hear presentations from Ken Smith on the breeding birds survey, and Andrew Steele on the butterfly survey. The total number of birds observed at Heartwood has doubled in eight years; the greatest