

Mid Herts local group

Events programme: April - September 2013

Herts and
Middlesex



Venue for all evening events: Howlands Baptist Church, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 4RS adjacent to Commonswood School. Donations: £3 at indoor (including coffee) and outdoor meetings unless otherwise stated. Contact: Neale Holmes-Smith 01707 324313 or Penny Fanthorpe 07761 712245 penny.fanthorpe@ntlworld.com. Families welcome. Please check for pushchair and wheelchair suitability at outdoor events.

Apr

Sunday 14th April. Woodland Flowers. Old Park Wood, Harefield. Meet at 10.00am for a guided walk at this Trust Reserve. From Harefield High Street head north onto Rickmansworth Road. In 200m turn left into Hill End Road. Park at new allotments in 400m [TQ049913]. Car share from Campus West car park WGC 9.15am (£1 all day parking).
Tuesday 23rd April. Bluebell Walk. Harmer Green Woods, Digswell. A 2 mile evening walk. Meet at 6.30pm at Welwyn North Train Station.

May

Sunday 12th May. Grizzled Skippers. Waterford Heath Nature Reserve near Hertford. A 2 mile guided walk to see these rare butterflies. Meet at 10.00am. Take A119 (Hertford – Stevenage) to Waterford. Turn right into Vicarage Lane. Continue up hill and over railway. Car park on left in 200m [TL31715]. Car share from Campus West car park WGC 9.30am (£1 all day parking).
Tuesday 21st May. Panshanger Estate. Meet at 6.30pm for a 2 mile guided walk. Take B1000 (Welwyn – Hertford). Enter via white gate house entrance approx 400m east of Tewin/Bramfield turn [TL293136]. Places limited. Entry strictly by booking only with Vicky on 01707 390064 or email: victoria.davies@hotmail.co.uk.

Jun

Sunday 9th June. Thorley Wash Nature Reserve, Bishops Stortford. A 2 mile guided walk at 10.00am around this newly revitalised Trust reserve. Take A1184 Sawbridgeworth - Bishops Stortford road. In Spellbrook turn right into Spellbrook Lane East. There is a car park at the Three Horseshoes Pub. Car share from Campus West car park WGC 9.15am (£1 all day parking).
Tuesday 25th June. Ellenbrook Field Reserve, Hatfield Airfield. Meet at 7pm for a 2-3 mile guided walk with potential for a Barn Owl at dusk. At Smallford roundabout turn into Oaklands Lane (near Notcutts Garden Centre). In 300m turn right just past St Albans Rugby Club Ground entrance. Park in 200m on bend by new houses [TL193080].

Jul

Sunday 14th July. Chalkhill Blue Butterflies. Hexton Chalk Pit Nature Reserve. A 4-5 miles guided walk with warden Nigel Agar to see chalk grassland butterflies, flora and birds. Meet 10.00am at the Live and Let Live Pub, 4 miles north west of Hitchin on B655 at the junction of Hexton Road and Pegsdon Way in Pegsdon, [TL121303]. Optional pub lunch. Car share from Campus West car park WGC 9.20am (£1 all day parking).
Tuesday 23rd July. BBQ, walk and Mid Herts local group AGM at Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve. Meet at 7.00pm Lemsford, Welwyn Garden City AL8 7TN [TL223123]. 1.5 miles west of WGC town centre, off roundabout leading to Lemsford village on B197, west of A1M. Open to all. Come and tell us what future events interest you. The AGM will be preceded by a short walk in Bocket Park. The BBQ will follow the AGM. (Bring own food and utensils.)

Sep

Sunday 15th September. Grange (Hope) Farm. A guided visit to learn about the research and changes to farming techniques that benefit wildlife on this 181-hectare (450-acre) RSPB arable farm in Cambridgeshire. Meet on site at 10.00am at Grange Farm, High Street, Knapwell, Cambs CB23 4NR. Please wear good walking boots or wellies, and be prepared for walking over rough ground. Bring lunch; drinks available. Booking essential, contact Vicky on 01707 390064 or email: victoria.davies@hotmail.co.uk. Car share from Campus West car park WGC 8.45 am (£1 all day parking).
Tuesday 24th September. Through the year in a nature photographer's Garden. We welcome the return of Jeff Harrison who will be sharing images of some of the flowers, plants, trees, birds, insects and other wildlife (including badgers, deer, foxes and grass snakes) seen and photographed in his own garden throughout the seasons of the year. 8pm, Howlands Baptist Church, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 4RS.

www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/mhlg



Our September trip to Frogmore Meadow near Chenies,

was supported by a group of 10 who were guided around by volunteer warden Gerald Salisbury who has

managed this eight acre Wildlife Trust reserve since it was purchased in the 1980s. Gerald led us down a steep descent across the Chess Valley Way and into the reserve; a scarce Hertfordshire habitat, consisting of a mixture of dry acid grassland with harebells and devil's-bit scabious amongst the ant hills. The wet grassland nearer the chalk stream was dominated by meadowsweet interspersed with lesser spearwort, marsh ragwort and marsh fleabane.



Meadowsweet

Entering a recently acquired Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) field, which included a small woodland, we were met by Holly and Hay; Gerald's Guernsey cows that graze the site. We enjoyed red kites and buzzards gliding overhead and a small flock of goldfinches. Sadly we failed to find signs of any water voles for which the site is renowned.

Our fungal walk in October was well supported and thanks to our wonderful expert, Kerry Robinson, we identified 82 different species. Look out for this repeated event next autumn.

The Stocker's Lake visit in November with Tim Hill proved a worthy morning's walk. The gravel pits were an early excavation from the 1930s and the uneven depths of the waters create a diverse habitat attracting a host of birds. Our bird count was 33 including black headed gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, cormorants, tufted duck, shoveler, goldeneye, wigeon, pochard, long-tailed tits, green woodpecker the odd parakeet, all nicely rounded off with a pair of Egyptian geese who showed off beautifully with a

goosander on patrol nearby. No kingfisher was seen by our group, but the fishermen told of three that morning... (- Was it three or the same one three times; remember it was a fisherman's tale..!)

Our post-Christmas walk took place in the Lee Valley where we met at Rye Meads Nature Reserve. The group has recently purchased a set of binoculars and a spotter scope and these were used to sight a good variety of waterfowl including shoveler, gadwall, teal and little grebe. We were disappointed not to see kingfishers from their hide but had clear views of a kestrel and a great spotted woodpecker on our way round. After an excellent lunch in the George IV pub in Great Amwell we spent the rest of the afternoon at Amwell Nature Reserve putting our new Mid Herts Group telescope and binoculars to good use. From the viewpoint we were able to see good numbers of lapwing and shoveler, gulls and cormorants and the less common wigeon and goldeneye.

Our evening events have been blessed with some wonderful photography from both Jeff Harrison and Luke Massey who were both very informative and inspiring. Our Autumn events included Barry Kaufmann Wright returning to share his knowledge and photos of our native trees.



Goldeneye

Oh and yes; there was of course the AGM and BBQ at Tewin Orchard. This attracted a good number of you whose company we thoroughly enjoyed. The evening was enhanced by some excellent moon and star gazing opportunities with experts on hand to put names to sparkles in the sky. The badger hide was put to good use too. We are very pleased to welcome a new committee member for 2012 - Robin Cole, the long-time warden of our local Tewinbury Reserve.

Make sure you put this year's AGM date - Tuesday 23 July - in your diary!