**BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS OFFICER’S REPORT**

**Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum (HSF) Local Nature Partnership (LNP)**

* No update since the last meeting.

**Great British Bee Count**

* Friends of the Earth are running the Great British Bee count from 17 May to 30 June.
* They want people to report sightings of bees as many of them have declined, with at least 35 species currently being on the threatened list.
* A free app is available to help with bee identification as well as providing more information about bee friendly gardening.
* For more information and to download the app visit:

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bee-count>

**Peregrine Falcon Recovery**

* A paper recently published in the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) journal Bird Study shows that the breeding numbers of Peregrine Falcon in the UK are now at a historic high, with particularly large increases in the UK.
* The analysis, based on results from the 2014 peregrine survey, estimates the breeding population to be 1,769 pairs, a 22% increase on the 2002 data.
* Increases were largely seen in lowland areas, particularly in England, where many peregrines are breeding on man-made structures such as buildings and pylons. In fact around 25% of the 500 monitored pairs in England nested on man-made structures where the absence of natural nesting crags would have, historically, resulted in fewer peregrine falcons.
* Peregrine falcons are not faring so well in the rest of the UK. For example numbers fell in Scotland and the Isle of Man whilst remaining stable in Wales. However, it seems that trends vary from region to region. Across the UK upland regions have shown the greatest declines, whist the regions that experienced the largest increases within the UK were in eastern England. In East Anglia, the peregrine population increased from no pairs in 2002 to approximately 44 pairs in 2014. The Channel Islands were covered in this survey for the first time, with an estimated total of 16 breeding pairs found, probably covering the majority of breeding pairs on the islands.

**Songbird Trapping in Cyprus**

* A report by Birdlife Cyprus and the RSPB has revealed that the number of songbirds illegally trapped last autumn on a British military base in Cyprus fell by more than 70% over a year (260,000 down from 880,000).
* The decrease is due to the RSPB working with the Sovereign Base Area Police to deter illegal trappers by increasing patrols and prosecutions, along with giving heavier sentences to those caught.
* Work to remove non-native acacia bushes is also continuing as this is from where hunters traditionally hang their nets.
* The songbirds are illegally trapped to provide the restaurant industry with the main ingredient of a local delicacy.

**EU Member States Support a near-total Neonicotinoids Ban**

* EU member states have voted in favour of an almost complete ban on neonicotinoid insecticides being utilised within the EU.
* This move effectively extends the ban, which originally came in to place in 2013, but now also bans almost all outdoor use (in addition to neonicotinoids being originally banned for use on crops including oils seed rape, oats, maize, barley and wheat).
* Neonicotinoids can still be used within greenhouses and some neonicotinoids, such as thiacloprid, will remain exempt from the ban.
* Neonicotinoids are the most widely used class of insecticides in the world and research has linked their use to a reduction of honeybees, along with other pollinators.
* The ban will come in to force by the end of the year.

**Local Nature Reserve (LNRs) and Open Spaces**

A range of projects have taken place at the LNRs and open spaces:

* The Aquadrome, Chorleywood House Estate and Leavesden Country Park have all been resubmitted to receive a Green Flag Award. Green Flag judges visited Leavesden Country Park and Chorleywood House Estate in May whilst the Aquadrome is the subject to a mystery shopper visit. We will receive the results by mid-July.
* There are eight categories upon which parks and open spaces are assessed. The site must, for example, be welcoming, safe and secure, clean and well maintained, sustainably managed, have community involvement and be well managed.
* For more information go to:

[www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag)

* New, five year, management plans are being developed for the Aquadrome, Oxhey Woods and Chorleywood House Estate.
* The cattle are back on Croxley Common Moor and will remain until September/October, depending upon the weather and vegetation.
* They are Herefords crossed with Charolais and are very placid.
* The Friends of Croxley Common Moor are in the middle of their spring/summer programme of tasks and walks. The next event is at 10am on 8 July and will involve ragwort control at the site. Additional walks and talks include a butterfly walk in July, a moth night in July and a bat walk in September.
* For more information about the work of the Friends and the upcoming events at Croxley Common Moor visit:

[www.croxleycommonmoor.org.uk](http://www.croxleycommonmoor.org.uk)

* The cattle will return to Chorleywood House Estate in mid-June. They will graze the field behind The Readings, Dell Field and the Dell.
* The fencing around The Dell and Dell Field has been repaired/replaced so that grazing can continue to take place in these fields (after an absence last year). Grazing is especially important in the Dell as this is an area of chalk grassland.
* TRDC has been working with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) to put together a new management plan for Chorleywood House Estate. The new plan will go out to consultation soon and will include projects such as improving signage, updating the interpretation boards and increasing the amount of information on the heritage of the site.
* A family of Dexter cattle returned to The Withey Beds at the end of April. This is the third year that they have been at the site and you can already see an improvement in the quality of the grassland.
* Various family activities have been organised by the Council’s Park Ranger. Activities have included welly walks, bug hunts and bat walks. For information on all of the upcoming events go to:

<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/events-community-groups-and-volunteering>