**Biodiversity Projects Officer’s Report**

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

* No update since the last meeting.

Urban vs Rural Wildlife

* Research has shown that urban birds are becoming louder, braver and wiser than those in rural areas. For example, birds in built-up areas begin singing earlier in the day in order to avoid having to complete with road traffic noise.
* Not only do birds, such as blackbirds, great tits and nightingales, increase the volume of their songs but they also alter the speed and pitch to increase the chances of being heard.
* Urban birds have also been found to be more daring and show more inventiveness when exploiting food resources when compared to birds in rural settings.
* There are several advantages to living in urban areas such as safer nesting opportunities, a wealth of food waste and warmer temperatures which also increases the amount of insect life.
* The negative aspect of the altered behaviour associated with urban areas is that birds may have a shorter life expectancy due to the increased stress associated with city living.
* Mammals are also known to adapt to their localised surroundings. Hedgehogs, for example, have smaller territories; grey squirrels use visual clues instead of sound so as to avoid problems with background noise and water voles seem to have developed bigger brains so that they can cope with the more complex challenges of urban settings.

Badgers Culls and Vaccination Programmes in the UK and Ireland

* Like the UK, the Republic of Ireland, has a problem with bovine turberculosis (bTB).
* The Irish government has decided to replace badger culling with a vaccination programme, although they haven’t, as yet, said when the culling will come to an end.
* The results of a vaccination trial, which commenced in 2014, are due to be published in 2018.
* The British government stopped vaccinating badgers earlier this year due to a shortage of supplies. However, its culling programme, which began in 2013, may include a further 10 areas later in the year.

**Japanese Knotweed and the Law**

* It is not an offence to have Japanese Knotweed growing on your land. It is, however, an offence to let it spread on to land that is outside of your ownership.
* It is also an offence, under Schedule 9, Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to ‘plant or otherwise cause the species to grow in the wild’.
* If Japanese Knotweed is to be disposed of then it must be taken to a licensed landfill site as it is classed as a ‘controlled waste’ under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
* There is no obligation to control Japanese Knotweed on your land. However, Three Rivers District Council does have a treatment programme in place to control the plant where it is known to grow on council land.

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

* Various projects have taken place at the LNRs and open spaces:
* Applications to be re-awarded Green Flag Awards at The Aquadrome (Rickmansworth), Chorleywood House Estate (Chorleywood) and Leavesden Country Park (Abbots Langley) were made earlier this year.
* Chorleywood House Estate and Leavesden Country Park received full site visits and assessments by official Green Flag judges on 16 June whilst the Aquadrome was assessed by a ‘mystery shopper’.
* The results were announced at the end of June and both the Aquadrome and Chorleywood House Estate have now been placed in the highest possible score band.
* There are eight categories upon which the parks and open spaces are assessed. The site must, amongst other things, 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)

* The cattle that graze Croxley Common Moor, to help keep the scrub under control, have now left the site. They should return around April/May next year.
* The Friends of Croxley Common Moor are now in the middle of their autumn/winter programme of walks, talks and volunteer activities. The next event will be on 13 November when a scrub removal session is being held.
* For more information and all of the event dates for Croxley Common Moor visit:

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

* The cattle have also left Chorleywood House Estate after a third year of grazing. 15 heifers grazed the field behind The Readings whilst four heifers grazed The Dell and Dell Field.
* The Dexter cattle remain at The Withey Beds for a little longer as they are having a very successful first season of grazing at the LNR.
* The Wild Trout Trust and the Environment Agency held a volunteer day at The Withey Beds in June. They undertook a range of improvements to the river in order to improve the available habitat.
* New welcome signs and interpretation boards for Prestwick Road Meadows Local Nature Reserve have recently been installed.
* A number of family activities continue to be organised by the Council’s Park Ranger. For example there have been bat walks and general wildlife walks at the Aquadrome. Keep an eye on the Council’s website for the latest events and activities:

[www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/park-ranger-services](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/park-ranger-services)