

# Biodiversity enhancements with Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Affinity Water has had a relationship with Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) that spans over 30 years. Our partnership provides site management, and joint educational and community events to raise awareness of environmental issues, particularly around habitats and biodiversity. Core to the partnership is connecting people with the environment and engaging the community with our organisations and the local area.

The project helps fund a wildlife officer and part-time employees at three of our sites, Stockers Lake; Hilfield Park Reservoir; and Springwell reedbed as well as a vehicle to assist with the work. Affinity Water sponsors events, giving our staff volunteering days to take part in specific site management initiatives, and provides the tools and materials.

Over the last year, various activities have taken place such as conservation management, invasive species management, and ecological surveys.

The Affinity Water and HMWT working group meets monthly to review achievements, and plan projects and events at each site. We are committed to involving the community, local schools, and our staff, as well as Trust members, in these events.

We are committed to working together to manage the sites to deliver real environmental outcomes and aim to encourage individual action for wildlife conservation and water saving.

#### Specific objectives are around key themes:

- Maintaining and improving habitats;
- Maintaining and enhancing accessibility for the public;
- Regularly monitoring key species groups;
- Increasing understanding and awareness of the site;
- Bringing people closer to wildlife by increasing their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the site and inspiring involvement of the local community in its conservation; and
- Managing the site as an integral part of the Colne Valley, maintaining connections with neighbouring sites and organisations, and considering the wider landscape.

#### Engagement and voluntary achievements:

- In the year 2020/21, we have engaged 1,524 people through our strategic partnership with HMWT on our sites. There have been 57 events, guided walks, talks and volunteering opportunities, clocking around 500 volunteer hour – that's the equivalent to 67 work days;

- Wildlife activities at Stocker's Lake – Life at the Lake – allowed us to engage with 812 people (including 476 children); and
- Work with stakeholders at Stocker's Lake has improved the wildlife watching hides. Four new interpretation boards were installed in 2021/22, plus levelling the floor and painting has spruced up the four hides.

#### Core environmental achievements include:

- Creation of 'pondscape' consisting of 13 small ponds. Altogether we have created 42 new ponds of varying shapes, sizes and depths on our sites since the beginning of the project and recorded a variety of species such as the Underwater Great Diving Beetle, Cased-Caddifly larvae and Water Scorpion.
- 19 species of dragonfly and damselfly, including ruddy darter, lesser emperor, southern-migrant hawkler, Norfolk hawkler and emerald damselfly.
- Smooth newts, grass snakes and breeding common toads.
- 44 bird species, including black-necked grebe, water rail, teal, green sandpiper, snipe, redshank, black-tailed godwit, oystercatcher, whimbrel, little gull, arctic tern and kingfisher.
- Cattle grazing continued at Stocker's Lake, to achieve increased biodiversity. Surveyed regularly by volunteers to track progress. We also launched two new tern rafts working with volunteers to encourage terns to breed.
- Springwell reedbed was cut to the benefit of wildlife and the local community.
- Shrubland enhancement work at Hilfield Park Reservoir continued to improve biodiversity of the site. Willow warbler, garden warbler and lesser whitethroat have been recording breeding in the tangle of bramble and blackthorn.
- Special swift nesting boxes were installed at Hilfield Park Reservoir in hope this declining species will choose to nest here in future.



It has been very exciting to be involved with the project working for the Trust and funded by Affinity Water. Our work at the three nature reserves is creating and enhancing habitats for local wildlife, while providing opportunities for people to have close-up experiences with nature, and be inspired to take action themselves to conserve wildlife for the future. Seeing toads and rare dragonflies thriving in wetlands created by the project is fantastic!"

Josh Kalms

People and Wildlife Officer (Affinity Water sites) at the HMWT

#### Our Genes

- Stewards of the local Environment
- Giving customers an exceptional service

#### Customer outcomes

- Making sure you have enough water, whilst leaving more water in the environment

#### UNSDGs

