

We're wild about our Wood!

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woodlands provide vital 'corridors' for species to move between and provide some safeguards against climate change, pollution, development and the many other threats facing wildlife.

Celebrations all round

Not surprisingly, we've been celebrating our achievement. In early April we invited everyone involved in the community fundraising to drop in and see us at Hertford Heath Village Hall. We were delighted that over 180 came – although the generous support of the local Women's Guild and Church Groups, laying on afternoon tea and cakes, may have provided encouragement too!

In June, the Wood's 'official handover' was aided by Bernard Lloyd, Chairman of Herts County Council, unveiling a commemorative plaque. We enjoyed the chance to thank our grant funders, local authorities and other key influencers as well as staff and children from Hertford Heath Primary school and our friends from the local conservation groups (Badgers, Butterflies and all!). Fantastic weather blessed both events – so we hope this augurs well for the future of this wonderful wood.

Now that we have the opportunity to manage the whole Nature Reserve, we'll be restoring and creating new habitat to encourage wildlife to move between the other links in the East Herts Woods Living Landscape. We'll keep you updated!

At the end of March we breathed a sigh of relief! Balls Wood had finally been secured for future generations and we could be sure that the 145 acres (58 hectares) of ancient woodland, including Hobbyhorse Wood were facing a brighter future.

Balls Wood is a fantastic place. Open, sunlit glades and rides sit within high forest, whilst a series of ponds and a network of ditches provide habitat for all sorts of plants and animals. Over recent years we've removed scrub and some of the trees to let more sunlight in. The rare herb paris, is just one of the plants to benefit, reappearing in the Wood after an absence of many years. This plant indicates that the

reserve. Both early purple orchids and common spotted orchids are increasing too. The average number of plant species for a wood is about 100 species, but a recent survey at Balls Wood has already noted over 150 species of plant and trees and 45 species of birds. Nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker, cuckoo, bullfinch, tawny owl and sparrowhawk can all be seen on the nature reserve. A pair of hobbys has bred in the last few summers and blackcap, chiffchaff and garden warbler have also been spotted.

The Wood's ponds attract dragonflies and damselflies, frogs, water beetles and all three species of

Balls Wood also supports badgers, deer and foxes. Pipistrelle bats feed on the rich insect life from dusk and brown hare frequent the woodland edges. Of course, Balls Wood is really great for butterflies and we've had good numbers this year. In July the purple emperor butterfly was glimpsed a few times and there have been bumper sightings of white admirals too!

However, there is a much bigger picture. Balls Wood is one of the woods within a (broken) chain of woodlands that stretches from the Lee Valley to the M25 at Potters Bar, with Broxbourne Woods National Nature Reserve at its heart. This



Unveiling the plaque: Emma Breatley (Forestry Commission), Judy Adams, and Bernard Lloyd, Herts CC.

Woods, Danemead, and Gobions Wood) and Northaw Great Wood SSSI. This chain of woodland has enormous potential to become linked once more through