



Buff-tailed bumblebee

HISTORY

Close to the site of the Gadebridge Roman Villa, the Halsey Field would have been part of the Villa's estate until the third century AD. In the 1950s it became part of the grounds of Halsey School, named after a 15th century local landowning family and in the 1960s the site was used to store turfed chalk spoil from a section of the newly created Leighton Buzzard Road. This has given the reserve an unusual mixture of soils leading to its present mosaic of habitats and variety of wildlife.

In 2015 after a survey carried out by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, it was declared a Local Wildlife Site.

Why are places like Halsey Field Important?

'Nature is in freefall, and the UK is no exception. Despite our ambition of being a world leader, we're one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world...'

Countryside Link 2020

When wildflower meadows vanish so do pollinators and other insects, along with their predators such as birds, hedgehogs and bats. Loss of pollinators also has a very real impact on the food we eat ourselves.

GET INVOLVED

How to get involved

Looking after this beautiful site helps wildlife flourish in a difficult world, and is interesting, sociable and good exercise!

Please contact us on 07463 821287 if you would like to tell us about interesting sightings or problems, give a donation, or help with our conservation work.

Please do not park on residential roads. Free parking is available at the Rossgate Shops.

Please remove any litter and encourage others to visit this beautiful place.



/// what3words

/// museum.bottle.store



Visit our Facebook page to join us and for news and announcements

Photographs & Text Copyright © Friends of Halsey Field 2021
Designed by Sherief Hassan Multimedia (www.sherief.co.uk)



Garden Warbler

Set on the high ground of Hemel Hempstead, Halsey Field overlooks the Gade Valley with its rare chalk stream and the ancient settlement of Piccotts End.

The views encompass an outstanding area of natural beauty and the site is bordered by remnants of mature mixed woodland, Home Wood and Warners End Wood, both a sea of blue in spring with native bluebells. In the spring and summer months Halsey Field is ablaze with the colour of wildflowers and buzzing with insects.





FLOWERS

Halsey Field's poor soil with underlying chalk is excellent for wildflowers, and a succession of plants provides food for insects from February through to October. First to flower are Speedwell, Coltsfoot, Violets. Carpets of Cowslips come next, then extensive patches of Ox-eye Daisies and Vetch, followed by three different species of orchid – Pyramidal, Bee and Common Spotted. Summer flowers include Wild Carrot, Knapweed, Marjoram and many more. Flowering bushes such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Dogwood, Wild Privet, Spindle and Wild Cherry also provide food and shelter for insects, as well as nesting sites and berries for birds and mammals.



Pyramidal Orchid

Bee Orchid

Cowslips

BIRDS

In spring, the resident species - Song Thrush, Dunnock, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer and many others are joined by migrants such as Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff. Green Woodpeckers take advantage of the numerous anthills, whilst raptors such as the Kestrel, Red Kite and Buzzard benefit from the presence of the many small mammals such as Wood Mice, Shrews and Voles.



Green Woodpecker



Kestrel

INVERTEBRATES

The diverse 'open mosaic' habitat on Halsey Field supports a rich variety of invertebrates and over 2,000 have been recorded so far. It has become a refuge for rarities such as Adonis Ladybird, Lesser Stag Beetle, and Pantaloon Mining Bee.

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Local residents have nicknamed the site 'The Butterfly Field' because of the vast number of butterflies seen in this tranquil spot. 25 different species have been observed here, many of which breed on the site. Grassland butterflies predominate, such as Skippers, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Marbled White, while Brimstone butterflies breed on the Purging Buckthorn and the Common Blue lays her eggs on the leaves of Bird's-foot Trefoil. Hundreds of moth species, such as the spectacular Privet Hawk Moth and some rarer species such as the Coronet Moth and Autumnal Rustic also benefit from the field's varied flora.



Elephant Hawk Moth



Six Spot Burnet Moths on a Teasel



Small Copper Butterfly

Lesser Stag Beetle



VOLUNTEERS

An enthusiastic group of volunteers helps to look after the site by following a management plan written by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The Friends of Halsey Field maintain the footpaths, keep open areas free of scrub and cut and rake sections of grass at different times of year to encourage the growth of nectar rich flowers. Volunteers also enjoy spotting and reporting wildlife and keep a watchful eye on the site. They are involved in events such as moth surveying evenings and bird recording to which visitors are invited.

