

“The abundance of wildlife at Panshanger demonstrates the ability to responsibly quarry and restore an area to create an asset which brings a variety of benefits to flora, fauna and the wider public.”

Michael Charlton, mineral estates manager at Tarmac

Planet

Environmental Stewardship

Rare Species Identified at Panshanger Park

We have owned the land that comprises Panshanger Park in Hertfordshire since the 1980s. In the 1990s we started phased mineral extraction of sand and gravel in the park, with much of the material being used to build homes and roads throughout Hertfordshire. Quarrying has now come to an end, with large areas of the park being opened and managed for public enjoyment and conservation.

Leading ecologists have now identified Panshanger Park as one of the most important habitats for a group of beetles in the UK, including recording a significant number of rare species.

Last year we worked with Natural England and commissioned EMEC Ecology to carry out an independent survey of Saproxyllic Coleoptera – beetles which rely on dead or decaying wood – at our Panshanger Park site as part of efforts to further enhance the site’s potential for wildlife. Two of the species identified have never been recorded in the county, one of which is a rare beetle of ancient woodland, while the other has only been identified at four other locations in the British Isles.

We are working with local stakeholders and partners to implement the new management plan, which will include the planting of new parkland trees and increasing the area of wood pasture. Low intensity grazing will be expanded to enable natural processes to develop a more structurally diverse woodland and tree population, and a richer mosaic of habitat.

Sarah Clarkson, team leader at Natural England, said: “Panshanger is really exciting because it is such a good example of how nature can co-exist with people and still thrive, so we have a double win. It’s so important that people from all backgrounds and communities can access green space and gain from the benefits to health and wellbeing that connecting with nature brings.”



The survey contributes to a number of ecological surveys that have been carried out at Panshanger Park over the years. Over 12,000 species have been recorded, alongside healthy populations of water voles, bats and dragonflies.

In 2023, the site was also named a dragonfly hotspot by the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) due to its thriving population of the insects.

An existing dragonfly trail has seen recent improvements, with a newly surfaced pathway improving accessibility for visitors. The extended 2.5km trail includes sights of the Kings Lake and Riverside Lake, the Rifle Butts wildflower meadow, and a viewing area over the river Mimram. Panshanger Park is home to 19 different species of dragonflies and damselflies, such as the emperor dragonfly, ruddy darter, willow emerald damselfly, and red-eyed damselfly, making it one of the best habitats in Hertfordshire to accommodate them.

Chosen by the BDS, dragonfly hotspots are carefully selected based on specific criteria, including if there are volunteering possibilities to maintain the habitats to the best conditions and educational opportunities in the area to learn about the dragonflies and damselflies. Other requirements assess how well dragonflies and damselflies can thrive and live in these areas, and state that they must be easily accessible to everyone.

Jo Whitaker, formerly from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and people and wildlife officer for Panshanger Park, said at the time: “We’re delighted that Hertfordshire has its first Dragonfly Hotspot at Panshanger Park, giving everyone access to see these amazing insects which have been around for 300 million years!