

18 May 2010

## News Release



# NATURE DETECTIVES NEEDED TO DIP INTO LOCAL PONDS AND LAKES

The University of Hertfordshire and Stevenage Borough Council are inviting local nature enthusiasts to join in with some exciting activities at the Springwatch Wild Day Out. The free weekend is aimed at inspiring new wildlife heroes and will run from 12.00 noon on Saturday 5th June.

At the Springwatch Wild Day Out, people will be able to take part in the OPAL (Open Air Laboratories) Water Survey, a national project seeking to get as many people as possible exploring local freshwaters in the name of science. The survey uses commonly found animals to indicate the health of the habitat. Taking part will enable people to check whether their local water body or garden pond is in good condition, and will help scientists working to protect freshwater wildlife.

Helene Coleman, University of Hertfordshire, said, "We need to investigate the region's ponds and lakes to find out which ones could be improved and which should be protected. Ponds and lakes are really important habitats but many of them are affected by pollution. The survey is a really fun and exciting project to get involved with, and it gives local people the chance to contribute to a national scientific study."

The OPAL Water Survey can be carried out at any lake or pond in England. Anyone can take part with an identification guide and workbook that can be downloaded free from the OPAL website. The website will display uploaded results on an interactive map, along with those of other participants from around the country.

**For more information about the Stevenage Springwatch Wild Day Out and the OPAL Water Survey, please contact Helene Coleman, University of Hertfordshire on 01707 285050 or email [opaleastofengland@herts.ac.uk](mailto:opaleastofengland@herts.ac.uk).**

## Notes to Editor

- The University of Hertfordshire is the UK's leading business-facing University and an exemplar in the sector. It is innovative and enterprising and challenges individuals and organisations to excel.
- The University of Hertfordshire is one of the region's largest employers with over 2,700 staff and a turnover of more than £235 million. With a student community of over 24,500 including more than 2,000 international students from over eighty five different countries, the University has a global network of over 165,000 alumni.

For further information visit [www.herts.ac.uk](http://www.herts.ac.uk)

- The OPAL Water Survey has been developed by scientists from UCL in partnership with Pond Conservation and Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust. It is funded by OPAL's grant from the Big Lottery Fund of £11.75m. The project hopes to create a legacy of knowledge and interest in aquatic monitoring which will feed into new campaigns being developed by Pond Conservation in 2011.
- Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a nation-wide partnership initiative that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environments. It aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by stimulating interest through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and relevant to anyone who wants to take part. Website: [www.OPALexplorenature.org](http://www.OPALexplorenature.org)