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## News Release



### SCOUTING FOR EARTHWORMS AND BIRDS

Scouts, cubs and brownies from Stevenage will gather to dig up and identify earthworms to understand the role they play in the ecosystem on Saturday (13 June).

The initiative, which has been organised by the East of England Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) team at the University of Hertfordshire, will take place at Rigery Farm, Colliers End, Ware, and is part of the national OPAL project which aims to inspire a new generation of nature-lovers.

The children, who are members of Stevenage Scouting and Guiding, will identify earthworms as part of the OPAL National Soil and Earthworm Survey, which aims to discover more about earthworms and the soils in which they live.

The group will also learn how to identify birds, create habitats for invertebrates and they will tour the woodland with a tree expert.

“The OPAL network is an exciting new initiative that is open to anyone with an interest in nature,” said Dr Lorna Paterson, Community Scientist at the University of Hertfordshire’s School of Life Sciences. “Events like this allow us to engage a new generation of young naturalists.”

The OPAL Stevenage Scouts Natural History/Worm Survey Day will take place at Rigery Farm, Labdens Lane Colliers End, Ware at 2pm.



Open Air Laboratories has been awarded a grant of £11.7 million from the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme to encourage people to engage with the natural world around them. The project is made up of 15 partners across England which are running activities and events that anyone can get take part in.

Information about OPAL can be accessed at: <http://www.opalexplorenature.org/>

**ENDS**

### Notes to Editor/s

- The University of Hertfordshire is an ambitious and entrepreneurial university. It offers excellence in teaching, learning and research and puts students at the heart of its activities. It is a model of a 21st century university, international, business-facing and business-like in its approach – making it distinctive in an ever changing higher education environment.
- The University of Hertfordshire is one of the region's largest employers with over 2,700 staff and a turnover of £205 m. With a student community of 23,000, including more than 2,000 international students from over eighty five countries, the University has a global network of over 160,000 alumni. For more information, please visit, [www.herts.ac.uk](http://www.herts.ac.uk)
- For further information please contact Hélène Murphy, Media & PR Officer, University of Hertfordshire, Tel: 01707 28 4095, email: [h.1.murphy@herts.ac.uk](mailto:h.1.murphy@herts.ac.uk)
- 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.
- For more information, please visit [www.OPALexplorenature.org](http://www.OPALexplorenature.org)
- The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment. Imperial College London (the leading OPAL partner) was awarded a **£11,760,783** Changing Spaces grant in August 2007
- The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

