



# Muntjac

Winter 2009/10

## You otter be in pictures!

On November 21 Priory Park in Bedford saw its usual complement of Little Grebes, Tufted Ducks, Redwings and other critters. But an excited phone call sent folks scurrying to the West Fingers for a



The otter that caused all that excitement at Priory Park. Photo by David Barnes

glimpse of what is admittedly one of Bedfordshire's most charismatic species. On the 20<sup>th</sup> an otter had been spotted hanging around, feeding and offering very good views to those willing to brave the cold. But on the 21<sup>st</sup> it swam around and hunted for a full 45 minutes, and came within feet of the excited naturalists. 'It was obviously well aware of us but seemed indifferent as it continued to hunt, catching many small roach', reported David Barnes.

The otter finally moved out of sight along the edge of the spit, leaving the happy crowd to wander off to Kramer Hide to watch the Teal.

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



**The Bedfordshire Natural History Society**  
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**BedsLife**  
[www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)

## The BNHS

The BNHS was formed in 1946, its main function to record the fauna and flora of the county. It has over twenty active Recorders who cover many branches of natural history study and whose annual reports are published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* journal.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, The Muntjac, and programmes of meetings. These meetings include field meetings to Bedfordshire sites and occasionally farther afield. During the winter months, there are illustrated lectures normally held in Elstow, Haynes, Toddington and Maulden.

The Society depends on annual subscriptions which are devoted to its working, as all offices are honorary. Membership is open to anyone, whether resident in the county or not. If you would like to join the Society, please contact **Mary Sheridan**, Honorary Membership Secretary, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2TR. Tel: 01525 378245, [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk).

## BedsLife

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership is a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire's biodiversity. The Partnership oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan, which can be found online at [www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk).

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Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past Muntjac issue are welcome/essential for continuity. Please do send articles to me either as an attachment via email or through the post. Pictures are always welcome; material required by **15 March 2010** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next Muntjac will be published in **March 2010**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society

## Coming soon: a stunning landscape for all to enjoy!

The Greensand Trust and Central Bedfordshire Council have formed a partnership to preserve a large area of parkland for people and wildlife! Rushmere Park, located just north of Leighton Buzzard, comprises 210 acres of parkland and mixed woodland. It has a wide variety of other important habitats, including open grassland, heathland and lakes.

The park purchase has been made possible by money from Central Bedfordshire Council, a £573,000 grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government and private third sector funding and donations, including a generous donation of £120,000 from the Peter Smith Charitable Trust.

The site will remain closed (existing Rights of Way will remain open) until all works for access and master planning have been completed. Updates will be published on [www.greensandtrust.org](http://www.greensandtrust.org).



Photo courtesy The Greensand Trust

### From the Editor's desk

This morning I scraped the frost off my car for the first time this year (right before trashing the front bumper while backing out of the drive, but that's a whole other column). Having grown up in ice and snow I'm well prepared for this particular morning ritual, and am well equipped with my specially imported indestructible Canadian ice scraper. In the last four years I've witnessed a number of English car de-icing techniques, from the amusing (a spray can; what on Earth!?) to the horrifying (boiling water on the windscreen). Take it from one who knows: there's just no substitute for scraping the stuff off. Think of it as a morning workout!

What this means of course is that winter is upon us. In my house this means the end of jam making season, alas. I managed a few batches this year, including elderberry, Bleinham Orange apple/ginger and kiwi/sea buckthorn. I confess the latter turned out a horrible colour so I might just go harvest some more berries and try again. But the kiwis came from a friend's house in France so how could I resist? The freezer is full of brambles, apples and other fruits harvested from the hedges on my bike rides around Cranfield. So while jam making is over, pie making has yet to begin!

Winter is also when I put out the suet. As I write this I can hear a Starling feeding frenzy at my kitchen window. They're monstrously messy but the Dunnocks and Great Tits pick up the bits dropped during the melee so I suppose everybody wins. And hopefully it makes up a little for the fact that the Tit feeder has been empty for over a week. I'm trying not to look out the window too much but I know my little black and yellow friends are out there, gazing back in with reproachful looks.

Spring is normally the time for new beginnings. For the Muntjac though this winter marks the start of a new era. This is the first issue of the new Muntjac, which has been merged with Beds BioNews. I mentioned in the last issue that we'd be introducing some new features, and the first of these appears in these pages. Last year I attended the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona. Mingling with naturalists and environmentalists from around the world really brought home that we Bedfordshire folk are part of a much larger community. There are millions of us around the world working to conserve our little patches of the planet. So I thought I'd start bringing a bit of the world to Bedfordshire, featuring conservation projects from around the globe. This inaugural column introduces Cheetah Conservation Botswana, which was started and is run by Kent native Rebecca Klein. I hope you enjoy reading about this and other projects. And I hope it inspires you – as it did me – to cherish and appreciate the wonderful species and spaces in our own little piece of the planet.

### Nature nuggets

**The Muntjac is getting onto the information superhighway! In a bit of an experiment this and future issues will be available online.** Nature is awash with colour and so is the Muntjac! Do drop by the BNHS website to check it out!

**Congratulations to the Wildlife Trust**, who have received a grant from the Chilterns Conservation Board! The money will help the Trust rejuvenate Warden and Galley Hills near Luton and build links with local communities.

Nicholas Crane presented **CPRE Bedfordshire's Living Countryside Awards** on December 3. Congratulations to all winners, especially the six recipients of the CPRE Mark award: Yelnow Organic Farm Odell, Stotfold Mill Meadows Nature Reserve, Barton Hill Farm, The Nude Ewe Conservation Wools, Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association and Luton Hoo Walled Garden Project!

Apologies to everyone who tried to access the **BedsLife and Nude Ewe websites** during November. Murphy's Law was well against us as everything that could go wrong did! Things are back online though so please do visit again!

Are you a teacher, scout leader or other educator looking for places to get students exploring and working with nature? The Bedfordshire and Luton Environmental Education Working Group has compiled a **directory of organisations offering environmental education opportunities** in our county. The directory is available at [www.bedslife.org.uk/publications](http://www.bedslife.org.uk/publications) - check it out to find out what kinds of services and facilities are available!

## A New Gall for Bedfordshire

by Seán Karley

British Plant Gall Society recorder for The Wildlife Trust area.

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On Thursday 22 October 2009 I parked near Maulden Parish Church and followed the Greensand Ridge Way along the south side of Maulden Wood, looking for galls.

I was looking at the leaves of a Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) when I spotted a little pale blob in the middle of a leaf. It looked like a poor specimen of an Oyster Gall, caused by a wasp called *Neuroterus anthracinus*. That gall was plentiful on English Oaks (*Q. robur*) nearby. In total I saw about a dozen of these galls, on two separate bushes.

A few days later I was reading *Cecidology*, (journal of the British Plant Gall Society), and I found an article about a new species of gall-causer in Britain. I e-mailed the author, Brian Spooner, with a photograph of my find, and he confirmed that I had found the first record in Bedfordshire of Jumping Galls, caused by the wasp *Neuroterus saliens*.

This wasp was first recorded in England in Hackney in 2006. Since then it has turned up in Essex (2007), Berkshire (2008), Surrey and Wiltshire this year, and is clearly spreading rapidly. So now we can add Bedfordshire to the list of its conquests.

### What to look for:

This species is confined to Turkey Oak. The agamic (asexual) generation lives on the leaves, usually on the midrib, a large vein or the petiole, on either surface. It causes a split in the surface. The gall grows out of this, swells and takes the shape of a Cornish pasty but without the ridge on the back. The two ends also swell a little, making distinct knobs. It is about 3mm long ( ¼ inch). The colour is pale green, but can turn red in sunshine. When mature they can jump, about two millimetres! This may work them down into the leaf litter to overwinter. The wasps which emerge in the Spring are all female. They lay their eggs on the female flowers of the Turkey oak. Here they develop a solid gall covered with long thin processes, and looking rather like a sea-anemone, hence its name of Sea-Anemone Gall. The colour is green to start with, often turning red. The wasps which emerge from these mate and lay their eggs on leaves to start the cycle again. We have not yet found this stage here, so please watch out for them.



The gall of *Neuroterus saliens* on the midrib of a Turkey Oak leaf. Note in the inset photo the gall's Cornish pasty shape. This is the first Bedfordshire record of the species, which is spreading rapidly through Britain. Photo by Seán Karley.

Two other recent gall-wasp invaders have also been found in Maulden Wood, both on English Oak (*Q. robur*). The agamic galls of *Andricus grossulariae* develop underneath the acorn. They also have numerous processes on the surface, but these are coarser and blunter than on the Sea-Anemone Gall. The Ramshorn Gall is caused by the asexual generation of *Andricus aries*. It causes a bud to fatten, about 4-6 mm across with two 'horns' on the end; 5-50 mm long. Green, turning brown. Both species have spread rapidly, and are now well established in Northamptonshire and north to Leicestershire.

An obvious question is, 'are these animals spreading because of global warming?' We cannot be sure, but it is probably a factor in their success.

#### What is a gall?

A gall is an abnormal growth produced by a plant or other host under the influence of another organism. It involves enlargement and/or proliferation of host cells, and provides both shelter and food for the invading organism. Some well-known types of gall are Oak-Apples, Robin's Pincushions and Witches' Brooms.

### Ashridge Fallow Deer rut

by David Anderson

Just as day was breaking, a small group of members met at Ashridge Monument Drive on Sunday the 18 October, to view the Fallow Deer rut. We were well outnumbered by an adjacent National Trust group, but made a speedy departure and were afterwards not to see them again. We headed down Thunderdell Ride and were soon to hear a Tawny Owl hooting, quickly joined by a second bird. Not moments after the owls we heard our first deer groaning and as our ears got tuned in to the sound, we picked up another and then more. Within a short distance we watched a deer cross the ride and then quite a large herd of deer off in the undergrowth.

Our careful progress took us to the corner of the central field, where we were rewarded by the sight of large numbers of deer doing all the things they do in the rut; groaning, chasing off the youngsters, rounding up the females and fighting with the larger males. Walking further along the field edge we saw more deer and more action and a small number of other deer watchers. As the day was now clear and bright, cameras were clicking away at a steady pace, recording the scene and we were surprised to find that well over an hour had elapsed since our start. With the increasing daylight, the rut started to fade away and we walked around the field, looking at spots where the deer squeeze under the barbed wire fence leaving tufts of their hair on the fence barbs.



A fallow deer buck with his harem of does. Photo by Andrew Stawarz

At this time of the year, Ashridge with all its Beech trees displays a golden aura and we had a picturesque walk around some more of the forest on our way back to the cars. As the National Trust now opens the Monument Café in the mornings we all opted to walk up to the Monument and finish the meeting with coffee. On the way up the drive we were hailed by Alan Outen, the BHNS Fungi Recorder, on his way to lead a Fungus Foray, so while Alan set out on his event, we enjoyed a sit down and hot drink.

A most pleasant morning with a good show of the rut, in not too cold condition and certainly no rain.

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### A galling visit to Maulden Wood July 26 2009

Leader Seán Karley

Weather: Light cloud, fairly bright, warm and dry.

People present:

Name	Recorder	NNHS	KDNHS	WFS	BPGS	WT	Bedford NHS
Seán Karley		√	√	√	√	√	
Roger Warren		√	√				
Ian Farmer	Galls				√		
John Pitts						√	√
Keith Palmer					√		
Sheila Brooke							√
Alan Le Fort		√					
Judy Carrington		√					

Keith is a new BPGS member, and drove from his home in Rye. Rye to Maulden 124 miles

Ian drove from Conisburgh near Doncaster; 133 miles to Maulden

In total 69 species were seen in 2009. Thirty-six of these were not recorded in the original 1975-6 survey.

On the other hand 34 other species were recorded in the original survey but not found this year.

Species shown in **bold** were not recorded in the original survey.

Host plant: common name	Host plant: scientific name	Gall-causing species: name in 2009
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	<i>Aceria macrochelus</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	<i>Aceria aceriscampestris</i>
<b>Field maple</b>	<b><i>Acer campestre</i></b>	<b><i>Aceria eriobius</i></b>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	<i>Aceria cephalonea</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	<i>Aceria pseudoplatani</i>
<b>Horse chestnut</b>	<b><i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i></b>	<b><i>Aculus hippocastani</i></b>
Pendulous sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>	<i>Wachtliella caricis</i>
<b>Hornbeam</b>	<b><i>Carpinus betulus</i></b>	<b><i>Zygobia carpini</i></b>
<b>Hornbeam</b>	<b><i>Carpinus betulus</i></b>	<b><i>Aceria tenellus</i></b>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium (Carduus) arvense</i>	<i>Urophora cardui</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	<i>Phytoptus avellanae</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	<i>Dasineura crataegi</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	<i>Phyllocoptes goniothorax</i>
<b>Spindle</b>	<b><i>Euonymus europaeus</i></b>	<b><i>Eriophyes convolvens</i></b>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	<i>Hartigiola annulipes</i>
<b>Beech</b>	<b><i>Fagus sylvatica</i></b>	<b><i>Aceria fagineus</i></b>
<b>Beech</b>	<b><i>Fagus sylvatica</i></b>	<b><i>Aceria nervisequus</i></b>
<b>Beech</b>	<b><i>Fagus sylvatica</i></b>	<b><i>Acalitus stenaspis</i></b>
<b>Meadowsweet</b>	<b><i>Filipendula ulmaria</i></b>	<b><i>Dasineura pustulans</i></b>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	<i>Dasineura ulmariae</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	<i>Dasineura fraxini</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	<i>Aceria fraxinivorus</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	<i>Psyllopsis fraxini</i>
<b>Ash</b>	<b><i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></b>	<b><i>Dasineura fraxineai</i></b>

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Host plant: common name	Host plant: scientific name	Gall-causing species: name in 2009
Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>	<i>Cecidophyes galii</i>
<b>Hogweed</b>	<b><i>Heracleum sphondylium</i></b>	<b><i>Macrolabis heraclei</i></b>
Common mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	<i>Puccinia malvacearum</i>
<b>Crab apple</b>	<b><i>Malus sylvestris</i></b>	<b><i>Phyllocoptes malinus</i></b>
<b>Mint</b>	<b><i>Mentha</i> sp.</b>	<b><i>Puccinia menthae</i></b>
Norway spruce	<i>Picea abies</i>	<i>Adelges abietis</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	<i>Harmandia globuli</i>
<b>Aspen</b>	<b><i>Populus tremula</i></b>	<b><i>Harmandia tremulae</i></b>
<b>Aspen</b>	<b><i>Populus tremula</i></b>	<b><i>Phyllocoptes populi</i></b>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	<i>Eriophyes prunispinosae</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	<i>Eriophyes padi</i>
Turkey oak*	<i>Quercus cerris</i>	<i>Andricus quercus-calicis</i>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Andricus inflator sexual</i>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Andricus kollari</i>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus quercus corticis</i></b>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus quercus calicis</i></b>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus corruptrix</i></b>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus lignicolus</i></b>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus corruptrix</i></b>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Andricus aries</i></b>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Biorhiza pallida</i>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Cynips longiventris</i>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Macrodiplosis pustularis</i>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Macrodiplosis roboris</i></b>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Neuroterus albipes</i>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Neuroterus anthracina</i></b>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Neuroterus numismalis agamic</i>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Neuroterus numismalis sexual</i></b>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	<i>Neuroterus quercus baccarum</i>
<b>Common oak</b>	<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	<b><i>Trioza romota</i></b>
Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i> & <i>R. arvensis</i>	<i>Blennocampa pusilla</i>
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	<i>Dasineura rosarum</i>
<b>Bramble</b>	<b><i>Rubus fruticosus</i></b>	<b><i>Dasineura plicatrix</i></b>
<b>Willow</b>	<b><i>Salix</i> sp.</b>	<b><i>Iteomyia caprear</i></b>
<b>Willow</b>	<b><i>Salix</i> sp.</b>	<b><i>Rabdophaga salicis</i></b>
<b>Willow</b>	<b><i>Salix</i> sp.</b>	<b><i>Pontania gallarum</i></b>
<b>Willow</b>	<b><i>Salix</i> sp.</b>	<b><i>Pontania bridgmanii</i></b>
<b>Lime</b>	<b><i>Tilia europaea</i></b>	<b><i>Eriophyes exilis</i></b>
<b>White clover</b>	<b><i>Trifolium repens</i></b>	<b><i>Dasineura trifolii</i></b>
<b>Coltsfoot</b>	<b><i>Tussilago farfara</i></b>	<b><i>Puccinia poarum</i></b>
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	<i>Eriosoma ulmi</i>
<b>Wych elm</b>	<b><i>Ulmus glabra</i></b>	<b><i>Tetraneura ulmi</i></b>
Stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	<i>Dasineura urticae</i>
Germander speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	<i>Jaapiella veronicae</i>

### Field Meeting Yelden June 13 2009

by Tony Smith

The village of Yelden lies on rising ground on either side of the river Til. If you approach it from the south, you see the remains of the medieval castle, its mound and motte and bailey. To the north you see the church tower. Wide open views are a background, giving a sense of timelessness. The land in this part of Bedfordshire is heavy clay. I have been told that before the invention of the steam plough, it was so difficult to cultivate that it was never 'enclosed' and explains why there are few hedges.

It was a beautiful sunny day, warm with cumulus clouds and a gentle breeze.

Very close to our meeting place I had been shown a large silken web the size of a man's hand, made by the larvae of the Small Eggar Moth. The larvae were still there, streaming out to feed, fully grown, just prior to pupation. The web was sited towards the top of a large blackthorn hedge opposite one of the old houses along the main street and adjoining the castle grounds.



Caterpillar of the small eggar moth *Eriogaster lanestris*. Photo by Ian A. Kirk

The moth has a peculiar life-cycle. The eggs hatch in early May, the larvae feed and weave their web, enlarging it as they grow and use it for a refuge at night. In June they drop down to pupate in the ground at the bottom of mature blackthorn and sometimes hawthorn hedges, before the annual flaying done in the days after harvesting. On warm days in February or March the adults may emerge, fly and mate. If the weather is too cold, the pupae remain until the next year. They have been known to do so for up to six years. The larvae seem to favour the stems of blackthorn from the previous one or two years on which to anchor their web. I look for these from mid-May.

**Orchid Farm** is still worked in the old traditional way without the use of fertilizers or pesticides. The three small fields which form the SSSI differ slightly and have a different flora and therefore natural history interest. The old 'ridge and furrow' can still be seen. The most westerly field I believe is the wettest and contains nearly all the Common Spotted Orchids on the farm.

Even though the day was very warm there was no humming of insects. The Chimney Sweeper moth was the most numerous seen: over 100 within the three fields. Roesel's Bush Cricket was confirmed by Keith Balmer. Butterflies seen in small numbers were Large Skippers, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshells, Painted Lady and Meadow Browns. Moths seen in addition to Chimney Sweepers were Yellow Shells, Silver-ground Carpet, Silver Ys, Mother Shiptons and Burnet Companions.

Birds seen or heard were Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Swallow, House Martin, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Lesser and Common Whitethroat, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Linnets and Willow Warbler.

**Rifle Range Farm** takes its name from the use of 90 acres of land thought to have been used from 1892 by the Bedfordshire Yeomanry. It was later used by other regiments and school cadets. During the Second World War both British and American troops trained there. The lease lapsed in 1967. The Butts area remains and is of natural history interest, as the underlying more calcareous clays are exposed. It includes two sizeable ponds and is now used for clay pigeon shooting. Newton Gorse adjoins it and is a scrubby area used rearing Game Birds. At its western end, the Newton Bromswold Green Lane runs south to Knotting.

At the Butts, Large Skipper butterflies, Common Heath moths, Four-spotted Chaser and Emperor dragonflies, and Hare were seen. Birds seen or heard were Moorhen, Swallow, House Martin, Robin, Blackbird, Song thrush, Lesser and Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Great Tit, Chaffinch,



Goldfinch and Linnet.

Our thanks go to Robert Miley, Richard and, particularly, Ann Paynter for giving us access to their farms and in making the visit so memorable.

I would also like to thank Keith Balmer, Mick McCarrick, Peter Glenister, Peter Almond and all those others who added to the identifying of those few insects known to me.

### Molluscs – much more than garden pests

by Peter Topley

For the uninitiated slugs and snails are often dismissed as creatures to be eliminated in the gardeners fight to preserve those prized vegetables and bedding plants. Yet look only a little deeper and a fascinating and important group of animals emerges from the shadow of the cabbage patch, woodland log, pond or pathside wall. In fact molluscs are found in a wide variety of habitats and can be in turn indicators of the presence of ancient woodland, calcareous springs, good (or poor) fish populations, human disturbance and a changing climate among many others.

Bedfordshire has a recent heritage of thorough and expert mollusc recording; much of this is owed to the hard work of Beryl Rands and other recorders; many of these records are also held by the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland and (together with the Society's other records) are in the process of being entered on the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Gateway. This web site acts as a 'data warehouse' for biodiversity information, which can be quickly and easily accessed to understand the distribution of particular species in the UK. It accepted its 40 millionth species record in November 2009.

As the new Mollusc Recorder for BNHS I would be the first to admit my time for recording in the field is very limited. But I have been interested in molluscs from the age of 11 and joined the Conchological Society as soon as I could in 1970 when I was 12. My interest has always been balanced with other priorities in my life such as full time work and my additional 'career' as a husband and father of two children who are now beginning to make their own way in the world. I have never considered myself an 'expert' but instead as being on a kind of life long pilgrimage! I started out by just loving the beauty of shells. Over the years I have grown to appreciate many aspects of conchology including ecology and behaviour as well as historical aspects. Although my main focus has been on non-marine molluscs (both British and foreign), I also take an interest in marine molluscs as well and the occasional bit of palaeontology. In addition I edit the Conchological Society's magazine *Mollusc World* which is produced three times a year and this consumes much of what is left of my spare time!

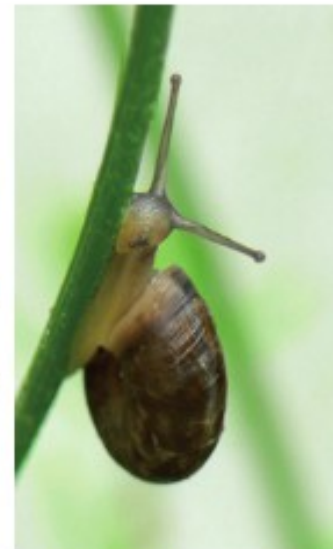


Photo by bramblejungle



Photo by Digimist

Although, for the time being, I have agreed to act as a 'caretaker' in this role until more time becomes available, I am happy to receive any mollusc records that members would like to submit and to assist with identification wherever possible (see the BNHS web site for contact details). Some species are very difficult to tell apart (for example the small freshwater bivalves of the genus *Pisidium* and some slugs) and may be sent on to relevant experts for confirmation. For those of you who wish to go further with identification, there is a guide to common garden species on the Conchological Society's website at [http://www.conchsoc.org/aids\\_to\\_id/idbase.php](http://www.conchsoc.org/aids_to_id/idbase.php). There are also two excellent AIDGap guides available from the Field Studies Council which cover land snails (OP79) and freshwater bivalves (OP82).

## The Global Naturalist: Botswana

Cheetah Conservation Botswana  
[www.cheetahbotswana.com](http://www.cheetahbotswana.com)

The cheetah is Africa's most endangered large cat, with approximately 10,000 in the wild. The species is now threatened with extinction due to loss of habitat and prey, a narrow gene pool and human persecution. Botswana has one of the largest remaining populations of free ranging cheetahs in the world, roughly 14% of the global population and identifying Botswana as one of the species' last strongholds.



Cheetah Conservation Botswana (CCB) was formed in 2003 to address the threats to Botswana's cheetah population. We are based at Mokolodi Nature Reserve and are operated by both international and local personnel. We are funded by grant aid and donor support. Our key challenges are to improve community perceptions towards predators and ensure that retaliatory killings do not continue to threaten cheetah numbers, while, at the same time, supporting and protecting rural community welfare.



We've developed a range of community programmes and supporting resources. Through our outreach activities we aim to build confidence through a better understanding of local predators. This helps promote a sense of value in Botswana's national wildlife resource. It also fosters greater tolerance and coexistence, narrowing the divide in the cycle of human/predator conflict.

We research cheetah populations, habitat use, prey species, genetics and disease, and we also do community surveys. We use our findings to influence attitudes and actions among government, farming communities and the general public. We visit individual farms and communities to conduct workshops and predator awareness

raising programmes and to distribute supporting resources. We are now starting a Livestock Guarding Dog Programme, and identifying and suggesting alternative livelihoods. We work extensively in schools, giving presentations and teacher training workshops, and developing and distributing educational resources.

Through research, education and community outreach CCB aims to create an integrated plan to assist the survival of Botswana's free ranging cheetah and the habitat on which it depends, ensuring the spirit of the Kalahari remains for future generations. Only by working together with communities who live side by side with predators, with initiatives tailored to meet their needs and priorities, do we hope to foster the attitudes of coexistence that will see cheetahs remain as an essential component in this remarkable ecosystem and a flagship species for Botswana's rich biodiversity.

We also take on international volunteers. If you have the skills and experience, have an interest in wildlife, can cope with living and working in basic facilities, and wish to experience Africa by volunteering in support of our cheetah conservation efforts in Botswana then we would be delighted to hear from you! Details are available on our website at [www.cheetahbotswana.com/volunteers.php](http://www.cheetahbotswana.com/volunteers.php).



Photos courtesy Cheetah Conservation Botswana

In Focus: National Moth Night, Sept 18-19 at Maulden Wood

Photos by John Pitts



'Hmmm, it looks like semaphore... he's saying... "Let' ....'me' ....'out' ....of... here...!"



'It looks like tab A should fit into slot B.'  
'Which is slot B?'  
'I don't know...where's that allan key?'



'I'm ready for my closeup, Mr DeMille!'



'Oi! Get away from me with that plastic vial, you!'



'Now, when I flip this switch the curtain will drop and you will see that Big Ben has completely disappeared. *Abacadabra!*'



'And with my amazing climbing abilities I scale the heights...eat your heart out, Spiderman!'

### Upcoming events

**Jan 12** Toddington: **The changing face of farming and its impact on the environment**, by Charles Porter. Charles will speak about his and Carolyn's Bedfordshire farm, how it has altered over the last 30 years and how the wildlife has responded. Meet at 7.45 pm at the Village Hall, Leighton Road, Toddington, TL007288.

**Jan 26** Maulden: **'Birding Cape to Cape'** by Phil Palmer who led a pioneering trip in 2009 from Cape Horn to the Cape of Good Hope, taking in the Antarctic penninsular, South Georgia and Tristan de Cunha group. Meet at 7.30 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381, for an 8.00 pm start.

**Feb 2-3: Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change** is the theme for the 2010 World Wetlands Day conference in Peterborough. The event will bring together the UK wetland community to explore the Ramsar theme of looking at wetlands and biodiversity in the context of climate change. The conference programme and booking info are available at [www.coastms.co.uk/conferences/428](http://www.coastms.co.uk/conferences/428).

**Feb 10** Toddington: **Butterfly migration**, by Rebecca Nesbit. Rebecca studied the Painted Lady migration in 2009 and has spent the past four years studying butterfly migrations at Rothampstead Research for her PhD. Meet at 7.45 pm at the Village Hall, Leighton Road, Toddington, TL007288.

**Feb 21** Marston Vale: **All day birding** at the Marston Vale brick pits, ending with a Gull Watch. Meet at 9.00 am in the lay-by off A421 at Stewartby Lake, near Marston Moretaine, TL002426. Those wishing to join for the Gull Watch only can meet at 3.30 pm in the same lay-by. Leader: Steve Blain, County Bird Recorder.

**Mar 21** Harrold-Odell: **Morning birdwatching** for early spring migrants and resident birds around Harrold-Odell Country Park. Meet at 8.00 am in the car park, SP957567. Leader: Richard Bashford

**Mar 23** Maulden: **Annual General Meeting**. Officers and Recorders will present their annual reports. Meet at 7.30 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381.

**Mar 30** Maulden: **'Asian wildlife trade - a bird's eye view'** by Dr Richard Thomas of Traffic International. An exposure of the exploitation of Oriental birds, including some endangered species. Meet at 7.30 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381, for an 8.00 pm start.

**Apr 10** Maulden: **Small mammal trapping** at Duck End Nature Reserve. Meet at 10.00 am at Duck End NR, TL051377. Leader: Richard Lawrence

**Apr 21:** The Floodplain Meadows Partnership is holding a one-day conference at the Open University campus, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes. **Floodplain Meadows: a Threatened Habitat** will feature speakers from across Europe on species-rich floodplain meadows: research, management policy and restoration. Contact Michelle Duke ([m.duke@open.ac.uk](mailto:m.duke@open.ac.uk)) for a registration form.

**Apr 25** Pegsdon Hills: **Morning birdwatching walk** over Pegsdon Hills for spring migrants. Park and meet at 8.00 am at the Live and Let Live Inn car park, Pegsdon, TL121303. Leader: Jon Palmer

**May 9** Maulden Woods: **Annual Dawn Chorus** in Maulden Wood. Meet at 4.15 am in the lay-by at the top of Deadman's Hill on the A6. Hot fried breakfast to follow, price £3.00. Order 7 days in advance with John Adams on 01234 381532. Leader: Pete Marshall

### Oh deer...

From Potters Bar, Hertfordshire:

'I live in a semi rural area. We recently had a new neighbour call the local town council office to request the removal of the "DEER CROSSING" sign on our road. She said the reason was, "too many deer are being hit by cars out here! I don't think this is a good place for them to be crossing anymore."

