



Muntjac

Spring 2011

The BNHS Gateway?

Keith Balmer sent in this little gem of an actual 'BNHS' gate(way): in this case the Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society. A quick trawl of the internet reveals that we're not the only BNHS around (imagine!)

Other BNHS include:

- Bombay Natural History Society
- British Natural Hygiene Society
- Belvedere North High School
- Birmingham Natural History Society
- Behavioural Nursing & Health Systems
- Bangaan National High School
- Biotinyl-N-Hydroxysuccinamide
- Buteshire Natural History Society
- Bahrain Natural History Society
- British National Health Service
- Byron Nelson High School

If you come across any other BNHS, do let us know!



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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society
www.bnhs.org.uk
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BedsLife
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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.

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.

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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 June 2011** please.

Thank you in anticipation.




The next Muntjac will be published in **June 2011**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society

Nature nuggets

Regarding the rescued polecat featured in the last Muntjac issue, our eagle-eyed Mammal Recorder Richard Lawrence thinks it is in fact a hybrid rather than a true polecat. Thanks for the info, Richard!

Register now to take part in the Wildlife Trust's **GardenWatch 2011** from June 6-12. Last year participants across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough recorded 1500 wildlife sightings in 92 gardens. The scheme is now being launched in Bedfordshire: visit www.wildlifecnp.org.uk/gardenwatch.htm to find out more and/or register your interest.

Graham Wilton-Jones, RSPB warden at Sandy, has retired after 10 years in post. In his time there he oversaw huge changes at the reserve, including 40 acres of conifer felling and the reintroduction of stock grazing. Best wishes for this new phase of your life, Graham!

<p>Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Recording & Monitoring Centre</p> 	<p>We have a NEW website!!! www.bedsbionet.org.uk</p> <p> You can also follow us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/bedsbrmc</p>	
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From the Editor's Desk

A couple years ago a friend told me I had 'a well-developed sense of place'. She meant it as a compliment, and as a foreigner here I took it as such. I confess I'd never heard of Bedfordshire when I applied for my job. Until then my England experience had consisted of the Lake District and Yorkshire moors. What both of those stunning landscapes have in common with Bedfordshire though is their open landscapes. Standing at the Lion Inn at Blakey one sees nothing but farmland and moor for miles around. Standing on top of Pegsdon Hills I get much the same feeling. I've never really connected with woodlands like some people do. When I was an undergrad in Ontario someone remarked that I was a pretty pathetic wildlife biologist because I didn't like being in the woods. And to be honest, I thought they were right.

So it was with some surprise that my affection for such a landscape was rekindled. On a recent trip to my native Ottawa (a city of three rivers: 'odawa' is Anishinabe for 'traders') I looked out of the airplane window and saw mile after mile of snow and conifer. Ottawa is at the northern edge of Ontario's 'Mixedwood Plains' zone, in the 'Eastern Forest-Boreal Transition' ecoregion. There the lush deciduous Carolinian-type forests have almost completely given way to the boreal conifers. Paper Birch and Sugar Maple still thrive, but surrounded by Black Spruce, Eastern White Pine, White Spruce and what you call Larch but we call Tamarack. In winter — and when I was there the snowbanks were five feet tall and it didn't get above -8° Celsius — the landscape is mostly white, punctuated by brushstrokes of dark green. In summer the granite outcrops sparkle softly in the sun and the many shades of green dominate.

Flying into this landscape I suddenly felt very, very Canadian.

Despite my recent surge of national pride, I don't actually know much about my native species and habitats. In fact I know much more about those of my adopted home. My heart leaps when I see the Rock Rose emerging at Knocking Hoe, or the Bluebells in Swineshead Wood. My cats and I (especially the cats) love watching the House Sparrow males fighting for supremacy in the shrubs, and at nesting time I'm happy to put out some of last year's sheep fleece for my resident Dunnock.

I think learning about my local species, habitats and landscapes has really fostered what my friend described as my 'sense of place'. This issue of the Muntjac includes a couple of suggestions for how you can rediscover what it is you love about our home. Our County Recorders are always looking for more records of everything from plants to birds to lichens, and the Record Centre has provided an excellent basic guide to recording for you. Or you could set yourself a challenge to see something new, as Stephen Plummer did with his mission to see all of Bedfordshire's mammals in a single year.

Spring has sprung! What better time to get out and enhance your own sense of place?

Neglected Insects in Bedfordshire

by Alan R. Outen

As many of you will be aware I have had a number of health issues over many years. Sadly some of these are now making it very difficult for me to carry out the high power microscopy and delicate manipulations necessary in accurate identification of Fungi and Bryophytes, for which I have acted as Recorder for very many years. During 2010 I had an additional problem from late April until the end of the year due to angina. I was forbidden to drive and was often very limited in how far I could walk, to the extent that on a bad day I was out of breath just walking around the garden. I kept myself amused by catching and photographing insects and it is quite amazing what one can find in one's local environment without any need to travel to special sites. Naturally enough I wanted to obtain identifications for the species that I photographed.

We are fortunate that in the BNHS we have some excellent County Recorders for many groups of insects, all of whom I have always found very helpful. Butterflies and Moths (Lepidoptera), Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata), Grasshoppers and Crickets (Orthoptera), Lacewings and allies (Neuroptera, Raphidioptera, Megaloptera and Mecoptera) are whole orders which have been well studied and documented over the years. This also applies to Heteroptera (within Hemiptera), Hoverflies (family Syrphidae within Diptera), social wasps, bumblebees (within Hymenoptera) plus Carabids, Ladybirds and Weevils and some others (within Coleoptera).

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In addition the late Vic Chambers had done major work on Aculeate Hymenoptera with a species list of wasps and ants published in *Bedfordshire Naturalist* 39 (1985). Chambers also recorded Sawflies (Symphyta) but sadly died before he was able to publish a Bedfordshire Checklist for these or the bees. His collections however are in the Natural History Museum, South Kensington. A Checklist of Bedfordshire Coleoptera, compiled by Bernard Nau was published in four parts in *Bedfordshire Naturalist* (1982-1985) and there have been other records published subsequently by Bernard Nau (*Beds. Nat.* 42, 46, 1988 & 1992) and by Jim Ashby & Wilf Powell (*Beds. Nat.* 43- 48, 1989-1994).

It is evident however that some of the 'less fashionable' orders of insects have been little studied in this county (as also in many others). For many of these groups the species require specialist identification and identification from photographs alone is often not possible (a problem that is also the case with fungi, especially, as I have so often pointed out, with toadstool species!). For this reason I ensured that wherever possible I retained a voucher specimen of these insect species in support of my photographs.

One might expect that getting identifications for such species would not prove possible. However I have discovered that not only are there now many excellent websites available to help with identification but there are also National Recording Schemes for many of these groups. I have found that those running National Recording Schemes and many other individuals contactable through the various websites have all proved exceedingly helpful. Not only that but a good number of the species that I have been finding have been of interest nationally as well as for Bedfordshire. It is also evident that many of the species that I have been finding (even within my village or our own garden) are either new to the county or likely to be so. The lack of County Checklists for many of these groups does however mean that in many instances it is impossible to know whether or not a recorded species is new.

I have therefore started putting together lists of Collembola, Psocoptera, Trichoptera, Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, Homoptera and Diptera (other than hoverflies) based on my own records together with those that I have been able to obtain either from National Recording Schemes or other *Bedfordshire Naturalists* and via literature searches.

I would welcome any validated records for any of the groups above in continuing to develop these lists, which will be made available to any who would like them. Please bear in mind however that in most cases I am not personally able to identify specimens or photographs of species from these groups! Some of these lists are inevitably at present rather short. In all these cases however I am very confident that there is an opportunity to develop them considerably. I am not tackling a Checklist of Bedfordshire Hymenoptera though I do have some records of these, including for groups not covered by our recorders. I am nonetheless hoping that someone else might undertake this task.

I am certain that even in the absence of specific recorders for these groups it should be possible to extend our knowledge of some of them within the county and I have other ideas as well on how to further facilitate this. I am hoping that through the Scientific Committee we can call a meeting for all those generally interested in Entomology in Bedfordshire in order to discuss the way forward.

Andy and Melissa Banthorpe tell me that there are at least 37 people operating moth traps in the county. As these individuals will be aware many other insects, in addition to moths, are attracted to MV light, including Caddis, Mayflies, some bugs, flies and beetles so there is a good potential source of records there. I had several interesting fly species in my own trap in 2010.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Charles Baker, Keith Balmer and John O'Sullivan for helpful suggestions on this article and to Andy and Melissa Banthorpe for providing information on the number of moth traps operating in the county.

Dragonfly Report 2010: Bedfordshire VC30

by David Anderson

The year can best be described as a relatively quiet one for Bedfordshire with all of the usual 21 species being recorded, but without any migrant or colonizing species being seen. All 21 species had a good year, being recorded as Ovipositing with the exception of Scarce Chaser which was however seen as Emerging.

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A total of 1994 records have been obtained so far from 68 different observers. The first record was on April 17, as always of a Large Red Damselfly; the last on November 19 with again the usual Common Darter. Both dates are within a few days of the 2009 dates, although the number of observers is down on 2009, but the number of records is up. Fewer people seems to be getting more records; a sign of a relatively good dragonfly year?

The least recorded species in the county was the Scarce Chaser with just nine records, but it does occur only on a 5km stretch of the River Great Ouse, from the county boundary south. In 2009 there were 10 records, so the species had an average year. Our other scarce species is the Downy Emerald with 21 records as against just 6 records in 2009. However matching these 21 records in 2010 is the White-legged Damselfly which had 29 records in 2009, so there seem to be winners and losers.

One observation was the low numbers of the Blue-tailed Damselfly. In 2009 they were seen 14 times in the group size D, but in 2010 they were seen just four times at this group size and most records were for just ones and twos.

Most contributors record from well watched sites with a good range of species, but Helen Hyre found her way into two stately homes, producing new records. Helen found me from the BDS website, so proving its worth. Local email groups, both for birds and other groups were also a good source of records.

The Bedfordshire Geology Group has been in existence for some years and needs more members to make it even more successful than it already is. This would enable us to cover a greater range of items of geological interest.

If anyone out there has an interest in things geological why not come and join us. It does not matter whether your interest is professional or amateur, all are welcome. It is a very good way to increase your knowledge in a friendly atmosphere.

We are affiliated to Bedfordshire Natural History Society.

For further details, please visit our website:
www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk

Membership Secretary:
Lindsay Hiles membership@bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk



In Focus: 2010, a special mammal year!

Text and photos by Stephen Plummer

This article is reproduced with permission from Stephen's 'Bedfordshire Wild' blog, which can be accessed online at <http://bedfordshirewild.blogspot.com/>



Mammal #2: Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis inermis*

2010 was the year in which I finally got to do something that I've been planning for some time: to attempt to see as many of Bedfordshire's mammals as possible over the 12 month period. Here's a brief overview of just how it went.

The first mammal was never in doubt and, as expected, a number of **Rabbits (1)** were picked up in the car's headlights on the way back from the Bedford Blues RFC's New Year's Eve party!

Later, another New Year's Day species was added when I came across **Chinese Water Deer (2)** in the fields adjoining Flying Horse Farm near Ridgmont. A walk

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over nearby Millbrook Plantation on the second day of the year added **Grey Squirrel (3)** and **Muntjac (4)** to the list. This was followed a few days later by a hungry **Red Fox (5)** walking on top of the ice at Brogborough Lake. **Brown Hares (6)** were seen in their regular haunts to the north of Ampthill Park before what turned out to be another red-letter day: January 13. I joined members of the Bedfordshire Bat Group in a hibernation check of several ice houses and another premier Bedfordshire site. Four bat species were seen throughout the day: **Brown Long-eared (7)**; **Natterer's (8)**; **Barbastelle (9)** — the one I'd really been hoping for; and **Daubenton's (10)**.

Two days of small mammal trapping at Westminster Pond, Ampthill Park in mid-February added **Common Shrew (11)**, a diminutive **Pygmy Shrew (12)** and **Wood Mouse (13)** to the growing list. Ampthill Park has given me some amazing Stoat sightings over the years so, as dusk began to fall on February 24, I made my way down to the epicentre of their activity: The Rezzy. Within 20 minutes a **Stoat (14)** suddenly ran out from under a bramble and down the path. Incredibly, it turned out to be the only Stoat I saw throughout the year!



Mammal #13: Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

As March arrived, my attention turned to Stewartby Lake. Early in the month I lifted a piece of strategically placed tin to reveal a confiding **Bank Vole (15)**, the first of many through the year. There had been reports of an American Mink frequenting the lake shore close to the gull watchpoint so, early one morning, I got into position and soon spotted the **Mink (16)** swimming right in front of the watchpoint. It didn't re-emerge further down the shore and, searching the bank, I'm fairly confident that I found its den under a large fallen log. When it comes to Water Shrews the RSPB HQ at The Lodge in Sandy never disappoints. At Jack's Pond my patience was rewarded when a **Water Shrew (17)** appeared and spent some time swimming and diving, at one point consuming its prey right beneath my gaze! I thought I'd got some stunning video footage...until I discovered I hadn't switched the recorder on!

March 24 was another red-letter day. In the morning I followed a **Water Vole (18)** making its way some hundred metres along a brook. Then, as dusk was falling I made my way along to Warren Villas Nature Reserve and sat on the path some 20m away from the point where Otters crossed from the lake into the River Ivel. I thought I was too late but, less than 10 minutes later I looked up to find an **Otter (19)** staring at me at that very spot...Wow! Before this I had spent many early mornings fruitlessly searching for the Stewartby Lake Otter!

It was to be another month before I was able to add to the list with an inquisitive **Weasel (20)** spotted crossing the main ride at Chicksands Wood. A night taking part in a bat survey in another wood resulted in a **Common Pipistrelle (21)** being examined in the hand. But even better was a big **Serotine Bat (22)** that hawked for insects right around me as I stood at the woodland edge.

A visit to Priory Country Park on the way back from watching the Bedford Blues train on June 10th gave the opportunity to catch up with a large number of **Soprano Pipistrelles (23)** and, on the way back to the car, I came across a **Hedgehog (24)** snuffling in the grass. I thought it was about time I added Badger to the list and, the following evening, I had some great views of two growing **Badger cubs (25)**. On June 28 I joined a bat survey at Stockgrove Country Park and we managed to net a big **Noctule (26)**. The evening got even better when a **Roe Deer (27)** was spotted in the verge alongside Kingshoe Wood on the way home, a species that is only just starting to colonise Bedfordshire and remains fairly scarce. The next day I finally caught up with Brown Rat after searching in various places. Following a tip-off, I visited Wardown Park in Luton. I walked from the car to the lake shore...and looked down to see a **Brown Rat (28)** only a metre or so away from me. Within 10 minutes I had two feeding on the seeds I was throwing to them!

Field Voles seem to have been at just about the lowest point of their population cycle these last few years, so I was really pleased to find a **Field Vole (29)** in the Longworth Trap set in grassland just north of Redbourne School in Ampthill on July 1. And a fortnight later I made my way up the ladder and into the permanent stand at Potton Wood to be rewarded with great views of a **Fallow Deer (30)** and her fawn.

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I knew that it was going to be a real challenge to add any further species to the list from here on in, which made every one really special. My surveying group had missed Hazel Dormouse during the Maulden Wood box checks, so I was really grateful to the Studham group for allowing me to join them. I got to Studham just in time to see the **Hazel Dormouse (31)**. She was in rude health but, sadly, the **House Mouse (32)** died soon after I had left Sue's house, probably as a result of imbibing poison elsewhere.

I can't do justice here to the **Edible Dormouse (33)** encounter that David Anderson and I had on September 17th. Suffice to say, the young animal not only mistook David for a tree, but found what it thought was a cosy nook, too! I still can't believe that David didn't have a heart attack! On September 30 my night-time forays turned up a **Polecat/Polecat-hybrid (34)** in the verge at Kingshoe Wood in the early hours but, unfortunately, it was only a view of the shoulders down as it leapt into the longer grass.

But November brought some great views of two mammals that could so easily have been missed. After Dave Parsons turned up at Richard Lawrence's office with a dead Yellow-necked Mouse caught in his garage in Haynes, I set a number of Longworth Traps. Sure enough, a few days later on November 11, two traps in the roof space contained big, bouncy mice with attitude: **Yellow-necked Mice (35)**. And, two days later, having put down a number of traps in the vicinity of empty Harvest Mouse nests on Flitton Moor, I came up trumps when, in the last trap on the last day, there emerged a beautiful **Harvest Mouse (36)** It was the first one I have ever seen and it was the cherry on the cake at the end of a brilliant year.



Mammal #32: an incredibly cheeky Edible Dormouse Gils gils

I was really pleased with 36 species. There were two 'that got away'. While I was in Israel in May, Bob Cornes caught a Brandt's Bat in a wood where they have occurred before. And, believe it or not, I never did see a Mole! Oh yes, I saw plenty of molehills appearing and moving, and I spent some time during the final week of the year gazing at lumps of brown earth at Duck End Nature Reserve, but it wasn't to be.

I'd love to do this again now that I'm armed with more knowledge as to where a number of these species occur and the best opportunities of seeing them. But maybe I will concentrate on studying a few of these mammals more closely this year. Now I know where there are Harvest Mice, I'm pretty sure I can rig up something so that I can watch them...and then there's that Otter — I've got a feeling that I'll be spending a few late nights and early mornings at Warren Villas this year!!

Insects on the Net

Text and photos by Alan R. Outen (photos copyright of the author)

In view of my own experiences I thought it might be useful to share some of the websites and National Recording Schemes that I have found useful, and which will hopefully enable others to make use of these resources. Please bear in mind that the list is by no means exhaustive and what follows is very much a personal list of the sites that I have found particularly good. For the sake of completeness I have also included some references to websites covering some groups for which we do have recorders. Hopefully others may add to this in future editions of Muntjac. Do remember that National Scheme Organisers and other specialists are likely to be busy so do ask them before sending either images or specimens. They will then advise whether, when and how you should send these.

COLLEMBOLA (Springtails)

The largest of three orders of modern hexapods which, although traditionally treated as insect orders, are now often placed in a separate class, the Entognatha. (The other two groups now included in this class are the Protura and Diplura.)

www.stevehopkin.co.uk/collembolagallery/ includes a modern national checklist, distribution maps and many superb illustrations. (This website also has links to excellent illustrations of many other invertebrate groups.) Please note that although this website still gives links to e-mail addresses Steve Hopkin was

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tragically killed in a car accident in 2006, so do not use the e-mail address.

The National Recording Scheme Co-ordinator is Dr Peter Shaw who is happy to look at digital photographs of Collembola, but may be unable to put a record on the national database without you sending a preserved specimen to check. To post samples, immerse them in 70% alcohol in a small leak-proof glass tube, wrap securely and send to his postal address. The website for further, very useful information is www.roehampton.ac.uk/collembola/taxonomy/.

EPHEMEROPTERA, PLECOPTERA and TRICHOPTERA

There are National Recording Schemes for all these three orders: Ephemeroptera (Mayflies) coordinated by Craig Macadam, Plecoptera (Stoneflies) coordinated by David Pryce and Trichoptera (Caddisflies) coordinated by Dr Ian Wallace. These three groups come under the Riverfly Partnership hosted by another excellent website at www.riverflies.org/index/riverflies.html. From this you will find links to each individual order, with up-to-date national checklists, some illustrations, published keys and other information as well as contact details for the three schemes. All three National Recorders have looked at images of mine and have also offered to look at specimens.



Agrypnia vera, a Caddisfly only recorded this once, at Stockgrove Park

ODONATA (Dragonflies and Damselflies)

We have Society Recorders for Dragonflies and Damselflies, as well as Steve Cham's superb book *Dragonflies of Bedfordshire*. I would nonetheless also recommend two websites for anyone interested in these insects. Both of these include some excellent images. These are the website of the British Dragonfly Society www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/ and www.ghmahoney.org.uk/dragonfly/.

ORTHOPTERA (Grasshoppers and Crickets) and related orders

We also have a County Recorder for Grasshoppers and Crickets; this group has been well studied in the county. The website of the National Recording Scheme for Orthopteroids at www.orthoptera.org.uk/ also covers Dictyoptera (Cockroaches etc.), Dermaptera (Earwigs) and Phasmida (Stick Insects). It includes good illustrations of many species, written accounts, national distribution maps and videos complete with sound. www.wildguideuk.com/orthoptera.htm also has some very good images.

PSOCOPTERA (Barkflies and Book-lice)



Graphopsocus cruciatus, a Common Barkfly but like all members of the group rarely recorded in Bedfordshire

The Barkfly — National Barkfly (Outdoor Psocoptera) Recording Scheme has much useful information, a key to adults of species, UK distribution maps and many excellent illustrations. The Scheme is co-ordinated by Keith Alexander. As the website states "The lack of recording ensures that even casual recorders of the group have a good chance of making significant finds. Wherever you live you are likely to turn up species previously unrecorded in the area and may even find species new to Britain. Over the last ten years seven new species have been found and there is every chance that further species are waiting to be discovered."

HEMIPTERA (True Bugs)

For Heteroptera Bernard Nau is our longest serving Recorder and this sub-order has therefore been very well studied in Bedfordshire. Nonetheless I was still able to add a new species to the County List less than 300 m from my home! The website www.britishbugs.org.uk/ is superb and I thoroughly recommend it to all those interested in insects. I have spent many happy hours perusing it. It includes much useful information and vast numbers of excellent images of both Heteropteran and Homopteran species,

including Auchenorrhyncha (Froghoppers, Treehoppers, Planthoppers and Leafhoppers) and Psylloidea (Jumping Plant lice). The website is run by Joe Botting and Tristan Bantock, both of whom I have found exceedingly helpful and I have become very interested in this group, photographing a good number of species since June just in my local area. (This site also provides links to other good European sites on Hemiptera.) An excellent website for the National Recording Scheme for froghoppers has recently been launched at www.ledra.co.uk.



The Homoptera also include Scale Insects, for which Chris Malumphy has provided an excellent introduction on our own BNHS website. Chris indicates there that he would be delighted to receive any samples of scale insects and assist with their identification. His address is given in the online article.

Some Hemiptera are gall-causers so this provides another useful means of recording them. The British Gall Society website is under development but there are excellent books available on the subject, especially *British Plant Galls* by Margaret Redfern and Peter Shirley. This was published in 2002 by Field Studies Council but a new edition is in preparation.

LEPIDOPTERA (Butterflies and Moths)

Unquestionably the most popular of all insect groups, these are well studied in Bedfordshire. We are fortunate to have a team of very hard working County Recorders and more individuals contributing records than for any other group except birds. I think the following websites will be of interest to anyone who has not yet discovered them.

www.ukmoths.org.uk includes illustrations of over 2050 of the 2400+ total moth fauna of the UK, often with several illustrations per species and including many micros for which illustrations are not otherwise readily available. The facility to move easily from a species to those closely related is invaluable. Another site, covering European species and which I have found very good in helping to identify species that I encounter when leading Naturetrek tours abroad, is Moths and Butterflies of Europe and North Africa at www.leps.it.

Many larval micro-moths are leaf miners and these and other leaf mining larvae (Diptera, Hymenoptera and Coleoptera) can often be identified from the characteristic mines they make. Using www.leafmines.co.uk you can either search by the insect species or by host plant. The Dutch website at Bladmineerders van Europa www.bladmineerders.nl is also excellent and can be searched in either Dutch or English. Be aware though that some species included may not be British.

DIPTERA (Two-winged Flies)

I have been interested in this group from an early age though have neglected them for some 45 years! Last year especially however my interest was re-awakened and I photographed well over 100 species during 2010! Hoverflies have been studied in the county for many years and in John O'Sullivan we have yet another excellent recorder. Those interested in this family might be interested in the website www.microscopy-uk.org.uk/magartmay07/cd-hoverflies.html which has a lot of useful background information on this family and many excellent images. The national Hoverfly Recording Scheme website is also full of information, and includes species distribution maps, photographs and a discussion forum www.hoverfly.org.uk/portal.php.

There are over 7000 Diptera species in the UK. Apart from hoverflies these have received little attention in Bedfordshire though there are many extremely attractive species and manageable families. The website of the Dipterists Forum at www.dipteristsforum.org.uk enables one to post images which experts will often be able to identify for you. Non-members can still make use of the site but membership (at just £6/yr) gives many benefits including access to the updated UK Checklist. I have found this group exceedingly kind and helpful and have had many offers to look at specimens where species cannot be identified from the photos. In addition I have been sent copies of draft keys etc. I really cannot recommend this site too highly. The website also provides links to national recording schemes for many families. (Note however some

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families, including the widespread Muscidae (House Flies and their allies) and Calliphoridae (Bluebottles, greenbottles and allies) do not currently have dedicated national recording schemes.)

There are also some websites dealing with individual fly families, of which www.tachinidae.org.uk is I think particularly good whilst www.culicoides.net covers just the single genus of biting-midges Culicoides (Family: Ceratopogonidae) in superb detail.



Another really excellent and useful site is www.diptera.info. This is an interactive site for Dipterists from all continents. From the Diptera Gallery here one can access vast numbers of images arranged by family!

Some flies are gall-causers as larvae and so reference sources referred to under Hemiptera are useful to identify fly species, which are generally specific to host plants.

Other flies are leaf miners as larvae so the website www.leafmines.co.uk/ is again useful, as is that at Bladmineerder van Europa as referred to above. There is

also a separate site dedicated specifically to fly mines at www.ukflymines.co.uk.

HYMENOPTERA (Bees, Wasps, Ants, Sawflies, Ichneumons etc.)

The website www.bwars.com provides a similar facility for image identification of bees, wasps and ants as Dipterists Forum does for flies. Note however that it does not cover all Hymenoptera and I have found the way the system operates is much more awkward to use than Dipterists Forum (though this may be partly my web browser!)

www.forum.hymis.de is a German website that includes Ichneumons and other Hymenoptera not covered on the BWARS site. Note however that the Ichneumons are a massive group and species identification from this family (and some others) is rarely possible. www.hedgerowmobile.com has a good sub-site on parasitic wasps at www.hedgerowmobile.com/parasitica.html as well as other sub-sites on Gall Wasps, Ichneumons etc. Keith Balmer has kindly drawn my attention to the Sawfly Forum at <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/sawfly>.

Some of us do however have contact with specialists in Ichneumons, sawflies etc so if you need help with these please ask.

COLEOPTERA (Beetles)

This is the insect order where I have always had the most difficulty getting help with identifications. Furthermore beetles, rather surprisingly, seem much less well served with websites than other insect orders but some families do have Recording Scheme Co-ordinators who may perhaps help. See www.brc.ac.uk/recording_schemes.asp. A superb German website at www.koleopterologie.de/gallery/ has over 18,000 excellent photos of European beetles. I can also recommend www.eakringbirds.com. This covers the birds and invertebrates of Eakring and Sherwood Forest NR Nottinghamshire and has a fantastic gallery of beetles especially but also many other insects, as well as spiders, harvestmen etc.

www.ladybird-survey.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/londonla.htm is a good ladybird site with most species illustrated by photographs.

GENERAL

An invaluable database of insects and their food plants can be found at www.brc.ac.uk/dbif/homepage.aspx. It includes about 47,000 interactions for roughly 9,300 invertebrate taxa and 5,700 plant taxa.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Charles Baker, Keith Balmer and John O'Sullivan for helpful suggestions on this article.

Just for the Record

by the BRMC Team

Many people are keen to help with recording the county's wildlife but don't know where to begin, what information to report, or to whom. If you are one of these people, please read on...

While it may be true that some species are more exciting to find than others, usually due to their rarity or beauty, it is also important to record common wildlife too. Every piece of information helps to build up a better understanding of the natural world in which we live, and can also help direct conservation efforts and steer new development away from sensitive areas. Species distribution and abundance are constantly changing, and global warming and living landscapes will also affect this. So, in a nutshell, every record is useful!

A species record is a summary of something that was seen and should contain all of the following pieces of information about an observation:

- Species (common name, scientific name, or both)
- Date (preferably day/month/year)
- Grid reference (e.g. TL072492)
- Location description
- Observer name(s)
- Nature of record

The first five items are required for all types of record, but the "Nature of record" will vary according to the wildlife being recorded. For mammals it could be fur, prints, adults, a sett, a road kill, a spraint, etc. For butterflies it may be the quantity, eggs, larva, pupa, etc. and so on for other groups.

Records about wildlife should be sent to the appropriate County Recorder. A County Recorder is an unpaid volunteer who has been appointed to keep records of a particular group of wildlife within the county. They tend to specialize in one or two groups only, so depending upon what was seen, the information may need to go to different people. If you're not too sure what you have seen, contact them anyway, and they may be able to help with its identification. We all have to learn to identify wildlife and most naturalists are only too happy to share their knowledge with others. They can also advise on what to look for, where and when, and if help is needed for a particular project, so please don't be afraid to contact them. They will welcome any help you can give and will be happy to talk to you about their speciality.

The full set of the current County Recorders can be found on the Bedfordshire Natural History Society (BNHS) website www.bnhs.org.uk, in the 'Contacts' section. The BRMC obtains most of its data through these Recorders, so by sending your records to them they will in turn become available to us at the BRMC.



The BNHS 'Grab a Grid Reference' facility

The BNHS website also carries some standard forms preferred by the Recorders for submitting records. While they are usually happy to accept records in any intelligible format, by using their preferred forms this greatly aids their processing of data which can amount to tens of thousands of records per year!

As well as containing lots of interesting info about Bedfordshire's wildlife, the BNHS website also carries an article titled 'For The Record' about recording, and also a very useful tool called 'Grab a Grid Reference' (pictured left) which makes it very easy to obtain a grid reference for a record. You can find out more about the work of the BRMC on our website www.bedsbionet.org.uk.

Bedfordshire & Luton
Biodiversity
Recording &
Monitoring
Centre



Issue 158 - March 2011

Dear Editor,

The article by Rosemary Spencer in the Winter edition of *Muntjac*, about the insects in her Bedford garden was most interesting and something we could all be doing.

However I am sure she is overly optimistic in her identification with the presence of Southern Migrant Hawker. This species has never been recorded in Bedfordshire; although that would not rule out the possibility of one being found. A much more usual species would be Southern Hawker, seen in Bedfordshire from the 5th June 2010 onwards, or the Hairy Dragonfly seen in Bedfordshire from the 6th May to the 28th June 2010.

The small damselfly with a blue tip to its tail is probably a Blue-tailed Damselfly.

As the Dragonfly Recorder for Bedfordshire, I would like details of **all** dragonflies seen in the county. Just send me the species, numbers, location and date. If unsure of species, supply a photograph, or contact me for advice. Look on the Bedfordshire Natural History Society Website www.bnhs.org.uk and click on the "online dragonfly recording" box, or email or telephone me as below.

The BNHS has published an excellent book *Dragonflies of Bedfordshire* and although now a few years out of date, is still of interest and help. The Society is now giving away free the remaining copies of this book, so if Rosemary or any other reader would like a copy, please get in touch with me. Also I can supply copies of the 2009 Dragonfly Report as printed in the 2009 BNHS Journal and shortly the 2010 Report.

Please remember to send in your 2011 Dragonfly records, they are **all** important.

David Anderson, Bedfordshire Dragonfly Recorder
Email: dragonflies@bnhs.org.uk
Telephone: 01582 712604

Upcoming events

April 9 Small mammal trapping at Duck End Nature Reserve, Maulden. Meet at 10.00 am at the reserve, Moor Lane Maulden, TL053177. Leader: Richard Lawrence.

Apr 24 Morning birdwatching walk at Pegsdon Hills for spring migrants. Park and meet at 8.00 am in the car park of the Live and Let Live Inn, Pegsdon, TL121303. Leader: Jon Palmer.

May 8 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, TL073394. Hot fried breakfast to follow, price £3.00. Please order 7 days in advance with John Adams on 01234 381532. Leader: Pete Marshall.

Jun 12 is Open Farm Sunday: visit www.farmsunday.org to find an open farm near you!

Jun 30 Westminster Forum Projects is hosting Westminster Food & Nutrition Forum Keynote Seminar: Biodiversity in London. Timed to follow the Defra White Paper on the natural environment, this seminar will consider the value of biodiversity in the UK and around the world. The delegate fee is £190; to book a spot please visit the seminar website at www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/forums/event.php?eid=201.

Sept 6-8 The 18th annual International Association for Landscape Ecology conference will explore landscape ecology and ecosystem services. There will be 2 days of presentations on science, policy and practice, networking events and workshops, followed by field trips to landscape-scale projects. The event is taking place at Wolverhampton University, Telford Campus. Details are available at www.iale.org.uk.

Nov 2-3 'Tools for Rebuilding Biodiversity' will be the theme of the Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) Autumn conference 2011, which will be held in Liverpool. Details are forthcoming but mark your diaries now!