



# Wild About Beds

Summer 2011

## The New *Flora of Bedfordshire*

The new *Flora of Bedfordshire* is due to be published later this year, following years of recording by members of the Society.

County Floras have been and still are an important feature of Britain's botanical scene. The *Flora of Bedfordshire* will provide an up to date account of the status and distribution of flowering plants and mosses of the county, and place their occurrence in the context of over 400 years of study of the local area.

Recording for the Flora has been ongoing since 1987, led by BNHS County Recorder Chris Boon. A Flora Group was established in the 1990s to focus on the targeted recording of plants across the county. About 100 people have contributed records. Many of these contributors are BNHS members, with 10 core volunteers who have carried out much of the recording. About 400,000 records have been generated to produce a comprehensive atlas of the presence and distribution of plants across the county. Recording for the mosses has been ongoing since 1970.

Stay tuned for more information on this monumental and exciting piece of work!



Burnt orchid *Heathia ustulata*, just one of our county's many flowering plant species. Photo by Heather Webb

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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)

## Issue 159 - June 2011

### 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, *Wild About Beds*, 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).

#### Editor: Heather Webb

The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane Bedford MK41 9DJ.  
Tel: 01234 364213, email: [newsletter@bnhs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bnhs.org.uk).

Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past *Wild About Beds* 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 2011** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next *Wild About Beds* will be published in **September 2011**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society

### Bedfordshire Orchard Survey: results are coming in!

The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has just released preliminary results from the Bedfordshire section of their national survey of traditional orchards. Over 320 orchards were identified from aerial photos of the county. Working with the Bedfordshire and Luton Orchard Group and Greensand Trust, PTES has formed a team of volunteers who are now visiting the sites to verify the findings.



Spring blossom at Duck End Nature Reserve, Maulden. Photo by John Pitts

Bedfordshire was one of the last counties to be surveyed so it's early days yet and results are few. When PTES released their report only 1% of orchards had been surveyed. Of those, 20% were found to be in excellent condition, 20% in good condition and 60% were in poor condition.

The report is available online at [www.ptes.org/files/1452\\_traditional\\_orchard\\_inventory\\_county\\_summary\\_bedfordshire.pdf](http://www.ptes.org/files/1452_traditional_orchard_inventory_county_summary_bedfordshire.pdf). Since it was released more results have come in. PTES are still looking for volunteers, particularly in the north of the county. If you would like to find out more about becoming a volunteer surveyor, please contact Anita Burrough at [anita@ptes.org](mailto:anita@ptes.org) or call 020 7498 4533.

### From the Editor's desk

'What happened to my *Muntjac*?!'

Yes, after years of discussion and pondering — and no doubt a bit of soul-searching — the *Muntjac* has undergone perhaps its biggest change ever. Welcome to the first issue of *Wild About Beds*!

When I first arrived in Bedfordshire I occasionally heard whispers that the BNHS was considering changing the name of its newsletter. Five years later I find myself editor and it's on 'my watch' that the change happens. It's potentially a tricky place for me to be: I appreciate that there are likely some among you who would have preferred to keep the name as is. The *Muntjac* deer might be an invasive, destructive critter. But it was *our* invasive, destructive critter and back when the newsletter was named it was an interesting curiosity and characteristic of our county.

I confess I don't know as much as I ought to about the history of this newsletter. I also don't know how the BNHS Executive finally decided to change the name, nor how they chose it. But what I do know is that those decisions weren't taken lightly. The many years of batting the idea around certainly attest to that!

I also know that the name *Wild About Beds* is easily subject to Freudian slip. Telling a meeting room of colleagues that the new name is 'Wild in Beds' only leads to shocked, open-mouthed silence (in fact I could almost swear I heard someone drop their pen). In future I promise to be more careful!

Rest assured that only the name has changed: the content is still the same. The logo on the cover is bound to change, however: for now it's just something I threw together in haste until the more artistically talented can have a go.

This was always going to be a difficult column, and not just because of the name change. There's just been so much happening! Three months of drought has had a huge impact. This year my neighbour's cherries have already been stripped by the starlings desperate for hydration. After hearing horror stories about blackbirds taking baby mice and even cannibalising their young I'm so glad I used my washing up water on the garden, bringing earthworms to the surface for the young family nesting in my clematis. The recent heavy rains have sent the weeds rampant in my garden. But after reading about the 25% decline in hedgehogs in the last decade, I think I'll just leave some of those weedy bits alone for the prickly visitor who occasionally snuffles around my fences.

Weather aside, two big documents were released this month. The government finally released the new Natural Environment White Paper on June 8. The first in 25 years, it sets out their vision for conserving nature in England. And in keeping with their focus on 'localism' it looks like they're going to really rely on communities for help. I'm not sure how I feel about this: the fact that 100 volunteers spent 25 years generating 400,000 records for the new county Flora tells me that localism is already alive and well in Bedfordshire!

The other big document was the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA). This is the first analysis of our natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society. It was a huge undertaking, and I've only been able to skim over the findings at a very high level. If you've got some time and a keen interest, there are comprehensive reports on each of our main habitat types. I read through the grasslands report and I have to say the NEA appears to have been a very thorough research project. The main report includes some startling figures. For example it claims that over 60% of the UK's *102 billion cubic metres* of annual water needs come from overseas, largely in the form of embedded water in biomass like food products. Those are shocking numbers: 60% of 102 billion cubic metres. Yikes.

If you're interested in either of the above two reports, the Natural Environment White Paper can be found online at [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/). The UK NEA is available at <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>.

But back to the newsletter. I do hope you continue to enjoy reading it, as I continue to enjoy editing it. No matter what the name it's still full of great stuff about nature in your area, brought to you by naturalists in your area. This is your newsletter, so if you have a question to ask or something to share, please do!

## River Ouse Invertebrates

by Roy Bates, BNHS Fish Recorder

The members who read my fish report in the Bedfordshire Natural History Society journal will realise that over the years I have become increasingly concerned over the serious decline in the fish stocks of the Great Ouse. In particular the stretch between Newport Pagnell to Bedford, although above and below these towns the river is in a similar state. The Great Ouse, once classified as a Class A river by the Environment Agency, as at 2009 declined to a Class D. E is the lowest limit, a status of extremely low fish stocks or a polluted river. The classification for 2010 will I suspect remain the same.



Freshwater shrimp *Gammarus pulex*. Photo by 'labormikro'

With both the density (number of fish) and the standing crop (biomass or weight) in a state of serious decline it appears from the Environment Agency surveys that all species of fish are having difficulty reproducing. In general the fish that are surviving are the larger growing species such as the Chub and Barbel. Both of these fishes are by far the dominant species and have been caught by anglers and in Environment Agency surveys at extraordinary large weights. Perhaps more so the species Barbel, for which until comparatively recently, the English record stood at 14lb 6oz for 68 years. The record for this species now stands at over 21lb, being caught from Adams Mill, a stretch on the Great Ouse that Milton Keynes Angling Club control. Unfortunately as these larger and older fish naturally expire, with very little or no recruitment, and what

there is preyed upon by three major predators: mink, otter and to my mind more devastating, the cormorant, the future of the Great Ouse in my opinion looks very grim indeed. For fish to grow to these extreme weights there logically must either be an abundance of food in the river or as I suspect very few fish to gorge on what is available in the form of invertebrate life. Of course a significant decline of invertebrates would go towards explaining the overall decline of the fish community structure.

With this in mind I approached the Scientific Committee in January 2010 requesting a number of nets and sample trays in order to survey the river's invertebrate structure. The committee agreed to my request and the equipment duly arrived.

The sampling method used is a common one, practiced by the Environment Agency and other environmental groups, and is used generally as a pollution indicator. This survey method is called kick sampling and involves wading out in to the desired area, placing the net in front of your feet whilst kicking the riverbed for one minute as you walk slowly downstream. This should be carried out for a total of five minutes in the same area but from five individual sites. After each kick sample the net is gently emptied into a white sampling tray that has previously been filled with water, where the number of individual species is counted. Each species has a score count. For example damselfly nymph has a value of eight whilst flatworm records three and a half. These values increase where numbers of individual species counted become greater than one to ten, i.e. eleven to one hundred and one hundred plus. The total count of all species are then totalled up to give an overall tally. The higher the count the cleaner and better oxygenated the water. Obviously the more diverse the invertebrate life together with good counts of high scoring species, the better the river and inevitably its fish composition.

For my sampling site I decided that upstream of Harrold bridge would be a good place to start. I am a member of the angling club and know the water intimately with its numerous shallows and easy access. Once a month from



Like the adults, dragonfly nymphs have huge eyes, making them excellent underwater predators. Photo by Dave Hulth

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April until October, with the help of volunteers Laura and Rachel from the Wildlife Trust, the invertebrate samples were taken. The results in my opinion were very poor and I do not think that there was sufficient river life to support a good number or diversity of fish. I could be wrong though for I am not an expert in this science by any means.

However my reasons for these negative remarks are that although a fair number of different species were recorded, there was not any species recorded in multiple numbers. For example, the freshwater shrimp and water louse, which are fairly large creatures, were very low in numbers. Usually these are high in numbers and would be the staple diet of many species of fish. There was also very poor numbers of snails, again a main food of fish, flatworms and leeches. These are particularly slow moving animals and their decline as with others could be attributed to the arrival of the Signal Crayfish, which is now common throughout Bedfordshire and most of England. During my sampling a good number of these non-native aggressive crayfish were captured, many from weedy areas where of course most invertebrates live their lives.

The different species recorded during the sampling were as follows:

Point value	Species
8	Flattened mayfly nymph
8	Damselfly nymph
8	Dragonfly nymph
6	Cased caddisfly larva
6	Limpet
5	Blackfly larva
5	Beetles
5	Swimming mayfly nymph
5	Alderfly larva
4	Freshwater shrimp
3.5	Caseless caddisfly larva
3.5	Snails
3.5	Flatworms
2.5	Water louse
2.5	Non-red midge larva
1.5	Sludgeworm
1.5	Bloodworm

The highest counts were:

April	35
May	67.5
June	62
July	55.5
August	33.5
September	54
October	33

A number of fish, Bullhead and Stone Loach were also captured whilst sampling. The variations in counts will be due to different sites at Harrold being sampled and fluctuations caused by the hatching of flying creatures. My sampling will be ongoing each year from April to October. Volunteers are welcome, just ring me on 01234 822603.

Finally, because of my concern the Environment Agency are conducting an invertebrate survey at Harrold in April and October. This will be interesting to compare my results with theirs.

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## The East of England Wild Venison Project

by Graham Riminton, Venison Project Officer for The Deer Initiative

It's commonly agreed that wild deer populations need to be managed, not least to protect our ancient woodlands. There is also a common desire to see more wild venison for sale in local shops and catering outlets. The East of England Wild Venison Project has been set up to support and encourage those working in the venison supply chain to achieve a sustainable cull and ensure good quality venison reaches the customer. This is in addition to the support provided by Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grants, which are able to support high seat purchases, ride management and deer management time.

The East of England Wild Venison Project aims to develop the wild venison supply chain through activities that will support sustainable land and woodland management, while simultaneously improving deer management and the collection, storage, processing and distribution facilities for the venison generated. The project is supported by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), funded by the Rural Development Programme for England and Forestry Commission, and managed by the Deer Initiative.



The project has three major components. The first is facilitation, advice and training. These could include elements such as advising on deer management and cull planning, training in stalker skills and food hygiene or help with marketing plans. The second component is capital investment, to provide up to 50% of funding for infrastructure. This could be for equipment to cleanly extract carcasses from sites, chillers to hold carcasses in good condition or butchery and packing equipment, for example. Finally, the project can also help with grant support to those who wish to develop their own market through, for example, website design, branding and innovative marketing materials.

The project has been running since June 2010 and there are already eight applications jointly receiving £82,000 in grant support. In total £800,000 is available to be used in conjunction with match funding from applicants until the end of 2013. The current active projects range in size and approach, from relatively large projects of county sized operations expanding or investing in new facilities, to much smaller initiatives of individual stalkers converting garage space with the addition of a chiller and a small preparation area.

In return for this support applicants must show some 'additionality' (doing more or better quality work than prior to the grant) and least some of the following:

- Improving the woodland SSSIs or other designated sites in the region
- Improving wild deer management
- Improving and stimulating the supply of wild venison to local markets
- Reducing the number of road accidents associated with wild deer
- Supporting landowners to improve their agricultural yields through improved land management.

Those interested in applying for support should contact:

Graham Riminton  
Venison Project Officer  
The Deer Initiative  
% Woodfuels East  
Forestry Commission  
Santon Downham  
IP27 0TJ  
Tel: 07966 966390  
Email: [vpoeastern@thedeerinitiative.co.uk](mailto:vpoeastern@thedeerinitiative.co.uk)



Photo provided by 'Rush'

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Some invertebrates on the Web (other than insects)

by Alan R. Outen

The British Myriapod and Isopod Group (BMIG) with the rather obscurely identified website at [192.171.199.210/](http://192.171.199.210/) has Recording Schemes for Centipedes, Millipedes and Isopods (Woodlice etc.) You may find it easier to just Google British Myriapod and Isopod Group.

It's about time  
someone paid  
attention to us!



"Scheme organisers are usually happy to check the identity of individual specimens but please do not send large collections of material without prior agreement. (Please ensure that specimens are sent in appropriate containers that will not be damaged or broken in the post.)

Scheme organisers will only normally deal with British material. They may be able to help with some specimens collected in other countries but please do not send these without checking first".

[www.xs4all.nl/~ednieuw/Spiders/spidhome.htm](http://www.xs4all.nl/~ednieuw/Spiders/spidhome.htm) has images and descriptions of 220 species of spider commonly found in north-west Europe.

A developing web-site for Pseudoscorpions with distribution maps and some images, can be found at: [www.chelifer.com/pseudos/pseudoscorpions.htm](http://www.chelifer.com/pseudos/pseudoscorpions.htm).

The Conchological Society is developing a new 'Online Encyclopedia of Molluscs' which aims to provide an overview of the variety of different forms and also give more information on individual species. As well as excellent images, it provides descriptions of the shell, habitat and ecology details, key features and distribution maps. Please note however that this is still under development. See [www.conchsoc.org/](http://www.conchsoc.org/).

The Natural History Museum in London is encouraging people to pay more attention to Earthworms and has produced an online guide to the commoner species. This can be found at [www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/other-invertebrates/earthworm-slideshow/](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/other-invertebrates/earthworm-slideshow/). If you want a comprehensive guide to species and are willing to use a microscope then a key to all British species is available from Field Studies Council.

## Hedgehog Street

Hedgehogs are instantly recognisable and much loved creatures. All the more distressing then that a new report, The State of Britain's Hedgehogs, provides real evidence that their numbers have declined by 25% in the last 10 years. This alarming figure has motivated the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society to join forces to launch Hedgehog Street. This project aims to empower whole communities, encouraged by volunteer 'Hedgehog Champions', to take small steps to improve their neighbourhood for hedgehogs in a bid to create a giant patchwork of hedgehog-friendly areas across the British Isles.



Hedgehogs increasingly rely on urban areas like gardens. A male can travel up to 1km each night in search of food!  
Photo by Tomi Tapio

The reasons for falling hedgehog numbers are complex. Some of the factors are thought to be loss of hedgerows and permanent grasslands, agricultural intensification and larger field sizes, and reduced prey in the countryside. Urban and suburban areas are becoming increasingly important for hedgehogs, but the move towards tidy, sterile gardens has also contributed to their demise.

You can help by taking part in Hedgehog Street and generating support in your street, estate or communal grounds. To find out how to take part, download an information pack from [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org). The packs are crammed with ideas on making your own garden and neighbourhood more hedgehog-friendly.

## The Wildlife Trust's work along the Greensand Ridge

by Gwen Hitchcock

Two key nature reserves along the Greensand Ridge are to receive special attention over the next two years thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Gwen Hitchcock has joined the Wildlife Trust in Bedfordshire as the new Greensand Reserves Ecology Officer with the aim of increasing our understanding of Flitwick Moor and Cooper's Hill through management trials and surveys.

Although these two reserves are only a few miles apart they have very different ecologies. Cooper's Hill is Bedfordshire's best remaining pocket of lowland heath characterised by its heather community. It is home to common lizards, green tiger beetles and numerous solitary bees and wasps amongst other heathland specialists. The heather is in danger of being smothered by encroaching trees and grasses making it important to act now and find the best management strategies for preserving this heath. Trial plots of removing the grass to allow heather seeds to germinate are already underway and other heathland management options are being planned.



Cooper's Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest. Photo by Andy Fleckney

In contrast, Flitwick Moor lies in the Flit valley where the greensand is covered by a layer of peat. The reserve is a wonderful mosaic of wet woodland, fen meadow and pastures home to many different plants and animals including the elusive water rail and lesser spotted woodpecker. One of its often overlooked wonders is the many species of lower plants and fungi that are found throughout the mire. For its size the moor has the best diversity of Bryophytes found in southern England. It is important to understand these communities and how they fit together in order to preserve such rich diversity. We will be trialling further management with extra funding from Veolia, including creating more open areas of standing water to encourage first stage successional communities.



Common lizard *Zootica vivipara*. Photo by Keith Balmer

Gwen will also be meeting the local community and visitors at both reserves so that they understand the work we are doing and how it benefits local wildlife. She will also work with some local schools to introduce the children to the wonders of the natural world around them.



Gwen checks out the Cotton Grass at Flitwick Moor. Photo by Graham Bellamy

With the help of volunteers and local experts both these reserves will be surveyed and different management techniques compared to ensure these special habitats will thrive for years to come. If you are interested in finding out more about this project or would like to get involved please contact Gwen on 01234 364213 or by email at [gwen.hitchcock@wildlifebcnp.org](mailto:gwen.hitchcock@wildlifebcnp.org).

*Editor's note: Gwen was too modest to mention it, but her project will be highlighted on the July 17 episode of Countryfile, so do check it out!*



## Iron Age hut: an update

by Jane Moore, Ranger, Priory Country Park

Work had continued apace on the hut that children from Bedford Museum's Saturday Archaeology Workshop were building at Priory Country Park (*Muntjac* #157, Winter 2010). With all the willow wattle for the walls completed further daubing sessions were held. Different mixes of daub were tried to see which was the most effective. Part of the mix was fleece from the Wildlife Trust's conservation flock of sheep. When included in clumps, this had an unfortunate tendency to drop off the wattle! Combing it out beforehand helped to make a much stronger mix, and it was a case of less is more in terms of the strength of the daub once applied.

With over half the walls daubed it was time to move on to the roof. Locally coppiced ash and hazel formed the thicker more structural beams and woven willow rings provided something to attach the thatch to. Reed cut as part of the management of the Crescent reedbed in Priory Park proved a very good thatching material but there wasn't enough of it to thatch the whole roof. The School of Thatching based at Knuston Hall, Rushden kindly provided long straw thatch left over from training apprentices. With advice from Master Thatcher Roger Evans of Riseley, the thatching was proceeding apace.



The nearly completed hut. Photo © Daniel Fellman 2011

Unfortunately, on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July disaster struck, courtesy of persons unknown, who set fire to the nearly completed hut. The fire burned so fiercely that the remains were unsafe and had to be demolished. All that was left were the burnt surface, some of the wattle and daub from the demolition and the ends of the posts in the ground.



The roof starting to come together

Despite this dramatic ending it has still been a positive experience for all involved. In terms of experimental archaeology it has been a great learning experience (and great fun!) for the children, their parents and the archaeologists from Albion Archaeology who were advising on the project. From the park's point of view it has generated a lot of interest and pleasure for regular visitors who looked forward to seeing how it was progressing.

The hut was to have been the centrepiece for the children's contribution to 'The Making of Bedford' history event on 17<sup>th</sup> August at Priory Country Park. Nothing daunted they are making the best of the disaster with an archaeological dig at the site of the hut (the remains of which are uncannily like what you would expect to find if you excavated a real Iron Age hut). There will also be a

chance to see how the hut was constructed with the chance to have a go at wattle and daubing or thatching so that a section of the hut is recreated on the day.

Children from **Saturday Archaeology Workshops**, run by Cecil Higgins Art Gallery & Bedford Museum Education Service and Albion Archaeology. Photographs © Bedford Borough Council and Albion Archaeology 2010, 2011.

## Wanted: Large Red Damselfly records!

Dragonfly recorders David and Karen Anderson would like your records of Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula*. A map of all 21<sup>st</sup> century records is available on the BNHS website: check it out and do add to it if you can! Details are available at [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk).

BRMC News: Planning & Biodiversity Conference 2011

By BRMC Team

The BRMC together with Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) hosted a "Planning and Biodiversity Conference" at the Møller Centre in Cambridge on Thursday 14th April 2011.

The day was targeted at local authorities and conservation organisations from the Eastern Region who are involved with the planning system. About 100 delegates attended and the conference provided an overview of the latest developments and emerging best practice related to spatial planning, development control and biodiversity.

Bedfordshire & Luton

**Biodiversity  
Recording &  
Monitoring  
Centre**



Brian Eversham gives an inspiring talk about the history of local recording and its place in the Big Society. Photo by BRMC.

The day started with an inspiring talk by Tony Juniper, a well-known campaigner, author and environmentalist, who writes for The Guardian. This was followed by a presentation by Gary Grant, an independent ecological consultant with three decades of experience including regional and green infrastructure planning. Robert McCracken QC, a leading public, planning and environmental lawyer who appears at all levels from the European Court of Justice to magistrates courts and planning inquiries then explained about environmental planning law within Local Authorities.

The afternoon session opened with Brian Eversham, Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough explaining how voluntary bodies can assist Local Authorities in meeting their biodiversity obligations as the "Big Society in action".

Heather Webb, Biodiversity Coordinator for Bedfordshire, then explained how biodiversity information is being used to "Predict Wildlife Site Sensitivity to Visitor Pressure".

Following on from the presentations the delegates were split into breakout groups in which the role of biodiversity data in planning decisions was explored. Also Gary Butcher of Wingbeat Falconry toured the group sessions, allowing closer examination of a Peregrine, and he explained their life-style and how they are protected by the law.

Since the conference we have received a lot of positive feedback and comments. As a result, we will be looking to host another similar conference in 2012. Please keep an eye out on our website ([www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)) or facebook page ([www.facebook.com/bedsbrmc](http://www.facebook.com/bedsbrmc)) for further details as they become available. Conference presentations and resources are available on our website.



The event was a great opportunity for people to network, discuss common issues and share best practice

Did you know?

**Copies of all Bedfordshire Naturalist journals from 1946-1998 are now available online** as searchable PDFs! 53 years worth of Bedfordshire natural history is yours at the click of a mouse: [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk).

### Nature nuggets

We have another update from Rory Morrissey on the **polecat** featured on the cover of issue 157 (Winter 2010/11). Richard Lawrence's note in the last issue is correct: the staff at Tiggywinkle's have confirmed that 'she has a bit of ferret in her'. She is alive and well but cannot be released back into the wild because of her injuries. She is exhibiting polecat behaviour — digging tunnels and pouncing on things — and seems to be quite happy. She is kept away from other animals and birds so as not to cause them alarm and is not on public view, although she is very tame now and is loved by the staff.



Rory has since taken another animal to Tiggywinkle's. He reports that 'this time a Mallard drake that frequented our garden and pond arrived one morning with a badly broken leg. It came back the next day in the same state and was clearly in some distress, having more or less given up feeding. It was mended at Tiggywinkle's and released back into the wild on April 24. Strangely, the duck soon found another mate, who we call Gimpy: yes, he has a pronounced limp too, but he's a very tough Mallard and sees off any other marauding drakes. He often only needs to look at them and they're off!'

The **OPAL (Open Air Laboratories) Bugs Count** launched on June 8. Led by the Natural History Museum, the survey wants people to search their local area for all sorts of bugs. They are particularly interested in 6 'minibeasts': Two-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata*, Devil's Coach Horse *Ocypus olens*, Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*, Green Shieldbug *Palomena prasina*, Leopard Slug *Limax maximus* and Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*. You can download a pocket ID guide, field notebook and free Bugs Count pack from the survey website [www.OPAL.explorenature.org](http://www.OPAL.explorenature.org).

Buglife have launched **Get Britain Buzzing**, a campaign to highlight the crisis facing pollinating insects like bees, hoverflies and moths. To find out more please visit [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk).

The most recent **update to the suite of UK biodiversity indicators** was published in May and is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/biyp/>. There is a total of 18 indicators, which include the population status of key species, the status of habitats and ecosystems, and expenditure on biodiversity. These indicators have been updated annually since they were agreed in 2007 and provide an overview of biodiversity trends in the UK.

The **UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA)** is the first analysis of the UK's natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society and continuing economic prosperity. The project has produced an independent and peer-reviewed assessment of the state and value of the UK's natural environment and ecosystem services. Over 500 scientists and economists have been involved in the project, the results of which are available at <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/Resources/tabid/82/Default.aspx>.

**An exciting discovery** has been made just over our county boundary: the Noble Chafer beetle *Gnorimus nobilis* has just been found in an old Damson orchard in Buckinghamshire, only 100m or so from Bedfordshire! An orchard specialist, the Noble Chafer lives most of its life inside old decaying fruit trees. What does this discovery mean for Bedfordshire? We're not sure but you can bet the hunt is on now in our own orchards!

An astute telly viewer recently reported on the BNHS Newsgroup an **interesting snippet from the June 25 BBC4 special 'The Wonder of Weeds'**. Don Green reports that, '...it mentioned that Sir Edward Salisbury who was Director at Kew at the time gave a talk during WWII in Westminster Abbey about the weeds which proliferated on the London bomb sites. You may not know that the same gentleman jointly led a BNHS/ Herts NHS field meeting with Dr John Dony around Dedmansey Wood, Studham on 30/05/1948. Well I just thought someone might be interested.' Interested indeed: thanks Don, for the great bit of local natural history trivia!

A new survey of Bedfordshire's parkland habitats has just been completed. The new report provides an update to the 1997 survey done by Bedfordshire County Council. Parklands are a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat, and are extremely important for veteran trees and the species that live on and in them. The report is available now at [www.bedslife.org.uk/publications](http://www.bedslife.org.uk/publications).

### Upcoming events

**July 14** This year's Chilterns Chalk Downland Day will include visits to Aldbury Nowers and Dancers End. The event is being co-hosted by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon and Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trusts. Details are still being finalised; please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board for information [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org).

**July 17** Morning birding and looking for some interesting butterflies in Chicksands Wood. Park and meet at 9.30 am at the entrance to the wood, TL106411. Visit to finish around 1.00 pm. Leaders: Don Green for birds and Peter Glenister, joint County Butterfly Recorder.

**July 17** The Making of Bedford: Bringing Bedford's Past to Life takes place at Priory Country Park, and will include a huge range of displays and activities related to the town's historic and natural environment. The BNHS will be there, along with the Bedfordshire Bat Group, Bedfordshire Geology Group and others!

**July 28** The Beds & Northants Group of Butterfly Conservation is holding a 'Save Our Butterflies Week' event at the Chiltern Gateway Centre on Dunstable Downs. This free event runs from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm and is open to all. Guided walks along the Downs will take place at 10.30 and 2.30 weather permitting. For information please contact Rebecca Pearce at the Gateway Centre on 01582 500920.

**July 30** Evening meeting moth trapping and glow worm survey in Maulden Wood, Maulden. Park and meet at 9.00 pm near the Greensand Trust office at the north end of the wood, off the A6, TL070396. Please wear suitable clothing and bring a torch. Late comers please phone 07885 159380 for details of where the lights are. Leaders: Andy and Melissa Banthorpe, Moth Group.

**Aug 3** Morning visit to Potton Wood and afternoon to Gamlingay Wood mainly for butterflies and dragonflies with the BNHS recorders. Meet and park at 10.00 am by the water tower, TL247496. Leader: Ian Woiwood

**Aug 24** Morning walk around Bromham Lake LNR for water boatmen, insects and possible Wasp Spider. Meet and park at 10.30 am at the reserve car park towards the end of Lower Farm Road, Bromham (off Oakley Road), TL025517.

**Aug 24** Afternoon walk around Felmersham NR for dragonflies and low growing plants after the recent clearance. Park and meet at 1.45 pm in the reserve car park on the road north of Felmersham, towards Sharnbrook, SP987583.

Leaders: Peter Almond and Tony Smith

**Sept 4** Day trip to Dungeness, Kent for passage migrants and sea birds. Meet and park at 9.00 am at the RSPB Burrows Pit Reserves car park, TR063196 (map 189). Leaders: Paul Trodd and Rob Dazley

**Sept 6-8** The 18th annual International Association for Landscape Ecology conference will explore landscape ecology and ecosystem services. There will be two 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 and booking are available at <http://iale.org.uk/conference2011>.

Sept 14-16 Animals, Man and Treescapes will be the theme of a conference at Sheffield Hallam University. The event will look at the interactions between grazing animals, humans and wooded landscapes, and will link research relevant to community projects throughout the UK and across Europe. Booking forms and further information including a provisional programme can be found at [www.ukeconet.co.uk](http://www.ukeconet.co.uk). The programme is full for spoken presentations but offers of posters and displays should be sent to [christine@hallamec.plus.com](mailto:christine@hallamec.plus.com).

**Sept 24** Small mammal trapping at Flitwick Moor SSSI, Flitwick, in a joint meeting with the Flit Vale Wildlife Group. Meet and park at 8.30 am in the car park at the end of Folly Lane, next to Folly Farm off Maulden Road, TL046354. Leader: Richard Lawrence