



Wild About Beds

Autumn 2011

Natterjacks for Norfolk

Grimston Warren near Kings Lynn is the new home of 800 Bedfordshire Natterjack tadpoles. Which despite how it sounds is actually something of a homecoming.

The Natterjack Toad *Epidaleia calamita* (formerly *Bufo calamita*) is known from only one site in the county: the RSPB Lodge in Sandy. This single Bedfordshire population was robust enough however to supply a new colony being established by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust at their Grimston Warren reserve. The transfer was overseen by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.



Natterjack Toad *Epidaleia calamita*. Photo by Miguel Librero

Natterjacks are habitat specialists, requiring heathland, sand dune and/or saltmarsh. Habitat loss is thought to account for their current rarity, and the species is listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The species is now known from fewer than 60 sites in England, including of course the RSPB Lodge. This wasn't always the case however: the Lodge was the first successful Natterjack reintroduction to heathland, for which the spawn and tadpoles came from Syderstone Common in west Norfolk.

Farewell, little tadpoles and welcome home!

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The Bedfordshire Natural History Society
www.bnhs.org.uk
Registered charity number 268659

Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



BedsLife
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, 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, Linlade, 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 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 December 2011** please. **Thank you in anticipation.**

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

The Community Tree Trust seed collection events 2011

It's that time of year again! Everyone is welcome to attend, including volunteers and families,

- Sunday Oct 2 at Flitwick Wood: 10.00 am; park at the end of Tennyson Road by the gate (off Byron Close and Manor Way, Flitwick), TL026350.
- Sunday Oct 9 at Palmers Wood: 10.00 am; meet opposite the Equine Centre TL134448 or at Tobacco Pipe Spinney TL 132450.
- Sunday Oct 23 at Clapham Park Wood: 10.00 am; park at the end of Hawk Drive Brickhill, Bedford, opposite Beauchamp School TL050525.
- Sunday Oct 30 at Potton Wood: 10.00 am; park at the end of the track by the water tower TL247494.



Please contact Colin Carpenter on 01525 716371 or 07751 356094 if you are interested in attending any of these events. For more info visit the Community Tree Trust website: www.communitytreetrust.co.uk.

Photo by Tom Ryan

From the Editor's desk

Autumn is just around the corner, which means that time of year is upon us. The time of year when friends and neighbours inundate us with 'gifts' of bags and containers overflowing with fruit. Already I've been given more apples and plums than I know what to do with. Okay, that's not entirely true: I've been busy making cobblers, crumbles, cakes and applesauce. Fortunately the folks here in the Wildlife Trust office have been happy to help me eat much of it. A shame perhaps for whoever has recently filled the office fridge with apples for us to take home.

I love seeing people out in the countryside, bags and ice cream containers in hand, picking berries and other fruits off the hedgerows and trees. I confess I was surprised the first time I saw this. The North American ethic is 'take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints', and eating from nature is strongly discouraged. The last organisation I worked for had a quarterly magazine, and our issue on 'wild food' was highly controversial, with many members angry that we would dare suggest that wildlife be 'used' in such a way. They do have a point: some species like American Ginseng have been so overharvested as to now be very rare, and the locations of known populations are kept strictly secret.

I'm glad that eating from nature is accepted here; I think it connects us to nature in a way that only food can. In Russia the annual wild mushroom harvest is a big occasion, with entire communities streaming into the countryside to grab the delicacies before they're gone. And while I'd never trust my mushroom ID skills (I know Fly Agaric when I see it but that's about it) I've eagerly taken up the European habit of scouring the hedgerows. I have a favourite elder bush in the Marston Vale — an essential since my neighbour chopped down the elder that grew over our shared fence — and know that the bramble growing beside my local supermarket car park can always be relied on for a good harvest.

About four years ago a friend taught me how to make jam, and my cupboards (and I dare say those of my friends) are now crammed with elderberry, bramble, apple-ginger, pear, plum, cherry and even sea buckthorn varieties. Whenever I go back home to Canada I have to bring jars of the stuff with me. It's legal to bring preserves into the country, although in the USA I have opened my suitcase once or twice to find Department of Homeland Security tape wrapped around the jars. I can't help but wonder what the border guards thought they might contain?

So when your neighbour turns up with a huge bag of fruit for you, don't despair. Get out the cookbooks and be glad you live in a country with so much wild food to offer.

Flora of Bedfordshire book launch: don't miss it!

You are cordially invited to the official Flora of Bedfordshire book launch:

Sunday 4 December 2011 2.00 – 5.30 pm

The Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park, Marston Moretaine

This is a great opportunity to meet the authors and have your copy personally signed by them



BNHS Field Meeting Felmersham NR, August 24 2011

by Tony Smith

When this was planned, it was not known that The Wildlife Trust was celebrating 50 years since acquiring its first reserve. On June 3 a gathering of long standing members met in the Village Hall. Quite a number of BNHS members were there and Brian Eversham made a very thought-provoking presentation as to the way conservation might go in the next 50 years. Guided walks around the reserve followed.



Felmersham Nature Reserve. Photo by Gwen Hilchcock

My own association with the reserve came soon after my family moved from Northampton to Carlton in 1967. Bernard West, the then BNHS Butterfly Recorder was living in Felmersham. We met socially to find our wives had been at school together. I was already a member of the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, but I not only joined the then Bedfordshire & Huntingdonshire Wildlife Trust, but became one of the small group of labourers he had recruited to transform the old sand and gravel pit to become a nature reserve. On a Sunday morning circa 1970, with snow falling a Kingfisher alighted just a few feet away on the post of the gate we were putting at the entry of the large meadow — my first sighting and unforgettable.

I believe that the extraction of sand and gravel were used for making the concrete runways of the USAF airfield at Podington. Likewise, I believe Radwell Pits provided for those at Thurleigh. As the weight of aircraft and their bombloads increased, by 1942 the grass covering the wet boulder clay prevented a number of flying operations, particularly in the winter months.

After the war, impecunious landlords in Podington, Odell and Sharnbrook were unable to make the land area profitable. Unilever brought its research establishment to Sharnbrook. Podington airfield became an area for some emerging companies. Santa Pod Raceway followed in its centre some years later. Felmersham Gravel Pits became a nature reserve.

The whole area became rich in wildlife and although a little diminished now, it still is.

In 1986 I started a daily diary published by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. This just happens to be half way between the reserve's creation and this year. My entry for Sunday August 17 reads:

pm. Sunny not too warm. Pair Great Crested Grebes and 3 young on large lake. 2 young on small lake. Latter also 2 Coot, Mallard females. Numbers of tits including 3 Long-tailed. 1 Magpie heard. Some House Martins and Common Tern. Caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell on young nettle patch in field. 1 Small Copper, Common Blues, Peacocks, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths, few Gatekeepers, many Large and Green-veined Whites and a few Silver Y Moths.

Comparison with this year is remarkably similar, even the weather!

Grebes, Coot and Mallard are on the lakes. Tits including Long-tailed, Magpie & Common Tern. Only the House Martin was absent. Over the years timber construction in all the Ouse Valley villages has been superseded with polystyrene or some other plastic. Mud will not stick on this to form the birds' nests. Kingfisher was heard. Peter Glenister recorded all those butterflies seen in 1986 except Small Tortoiseshell: Large White, 8 Small Whites, 1 Green-veined White, 1 Brimstone, 2 Meadow Brown, 7 Speckled Wood, 4 Gatekeeper, 2 Common Blue, 1 Holly Blue, 1 Small Copper, 1 Small Heath.

It has been a poor year for dragonflies. On the day: 1 Southern Hawker, 5 Brown Hawker, 8 Common Blue Damesfly, 2 Blue-tailed Damsfly, 2 Common Darter.

Two Grass Snakes were seen independently, one small and the other quite large.

Broad-leaved Helleborine was past flowering and quite a size.

The Flora of Bedfordshire

by David Withers

The *Flora of Bedfordshire* is a very important project for the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and is a must have for anyone interested in the plant life of Bedfordshire.

I am sure you will find the details below of real interest and a great introduction to this brilliant book. You will receive additional information in this edition of *Wild About Beds* which includes a flyer with a form to secure your copy.

The *Flora of Bedfordshire* will be published in December 2011. Our authors, Chris Boon for the flowering plants and Alan Outen for the mosses, have each spent many years studying their fields of natural history and are not only Bedfordshire recorders of their discipline but also involved with the respective national societies. The prime aim of this publication is to present an up-to-date account of the status and distribution of the flowering plants and mosses of the county and place their occurrence in the context of over 400 years of study of the local flora. As such it contains accounts of all species of flowering plant and moss that have ever been recorded in Bedfordshire. It is the culmination of comprehensive volunteer recording for over 20 years and a 100 people have contributed about 400,000 records, with volunteers developing their identification skills in the process.

Chris comments:

"It will be a hardback in A4 format with full colour throughout. It will be over 700 pages long and will be enhanced by many illustrations of plants and sites where they grow.

The distribution data for the individual species is presented for the common species in the form of maps showing the presence of the species by tetrad (2x2km area on OSNG). A unique feature of this flora is the indication on the maps of the distribution data from an earlier survey in the 1970s by John Dony the distinguished former county botanist. For the rare species of flowering plants which occur in five tetrads or fewer all records are given, not only the recent ones but also those from many other sources including published literature back to 1597 and the very important herbarium housed at Luton Museum.

There are introductory chapters on many aspects pertaining to the flora of the county and were specially commissioned by experts in their field. These include the geology and soils, conservation of the countryside and change in the flora over the last 50 years. Also given are accounts of the history of botany in Bedfordshire, an overview of the botanical hotspots in the county and other introductory material describing the various surveys.

Most of the photographs which enhance the book were taken by Richard Revels who is one of the foremost wildlife photographers in the country. Also included are a selection of 19th century paintings of plants from Bedfordshire by Caroline Gaye who was governess in several large houses in southeast England but whose home was in Sheffield.

County floras have been and still are a feature of Britain's botanical scene. For Bedfordshire this flora follows a long line of such works from Charles Abbot's *Flora Bedfordiensis* in 1798 to James Saunders' *Field Flowers of Bedfordshire* of 1911 and, more recently, John Dony's masterly *Flora of Bedfordshire* of 1953 and *Bedfordshire Plant Atlas* of 1976."

I have been fortunate to see some sample pages of our flora and without doubt it is a step above other modern county floras. At a pre-publication price of £35 the *Flora of Bedfordshire* represents great value for money. We are intending to have a launch event where you will have the opportunity to collect your copy and also have it signed by the authors.

Barkflies in Beds

by Alan R. Outen

In a recent issue of *Muntjac* (Spring 2011, number 158) I wrote an article entitled *Neglected Insects in Bedfordshire*. My intention was that this would be the start of a series of articles in an attempt to try and stimulate further interest and recording of some of these Insect groups. In addition to giving regular updates on the progress in the recording of these I hope to provide further information about the various groups on which I am focusing.

For this article I have selected the barkflies and booklice that together comprise the insect Order Psocoptera, a group that many will probably not have encountered though they are actually rather common. Nonetheless with just under 90 species of this order known in Britain only a handful have so far been recorded for Bedfordshire.

The name barkfly was only coined in 2003 by Keith Alexander as an alternative to the previously used vernacular name of barklice. As the term "lice" has such a bad press he felt a more attractive name might promote greater interest in these delightful little insects. Barkflies live outdoors whereas booklice occur indoors, including as pests of stored food products though they are harmless to humans.

Barkflies are relatively small insects (1.5 – 7mm) that usually hold their wings in a tent-wise fashion over their abdomens rather like miniature lacewings. Some species do not have full-sized (macropterous) wings but have ones that are much reduced (brachypterous) or absent (apterous).



Melyophorus nebulosus swept from Oak, Clifton Bury, Bedfordshire, June 29 2011. Coll. A.R. Outen, conf. Keith Alexander. Photo © Alan R. Outen.

Useful features in recognising barkflies are the domed postclypeus (the area at the front of the head between the antennae and mouth), long filiform antennae, the simple wing venation with two 'triangular' cells at the tip of the forewing, and a pronounced tendency to run rather than fly away. They can be confused with jumping plant lice (psyllids) but these have very different wing venation and tend to jump if gently touched whereas barkflies will only rarely do so and might at best manage a feeble hop.

Barkflies can be found on a wide range of broad-leaved and coniferous tree species with the greatest diversity of species likely on Oak, Beech, Yew, Pine, Elder and Hawthorn. Ash, Sycamore and Lime usually have a low species diversity. Mature trees in old parkland can be particularly productive.



Liposcelis bostrychophila, a wingless booklouse species in flour, Clifton, Bedfordshire, 3 September 2011. Coll. and det. A.R. Outen. Photo © Alan R. Outen

Two useful techniques for collecting barkflies are:

1. Beating tree branches with a stick and catching the falling insects onto a beating tray, a net or an upturned umbrella).
2. Sampling of tree trunks using a large soft brush (e.g. wallpaper paste brush) and brushing down the trunk catching any specimens in a beating tray or net.

The foliage of trees represents a distinctly different niche to the bark and in particular the trunks. As a result, beating tree branches will often result in a different range of species to that obtained by sampling tree trunks. However not all barkflies are associated with trees and searching low vegetation, leaf litter and

under stones will also occasionally yield other species. Sweep-netting, litter sieving, malaise trapping and vacuum sampling can therefore also be techniques worth trying, whilst a few species may occasionally be attracted to light, though easily overlooked as one sorts out the catch in a moth trap.

Most barkfly species can be identified without too much difficulty from external characters such as wing venation. Fortunately only very few require dissection for identification. Many species can be identified using the National Recording Scheme website and there is also a recent and very good Royal Entomological Society Handbook. However bear in mind that the Beds Biological Record Centre requires identifications to be verified by someone authoritative (County Recorder or higher, or on a forum with expert peer review). I am willing to accept specimens or images or specimens can be sent to the National Recording Scheme organiser for identification. They do however need to be stored in 70% alcohol as dried specimens can be very difficult to identify.



Wildlife Watch 

PRIORY COUNTRY PARK

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WHO: anyone who is **AGED 8 - 12**
UNDER 8'S are welcome to join in the fun as long as they bring an adult!

WHEN: THE **FIRST SATURDAY** of each month
From **14:00 - 16:00**

WHERE: meet at **PRIORY COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE**

COST: a **DONATION OF £2** per child appreciated, ALL DONATIONS ARE USED TOWARDS GROUP ACTIVITIES

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Priory Rangers
Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 6DJ
Tel: 01234 211182 Email: prioryrangers@bedford.gov.uk

BNHS Field Meeting at Bromham Lake LNR, August 24 2011

by Peter Almond

This was a morning meeting for Society members mainly looking for insects, particularly the wasp spiders (*Argiope bruennichi* (Scopoli)). Five members joined me on a fairly overcast morning, however sunshine amounts did increase.



Four-spotted Orb Web Spider *Araneus quadratus*. Photo by Nick Ford

After a potted history of the site for members who had not visited, during which a Common Buzzard was heard and then seen, we set off for the bird hide at the west end of the lake. On the way Kestrels were heard and two seen, possibly a juvenile and an adult based on the amount of calling.

From near the hide it was possible to watch a number of large pond skaters (*Aquarius paludum*) on the lake surface. I had first observed the species in 2004 and every year since. More were seen from near the subaqua platform and in the bay area at the east end of the lake.

Birds in the lake were 20 Mallards, it looked as if they were from at least two families, and one Great Cormorant.

Whilst walking alongside the lake members looked for insects. On reaching the meadow in the bay area, we split up to look for any sign of Wasp Spiders, and then moved into the large meadow. Unfortunately none were found. The grass in the former area and along the north side of the latter was very short with very few clumps, nothing like the habitat when there were spiders present. In fact there are now very few Meadow Grasshoppers (*Chorthippus parallelus*) and even no Four-spotted Orb Web Spiders (*Araneus quadratus*). The grasshoppers previously appeared to be the main source of food for the spiders. The habitat has changed.

The first Wasp Spider, a female, was found by Sheila Brooke and Bernard Nau on August 13, 2000 (see article in *Bedfordshire Naturalist* 2002 No.57(1). The front cover photograph was taken by Richard Revels in August 2001). Spiders were also present in 2002.

A Wasp Spider hunt was carried out by members of the Society on September 2, 2003 when at least six females were found, also a number of Four-spotted Orb Web Spiders (see my article in *Muntjac* issue 133, December 2003).

On another hunt on August 31, 2004, 33 females and one egg sac were counted. In the autumn a total of 63 egg sacs were found but about half had disappeared by the end of the year (eaten?) Common Pheasants and Red-legged Partridge had been observed at the site. An update on this meeting was published in *Muntjac* issue 137, April 2005.

During a hunt on August 31, 2005 only one spider was found out of five that I had previously recorded and no egg sacs. In 2006 I found three females present before I went on holiday. John Comont (then County Ecologist) and his family visited on August 30 and found six females. Back from holiday I found four egg sacs on September 14, with five other visits the number rose to 31. I recorded their position on my GPS and plotted on a site map provided by John Comont. I was unable to visit the site at the appropriate period in 2007 and when I was able to in November I found just two egg sacs. What had happened to all the spiderlings in the egg sacs at the end of 2006? Although I searched in 2008, 2009 and 2010 I was unable to find any Wasp Spiders or their egg sacs. I did find the occasional Four-spotted orb web spider but very few Meadow Grasshoppers and the habitat was decaying.



Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi*. Photo by Nicolas Godinho

Whilst searching in the main meadow the amount of sunshine increased and the ambient temperature accordingly. The species of butterflies recorded were: Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Small Heath. Macro-moth species were: Shaded Broad-bar, Treble-bar and several Six-spot Burnet Moth cocoons. Brown and Migrant Hawkers were the only dragonfly species and a Common Blue Damselfly. Noteworthy birds heard on the reserve were: Chiffchaff, Bullfinch and Green Woodpecker. A bug photographed by John Pitts was identified as *Corizus hyoscyami*.



Corizus hyoscyami. Photo by Cano Vaari



What on earth is this?

This is the new 'QR code' for the BNHS website, and was created by Keith Balmer.

QR stands for 'Quick Response'. It is a type of barcode which was first used by the automotive industry. The BNHS QR code is essentially a graphical representation of the BNHS web address.

What this means is that anyone with a 'smart phone' (e.g., iPhone, Android, Blackberry) can use their phone to read the code, much as the supermarket reads the barcodes on grocery items. This will take them directly to the BNHS website. The code can be put on flyers, event announcements or posters so readers can instantly be directed to more information online.

Say for example the BNHS were hosting a gala fundraiser. One might want to put up posters announcing the event in libraries, surgeries, post offices and other locations. If the QR code were displayed on the poster, someone interested in attending the event could use their phone to 'read' the code and instantly be taken to the BNHS website where they could find out how to purchase tickets, learn more about the event or find out more about the BNHS itself.

Futuristic? Yes. But QR codes are increasingly being used to promote businesses, events and products so it's great to know the BNHS is right up there at the cutting edge of technology!

Could the Noble Chafer be back in Beds?

The rare Noble Chafer beetle *Gnorimus nobilis* was recently discovered in an old orchard right on the border between Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. An orchard specialist, the Noble Chafer requires old and decaying fruit trees, many of which have disappeared since the Second World War.

The find has excited the area's entomologists, and the question now is whether the species might still exist in our own orchards.



Noble Chafer *Gnorimus nobilis*. Photo by Luciano Giussani

Himalayan Balsam in the Flit Valley

by Katharine Banham, Conservation Officer, The Wildlife Trust

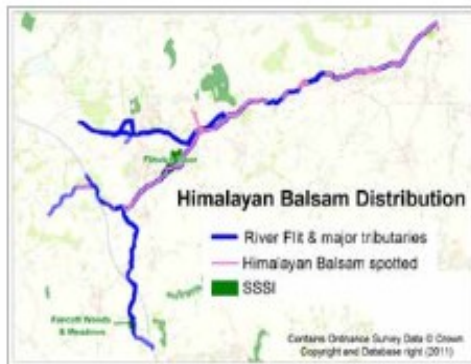
The monitoring and removal of the non-native invasive species Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) from in and around Flitwick Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is now in its third year. The project began in 2009 after Unit 1 of the SSSI was classed by Natural England as in unfavourable condition due to the spread of Himalayan Balsam. Although the species has an impressive pink flower, in some areas it can quickly out-compete the native vegetation becoming dominant.



Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. Photo by Christina Geyer

Flitwick Moor is Bedfordshire's most important wetland. It is a mosaic of fens, meadows and wet woodlands which support one of the most diverse bryophyte and fungi assemblages in south-eastern England. In some areas large stands of Himalayan Balsam had already developed and the nationally important vegetation in other areas was under threat. Himalayan Balsam has become a problem along watercourses across the country. As it is an annual it grows from seed each spring and dies back completely in the autumn leaving the ground bare during the winter months. As well as removing the native vegetation this can be a particular problem on riverbanks as they become more vulnerable to erosion.

Survey work



Two years of Himalayan Balsam monitoring along the River Flit had found that the flowering time varied significantly between years. It seems to depend on the weather during the preceding winter and spring. It is also suspected that winter flooding or management works may have the ability to spread Himalayan Balsam seeds into new areas, rapidly changing its distribution between years. It is therefore important to review the distribution of the Himalayan Balsam annually before deciding where to prioritise removal work. In 2011 this was particularly important as the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) had cleared and deepened several of the ditches through Flitwick Moor and the River Flit over the winter. This had involved moving

sediment from the watercourses onto the banks. Although the winter of 2010/2011 had been cold for long periods the spring was unusually dry and hot. It was observed that the flowering time for the Balsam was approximately the same as in 2009 despite the spring sunshine. Surveys were carried out on May 31, June 6 and August 3, 2011. On the May and June survey dates the plants were large enough to be visible and easy to survey but were not flowering. This is when most of the surveying was conducted. The August survey date was useful for reviewing a few areas where there is a limited view of the watercourse as the Himalayan Balsam was tall and in flower by that stage it was more visible from a distance.

The general impression of the Himalayan balsam this year was that it had not been affected by the cold winter or dry spring. There was concern that the plants in established areas might flower earlier than normal but this did not seem to be the case. Overall the impact of the management work which had been carried out in previous years had been much greater than expected.

Removal

Based on the survey results it was decided to work on Flitton Moor County Wildlife Site (CWS), the River Flit between Flitton Moor and Flitwick Moor, some main ditches within Flitwick Moor SSSI, six compartments within Flitwick Moor SSSI, Flitwick Manor Park CWS and Kingshoe Wood CWS. Although removal work was carried out on Moors Plantation CWS last year it was not possible to contact the

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landowner to obtain permission during 2011 and therefore, this site was not worked on. This did allow more work to be conducted on Flitwick Moor itself.

Using a mixture of volunteer teams and a contractor seemed to work well during 2010 and so this model was used again this year. The contractor brushcut areas where the Himalayan Balsam had become dominant and there was little other vegetation remaining. It was found that volunteer teams were better in areas where some of the native vegetation remained and more 'weeding' was required. It was noted however, that members of most volunteer teams enjoyed brushcutting and if a suitable area was available nearby this provided more diversity to the task. When it was being pulled up by hand the roots were removed and during brushcutting the stem was cut below the lowest node. By late June/July this should have effectively stopped cut plants regrowing. The uprooted or cut material was gathered into piles on site. Previous work had found that the piles rotted down very quickly: most were difficult to find a year later. It was also found that some plants at the bottom of the piles re-rooted and continued to grow; re-rooting would be much greater if the pulled up material had not been gathered together. The removal work was focussed around July as by this stage the plants are large enough to be easily visible but no seeds had been produced yet. Although dense stands of Himalayan Balsam are visible before late June/July, cutting much before this time can encourage the plants to re-grow more vigorously.

Volunteer teams from a variety of organisations took part in the Himalayan Balsam removal to ensure that no one group was asked to do too many tasks. During 2011 volunteer teams from The Wildlife Trust, The Greensand Trust, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity and The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers worked across the sites. It was felt that the volunteer resource had been used to capacity within the time available to work on Himalayan Balsam.

Himalayan Balsam removal from some of the compartments at Flitwick Moor has been more successful than was initially expected. This shows that the project is achieving its objectives but more work is needed to produce similar results elsewhere on Flitwick Moor SSSI and on the surrounding sites to prevent seeds from re-establishing colonies in previously cleared areas.

Plans for Work in 2012

Himalayan Balsam seeds only remain in the seed bank for about three years. This means that it should be possible for the population to be brought under control relatively quickly as long as work can be sustained on a site for a few years. Three years of removal work has now been completed in some areas of Flitwick Moor. These sections now have only a few Himalayan Balsam plants and have responded well. After three years the arrival of new seed will still need to be managed, but it is thought that this would be much less time consuming and would be focussed on particular areas which are most likely to receive seed.

For more information on Himalayan Balsam work in the Flit Valley, please see 'Review of the Work on the Non-Native Invasive Species Himalayan Balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) along the River Flit during 2011', available on the Publications page of the BedsLife website: www.bedslife.org.uk.



Compartment 122A of Flitwick Moor before (top) and after (bottom) 2010 site clearance. The dominant stand of Balsam has been replaced by a mix of Balsam and Bracken. Photos by Katharine Banham

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New publications

'Assessing population status of the great crested newt in Great Britain', Natural England Report NECR080 is now available from the Natural England website, and focuses on new ways to predict population status from limited data. The report can be downloaded as a pdf at www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/publications/default.aspx.

Upcoming events

Oct 8 Pumpkin & Apple Gala at Luton Hoo Walled Garden, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm. 'Decorate a pumpkin' competition and children's activities. Artisan marquee with live demonstrations of pumpkin and apple goods created by local artists. Farmers market, hog roast and locally sourced food and drink.

Oct 9 Fungus Foray at Marston Thrift. Park and meet at 10.00 am for the morning session or 13.30 for the afternoon session, in the public car park near Wood End, SP973412. This is a joint meeting with the Herts Fungi Group. Leader: Alan Outen.

Oct 16 Apple Day at Bromham Mill. A day out for the entire family with a local food fair, apple identification, storytelling, puppet shows, local beer and cider, morris dancing and more.

Oct 18 'British and Tropical Bats' by Daniel Hargreaves, 7.45 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381. Daniel is a very experienced bat worker and photographer, enthusiastic and travelled worldwide.

Oct 23 Morning visit to RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes, Cambs, for a variety of wetland birds. Meet at 9.00 am in car, TL342700 (map 154). Leader: Neil Renwick, Community Projects Officer, RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes

Oct 25 'Why Have Divers Moved to Page 60?', or 'How to See More Species Without Getting Out of Bed' by Michael Webster, 8.00 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381. This talk introduces a range of topics: taxonomy, speciation, evolution and more.

Nov 6 Fungus Foray at RSPB Sandy. Meet at 10.00 am for the morning session or 13.30 for the afternoon session, in the Lodge car park TL191486. There may be a car parking charge for non RSPB members. This is a joint meeting with the RSPB and Herts Fungi Group.

Nov 13 Henlow: morning walk around east Beds area. Park and meet at 8.30 am at Henlow Bridge Lakes, TL188379. Detailed directions will be given on the Bedsbirds email group and in the September issue of Hobby. Leader: Roger Hicks

Nov 15 'Flora of Bedfordshire' by Chris Boon. Introduction to the book about to be published, 7.45 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381.

Nov 18 This year's National Biodiversity Network Conference will be held at the Royal Society in London. 'Evolution or Revolution? The impact of technologies on biological recording' will focus on the tools and resources available through the NBN and the services offered by the new look NBN Gateway. The programme and booking details are available at [www.nbn.org.uk/News-and-Events/NBN-news/NBN-Conference-\(1\).aspx](http://www.nbn.org.uk/News-and-Events/NBN-news/NBN-Conference-(1).aspx).

Nov 29 'The Biggest Twitch' by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller. A first hand account of their remarkable year long worldwide twitch to set a new world record for the most species recorded in a year, 8.00 pm at Maulden Village Hall, TL049381.

Dec 8 BNHS Christmas Social evening with seasonal refreshments, 7.45 pm at Haynes Mission Hall, Northwood End Road, Haynes, TL100420. Bring along a selection of your slides, or digital photos on a CD. Chair: David Withers.

Dec 26 Annual Boxing Day walk through Woburn Park. Meet at 9.30 am at the Woburn Town car park, SP950322, opposite the church. Leader: Mary Sheridan.