



Wild About Beds

Winter 2014/15

If you go down to Linslade Wood today...

Okay maybe not today, but Rory Morrissey recorded this rare beauty in Linslade Wood on 22 September. The Liverpool Feather-horn (also known as the Feathered Stem-moth) *Ochsenheimeria taurella* is nationally scarce but widespread throughout England and Wales. The base of the antennae is thickened and hairy, and it has erect scales on the forewing giving it a distinctive shaggy appearance.

At the time Rory didn't think it was all that exciting. 'Yes I found this funny looking moth in Linslade Wood,' he says. 'I took a few photos of it, having no idea what it was except that it was unusual and I'd never seen one like it before. I sent the photo to Melissa Banthorpe and she identified it.'

The species has been recorded a few times in Beds VC30 but never in VC24, the old Bucks vice-county. The Bucks recorder is reported to be very pleased with the record! Experts believe that while scarce, the species is under-recorded because it is very small (11-12mm) and only flies for a couple of hours in the afternoon between July and September. 'Now I do think I was really lucky to see it,' says Rory. 'I'm sorry the proper moth experts didn't get a chance.'



Liverpool Feather-horn *Ochsenheimeria taurella*. Photo by Rory Morrissey

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



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



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, 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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The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane Bedford MK41 9DJ.

Email: 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 2015** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **March 2015**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Bird Club 2014 end of year show film now available

by *Richard Bashford*

As many of you will know, I put together a film for the Bird Club's end of year show. It is a really popular evening with over 100 people attending in 2013. The 2014 film was shown at the December meeting on the 16th. The film is 1h 25 mins long and is mainly birds (from rarities like the popular Willington Hoopoe to amazing footage of a Heron eating a large fish), but also includes some mammals and insects including Purple Emperor. Some of the film is fantastic HD quality, some is a little more atmospheric...! But all is filmed by our very own local members and is a great record of Bedfordshire's year of wildlife.



If you're interested in buying as copy for yourself, it is a bargain at £6 (which includes P&P). If interested, please send a cheque to Richard Bashford, 6 Brook Road, Eaton Ford, Cambs PE19 7AX. DVD sales usually raise over £100 for the BNHS each year.

Winter herpetiles?

by *Helen Muir-Howie*

Although the weather has turned colder now it was very mild up until the end of November. It was so mild that there was a report of frogspawn being laid in a pond in Cornwall.

Did anyone notice any amphibian activity in Bedfordshire? If you did I would be pleased to have the record. You can easily submit records via the BNHS website www.bnhs.org.uk and follow the link.

They came from far and wide...

by Steve Halton

You may have heard about the rare bird fever that hit Cople and Willington in October and certainly got the local birdwatchers twitching!



The Willington Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (try saying that after a few glasses of mulled wine!) Photo by Lisa King

It all started just a couple of days after I had sent in my 'Wild about Cople' to bed in early October when a lovely lady from the village, Jennifer Sargeant, knocked on my door and asked if I was 'The Birdman'... Well, there are lots of ways I could have answered that but I answered the right way and she told me that she had seen an 'unusual-looking bird' at the entrance to Dog Field the day before. She had found a picture of the bird and showed it to me on her phone and I, somewhat excitedly, told her that it was a rare bird called a Hoopoe. I immediately put the discovery onto the Beds Birds Email group and dashed up to Dog Field but it was getting late in the day and myself and a couple of local birders could not locate it.

The next day the bird was amazingly relocated by Robin Edwards from Willington feeding on horse paddocks at Hill Farm along Wood Lane, Willington. We wandered across the fields from Cople that morning and, already, you could see the queue of cars along the lane! The hoopoe was incredibly obliging and at times was so close you could barely focus your binoculars on it! It eventually stayed for over a week, which is very unusual, and was enjoyed by many people, including the two chaps we met you had heard about it on the grapevine and driven down from Yorkshire that same morning!

Hoopoes are rare and beautiful birds with a salmon-pink, black and white plumage, large rounded wings, a long curved bill and a crest on their head which they can raise and lower when excited. About 100 occur on migration in the UK each year. They do not breed here but breed across Europe, Asia and North Africa where they nest in trees or walls; they like to feed on bare areas or areas with very short vegetation (thus the horse paddocks) where they feed on insects, seeds and berries.

All in all, a lovely bird and it was great that so many people had the chance to see it at close range and I think a thank you should go to Jennifer for seeing the bird in the first place, recognising it as something different and reporting it to me quickly so we were able to get the word out so someone like Robin was able to re-find it. And a thank you should also go to Gavin and Lindsay (who I know well) for being such patient people — especially when you have 30 birdwatchers or more at a time sticking their cameras and binoculars into your front garden!

This article first appeared in Steve's 'Wild About Cople' column in the November village newsletter. -Ed



Photos by Lisa King

With this ring

by Jude Hirstwood and Bob Cornes

Nathusius' pipistrelle bats in Europe are known to migrate over vast distances, but in the UK the only known resident population was in Northern Ireland, though individuals have been found across the country (we found our first one at Swineshead last autumn).

Some of you went to the BNHS talk given by Daniel Hargreaves and will know what a tireless bat enthusiast he is. This year he has worked with the Bat Conservation Trust to run a National Nathusius project to try to get a better picture of its distribution across the country.

The research protocol involves using a harp trap and lure (which plays sequences of ultrasonic bat calls). At the beginning of the year the Bat Group bought a lure. A little later Bob Cornes bought a harp trap as bat group funds wouldn't run to buying one as they cost about £2,400. (In October the Bat Group had some money in hand and gave him £1200 towards the cost).

The national project was set up in six counties, using bat group volunteers, but groups like ours who had their own equipment were also allowed to contribute. 2014 as you all know was a fantastic year and soon the Bat Group was busy surveying likely places for this rare bat, catching some other exciting bats along the way. For example, at Harrold-Odell Country Park we caught our first ever Natterer's and brown long eared bats at the site, and elsewhere we found the county's first live Leisler's bat.



Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*.
Photo by Hedj Dolman



A ringed Nathusius' pipistrelle. Photo by Bob Cornes

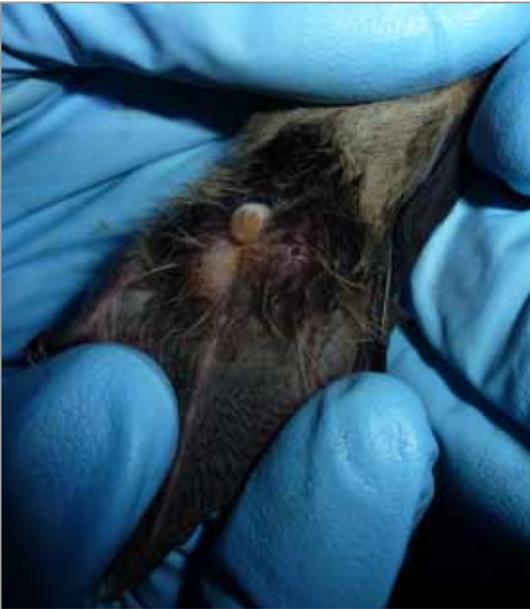
In the course of the season we caught more bats than any other Bat Group — a stonking 309 bats, which included 5 male Nathusius which were ringed (under licence from Natural England). In addition to recording weight forearm length and reproductive status, small samples of fur were also taken (again under licence) so that isotope analysis can be carried out. This is a complex technique it is hoped we can gain an idea of where the bats have originated from, e.g. are they vagrants or part of a resident species. These results will not be available until next spring at the earliest.

The hope is that the ringed bats may be recaptured elsewhere in the county — or further afield, though as yet none has been recaptured. (One of the 70 bats Daniel ringed at Blagdon in Somerset before the national project

started, made the national press when it was found in Holland.) Nearly all the bats have been males, but the Northumberland Bat Group have caught females and also a juvenile which means that there is a breeding colony there.

Next season we will be continuing the project, we have yet to find a female, but we have had several sites where we have heard a Nathusius but not yet caught one. Perseverance is the key. For years we heard Nathusius at Priory Park, Bedford and we trapped once a month there for six months this year often using three sets of equipment. Daniel has been coming up to Beds with his kit whenever he is free and has also let us borrow it when he has to be out of the country for work, and it wasn't until September that one came into the harp trap.

The level of co-operation between Bat Groups has been very high and there has been a certain friendly rivalry between groups, and it has been great fun .



The now somewhat infamous egg-shaped genitalia of the male Nathusius' pipistrelle. Photo by Bob Cornes

One of the main ID features of the Nathusius is its egg-shaped penis, so there has been a certain amount of bat porn as people have had a close look at several males in "full breeding condition". Because of the good weather, they and some of the other species, notably Noctules, had become extremely well endowed. (There are more x-rated photos on the website www.bedsbatgroup.org.uk.)

We are already planning for next season, and you can follow events on the bat group website or on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/109943449023992/.

PS If you are out and about with a bat detector and pick up a pipistrelle call peaking at 38 KHz. please let us know as it is highly likely to be a Nathusius.

Don't forget: the forthcoming *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire* would make a great Christmas (promise) present! Get it now at the pre-publication price of £15 (plus £3.75 p&p). Send to Mike Bird, 69 Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard LU7



Photo by John Pitts

Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire

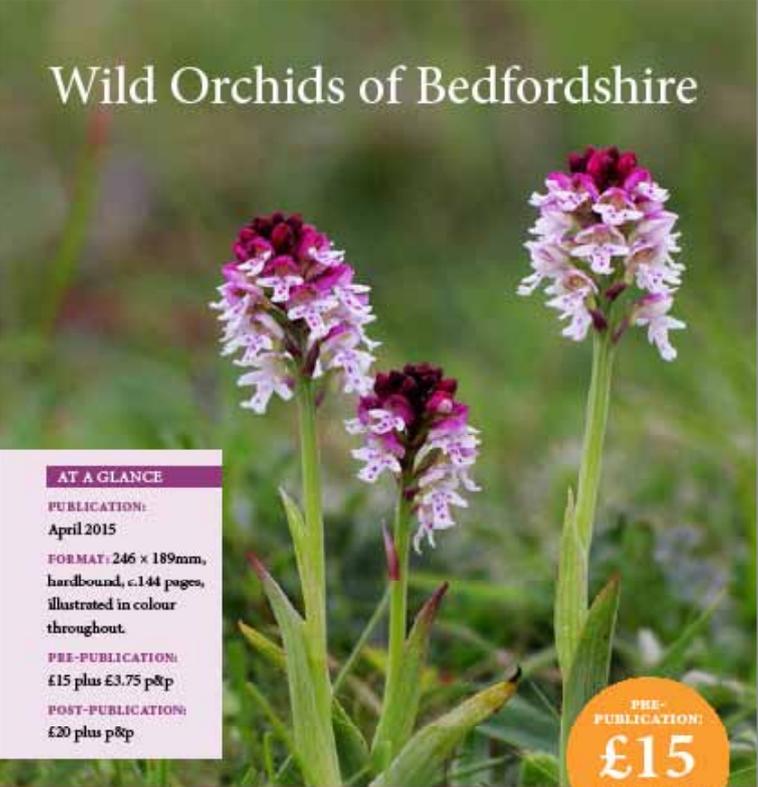
AT A GLANCE

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The new *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire* will be a superbly illustrated and up-to-date account of Bedfordshire's wild orchid flora following two years of intensive fieldwork by local naturalists. Accounts of all 27 species that have ever been recorded in the county will be included as well as hybrids and varieties.

The authors, Richard Revels, Chris Boon and Graham Bellamy have spent the last two years recording in detail the orchid flora of the county along with over three hundred local people who have enthusiastically contributed records. Richard Revels has been photographing all species still present in the county from their early leaves through flowering to seeding and, where possible, any insect pollinators visiting the flowers.

Oliver G Pike: Blue Plaque Unveiled

by Rory Morrisey

BNHS members will probably be aware of my occupation on matters to do with Oliver G Pike, the Society's first post-WWII President. Well now he has a Blue Plaque, though I can't claim any of the credit.

Although Oliver Pike was a long-term resident of Bedfordshire (from 1922 to 1963) he originally came from Winchmore Hill, which is now part of the Borough of Enfield and in the district known as Southgate. Unknown to me at the time, several members of Southgate District Civic Trust were also researching Oliver Pike and had produced an article about him in their local magazine.

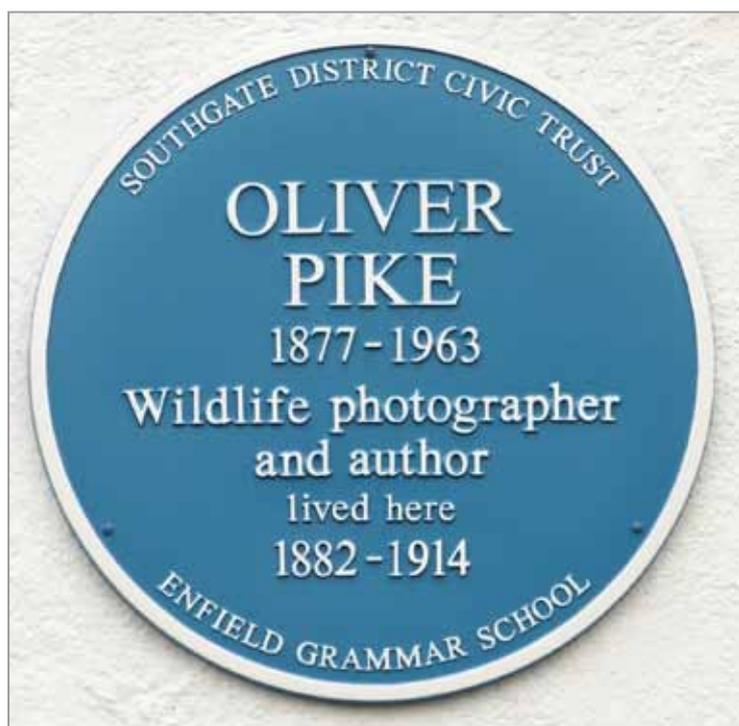


Photo by Rory Morrisey

Now they have realised a notable achievement, for on 16th November 2014 a Blue Plaque was unveiled on the house where Oliver Pike lived from when he was a lad until 1914. The house is now No. 96 Green Dragon Lane, but was called "No. 1 The Elms" back in his day. In the 1890s it was surrounded by orchards and the nearby Salmon's Brook was a haven for wildlife. It was where Oliver Pike first came to know and to love the kingfisher, brimstone and orange-tip butterflies, and the water vole. It's not like that now, but it's not all bad and the trust members hope to make the area more wildlife friendly.

Two of Oliver Pike's grandson's, Richard and Jonathan Dollimore performed the unveiling. Both are very interested in wildlife and keep their own small nature reserves. I am in touch with several more of Oliver Pike's descendants and have recently been able to put them in touch with each other after they had lost contact many years ago.

If you're going to Rushmere Park soon you may catch my exhibition of Oliver Pike's photographs which is again on view in the café.

County Wildlife Site botanical surveys

by John Wakely

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) aims to publish an atlas showing the distribution of flowering plants in the UK, every 20 years or so. This work is important to identify changes in the flora which may be caused by a number of factors such as climate change. The next atlas is due to be published in 2020. In order to produce records for Bedfordshire to go into the atlas, a working group of keen amateur volunteers has been assembled. Under the direction of the BSBI recorder for the county, they aim to search and record over the next few years. County wildlife sites (CWS) often contain the richest assemblages of plants, and many of the county's rare flowers are found on them. It is hoped that all the CWSs will be surveyed, but this will only be done with the land owner's permission. If you would like to find out more or would be happy for your CWS to be surveyed, please contact John Wakely on 01525 860085 or vetjw@btinternet.com



The delightfully named Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* can be found at Pegsdon Hills. Photo by Ian Boyd

Macro-moth larval challenge 2014

by *Melissa Banthorpe, Joint Macro-moth Recorder*

The county database contains around 350,000 records, the vast majority being of adult moths. For some time I have wanted to improve on the number of larval records in the database (just under 1,600 at the beginning of 2014) and also increase the number of species found in the larval stage in the county. I also had a wish list of species to see that had rather impressive larvae. So in 2014, my husband Andy and I decided to make a concerted effort to record as many macro-moth larvae as possible in the year.

The quest began properly at the beginning of April, when Andy and I went looking for Scarlet Tiger larvae at various sites around the Flit Vale, Ivel Valley and Heath & Reach/Woburn area. This had mixed results: we found none at several places, having looked at an awful lot of comfrey (one of the species main foodplants); a few larvae on comfrey at Flitton Moor; a few larvae on Green Alkanet (a known foodplant) in Leighton Street, Woburn; and found 50+ larvae on Green Alkanet in Aspley Guise churchyard.



White Satin *Leucoma salicis*. Photo: flickr courtesy Nutmeg66

From April to July I could be found regularly beating a selection of trees and shrubs at various sites to see what landed on a beating tray. Beating was the main method involved but Andy and I also looked at leaf spinnings and for feeding signs on a selection of flowering plants. Most of the species found during the year had been recorded by mid-June but as the year wore on new additions to the list became few and far between, though Andy still managed to find two different species of larvae on 1st November!

The list of species recorded during the year in the county stands at 85 currently. There are a few identifications outstanding, including at least one which we are trying to breed through. In addition we recorded 16 species of micro-moth (not including case-bearers and leaf-miners) and nine species of butterfly.

Some of the highlights included:

- A Yellow Horned larva in birch spinnings at Rowney Warren in April.
- A Puss Moth larva beaten from poplar at Marston Vale Country Park at the end of May.
- A fully grown White Satin larva found on poplar near to where I live in mid-June.
- An Orange Footman larva beaten off oak in King's Wood, Heath & Reach, at the end of June, which was new to the county as a larva (the species was added to the county list in 2003).
- Tawny Shears larvae found in Bladder Campion seeds at Totternhoe Old Quarry in mid-July.
- Bordered Sallow larvae found on Rest Harrow (Totternhoe Old Quarry) and Spiny Rest Harrow (Maulden Church Meadow mid August). The first record of a larva for the county was of one swept by Laura Wagstaff off Rest Harrow on a Chalk Carpet training day at Totternhoe Old Quarry on 17th July 2014 (Andy and I were involved with this) and Andy and I found some more at the same site later in the year.
- A Pale Prominent larva beaten off sallow in Chicksands Wood in late August.
- An Early Thorn larva beaten off hawthorn in Marston Vale Country Park in mid-September.



Tawny Shears *Hadena perplexa*. Photo: Tony Morris



Yellow-horned Moth *Achlya flavicornis*.
Photo: flickr courtesy Rovanto

In addition it was great to find a single larva of White-letter Hairstreak in Chicksands Wood at the beginning of May, which was beaten off elm; to find Purple Hairstreak larva at two sites in the county – Flitwick Moor and Marston Vale Country Park (late May and early June respectively); and to find a single Small Blue larva, which was swept off trefoil at Totternhoe Old Quarry in mid-July.

We have also received about 30 records so far of larva from other observers during 2014. These were mostly of Scarlet Tiger, Mullein and hawk-moths but did include some more, rather rarer species – Red-necked Footman and Lunar Hornet Moth.

I certainly enjoyed looking for larvae during the year and will carry on next year targeting particular species. I would like to encourage people to have a go and see what they find, though please remember to send in your records. All records of moths are appreciated, and larval records are particularly important as they provide evidence of breeding.

Of course photos of larvae would have been most appropriate to this article; for this I apologise to both author and readers. In my defense — and ashamed though I am to admit it among such company as this — I must confess to being phobic of caterpillars and worms and simply could not face trawling through hundreds of images of the horrid things. No, not even for you dear readers. In fact I was only saved by my very quick mouse-scroll-wheel finger, and the dog might have jumped at one very small scream. I hope you will overlook my weakness and enjoy these images of grownup caterpillars instead. And I hope you'll agree that I've been very, very brave today. -Ed.



Orange Footman *Eilema sorocula*. Photo: Donald Hobern

Raising the Profile of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society

by Julia Powell

Amongst members and the wider public the perception of the Society is sometimes misconstrued. Some stalwart members think of it as a society only devoted to serious scientific study and recording of Bedfordshire's natural history. In addition, many members of the public think that you have to know a lot before you can join and that the society is therefore somewhat elitist and discouraging to local people that enjoy natural history. Indeed some existing members of the society do not come forward to help at various events saying 'I am not an expert'. However, I would suggest that it is, and should be, an inclusive society for anyone with an interest in natural history and not just for those undertaking scientific study or with existing expert knowledge.

Yes, the society has a scientific purpose and recording the county's wildlife is certainly one of its principal functions, but this is all achieved through the efforts of volunteers. No-one in the society is paid for what they do and you do not have to be an expert. However a significant number of members know a lot about their field and can certainly call on national and international expertise. This was magnificently demonstrated at the recent and very successful Neglected Insects Conference in November.

There are a large number of Recorders active in their specialist fields and records from all members are

greatly appreciated. The Recorders organise surveys within Bedfordshire to identify additions (and sadly extinctions) of species to the county list each year. They also rely heavily on others to send in records year after year of the same things in the same places to demonstrate that we still have representation in the county. We will hear about some of the findings in the January talk by Dr Gwen Hitchcock concerning some of the survey work that is being carried out in the south of the county at Totternhoe and Dunstable Downs.

The Scientific Committee and Recorders organise the surveys for the year independently or in collaboration with other bodies such as the Wildlife Trust. Data generated are shared with Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Partnership. This is a consortium of government and non-government agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire biodiversity. Data are also fed into National Recording schemes.

Although 'ensuring the accuracy of records must always be our priority, at the same time, we must encourage and support people with less knowledge who are keen to learn, because they can make a valuable contribution to recording in the County' (extract from the society's Scientific Committee remit). This is where the events programme comes into its own. For all the good science that is carried out, a social side to the society is very important. It allows like-minded people to share activities in an educational way through the provision of natural history based presentations. This year we have had talks about local facilities at the Higgins in Bedford and what phenology is, a science that allows us to record the first and last of any phenomenon in the natural world that you care to mention.



Rushmere Country Park Christmas Fair stand



BNHS 2013 Christmas tree, Ampthill

The programme includes a range of activities to encourage more members to join and established members to increase their knowledge both within the society and with our partner organisations. The activities this autumn have been very diverse. The BNHS stand volunteers were very busy at the Bromham Mill Apple Day in glorious sunshine with people very reluctant to leave at 4pm and busy again (with different volunteers) the following week at RSPB Sandy on a very grey day. The stand was also on show at the Neglected Insects Conference at the Forest Centre at Marston Vale and again at the Christmas Fair at Rushmere Country Park at the invitation of the Greensand Trust. The audience for the last two was very different! New YounGnats members were signed up at all these events. Now we need snippets of information and anecdotes about what to do and see in the back gardens, parks and local reserves to put on the YounGnats website and maintain the interest of these young people so the society can carry on into the future. (Please send any information to Carol Curd for inclusion on the YounGnats web site: carol.curd@yahoo.co.uk). YounGnats group members were in Ampthill on 4th December to dress a Christmas tree for the society in the Christmas Tree Festival at St Andrews church.

Then there are the members only events ranging from the serious but interesting Recorders presentations at the AGM to the light hearted Christmas Social. There was a lot of good food consumed at the latter and

the entertainment value of members' photographs was superb.

So the Society has a serious function but also a lighter side and everyone should feel included in the various activities of the society according to their own interests. Members should feel that they are able to pass on their knowledge to younger people to maintain the vitality within the Society. It is equally important to encourage new members so the science can continue and the wonderful biodiversity seen in our beautiful county remains in the public eye. Raising the profile of the society can be achieved in so many ways.

There are two new dates for your diaries. The date for the launch of the Orchid book has been announced and there is an extra talk scheduled in April (speaker TBC). But please keep an eye on the website, the newsgroup and Facebook for details of these and further activities yet to be confirmed that will occur before the next Wild About Beds and the Summer Programme are published.

Sheila Brooke and I would very much welcome ideas for activities and speakers that you would like to have (or have again) in the Events Programme. Please also contact us if you feel any of the past events were not worthwhile for you and others in the society.

The Geminid meteor shower

by *Helen Muir-Howie*

As the winter months can be a quiet time for many areas of Natural History why not take a look at the night sky instead? You don't need a telescope although that does increase what you can see.

There are lots of things to see with the naked eye or a pair of binoculars.

Several constellations are easy to identify especially if you have an app on your phone to help you. If not you can use an old fashioned but trusty cardboard device called a planesphere.

On clear nights in December you should see some 'shooting stars'. These will be part of the Geminid meteor shower.

According to the British Astronomy Association:

The Geminids are the richest of the annual meteor showers, with rates outstripping those of the Perseids for a 24-hour interval centred on their 14 December maximum. The peak this year coincides with a last quarter Moon in Virgo, so there should be comparatively little interference by moonlight even during the early morning hours. The highest observed rates are most likely during the night of December 13/14, particularly in the pre-dawn hours of Sunday, December 14, and conveniently during a weekend.

This year, Geminid maximum is expected at around 07h on Sunday, 14 December, when the peak Geminid Zenithal Hourly Rate may reach 120 mph.

There is the added bonus of an increased proportional abundance of bright events after maximum; past observations show that bright Geminids become more numerous some hours after the rates have peaked, a consequence of particle-sorting in the meteor stream.



Composite of the 2012 Geminid meteor shower. Photo: NASA/MSFC/Meteoroid Environment Office



Events Programme Winter 2014/15

All indoor talks start at 8pm and are held at Maulden Village Hall, grid reference TL048380, post code MK45 2DP. Parking is free. OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

Visitors are encouraged. A small charge is requested for refreshments at the talks and possibly on other occasions too. Donations are always welcome.

Please check the web site www.bnhs.org.uk or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

For field meetings, bring stout footwear and warm clothing.

REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED.

(F) Particularly suitable for families and young people.

(L) Bring food to meetings. Lunch is eaten in the car park area. If joining the meeting for the afternoon, please arrive by 1.30pm.

 Meetings organised in conjunction with the ornithological section, the Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC).

CHRISTMAS DAY TO NEW YEAR'S EVE 

'**The Great Christmas Bird Hunt**' – details in the November issue of the *Hobby*. Organiser: Andy Banthorpe

FRIDAY 26th DECEMBER, Woburn

Boxing Day morning walk through Woburn Park. Meet at the Woburn Village car park, opposite the church, SP950331, MK17 9PG at 9.30am. Families welcome. Another social occasion while on the lookout for the 10 deer species present in the park plus any other wildlife of interest. Leader: Mary Sheridan.

SUNDAY 11th JANUARY, Isle of Sheppey 

Day trip to Isle of Sheppey, north Kent for a good variety of wintering birds. Meet in Swale car park, Shellness, near Leysdown, Sheppey TR052682 at 9.00 am. Leader: Pete Soper

SUNDAY 18th JANUARY 

The Great Duck Hunt. Bird Club annual countywide wildfowl census. See November issue of the *Hobby* for details. Organiser: Steve Blain

TUESDAY 20th JANUARY, Maulden

Talk by Gwen Hitchcock, Conservation Officer/Reserves Ecology Officer at Wildlife Trust BCN. Hear about current Totternhoe Wildlife Trust site management and the recent local orchid and butterfly surveys in the area. Maulden Village Hall, TL048380, 8.00pm. Chair: David Withers

TUESDAY 27th JANUARY, Maulden 

'**Amazing Columbia**' by club member Stuart Elsom. With over one fifth of the species on the planet this must be the ultimate birding destination. A flavour to whet your appetite. Maulden Village Hall, TL048380, 8.00pm.

THURSDAY 29th JANUARY, London

Visit to Natural History Museum, London. With Dr Ben Price, Odonata curator. Visit to see behind the scenes of the insect collection. Only a couple of places are left; please contact Julia Powell on 01582 661328 by Monday 5th January to book your place.

SUNDAY 8th FEBRUARY 

Morning visit to north Ivel valley for wildfowl and other wintering species. Starting at Roxton Lakes followed by Blunham Lake. Meet at end of Ford Road, Roxton, TL155541 at 8.00am. Finish around 11.00am. Leader: Richard Bashford

TUESDAY 17th FEBRUARY, Maulden

Talk by Stuart Warrington, nature conservation/ecology advisor for the National Trust (East Region) on 'The National Trust and Nature', the challenges of the 21st Century. He will be talking about special wildlife places of East Anglia. Maulden Village Hall, TL048380, 8.00pm. Chair: David Withers

SATURDAY 21st FEBRUARY, Broom

Workshop - How to Identify Dragonfly Exuviae by Steve Cham from 2.00pm until 4.30pm at Jordans Mill Education Centre. Microscopes and hand lenses will be available. Meet in the Riverside Café, Jordans Mill off Southill Road, Broom TL184430. Post code SG18 9JY

TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY, Maulden 

Start at 7.45pm for the **Bird Club Annual General Meeting** followed by an illustrated talk 'Field Notes' by world renowned bird photographer David Tipling. A compilation of David's favourite images from his extensive worldwide travels. Maulden Village Hall TL049380

SATURDAY 14th MARCH, Maulden (F)

Visit Duck End Nature Reserve to see what small mammals have been caught in the traps overnight. Meet at Duck End NR, Moor Lane, Maulden TL051374, at 8.30am. Leader: Richard Lawrence

TUESDAY 17th MARCH, Maulden

BNHS Annual General Meeting. Officers and Recorders will present their annual reports. Maulden Village Hall TL049380, 7.30pm. **Please note the earlier start time** as there is so much of interest to report.

SUNDAY 29th MARCH, Marston Moretaine 

Morning walk around Marston Vale Millennium Country Park for a variety of species, hopefully including early summer migrants. Meet in the car park, TL003417 at 8.00am. Finish around 11.00am in time for breakfast in the café. Donations welcome. Leader: Bob Hook

TUESDAY 31st MARCH, Maulden 

Allan Octavian Hume and Alfred Russell Wallace: an insight into their extraordinary Asian bird collections, by Dr Robert Prys-Jones, Head of Bird Group, British Natural History Museum. An inspiring **talk** about two of the greatest British ornithologists, partly based on Robert's original research. Maulden Village Hall TL049380, 8.00pm.

NEW TUESDAY 16th APRIL, Maulden

Talk - speaker to be confirmed. Maulden Village Hall TL049380, 8.00pm

NEW SATURDAY 25th APRIL, Marston Moretaine

Book launch - Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire. Order before 31st January 2015 to get the pre-publication price of £15, and if you collect on the day save £3.35 p&p. The authors will be signing copies on the day at the Forest Centre, Marston Vale Millennium Country Park, Marston Moretaine from 2 – 4.30pm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The BNHS thanks all who have kindly given permission to visit and to hold field meetings on their properties.

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE: Contact Peter Glenister 01582 524994 for details of venues, help with transport etc.



Christmas Hoopoe wishes everyone a very happy and safe holiday season!

Photo by John Pitts