



Wild About Beds

Spring 2015

Everything's aflutter at the Rushmere heronry

The chicks have already hatched but there's still plenty to see at the heronry at Rushmere Country Park.

Don't worry if you haven't got binoculars or a spotting scope: Greensand Trust volunteers are on hand to help with the equipment needed to help you get a great view of the treetop goings-on. Remote cameras have also been set up to beam live 'nest cam' footage — complete with sound — into the nearby visitor centre.

The 'Heron Watch' will continue into the summer, accompanied by a series of events, including:

- 'Meet the Herons' Tuesday 7th April 2.00-3.30pm. Includes finger puppet making and poetry writing, suitable for children around 8-10 yrs (must be accompanied by an adult), booking essential. Contact Kate Tuck on 01525 234260 or [visitorservices\(at\)greensandtrust.org](mailto:visitorservices(at)greensandtrust.org).
- Visit to Rushmere Country Park Saturday 9th May for a family afternoon with a variety of events. Displays will be up in and around the visitor centre. Spy on the heronry, check out what's caught in pitfall traps, take part in quizzes and more. Details in the events programme on page 11.



The Rushmere heronry. Photo by Chris White

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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, 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.

Editor: Heather Webb

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 June 2015** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

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

Help wanted: Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

by Clare Topping

Surveyors wanted to help with the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) - no experience needed, just an interest in butterflies and a willingness to walk a transect a couple of times in July or August.

The WCBS, a national survey, is now in its 7th year and contributes to both the local and national records helping Butterfly Conservation monitor the state of the country's butterflies. A joint project with the British Trust for Ornithology, last year there were 34 transects walked at least twice in Beds and Northants, with over 6,200 butterflies, moths and damselflies recorded. The top three butterflies were Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet, but we did have Clouded Yellows, Fritillaries and Purple Emperors for colour!

Although squares are allocated randomly by Butterfly Conservation, we have squares throughout the county but are particularly looking for people in the following areas (although once these are taken I will be able to get some more):

Current squares with no recorders in Bedfordshire are:

TL0123 Houghton Regis

TL0037 West of Ampthill

TL1548 Hatch, near Sandy

If you would like to help this year and would like more information please contact me ([ctopping\(at\)ratfox.net](mailto:ctopping(at)ratfox.net)). All the records go to the County Recorders automatically.

Bedfordshire's Wild Daffodils

by John Wakely

If you take the bridle path east from Green End along the south edge of Maulden Woods, in the second half of March or early April, you will be rewarded by the best display of wild daffodils *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, in the county. There is an area the size of a tennis court which is carpeted yellow. There are hundreds of flowers showing the golden yellow 'trumpets' of the corolla tube backed by the pale yellow tepals, characteristic of the native wild daffodil. There are smaller populations nearby, most being threatened by holly. Active management of the holly will be necessary to maintain daffodil numbers.

Having been brought up in Devon, I was familiar with the swathes of wild daffodils growing in the steep wooded river valleys to the east of Dartmoor. Gypsy ladies used to sell cartloads of wild dafs in the streets. When I moved to Bedfordshire and found the daffodils in Maulden Woods, I assumed they would be commonplace elsewhere in the county. Sadly that is not the case. Over the last couple of years I have checked most of the sites where wild daffodils have been recorded in the past. There are only a handful of places where populations are anything like healthy.



Wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. Photo by Ian Worsley



Photo by Bas Kers

Planting of plants which have the characteristics of native daffodils has become commonplace. They are now commonly planted on new road verges and other areas of grassland, and have certainly been planted in the past. (The lawn of Maulden Grange has been planted with a number of wild daffodils, together with primroses, cowslips and snakes' head fritillaries which make a fabulous display in April and can be seen from the footpath which runs from Maulden church to Green End). Planted or discarded daffodils can readily multiply to form clumps. (There is a good population of a cultivated variety of daffodil in Pennyfather's Moor wood beside the A507). Consequently it is difficult to decide whether populations of 'wild' daffodils are truly native.

Populations of wild daffodils which are not obviously planted elsewhere in the county are much smaller than those in Maulden Woods, with numbers in the 10s rather than 100s. There is an interesting population in Haynes West End in a young copse, but associated with an apparent ancient boundary ditch. Could these be native? The plants found in a small area of Flitwick Woods probably are.

Wild daffodils are mainly associated with woodland, but are also found in meadows. In Maulden Woods odd plants appear in grazed grassland adjacent to woodland populations. In the south of the county there are plants on Whipsnade Green and Whipsnade Tree Cathedral which may have been planted. There are several moderate clumps in Long Wood Studham and Ravensdell Wood.

Further north there are small populations in the Great and Little Woods of both Odell and Ravensden. I would be grateful for details of other populations which members might know about.



Please note: to reduce the risk of email spam being sent to contributors and others, '(at)' appears in email addresses in place of '@' in this newsletter. -Ed.

Podura aquatica: the water springtail

by Rory Morrissey

I first became interested in springtails a few years ago. They are quite difficult to identify, and very small, but there were always some right outside the back door, even in the middle of winter. I'm talking here about the species that inhabit leaf litter that has been left lying in the untidy borders. One of the key features of springtails is that they jump using a spring-like organ called the furca that is held in tension under their abdomen.



Podura aquatica 'lifting off'. Photo by Katie Hodge

Having found some, you learn about other species: the ones that are used in laboratories, the ones that live in the soil, and the ones that walk on water. The sources that I had read (including Steve Hopkin) said that the water springtail was fairly common and could even be found in large numbers on puddles. I looked in puddles, ponds and lakes, but never saw any.

In March 2015 I took a close look at a seasonal pond at the north end of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park in Leighton Buzzard. There were tiny (mostly around 1mm) grey creatures walking on the surface of the water and occasionally jumping. Aha! They look like springtails, I thought, so I ate my lunch and replaced the contents of my sandwich box with some of them, a few bits of weed and whatever else was there. I also took a few photos.

I was pretty sure I'd found the water springtail at last and sent a photo to Alan Outen. He agreed and came to have a look himself. Within a couple of days, we had confirmation from Peter Shaw, the expert who spoke at the Neglected Insects Conference last year. Yes, it was *Podura aquatica*.

In the meantime, I had realised that although the water springtail may not be rare it is very rarely recorded. In fact, it had never been recorded in Bedfordshire (VC30) or Buckinghamshire (VC24). Since 2000 there had only been nine records, and they were in East Anglia, the west of England and one in Scotland. Going back into previous centuries there were a few more records, and two were in nearby Hertfordshire. Then Peter Shaw told us that he hadn't seen one for several years.



Podura aquatica juvenile. Photo by Andy Murray

I suppose it should not have been too unexpected. After all, they are "neglected insects" – or are they? Peter Shaw at the conference said that some of the latest research indicates that they could be related to crustaceans. Anyway, they're not quite so neglected now. If anyone reading this sees similar creatures, Alan Outen would, I am sure, be very interested.

Ashes to Ashes?

by Roger K Hicks

In Bedfordshire, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* is a widespread and common tree, recorded from all 379 tetrads that comprise the modern county (Boon & Outen 2011). The first cases of ash dieback were recorded in the county in November 2012 east of Sandy (Bellamy & Outen 2012), following the first in the UK in February 2012 (Forestry Commission website, www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara). By January 2014 ash dieback had been reported from 622 sites with a concentration in East Anglia and Kent and it continues to spread, being confirmed from 949 sites in January 2015. It is still mainly in eastern counties, but has now been reported

as far north as Buckie, on the Moray Firth, Scotland and appears to have jumped the Pennines into Lancashire (Forestry Commission website). There are still relatively few cases reported from Bedfordshire only being shown for the 10km squares along the county's eastern border (Forestry Commission website).

More information on ash dieback can be found on the forestry commission website, including how to identify infected trees in winter and summer.

Partly in response to reports of ash dieback, in 2013 I began a survey of the rookeries in Bedfordshire (Hicks 2013) with the aim of recording their location, number of nests and tree species used for nesting. In that first survey 135 active rookeries containing 3744 nests were recorded. The tree species was identified for 62.7% of nests with ash being the most frequently used nest tree, accounting for nearly 29% of all nests (Hicks 2014). The survey was repeated in 2014 when 168 rookeries containing 4643 nests were recorded (this increase is explained by extended coverage rather than a rise in population). Ash was again the most frequently used nest tree, being used for over 36% of all nests. Nests were recorded in ash trees from 78 rookeries; 26 rookeries were wholly in ash trees (Hicks in prep). I did not notice any symptoms of ash dieback during either the 2013 or 2014 survey.



Discoloured Ash leaves. Photo by Roger K. Hicks

In late August 2014, I noticed that the leaves on the ash tree at the bottom of our garden in Henlow were turning an unhealthy brown colour. This was not the normal autumnal change of colour. The leaves soon fell, leaving bare branches. The leaf discolouration was similar to that shown as a symptom of ash dieback on the Forestry Commission website. This prompted me to go out and look for the same symptoms in various rookeries.

I had intended only looking for the symptoms in rookery trees but some rookeries are not readily accessible and nests counts have usually been made from a distance. It is not always easy to detect the disease symptoms at a distance, but I noticed that nearby trees seemed to be affected so began noting where ash trees with discoloured leaves were found. I only attempted to record presence

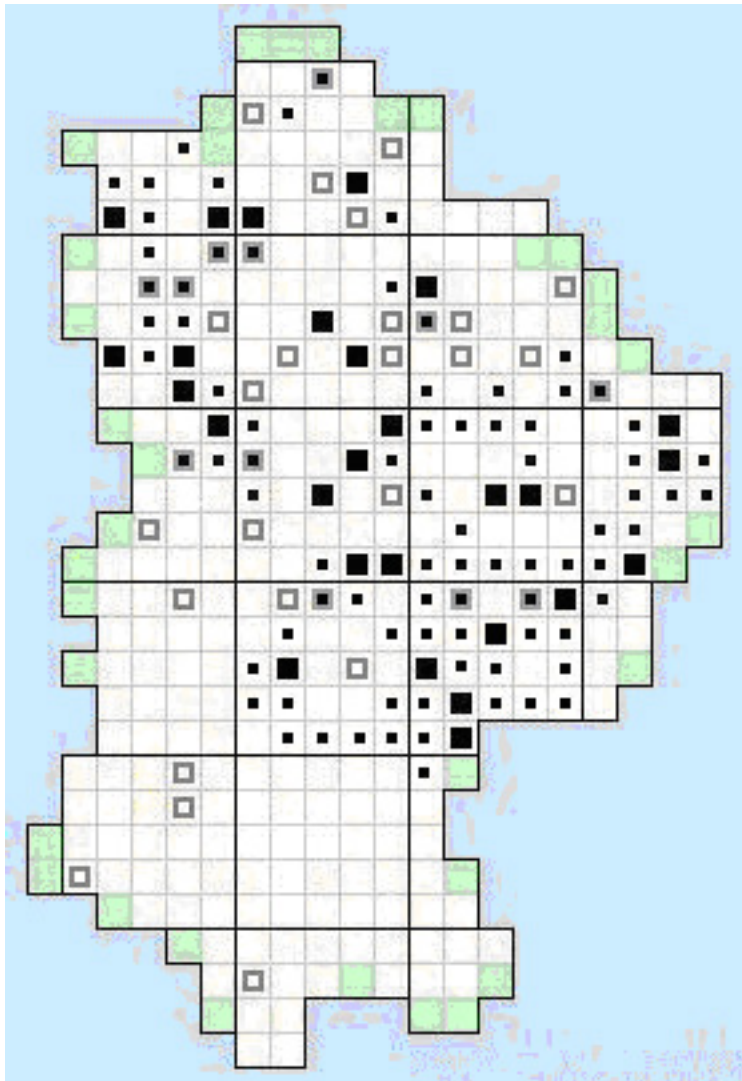
or absence of the discoloured leaves to the tetrad level but even so have found it at over 100 sites (see map). The blank areas on the map are more indicative of the areas I did not search rather than absence of symptoms.

Some ash trees were completely denuded of their leaves, e.g. at Hooks Mill on the Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire border (TL270456). Almost any ash tree noticed with bare twigs or even 'thin' foliage, on closer inspection showed discoloured leaves, whether on the tree or on the ground beneath. These symptoms were more readily visible in single trees on the roadside or in hedgerows. In a row of trees some will exhibit symptoms and others not. A row of young, less than 2m tall, saplings planted alongside the road between Potton and Cockayne Hatley (TL257494) nearly all showed discoloured leaves. I cannot remember noticing similar discolouration of leaves in previous years.

I did not notice the lesions indicative of ash dieback, so the map really only shows the distribution of discoloured leaves. The above details were sent to The Forestry Commission but they have not yet confirmed any more cases of ash dieback in Bedfordshire. It is possible these symptoms may only be evidence of environmental stress (A. Lewis pers. comm.).

I will be running the Bedfordshire Rookery Survey again in 2015. A Google map showing location of all rookeries used in recent years has been prepared and can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2015>. Currently, all rookery markers are yellow, as data is received these will be changed to green. If you would like to contribute to the survey, please get in touch (contact details below).

Tetrad map of Bedfordshire showing location of active rookeries in 2014 where at least some of the nest trees are Ash and where Ash trees with discoloured leaves were recorded



-  Rookeries in which at least some of the nests are in Ash trees
-  Ash with discoloured leaves noted in rookery (not necessarily a nest tree)
-  Ash with discoloured leaves recorded in tetrad but not in rookery
-  Ash with discoloured leaves recorded in tetrad where no rookery has been recorded

2014 Results

168 rookeries; 4643 nests: Ash trees held 1691 (36.42%) of all nests; Nests were recorded in Ash trees from 75 rookeries; 26 rookeries were wholly in ash trees

Blank tetrads and rookeries where no Ash trees with discoloured leaves were recorded are mostly areas that were not visited in the autumn of 2014.

References

- Bellamy, G. & A.R.Outen. 2012. Chalara causing ash dieback in Bedfordshire. *Wild About Beds* 165: 3
- Boon, C.R.. & A.R.Outen. 2011. *Flora of Bedfordshire*. BNHS
- Hicks, R.K. 2013. A Kick in the Rookeries. *The Hobby* 127: 9-11.
- Hicks, R.K. 2014. Rooks and rookeries in Bedfordshire. *Beds. Bird Rep.* 2013. 68 (2): 136-152.
- Hicks, R.K. in prep. Bedfordshire Rookeries: 2014 Summary. In prep.

Contact: Roger K. Hicks, 3 Elm Close, Henlow, SG16 6BY; email: [rogerkhicks\(at\)hotmail.com](mailto:rogerkhicks(at)hotmail.com)

A Morning in the Museum (A BNHS visit to The Angela Marmont Centre (AMC) at the Natural History Museum on 29th January 2015)

Text and photos by John Pitts

After recent contact with the Natural History Museum (NHM) and our very successful 'Neglected Insect Conference' the society membership was invited to inspect the NHM facilities and collection. As a result about 20 members took advantage of this offer. Getting to South Kensington on time proved slightly difficult for several of our group. Flooding of the Thameslink tunnels and an 'alert' at the museum just after public opening threw their plans to catch up with our spearhead group. However after several laps of the museum exterior all of us arrived together at the new and spacious facilities of the AMC (www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/)

centre-for-uk-biodiversity.html) in their new Darwin Centre at the west end of the museum and adjacent to the 'Cocoon' (<http://nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/history-architecture/architecture-darwin-centre/index.html>).

After an initial warm welcome and introduction by Florin Feneru (Identification and Advisory Officer) we broke into three groups and these were rotated to each of the sections of the centre according to the schedule prepared by Julia and Wilf Powel, the organisers at our end.

Each group visited the three areas:

a) Fossils and the UK fossil collection: This section was in the hands of Dr Fiona Fearnhead (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/departments-and-staff/staff-directory/fiona-fearnhead.html>). Fiona gave us an insight into her day to day business handling fossils and assisting the general public identify specimens and fielding day to day enquiries. It was evident that Fiona really welcomed these requests and was bubbling over with enthusiasm for her area of interest. My personal memory was being shown an amazing fossil of a large dragonfly preserved in fine detail within a slice of rock.

b) UK Insect & Botany Collections: Mr Florin Feneru (Identification and Advisory Officer), proudly showed us a tiny fraction of the botanical collection (see below) and he explained the ways in which these precious and sometimes very old specimens are protected against pest predation and degradation. From there we went on to the insects and we were able to examine part of the hoverfly display, including five specimens of *Mallota cimbiciformis*, (I had discovered a photo of this rarely seen in Bedfordshire in my collection recently: https://www.flickr.com/photos/pitzys_pyx/1630227111/).

The last group taken by Florin were introduced to a researcher/assistant who was working in the main office using a wonderful machine that nearly everybody coveted (see below for photo). It involved a camera and an automated 'image stacking' machine that he was using to digitise images from the NHM Diptera collection, producing the most detailed photographs in very short order. This work should be of considerable help in the identification of future specimens.



Dr Fiona Fearnhead (L)



Florin Feneru



c) Dragonfly Collection: Dr Ben Price (Curator, Odonata and Small Orders <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/departments-and-staff/staff-directory/ben-price.html>) flew us up to the seventh floor and into his secure fiefdom of dragonflies and damselflies where all the 'dragon' enthusiasts drooled over several cases Ben had set out for us to admire, including *Nannophya pygmaea* (the smallest dragonfly in the world) and some amazing Giant Helicopter Damselflies from tropical America (*Megaloprepus caeruleus*) with the longest wing span of any living Odonata.

Towards lunch time all of us met up again in the main office where we had the usual opportunity to ask questions and thank our hosts for their valuable time taken to show us the nature and manner of the NHM Collections and service. It was very evident from all that we had heard that all the NHM staff wanted to

help the everyday naturalist as well as the knowledgeable specialist, whether that was via direct access to their collection or via email or postal enquiries.

Afterwards most of the Society members attending the visit had lunch in the nearby cafe before going their separate ways. Some went to see Dippy, others to the Dinosaur Gallery while the writer attended a short lecture in the Attenborough Studio entitled 'Beetle Mania' given by Max Barclay, Collections Manager, Coleoptera and Hymenoptera (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/about-science/staff-directory/life-sciences/m-barclay/index.html>). The audience were mostly parents and their offspring. It was so good to see so many enthused faces even when there was no dumbing down of the 'naturalist' speak. Everybody was treated in an adult or appropriate manner.

Post Script

Wilf was most impressed with the facilities available for ID and particularly the photography set up. He will be using it to prepare his material for the weevil workshop he is doing for the Wildlife Trust later in the year. He was also surprised that Ben Price mentioned receiving Mike Parr's collection. Wilf knew him from when they were both working in Malawi in the 1970s .



Dr Ben Price (R)

Neglected insects: a look at lice

by Alan Outen

It's the time of year when we clean out nest boxes, which makes it an ideal time to look at external parasites:

Mallophaga (biting lice): These lice are external parasites that feed mainly on birds although some species also feed on mammals. They infest both domestic and wild animals and cause considerable irritation to their host, though none are normally parasitic on man. Most are host specific. As a group they are easily identifiable by their head which is wider than the prothorax. The body is flattened, wingless and eyeless or with small, poorly-developed eyes. The species that feed on birds typically have two claws on

the end of each tarsus while those that feed on mammals typically have just a single claw. Identification of individual species is however very difficult, not helped by a lack of available literature and the fact that there is no national recording scheme to offer support. There are 513 UK spp but no authenticated Beds records.



Shaft louse *Menopon gallinae*. Photo by ILRI/Marisol Collins



Male human head louse *Pediculus humanus capitis*. Photo by Gilles San Martin

Anoplura (sucking lice): Small wingless insects with a narrow head, eyes reduced or absent and antennae short. As their name suggests they have mouthparts adapted for piercing and sucking. Each leg ends in a strong claw well-developed for clinging to the host. All are parasites of mammals. At least three species or subspecies are human parasites. *Pediculus humanus* is divided into two subspecies, *P.humanus humanus*, the Body Louse and *P.humanus capitis*, the Head Louse. *Phthirus pubis*, the Pubic Louse, is the cause of the condition known as 'crabs'. There are 25 UK spp but no authenticated Beds records though Head lice and Pubic louse at least do certainly occur here but patient confidentiality is likely to prevent release of records by medical personnel!



APHID IDENTIFICATION TRAINING DAY

As part of the ongoing Neglected Insects in Bedfordshire Initiative Beds Natural History Society is organising this event for 2015. (There will be another Conference in 2016 covering a different range of groups).

Despite the fact that there are over 600 aphid species in the UK identification is often much easier than many might imagine as a lot of the species are host specific. Online and other available resources are excellent and there is also superb support available. The group are remarkably diverse with many very attractive forms. They are very important in the environment and as a source of food for many species.

The morning will be spent in Maulden Woods finding and collecting specimens. You will be shown how and where to look. (Other nearby sites may also be visited if time permits). For the afternoon we will be in the Greensand Trust Centre where we will have a large room available. You will be given guidance on identification resources and techniques and assistance in identifying the samples collected in the morning.

Numbers will be limited to 20 participants and there is already interest from within and out of county so early booking is advised.



Tutors: Bob Dransfield and Bob Brightwell

They are acknowledged specialists on this group and you can find more about them at <http://influentialpoints.com/aboutus.htm>. The section of their website dealing with aphids is well worth looking at http://influentialpoints.com/Gallery/Aphid_genera.htm.

Cost: £12 for BNHS and Bedfordshire Bird Club members, £15 for non-members. Fee includes tea/coffee and biscuits. *Please note: This fee is non-refundable.*

Venue: Maulden Wood and the Greensand Trust Working Woodland Centre

Date and time: Saturday 6 June 2015, 09.30 – 16.30

Please bring:

- A packed lunch
- A hand lens (x10 is adequate)
- If you have one (though not essential) a binocular low power (dissecting) microscope. These will be locked in the building while we are in the woods. If you do not have one we will ensure there are enough to share.

Please complete and tear off the application form overleaf and return with a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to Bedfordshire Natural History Society to: Mike Bird, Treasurer, BNHS, 69 Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3DN.

APHID IDENTIFICATION TRAINING DAY
Registration form



Please register me for the Aphid Identification Training Day
I enclose a cheque, made payable to Bedfordshire Natural
History Society for the sum of £

Please list all delegates below (if registering more than two
delegates please include details on a separate sheet of paper:

Delegate 1 Name: _____ BNHS member? []

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Delegate 2 Name: _____ BNHS member? []

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

* I understand that the payment is non-refundable. [] (please tick)

* I will/ will not be able to bring a dissecting/ low power binocular microscope (delete as appropriate)

✂ -----

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).

TUESDAY 21st APRIL, Maulden

Talk on glow-worms by John Tyler, a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society and keen wildlife photographer. Take an insect-eye's journey through the life of a glow-worm and find out how it produces its magical light. There is a field trip in June to see the real thing! At Maulden Village Hall, TL048380, 8.00pm. Chair: Graham Bellamy

SATURDAY 18th APRIL, Harrold CP **(F)**

Pond dipping Harrold-Odell Country Park from 2.00-4.00pm. Bring your children and grandchildren to find out what is lurking under water. Meet at the visitor centre car park, SP956566, MK43 7DS. Families



welcome. Leader: Sheila Brooke

SUNDAY 19th APRIL, Pegsdon 

BBC walk in the morning over Pegsdon Hills for spring migrants. Park and meet in the car park of the Live and Let Live Inn, Pegsdon, TL121303, SG5 3JX at 8.00am; finish by 11.00am. Leader: Jon Palmer

SATURDAY 25th APRIL, Marston Moretaine

Book launch *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire*. This is a superbly illustrated and up to date account of the 27 species of wild orchids in Bedfordshire. Collect your copy postage free if you have already placed an order or just come along to look before you buy. It is still possible to order one for £20 plus £3.75 p&p. The authors Graham Bellamy, Chris Boon and Richard Revels will also be signing copies on the day from 2-4.30pm at the Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park (Marston Vale), Marston Moretaine, TL004417, MK43 0PR.

SUNDAY 26th APRIL, Broom 

BBC Birding around Broom Gravel Pits in the early morning for spring migrants. Meet at the end of Kings Road, off High Street, Broom TL172433 to start 7.00am, finish by 12.00 noon. Leader: Matt Burgess

WEDNESDAY 29th APRIL, Barton

Morning ramble 10.00am - 12.30pm, walk around Barton Hills NNR to look for Pasqueflowers, butterflies and other spring wildlife. Park with care along Church Road TL085304, MK45 4LA. Leader: Sheila Brooke

SUNDAY 3rd MAY, Maulden Wood 

BBC visit for the annual Dawn Chorus in Maulden Wood. Meet in the lay-by at the top of Deadman's Hill on the A6, TL073394, at 4.15am. Hot fried breakfast to follow at 7.00am, price £3.00. Please order 7 days in advance with John Adams on 01234 381532. Leader: Pete Marshall

WEDNESDAY 6th MAY, Bedford

Visit to the Higgins Bedford, Castle Lane, Bedford MK40 3DX, 11.00 - 12.30. A special version of *Collections in Focus* session is offered with a specialist talk and chance to see items not on display. Restaurant facilities are available. Cost adults £10.35, concessions £8.25. Numbers are limited so please book by 24 April with Sheila Brooke, 18 Park Hill Toddington, Dunstable LU5 6AW, 01525 873396 or [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com).

SATURDAY 9th MAY, Rushmere (F)

Visit to Rushmere Country Park for a family afternoon with a variety of events. Take a closer look at the wildlife to be found here. Displays will be presented in and around the Rushmere Visitor Centre. Spy on the heronry, look at what is caught in pitfall traps, sweep nets and moth traps, see the displays and take part in quizzes. Especially suitable for young families and BNHS YounGnats. Any time between 2.00pm and 4.00pm. Use the Linslade Road entrance. Car park £2.00. Leader: Julia Powell

SUNDAY 17th MAY, Whipsnade

Visit Whipsnade Downs at 11.00am to look for the Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers in a joint meeting with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Butterfly Conservation. Meet at the car park SP999184. Leader: Greg Herbert

SUNDAY 17th MAY, Minsmere 

BBC visit to RSPB Minsmere in Suffolk for breeding specialties and spring migrants. Meet in reserve car park TM472672, IP17 3BY at 9.00am. Leader: Don Green

WEDNESDAY 27th MAY, Swiss Garden, Shuttleworth (F)

Visit to Swiss Garden for their Invertebrate Walk Day, joint with Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group. There will be walks through the grounds plus recording activities and the nature table will be on display. Meet in the car park at 10.00am TL149488, SG18 9EP. Families welcome. Further Details from Alan Outen.

WEDNESDAY 27th MAY, Dunstable 

BBC visit to Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works for breeding birds. Meet in the birdwatchers' car park, off

Thorn Road TL004242 at 7pm. Leader: Rob Dazley, Honourary Warden

SATURDAY 30th MAY, Rothamsted

Morning visit to Park Grass experiment, Rothamsted Research. A chance to see this uniquely elegant and internationally important 'Classical' experiment started in 1856 showing the effects of soil acidity and artificial fertiliser treatments on grassland communities. Places are limited so please contact Julia Powell to book [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com), 01582 661328. Leader: Julia Powell

FRIDAY 5th JUNE, Totternhoe (F)

Creatures of the Night 7.45 - 11.00 joint evening meeting with the Wildlife Trust looking for glow-worms and other nocturnal wildlife. Under 18s must be accompanied by an adult. Cost £3 adults, £2 children and £6 family. Booking is essential: contact Ruth Sneath 01525 874317. All details will be provided when you book. Leader: Ruth Sneath

SUNDAY 7th JUNE, New Forest 

BBC outing all day birding trip to the New Forest for local breeding specialties. Meet in Beaulieu area at Yew Tree Heath car park SU364063 at 9.00am. Leader: Kevin Sharpe

SATURDAY 13th JUNE, Knocking Hoe NNR and Pegsdon Hills NR (F) (L)

Field meeting in search of orchids and chalk flora. Park and meet in the field of Hitchin Road opposite the Live and Let Live Inn, Pegsdon TL120301, SG5 3JX at 10.30am. Bring a picnic lunch if you wish to see both sites. Families welcome. Leader: Graham Bellamy

WEDNESDAY 17th JUNE, Sandy Smith 

BBC outing joint with BNHS to Sandy Smith Nature Reserve, Clophill, for an evening walk looking for resident birds and other wildlife. Park and meet at the entrance gate to the reserve TL110387 at 7.00pm, finish by 9.30pm. Leader: Pete Smith

SATURDAY 20th JUNE, Silsoe (F) (L)

Invertebrates & other wildlife at 10.00am. Joint meeting with the Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group to record mainly invertebrates and an opportunity to explore the park and gardens. Meet at the English Heritage car park TL09116 35582. The entrance fee will be waived but please arrive promptly. You may wish to stay all day in which case bring lunch or visit the restaurant. Families welcome. Leader: Alan Outen

SATURDAY 27th JUNE, Sharpenhoe Clappers (F)

Field meeting looking for Pyramidal Orchids and other chalk flora as well as Dark Green Fritillary and other butterfly species. Families welcome. Meet in the car park TL065295, MK45 4SH at 10.00am. Leader: Graham Bellamy

SUNDAY 28th JUNE, Norfolk/Suffolk Brecks 

BBC day trip to Norfolk/Suffolk Brecks for local specialties. Meet in RSPB Lakenheath Fen Reserve car park, Suffolk TL722865, IP27 9AD at 9.00am. Leader: Pete Marshall

If you wish to know more about any of the events please contact either Sheila Brooke, 18 Park Hill, Toddington, Dunstable LU5 6AW 01525 873396 [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com).
or Julia Powell [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com) 01582 661328.

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



Hoopoe wishes everyone a happy Easter!

Photo by John Pitts