



# Wild About Beds

Summer 2017

## Holy hoverflies!

by John O'Sullivan

High summer is a great time for watching hoverflies, and among them is the common and striking *Myathropa florea*. Living mainly in woodlands, the species is strongly territorial, and males will defend a patch of space by sitting on an exposed leaf or twig and zooming out to challenge rivals or encounter females. They will even come and hover near a human passer-by, buzzing loudly. They are of course quite harmless; they just like to know what's going on! Another good place to look for them is on the tops of umbellifers, particularly Hogweed and Angelica, where they feed on nectar and pollen.



*Myathropa florea*. Photo by John O'Sullivan

*Myathropa* is often quite a large fly, approaching the size of a honey bee, and often bulkier. The markings are black, and the colours deep orange and, often, a lovely greenish-gold.

For years, hoverfly enthusiasts would confirm the identification of *Myathropa*, when static, by the two pale stripes that cross the thorax, which is a unique field-mark among these insects. And then somebody noticed. Between those two pale lines, this hoverfly has a Batman symbol on its back! In the picture, look towards the rear of the thorax: can you see the symbol? If you're not convinced, why not find your own, better example? This is not pulp fiction, they really are out there! Just get down to your nearest wood, and search the perches and the flowers. Capes are optional.

## In this 183<sup>rd</sup> issue:

### Contents

Tell us your programme ideas!	2
Help wanted: event volunteers	3
Help wanted II: plant spotters	3

### Contents

BUG LABs are back!	4
A great year for dragonflies	5
The great Flitton Barn Storm	6
Upcoming events	7

Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society  
[www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk)  
Registered charity number 268659



BedsLife  
[www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://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 Maulden; the Christmas Members' Evening is held in 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, email [membership@bnhs.org.uk](mailto:membership@bnhs.org.uk).

## BedsLife

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership is a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire's biodiversity. The Partnership oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan, which can be found online at [www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk).

### Editor: Heather Webb

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

Email: [newsletter@bnhs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bnhs.org.uk).

Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past Wild About Beds issue are welcome/essential for continuity. Please do send articles to me either as an attachment via email or through the post. Pictures are always welcome; material required by **15 September 2017** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **September 2017**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

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## Tell us your programme ideas!

Julia and I are currently compiling the programme for Winter 2017/18 and we are always looking for ideas for future meetings. Many members have already made suggestions, some of which we have followed up and some are still pending. However, it is great to have a selection to pursue and so if you have been to a meeting or an event that you think would be suitable for a BNHS meeting, or if you have been to a site that members would find interesting for a 2-hour ramble please let us know. We want to arrange meetings that you would like to come to so please let us have your thoughts.

If you would like to join this small team again please let us know.

Sheila Brooke [brooke.se@btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se@btinternet.com) Julia Powell [juliacpowell800@gmail.com](mailto:juliacpowell800@gmail.com)

*Hoopoe has been asked by the editor to remind everyone about the **Christmas Social**, which will be held December 5 in Maulden Village Hall, starting at 7.30pm.*

*Hope to see you there!*



## Help Wanted!

by Julia Powell

The BNHS has been invited to participate in the following events and I am looking for volunteers. This means helping out with a range of activities dependent on the number of volunteers at each event. These range from being observant on walks and bug hunts, to helping with the nature table, quizzes and displays using our own gazebo.

So far we need help with the following events:

National Meadows Day	1 July 12:30pm: Have a presence with the bug hunting and guided walks. Bring your own picnic. On the Hayfield at Blows Downs, the largest WLT site in Bedfordshire.
Family Barn Storm, Flitton Moor	8 July 1pm–6pm: Help with the BNHS stand
Pegsdon Hills 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary with WLT	5 August 10am–3pm: Have a presence with the bug hunting and guided walks
GST Summer Fair	13 August 11am–4pm: Help with the BNHS stand
Clifton Churchyard bioblitz	13 August 10:30am–4pm: Help with the BNHS nature table
Swiss Garden Invertebrate Day	16 August 10am: elp with the BNHS stand

Please contact Julia Powell 01582 661328 [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com)

Many Thanks, Julia



## Plant Spotters Needed

by John Wakely

Every 20 years the BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland) publishes an atlas of the distribution of plants in the UK. This is an important indicator of change. The next Atlas is due for publication in 2020.

The Beds Flora group is busy collecting records. Although there was a blip in recording effort after the publication of *Flora of Bedfordshire*, all the common county species have been found in each 10km square (the Atlas resolution). Recording effort is now targeted at uncommon species, particularly those recorded in the previous Atlas but not re-found since. Lists of these are available for each 10km square and I will gladly share this information.



All BNHS members will have some botanical knowledge and an idea of what is common and normal. This is a plea for records of any unusual plants you come across. It may well be that it is not uncommon, but on the other hand it could just be a national rarity. All records of possible rarities will be checked.

All records are welcome. Location (to at least 6 figure grid reference if possible), date, and a tentative identification/photo/description are essential. Phone, email, post, iRecord, Adnoto (orchids and arable weeds) are valid means of communicating records.

**BUG LABs are back!**

by Erika Pratt, The Greensand Trust

The Greensand Trust summer bug hunting activities, BUG LABs are planned again for the end of July and beginning of August this year.

Society members are always very supportive and join in to help support the Greensand Trust and guide young participants in identifying their creepy crawlies at a number of sites across the Greensand Ridge.

This year will be the 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday of BUG LAB and it has grown in popularity considerably over the years (some of you may have heard about the 200+ children who turned up all at once to join us at Rushmere last summer!)

This year we'll be operating slightly differently, still working with our partners BNHS and Central Bedfordshire Council but running a couple of extra sessions, requesting advance booking and limiting numbers so we know who to expect and can ensure they have a better quality experience. (It may also prevent my hair turning grey any faster!)

Rushmere Country Park, Heath and Reach, near Leighton Buzzard	Thursday 27 July	12.30–1.45 pm	2.00–3.15 pm
Houghton Hall Park, Houghton Regis	Monday 31 July	12.30–1.45 pm	2.00–3.15 pm
Linslade Wood, near Leighton Buzzard	Tuesday 1 Aug	12.30–1.45 pm	2.00–3.15 pm
Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, Leighton Buzzard	Wednesday 2 Aug	12.30–1.45 pm	2.00–3.15 pm
Flitwick Wood, Flitwick	Thursday 3 Aug	12.30–1.45 pm	
Centenary Wood, Pulloxhill	Fri 4 Aug	12.30–1.45 pm	
Rushmere Country Park, Heath and Reach, near Leighton Buzzard	Monday 7 August	12.30–1.45 pm	2.00–3.15 pm
Working Woodlands Centre, Maulden	Tuesday 8 August	12.30–1.45 pm	

The events are a great way of encouraging children and families to explore local habitats, to look up close at the natural world and to have fun: hopefully we will also inspire future members of the Natural History Society!

If you'd like to help please contact Erika at the Greensand Trust [erika.pratt\(at\)greensandtrust.org](mailto:erika.pratt(at)greensandtrust.org)

If you'd like to book (sessions cost £2.50) please visit the Greensand Trust website [www.greensandtrust.org](http://www.greensandtrust.org) from 1 June 2017. Places are limited!





## Dragonflies on the up

by Rory Morrissey, *Dragonfly Recorder*

The big news of 2016 was that the willow emerald damselfly had expanded its range westwards through Bedfordshire and even into Buckinghamshire. The odd singleton had probably been seen in Beds before 2016, but six were at Duck End NR on one day and a pair was seen later in tandem, probably ovipositing. All of the Bedfordshire sightings would have flown in from the east. Now we are waiting to find out whether they will breed in the county.

The weather in the spring of 2017 was poor for dragonflies, but it has since improved to the point where a bumper year for odonata seems possible. The numbers of common blue damselflies and banded demoiselles have been phenomenal in recent weeks, while other summer species seem to be doing very well.



The willow emerald damselfly *Chalcolestes viridis* has arrived in Bedfordshire. Photo by Thomas Bresson



The variable damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum*. Photo by Gilles San Martin

On 2 June 2017 Felmersham NR (Finger Lakes) turned up a number of variable damselflies. Steve Cham initially found a group of them and has since reported a pair in tandem. Variable damselflies have been recorded only rarely in Bedfordshire, although there is a large population just over the border at Paxton Pits. We don't know whether they are breeding at Felmersham but suspect they must be there or nearby.

Lastly, we have been waiting a long time for a beautiful demoiselle to turn up in Bedfordshire. It fell to Alan Nelson, the Buckinghamshire recorder, to find one on the Chichely Brook at Cranfield on 13 June. Again, this probably flew in from elsewhere - there is a large population at Little Linford Wood in Bucks.

Suddenly having all these new species is amazing. Bedfordshire had 21 resident species of odonata and could very soon have several more. The only trouble is that the newcomers can be a bit tricky to identify and differentiate from the usual species that we have, so it's back to the field guide for help.



The aptly-named beautiful demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo*. Photo by Bernard Dupont



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.

# **FAMILY BARN STORM**

**Saturday 8 July from 1.00–6.00pm**

**Art exhibition**  
focusing on work by local artists and including some of Jack  
Crawley's work

**Calling all local artists: if you would like to show  
your work at this event please get in touch**

**BBQ from 1.30pm**

**Themed guided walks & Nature Trail**

**Duck race c. 4.30pm**

**Children's activities**  
including pond dipping, willow creations, etc.

**Displays by local wildlife groups etc.**

**And much more on the Moor**





Events Programme Summer 2017

Please check the website [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk) or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

In bad weather, the leaders may cancel the event if conditions are unsuitable. Please check early on the day.

Indoor talks start at 8pm except the AGM which starts at 7:30pm and all are held at Maulden Village Hall, grid reference TL048380, post code MK45 2DP. Parking is free.

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

For field meetings, please wear stout footwear and warm clothing, bring a hat, water and sun cream if it is hot. OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

**REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED and children under 16 years must be accompanied by a responsible adult.**

**Unfortunately some trips will not be suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs. Please contact the leader in advance if you have any concerns about accessibility.**

Please check the web site [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk) or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

(F) Particularly suitable for families and young people.

(L) Bring a picnic lunch for all day events.



Meetings organised by the ornithological section, the Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC).

**SATURDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JULY, FLITTON 1pm**

**Stop Press – new event!** Visit the Family Barn Storm at Flitton. There will be an art exhibition by local artists including some works by Jack Crawley, a BBQ, duck race and other children's activities, pond dipping, nature trail, and displays by local wildlife groups including the BNHS and more. Meet at the end of Brook Lane parking with consideration along Brook Lane TL058359, MK45 5EJ.

Leader: David Sedgley

**SUNDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> JULY, STREATLEY 10.30 am** 

**Joint Day Trip** to Thursley Common NNR, Surrey for heathland species plus some excellent dragonflies and butterflies. Meet in the reserve car park, SU900417, on B3001 south of Elstead.

Leader: Pete Marshall

**THURSDAY 27<sup>RD</sup> JULY, SANDY 10.30am**

**Walk** at The Lodge, RSPB headquarters looking at the different stages of heathland restoration and the wildlife it supports. Meet in the car park (free for RSPB members), TL191485, SG19 2DL.

Leader: Betty Cooke

**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, EATON BRAY 10.30am**

**Visit** Bellows Mill for dragonflies and other invertebrates. Follow Bellows Mill Lane to the end where you will see the old mill house in front of you. Carry on round to the right past the short-let chalets and into the field by the lake to a crushed stone car park, SP980196, LU6 1QZ. The lake is fed from the millstream and there is a large accessible field to the north east, separated from the lake by the tiny River Ouzel. The lake is fairly accessible for netting pond life, with some bankside vegetation and field-edge vegetation, trees and shrubs. The large field is mostly long grass with wild flowers and mown paths and is suitable for netting invertebrates. There may be a marquee by the lake as the venue is used for weddings. There are visitors' toilet facilities at Bellows Mill but no refreshments. There is a shop and a chippy in Eaton Bray and a nice café called the Heirloom in Edlesborough, all easily drivable.

Leader: Rory Morrisey

**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, DUNSTABLE 7pm** 

**Visit** Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works for a variety of wetland species. Meet in Birdwatcher's car park, off Thorn Road, TL004242.

Leader Pete Marshall

**SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, HEATH & REACH 11am–4pm (F)**

**Rushmere Summer Fair:** Visit the BNHS stand to see the Nature Table, photographic displays and quizzes. There will be plenty of other stalls to look and a programme of events. See the GST web site for more details. Park in the Rushmere car park, SP912284, LU7 0EB. Parking £2.00.

Leader: Julia Powell

**SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, CLIFTON 10.30am–4pm (F)**

**Bioblitz** in Clifton churchyard and vicarage garden. The nature table will also be present. There will be an opportunity to try out techniques such as beating, sweeping, sieving and bark brushing. The area covered may be extended around the village to the hedgerows etc. along Stanford Lane, the River Ivel including the old Navigation canal and Clifton Bury. Meet in the church yard, TL166392, SG17 5EL.

Leaders: Peter Topley and Alan Outen

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, SHUTTLEWORTH 10am (F)**

**Visit** Swiss Garden for their Invertebrate Walk Day, a joint meeting with the Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group (BIG). There will be walks through the grounds, insect recording activities and nature table display. *Please book with Alan Outen to reserve your place:* [alanouten\(at\)virginmedia.com](mailto:alanouten(at)virginmedia.com), 01462 811374. Entrance fee will be waived for members that enter with the group at 10:00 prompt. Meet in car park, TL150448, SG18 9EP.

Leader: Alan Outen

**WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST, HARROLD 10.30am (F) (L)**

**Walk** around Harrold-Odell Country Park. You can picnic in the outdoor classroom but the café has changed hands. The current franchise is not as popular yet. Please check before the day if you are going to depend on getting food there. Meet at the visitor centre car park entrance, SP956566, MK43 7DS.

Leaders: Janet Munro and Sheila Brooke

**SATURDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER, ASHRIDGE 10.30am**

**Walk** in Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI looking at the landscape changes, commons and chalk grasslands. Meet outside the Brownlow café, SP970130, HP4 1LX.

Leader: Sheila Brooke

**SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, MAULDEN 9:30am–12 noon (F)**

**Visit** Duck End NR for Small Mammal Trapping (mice, voles and shrews). Limited parking at the site in Moor Lane, Maulden, TL051374, MK45 2DJ.

Leader: Mick McCarrick

**TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, MAULDEN 8pm**

**Talk:** "Are Latin Names a Joke?" by Alan Outen, a long standing and enthusiastic BNHS member and a mine of information about all aspects of natural history. He will be giving us a look at some of the humour that has been incorporated into scientific nomenclature from Linnaeus to the present day. Hopefully fun rather than intimidating.

If you wish to know more about any of the events please contact either

Sheila Brooke Tel: 01525 873396 Mobile: 07905 949901 Email: [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com)

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