



Wild About Beds

Spring 2018

Spoiler alert!



Spoiler alert for the 2017 butterfly report! Red Admiral's reported distribution of 259 1km squares was the largest ever for any species! (It was Green-veined White with 250 in 2009 before anyone asks!). It's also currently leading in 2018...

Last year's - and possibly this year's distribution king was the Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*. Photo by Keith Balmer

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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 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.

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 June 2018** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **June 2018**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

2018 BNHS membership rates

Dear Members:

Thank you to all those who have renewed their subscriptions for 2018. They have been coming in thick and fast! Unfortunately some of you who pay by standing order/online have not increased your payments to the new rate and are still paying at the old rate. Could I ask you to check please that you have amended your payments. If you haven't, perhaps you would be kind enough to settle the difference as soon as possible and ensure that your future payments are adjusted accordingly. Many thanks.

New rates as from 1st January 2018:

Ordinary Member	£19.00	Corporate Member	£38.00
Associate Member	£7.00	Student Member (under 18)	FREE
Senior Citizen	£13.00	Student Member (over 18 - full-time education)	£8.00

Additional subscription for membership of the Bird Club £6.00 per person

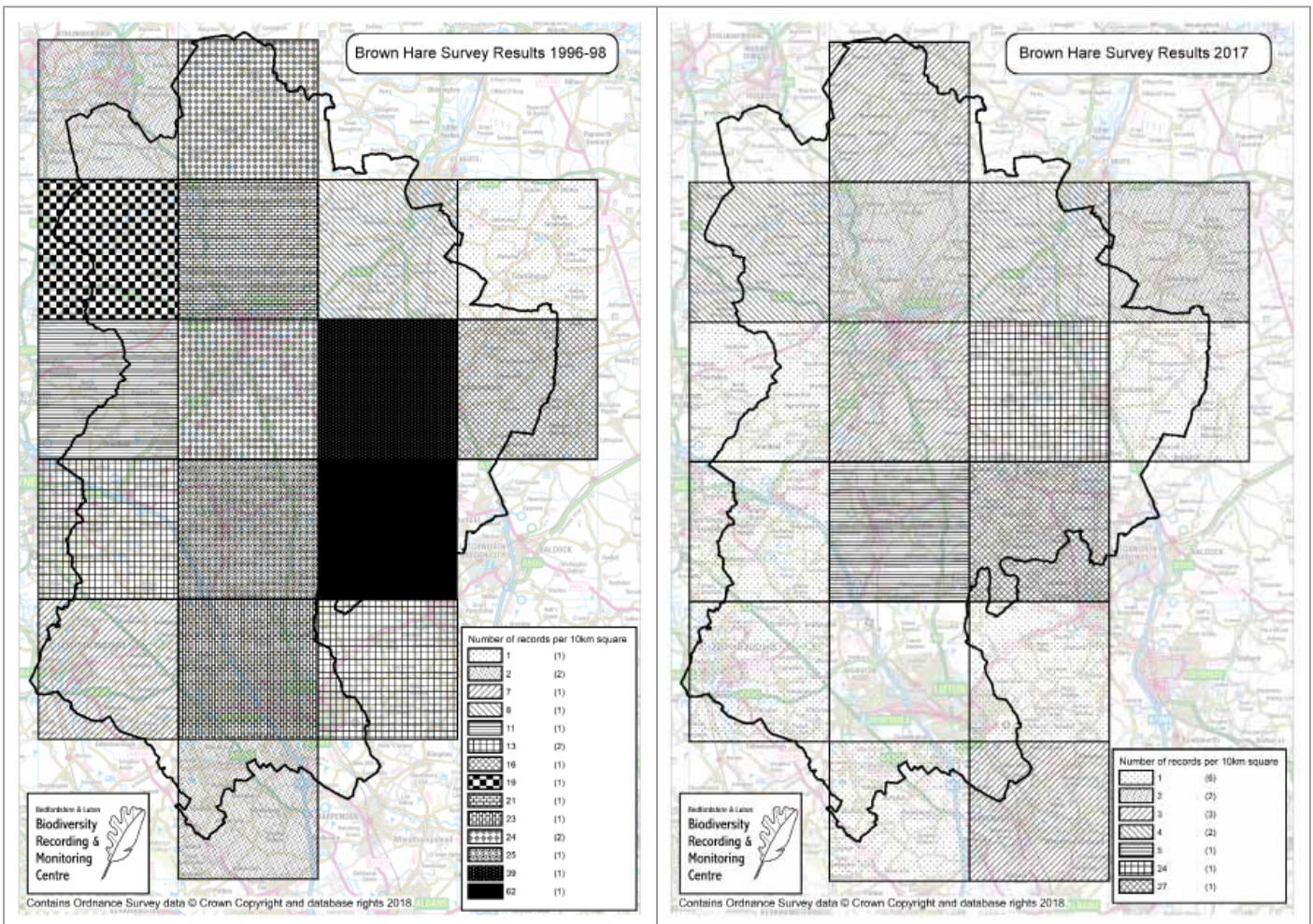
Kind regards

Mary Sheridan

Membership Secretary

Bedfordshire Hare survey
by Ken Winder, Survey Co-ordinator

The Bedfordshire Mammal Group decided to carry out a new two year survey of hares in Bedfordshire in order that we could compare the distribution with the survey undertaken between 1996–1998. The first year of the survey has now been completed and though we received many records in 2017, there are still huge gaps in the distribution compared with the previous survey. We hope therefore that in 2018 we can obtain many more records in order to cover the county as fully as possible so that we can ascertain if the distribution has indeed changed. So, if you see any hares, as well as sending a record of this to Adnoto could you please also complete the survey form on the Beds Mammal Group website (under research > hare survey) as this will automatically send this record to the mammal group. Many thanks to all of you who have already sent in records.



Brown Hare survey results from 1996-98 (left) and the current survey to date (right). Darker squares represent more records. Maps courtesy the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC)

Winter Highlights 2017–18

Boxing day walk at Woburn December 26th 2017

by Betty Cooke

Nineteen people enjoyed an invigorating walk on a cold but sunny Boxing Day, led as usual by Mary Sheridan. Good views were had of at least five kinds of deer, including Fallow, Red, Rusa, Chinese Water Deer, and a particularly close encounter when some Pere David stags halted our group while they crossed the path ahead of us.

Visit to Wardown House Museum 29th January

article and photo by John Pitts

On 29th January members of the society were invited to visit Wardown Park Museum, formerly the Luton Museum & Art Gallery in Luton. It is housed in a large Victorian mansion in Wardown Park on the outskirts of the town centre. The museum collection focuses on the traditional crafts of Bedfordshire, notably lace-making and hat-making.

The visit went smoothly after we managed to navigate to the overflow car park. Our small group of members finally met up in the library (in the absence of the museum's own staff guides) and from there Nicky Nicholl – one of our own members, who also occasionally volunteers at Wardown House – gave us a brief resume of the museum's status and then showed us the cabinet that contained a few samples from the much more extensive specimen collection held upstairs but not displayed.

From there we all split up to look at the various collectons on the ground and first floors. Later Nicky was able in small groups to show us the sad & sorry state of the botanical and other specimens housed in the attic. This store room has several old cabinets and stacked files containing important herbariums and other valuable natural history specimens going back many years.¹



The cabinet displays only a small part of the much larger museum collection of specimens



Afterwards most of us enjoyed a hot drink and cake if the comfortable ground floor cafe.

On the way out we noted the brass plaque in memory of John Dony and the lime tree nearby that members planted as another memorial in honour of this pioneer of natural history in Bedfordshire.

¹ The BNHS is hopeful that something can be done to safeguard these valuable collections and is in course of finding out what action needs to be taken.

Member Nicky Nicholl came to the rescue as impromptu guide.

About Wardown House Museum

The first floor galleries were refurbished and opened as the Luton Life displays in February 2003. This was partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The museum displays explore stories of Luton people over the past 150 years. The galleries contain several listening posts where visitors are able to listen to local people telling their stories and describing key events. Additionally there are also several interactive displays as well as computer screens with historic photographs of Luton.

The ground floor displays include the Living Landscape gallery which displays local archaeology and natural history, including the Shillington Roman coin hoard and an Iron Age mirror,[finds from Waulud's Bank are also on display.

The Lace Gallery displays some of the museum's extensive collection of locally produced lace work.

The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment gallery, produced by the Imperial War Museum, explains the history of the local regiment.

The museum holds around three to four temporary exhibitions each year in the temporary exhibition gallery on the ground floor.

WAB & Rushmere Half Term Extravaganza 14th February

article and photos by John Pitts



On 14th February several members of the society took our well known and spectacular Nature Table to the Greensand Trust's "Half Term" event at their Rushmere site near Leighton Buzzard .

Nicely set in the Rushmere Atrium entrance we had a steady flow of excited children and their parents closely examining the various exhibits (particularly the Mink), answering Wilf's nature quiz as well as asking lots of questions ably fielded by Michael Bird, Sheila Brooke, Wilf Powell & Julia Powell and other helpers.



College Lake 11th March

article and photos by Sheila Brooke

Seven of us enjoyed a ramble round College Lake this morning. We were given a short but interesting introduction to the site outlining its history as a chalk quarry and its subsequent transformation into a flagship nature reserve of BBOWT.

We set off on a clockwise circuit in lovely sunshine feeling that Spring was at last on the way. We counted 27 species of bird - so close to 28 with "there's a Kingfisher - oh no it's a Blue Tit" as the sun shone off the Blue Tit! The Lapwings were delightful to watch and the Canada Geese were as noisy as ever!

We were too early for the Arable Weeds and the Cornflowers - that is for another day!



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.

In memory: Don Green 3 Dec 1936–12 Nov 2017

by David Anderson

The sad death of Don Green has robbed the Bedfordshire Natural History Society of one of its longest serving members, but more importantly it is the passing of a giant of the Society.

Don joined the BNHS in 1964 and within two years was elected onto the Society Council, a position he continued to hold right up to his death. In 1978 Don was elected as Society Chairman, which he held until 1984. Since the formation of the Bird Club in 1992, and right up until 2017, Don held the position of Meetings Secretary; he was President from 2011 to 2013 and Vice President from 2017. In 1999 Don and his wife Maureen were Awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Society and the Bird Club and I can do no better than to repeat the announcement that John Adams wrote for the 1999 Journal:

“Council this year were pleased to award Don and Maureen Green honorary life membership of the Society. This award is given in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the Society over many years. Since they joined the Society in 1964 Don has served as an Honorary Officer in almost every capacity possible.

- Honorary Secretary 1969–1975
- Honorary Chairman 1978–1984
- Chairman of the Programme Committee 1985–1993
- Council Member 1966–present

I have been privileged to know Don for many years and to have worked on a variety of committees with him, where his quiet humour and calm logic has helped us through many intricate discussions. Don was blessed with immense common sense and experience that are invaluable to our Society. He was instrumental in the steering committee which led to the creation of the Bird Club which today is such an outstanding success.

In recent times Don produced the Bird Club Programme where quality and variety has led to consistently high attendances. As meeting projectionist Don and Maureen have struggled through many a winter's night to shed light on the screen. Truly a man and woman for all seasons. Congratulations to you both.”

The Natural History Society is truly indebted to Don for the healthy condition that both it and the Bird Club are in today. In so many ways, Don's contribution has been enormous and he will be sorely missed for that and for his lasting friendship.

As part of the Natural History Programme and sometimes as a loose group of BNHS Members, Don arranged and led many week and weekend trips, some in the UK and some further afield. The annual Solway winter trip to see the geese before they fly back north has over the years allowed a large number of people to enjoy this spectacle. A trip three of us took years ago at the end of winter was to a then-unknown reservoir south of Paris to see the Cranes on their migration back north. It was a typically well researched and adventurous idea, even though it did mean staying at a very basic village bar. Only Don would be brave enough to think it was possible and he proved himself right. Many others in the BNHS followed in later years, by then with much improved accommodation and a known itinerary. They were great fun and many in the BNHS will recall them with fond memories.

By an odd act of fate, perhaps Don's greatest and final achievement was the Bird Club's 25-year anniversary Meeting in September this year, with the celebrity TV naturalist Iolo Williams. Apart from coming up with the suggestion for such a meeting, he proposed the speaker, contact him and negotiated a significantly reduced fee. The meeting was a resounding success with an attendance of well over 100 people enjoying a great evening. Don felt he was not well enough to attend himself but the lure of the event got to him, so I drove him and Maureen to the meeting with the understanding that we would return home afterwards. But would you believe it, he changed the plan to include a visit to the post-meeting pub gathering. This final meeting, organised largely by Don, is a fitting tribute to his spirit and character.

I am sure we all mourn his going; I know I do.

Thank you Don for so many years of service and friendship.



Events Programme Spring 2018

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

In severe weather, the leaders may cancel the event if conditions are unsuitable. Please check the website early on the day or contact Sheila or Julia.

Indoor talks start at 8pm 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 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)

WEDNESDAY 11th APRIL, THERFIELD HEATH 10:30am (F)

Walk on Therfield Heath for Pasque Flowers and other spring chalk grassland wildlife. Approach Royston on A505 until roundabout at TL333403. Take Royston exit road. Turn first right up hill and take car park on right at TL336401.

Leader: Graham Bellamy

TUESDAY 17th APRIL, MAULDEN

Talk 'Genetic Engineering-what is it and do we need it?' by Peter Lillford CBE, visiting Professor at the School of Engineering, Birmingham. An explanation of the basic science and how it developed focussing on work with plants although Peter is willing to discuss human and animal experiments.

SUNDAY 22nd APRIL, PEGSDON 8am 

BBC Morning walk over Pegsdon Hills for spring migrants. Park and meet in car park of Live and Let Live Inn, Pegsdon, TL121303. Finish around 11.00am.

Leader: Jon Palmer.

SUNDAY 29th APRIL, BROOM 7am 

BBC Early morning birding around Broom Gravel Pits for spring migrants. Park and meet at end of Kings Road, off High Street, Broom, TL172433. Finish by 12.00 noon.

Leader: Stefan Baltruschat.

WEDNESDAY 2nd MAY, SILSOE 7pm

Walk in Wrest Park - with three hundred years of landscaping at Wrest Park, its history comes alive through its trees. Many survive today, from the early C18th, the Capability Brown designed influence and later C19th post war development. The changes in tree planting fashion shaped Wrest Park with the woodland, avenues and garden landscape we enjoy today. No entrance fee. Meet in the car park TL088355, MK45 4HR.

Leader: David Alderman.

SUNDAY 20th MAY, WHIPSNADE 11am (F)

Visit Whipsnade Downs for the Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, a joint meeting with Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Butterfly Conservation and S Beds Local WT Group. Meet in the Bison Hill car park, SP999184, LU6 2LA.

Leader: Greg Herbert.

SATURDAY 26th MAY, FLITWICK 10am-4pm (F) (L)

Visit Flitwick Moor SSSI for the Invertebrate Day joint meeting with Flit Vale Wildlife Trust Local Group, recording invertebrates and other wildlife. Meet in car park at end of Folly Lane, off Maulden Road by Folly Farm, TL045354, MK45 5BW.

Leader: Colin Carpenter

SUNDAY 3rd JUNE HEATH and REACH 10:30am – 4pm

Visit Rushmere Country Park to take a closer look at the wildlife to be found here in a family bioblitz. Displays in and around the Rushmere Visitor Centre. Lots of help with identifying species, see the BNHS displays and take part in our quizzes. Especially suitable for young families and BNHS YounGnats and bring your grandchildren. Park in Rushmere car park £3 on exit.

Leader: Julia Powell

WEDNESDAY 13th JUNE, CLOPHILL 7pm 

BBC evening walk joint with BNHS around Sandy Smith Nature Reserve, Clophill looking for resident birds and other wildlife. Park and meet at the entrance gate to the reserve TL110387.

Leaders: Peter Smith and Sue Raven

WEDNESDAY 27th JUNE, LINSLADE 10:30

Walk in Linslade Woods. Linslade Woods has an old woodland area, known as Bluebell Wood, some 1000 years old, and, largely surrounding it, a former agricultural area planted as woodland about 30 years ago. The woods boast a Rookery, ongoing Hazel coppicing, scores of common orchids, many butterflies including Marbled Whites, a small seasonal pond, and if we're really lucky we might see a Roe Deer. There are no facilities, and the ground is steep and uneven in parts. Park in the lay-by to the north of the wood on either side of the Stoke Road, at SP90882626 (west of the railway tunnel). From here it is a few minutes walk to the canalside Globe Inn!

Leader: Judith Knight

As you read this, you will realise that the summer programme has been finalised. Sheila and I like to include members' suggestions so if you have any ideas about outings, talks or workshops please get in contact. Any help organising events would also be gratefully received.

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)

or Julia Powell Tel: 01582 661328 Mobile: 07958 161938 Email: [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com)

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

Bedfordshire Natural History Society: Charity number 268659

Hoopoe would like to remind everyone to please make sure you've paid your subs to the correct new rate: you might need to top up so do check!

