



# Wild About Beds

Winter 2018/19

## Volunteer(s) wanted by John Pitts

I expect you are all aware that BNHS has an excellent website at <https://www.bnhs.co.uk/>. The society was very lucky to have Keith Balmer to set this site up and run it so well for more years than I or he may wish to recall. He has added some very useful bits like 'Grab a grid reference' and Adnoto. Keith is now transitioning the day to day management of the web site to Hugh Griffiths.



This is a short-term solution as in the longer term we need to revamp the site. The managing council wondered if within our society's members there might be a willing person with relevant web building and management experience willing to volunteer to help the society in this area?

Please contact anybody on Council if you can help.

BNHS needs you!

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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 March 2019** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **March 2019**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

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## An apology from the Editor

The last issue (188 – Autumn 2018) included a photo of a Southern Migrant Hawker by Paul Ritchie instead of the one submitted and taken by the author John Curd. The editor apologises for not having verified Mr Curd's ownership of the submitted photograph before substituting it for a copyright-free photo.

## Sponsorship for our Insect Conference

by John Pitts

At the commencement of our recent sell-out and very successful 'More Neglected Insects in Bedfordshire' conference held at the Forest Centre Marston Vale Country Park on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2018, Mr Richard Campey of One Stop Nature Shop (<https://www.onestopnature.co.uk/>) very kindly donated a cheque for £200 to sponsor the conference.



One Stop Nature Shop have supported our Society at previous conferences and have built a reputation for efficient and helpful service and sales of their microscopes and many other products, full details of which can be seen at their website or via the BNHS website.

## Cancellation

Apologies to all the stalwarts who turned up at Maulden Village Hall on Tuesday December 11<sup>th</sup> expecting a fine display of members photos and to indulge in a good supper.

Unfortunately, it seems the hall was double booked and we did not want to come up against the WI who were in full flow when the first BNHS members arrived. Measures are being taken to rearrange this popular event. But we have to agree suitable date: Maulden Village Hall is already booked for January 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. It may have to be held on a different weekday and an alternative venue is being sought in case the hall is not available on an acceptable date. Any suggestions regarding new dates or venues are welcome: please contact Wilf and Julia Powell or Sheila Brooke.

If the event is rearranged, the details will be posted on the website, newsgroup and Facebook but there may not be time to send out information in the post.

Julia Powell



Don't forget...

by John Pitts

Just another reminder as it is Christmas and you may be spending some dosh. Sign up with easyfundraising and nominate BNHS as your chosen charity. sign up at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and help keep BNHS solvent.



easyfundraising  
feel good shopping

Buy everything you need for Christmas this month via easyfundraising, and Bedfordshire Natural History Society will receive free donations every time you shop online. You shop. Your cause gets money. For free. Join over 1.4 million people raising free donations at over 3,500 shops and sites every day the easyfundraising way! Over £24 million has already been raised for good causes.

*Hoopoe would like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and all the best for a healthy and prosperous New Year!*



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.

Autumn Highlights 2018

by Julia Powell

**Knolls Wood walk 30<sup>th</sup> September**

A dozen people gathered in Sandy Lane to meet our guide Chris Christofolou for whom Knolls Wood is his local patch. He started by telling us of the survey work he has done for Friends of Knolls Wood, an organisation of which he is a committee member. We then enjoyed a relatively short but hugely interesting stroll around the wood ending by walking down Monkey Puzzle Avenue. We now know the difference between male and female Chilean Pines and what the cones and seeds look like. Chris is a fantastic artist and photographer and we ended by hearing about some of the talks he has given.

Photos by John Pitts



Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*. Photo by Sheila Brooke

**RSPB Discovery Day Sunday 7th October comments from our members:**

Ann De Winter: 'A very enjoyable time yesterday on the BNHS stand at The Lodge with Betty and Sheila. Lots of visitors with much interest in our nature table. Amongst other activities was a bird ringing demonstration which was fascinating - birds ringed and recorded included Goldfinches, Tits, Song Thrush and the first Bramblings. I also managed to get a couple of snaps of a Nuthatch and a very vocal Great Spotted Woodpecker!'

Betty Cooke: 'Yes, another good outing with the display produced several compliments, particularly of the nature table; and the quizzes were popular too. A Hummingbird Hawkmoth hovered around the Lavender briefly but did not stay to be photographed!'

Sheila: 'Yes, a fairly steady flow with several interested youngsters. It was great to see the Brambling close up - a lovely little bird! It was cold, but we enjoyed the coffee provided!'

### Swiss Garden Fungal Foray 14<sup>th</sup> October

A joint meeting with Herts & Beds Fungus Group proved to be well attended despite the awful weather and as ever, it was very productive. A Sandy Stillball fungus was an exciting find being only the second county record. Fortunately, fungi are not deterred by torrential rain; it just affects humans!!

### Heartwood Forest walk 4<sup>th</sup> November

It was a little difficult for the 13 or 14 members to meet up with David Anderson, our leader, at the start of this walk. The large car parks were nearly full as this is obviously a popular venue for dog walkers, runners and many others that enjoy a walk outside. However, the path that David chose for us soon led us into some of the less well used parts of the forest. Although many areas had young trees there was quite a variety of habitats to see. It will be interesting to see how this forest matures in years to come.



Nuthatch *Sitta Europaea*. Photo by Ann De Winter

### Neglected Insects get more attention

by *John O'Sullivan*

The Society's latest conference on invertebrates was another great success, with the venue packed to capacity with over a hundred people, all sharing a similar enthusiasm and desire to learn more.

Held at the Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine, on 17<sup>th</sup> November, this was the third in a two-yearly series, and this time focused entirely on insects.

There were seven speakers, all recognised experts at the national level: Duncan Allen (Scale Insects & Mealy Bugs), Stuart Ball (Sciomyzid Flies), Gavin Broad (Ichneumonid Wasps), Peter Brown (Ladybirds), Martin Drake (Dolichopodid Flies), John Kramer (Craneflies) and Darren Mann (Dung Beetles). We were also delighted to welcome a distinguished group of Honoured Guests; Brian Eversham, Erica McAlister and Alan Stubbs.

Delegates commented on the high quality of the presentations by the speakers and the many colourful and informative displays set out around the venue. Also welcome was the opportunity to chat with other naturalists from Bedfordshire and farther afield. Useful study equipment was on sale from our friends at Opticron and One Stop Nature Shop, and the latter also kindly sponsored the event.

None of this could have happened without the hard work – before, during and after – of the Society's volunteer event organisers, and in particular Alan Outen, who first envisaged this series of conferences. On behalf of the Society, the Chairman presented Alan and his wife Pattie with a card and floral bouquet in appreciation of their efforts.

Thanks to all Society members who came and threw themselves into the spirit of the event. It couldn't have happened without you.

Speakers have kindly agreed that their presentations can appear on the BNHS website: whether you were able to come this time or not, look out for them soon!

In case you missed it:

The 2018 Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards winners have been announced and as usual this year's group were truly something. Do check them out at [www.comedywildlifephoto.com](http://www.comedywildlifephoto.com). Click on the 'gallery' link to see all of the finalists.

Staying with the photography theme, the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition is currently on at the Natural History Museum and will run until 30 June 2019. Now in its 54th year, it showcases extraordinary animal behaviour and the breathtaking diversity of life on earth. Chosen from over 45,000 entries by expert judges, the images were awarded for their creativity, originality and technical excellence. To find out more visit [www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/exhibitions/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/exhibitions/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year.html).

### Field guide celebrates recording of ladybirds *from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, November 2018*

The co-author of a new comprehensive, easy-to-use illustrated field guide to all 47 species of ladybirds in Britain and Ireland hopes it will encourage further recording of the insects to help inform understanding of environmental change.

Professor Helen Roy, an ecologist at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, has written *Field Guide to the Ladybirds of Great Britain and Ireland* with Dr Peter Brown of Anglia Ruskin University, which provides essential information for enthusiasts and scientists alike.

The two co-authors jointly lead the UK Ladybird Survey, which involves people reporting sightings of ladybirds with photographs via the iRecord website and app run by the Biological Records Centre, based at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology's Wallingford site. It has generated more than 200,000 records – contributed by members of the public – of all 47 species since its formation in 2005.

Professor Roy says, "This field guide is a celebration of the amazing contributions to the UK Ladybird Survey from so many people and we hope it will encourage further recording of all the species."

She explains that while the public frequently report sightings of different conspicuous species of ladybirds, many of which are brightly coloured, the small so-called inconspicuous ladybirds are under-recorded.

"Recording is vital to understanding how species are responding to environmental change, to help inform conservation policy decisions," she adds.

To help readers easily identify the different species of ladybird, *Field Guide to the Ladybirds of Great Britain and Ireland* features clear information on the appearance of species, including 130 detailed artworks by renowned wildlife illustrator Richard Lewington and 102 colour photographs. There are also regional guides on habitats and recorded species.

Additionally, Dr Colin Harrower of the Centre of Ecology & Hydrology has put together distribution maps for each of the species, based on records submitted by thousands of people.

Not only are ladybirds popular with the public because of the bold colours that many of them have, but many of the species are predators, helping gardeners and farmers with pest control. The 7-spot ladybird, for example, can eat about 5,000 aphids during their year-long lifespan.

One of the 47 species of ladybird, however, has proved particularly troublesome.

The harlequin has been described as "the most invasive ladybird on Earth". First recorded in the UK in 2004, its numbers have rapidly increased, posing a major threat to native ladybirds. Large and with a voracious appetite and varied diet, it out-competes them for food and will also eat some of its native British cousins, notably the 2-spot ladybird.

*Field Guide to the Ladybirds of Great Britain and Ireland* is published by Bloomsbury, £45 hardback (ISBN 9781472935670) and paperback £25 (ISBN 9781472935687).



### Events Programme Winter 2018/19

Please check the website [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://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](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)

#### **TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, MAULDEN**

**Talk “Uncertainty and opportunity: what’s the future for Britain’s pollinators?”** by Professor Jeff Ollerton. He will discuss the diversity of pollinators in the UK, how and why this is changing, why that diversity is important, the roles of pollinators in maintaining both plant diversity and agricultural productivity, and the current and future threats to pollinators. Jeff Ollerton is Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Northampton, and has been studying the ecology, evolution and conservation of plant-pollinator interactions for almost 30 years. He has carried out field work in Africa, South America, Australia, the Canary Islands, and the UK, and is author of more than 100 research papers and book chapters, plus two edited volumes.

#### **WEDNESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY, CAMBRIDGE 2pm**

**Visit Cambridge University Museum of Zoology** for a guided tour with Dr Ed Turner. Contact Julia Powell before January 16<sup>th</sup> to book your place – maximum charge £10 per person for a group of 10 and if we get more people the cost will reduce.

In the UK, Dr Turner collaborates with the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, investigating insect diversity and management on chalk grassland reserves especially the role of habitat management in supporting insect diversity. They are particularly interested in understanding how conservation management can be tailored to benefit threatened butterfly species, such as the Duke of Burgundy, in the face of future climate change. He is a conservation scientist, who researches strategies that can be employed to conserve species diversity and healthy ecosystem functioning both in the UK and abroad. He is a University Teaching Officer in the Department of Zoology, Curator of Insects in the University Museum of Zoology and a Fellow at Clare College, Cambridge.

#### **TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, MAULDEN**

**Talk:** Sun, sand and...scarce migrants! Nick Moran spent five years living and birding in southern Arabia and will take us on a season-by-season virtual tour of this fascinating region, a rich oasis for migrants and specialist breeding birds alike. Don't miss this unique insight into the birds and birding opportunities in the UAE, the Yemen and Oman – a corner of the world so under-watched that it recently yielded an entirely new species of owl to science.

#### **WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, MAULDEN WOOD 10am – 12 noon (F)**

Find out what owls eat by dissecting their pellets. See the tiny bones and insect skeletons under the

microscope. Also hold animal skulls, mummies and antlers. Children must be 8 years old or over and all children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Advance booking essential at GST website [www.greensandtrust.org/whats-on](http://www.greensandtrust.org/whats-on). £3 charge. Meet at the Working Woodland Centre off the A6 at Deadman's Hill layby, TL072394, MK43 3QT.

Leader: Julia Powell

### TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, MAULDEN

**Talk: “Settling Slow-worms: A translocation project”** by Katharine Banham (Conservation Officer) and Gwen Hitchcock (Monitoring and Research Officer), Wildlife Trust BCN. Nearly 1,500 slow worms were relocated from the guided busway site, mostly to the nearby Wildlife Trust nature reserve at Totternhoe. Ongoing monitoring of these translocated populations will determine the success of the scheme and this will be discussed. Members of the Society are among those who volunteered to participate in the monitoring at Totternhoe.

### TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, MAULDEN

**BBC Talk: “Blakeney Point is probably the most exciting venue in Norfolk to bird watch during Spring and Autumn, plus breeding terns in Summer.”** Paul Laurie has been studying and photographing birds for 46 years the last 20 at Blakeney, where every autumn, thousands of birds pass through the point as they undertake their often challenging southward migration.

### SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> MARCH, BEDFORD 8:30am

**BBC morning walk** joint with BNHS around Priory Country Park, including Meadow Lane for mainly resident and wintering birds. Meet outside the visitors' centre, TL072494.

Leader: Peter Marshall

### TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH, MAULDEN 7:30pm

**BNHS AGM and RECORDERS SHOW** After a short AGM, the Officers and Recorders will present their annual reports. A wonderful way to find out about the up, downs and new arrivals of wildlife in our county. Also hints about what might be coming our way. There are some truly excellent presentations despite each recorder being limited to five minutes in order to have time for everyone to present. **PLEASE NOTE START TIME.**

### TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MARCH, MAULDEN

Join us for a thought-provoking evening as our speakers, Dr Rob Lambert and Lucy McRobert ask “**What have Ospreys ever done for us?**”

### WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> MARCH, AYLESBURY 10:30am – 12:30pm

**Visit Greatmoor Energy from Waste facility.** The Visitor Centre is designed to promote and inform visitors about benefits of using waste to produce renewable energy as well as educating about waste reduction, reuse and recycling. Must be able to manage narrow walkways, some on metal grating, including some at height. Long trousers and long sleeves must be worn. **Booking essential and places limited.** Please contact Sheila Brooke [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com) or on 01525 873396 for further information.

### SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> APRIL, PEGSDON 8am

**BBC morning walk** joint with BNHS over Pegsdon Hills for spring migrants. Park and meet in car park of Live and Let Live Inn, Pegsdon, TL121303.

Leader: Jon Palmer

### SUNDAY 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL, BROOM 7am

**BBC early morning birding** joint with BNHS around Broom Gravel Pits for spring migrants. Park and meet at end of Kings Road, off High Street, Broom, TL172433.

Leader: Stefan Baltruschat

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