



Wild About Beds

Summer 2020

Beetle new to science found in Bedfordshire

by Wilf Powell

Last November Mark Telfer and German taxonomist Wolfgang Rucker published a paper in *The Coleopterist* (vol. 28(3) p. 101-107) describing a small beetle new to science. It was named *Corticaria culminis* sp. nov. (Coleoptera, Latridiidae). Mark had found the beetle in 2006 when he had the opportunity to examine old thatch that was being replaced on a house in Billington. Mark's attempts to identify the specimen using museum collections, and British and central European literature failed and so he sent it to Wolfgang, the leading authority on the group. Following extensive investigations by both Mark and Wolfgang it was deemed to be a new, undescribed species. The tiny beetle, measuring only 1.8mm in length, is fully described and illustrated in the paper, including a photo of the male genitalia dissected from the specimen. It is thought that the species may have arrived in Bedfordshire in reed imported from Turkey in the early 1990s and used to repair the roof of the house in Billington; this would suggest that an introduced population had persisted in the thatched roof for 12-15 years prior to Mark discovering it. The epithet *culminis* can mean 'of the roof' (referring to the discovery on a thatched roof) and also 'of the stalk' (referring to thatching straw).



The newly described *Corticaria culminis*. Photo by Mark Telfer

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society
www.bnhs.org.uk
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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 **Kath Hindley**, Honorary Membership Secretary, Tel: 01525 841256, 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 September 2020** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **September 2020**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Spittlebug survey update

by *Dr Claire Harkin, University of Sussex*

The Covid-19 lockdown has of course had a significant impact on the scope of our activities, so we have developed a couple of additional 'lockdown-friendly' resources that you might like to share with your members. We now have a lovely short video that talks about spittlebugs (nymphs only) and how to distinguish between genera: <https://youtu.be/anfH8DAC7p8>

...and a new family-friendly activity sheet with 'fun facts' about spittlebugs that will appeal to children, and an invitation for people to look for them in their gardens (or indeed local parks as the movement restrictions lift): www.jic.ac.uk/app/uploads/2020/05/Spittlebug-activity-sheet-v2.pdf.

As before, contributors can link directly to the survey form: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/spittle2020.

Our website supporting the survey includes species information, lots of images (mostly adults) and a blog focussed largely on fieldwork for the project: www.spittlebugsurvey.co.uk/.

I hope these new resources will be of interest to your members and would be happy to provide any other materials that might be useful.



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.

BNHS during the Covid-19 pandemic

Update from Graham Bellamy

All our planned walks, talks and other activities are on hold until Government guidelines are relaxed enough for us to realistically start to return to normal. Updates will be posted on the Society Webpage, e-mail newsgroup and Facebook page.

This time is frustrating for all of us who enjoy exploring our wildplaces in the company of others in the Society. My feeling is this will take some time to do so safely.

This has coincided with some changes to Council with Wilf Powell stepping down after five years as Chairman, being replaced by Graham Bellamy. Mary Sheridan has also stepped down as Honorary Membership Secretary, a post she has carried out so well for the last 30 years. Thanks Wilf and Mary. Wilf continues on Council.

Face-to-face meetings of Council, Scientific and all other committees have been cancelled but business has continued via e-mail 'meetings' and Zoom meetings.

The new BNHS book *Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife* has been received from the printers, quarantined, and can now be posted out. It's an ideal gift to whet the appetite to get outside and enjoy our special wild places and wildlife. I hope you enjoy it.

Many thanks

Thanks also to Betty Cooke and Hugh Griffiths who are planning to step down as Honorary Secretary and the Societies Webmaster respectively, in the next year. We are looking now for people keen to take on these roles, and keep your society functioning smoothly, both have kindly offered to help new honorary officers to settle in to the roles.

Exciting Opportunities to help your society to continue to run smoothly

The BNHS is looking for someone to take over from Betty Cooke as **Honorary Secretary**. No previous experience or specialist expertise is required. An eye for detail, organisation, and the ability to take accurate minutes and send out paperwork and supporting documents electronically to deadlines are important. This is a good opportunity to support your society and develop your organisation skills in a friendly atmosphere. Plenty of guidance and help will be provided,

The main duties are:

- Prepare agendas and circulate to Council members before each meeting (5-6 per year c. 2hrs/meeting)
- Attend and take minutes at Council meetings, circulate to Council members and keep paper copies for the records (5-6 per year c.4hrs/meeting)
- Book meeting rooms for Council, Scientific and Recorders' meetings (less than an hour)
- Circulate minutes received from those representing BNHS on other committees (5-6 per year c. 1hr ea)
- Deal with correspondence (mostly electronic, c.1hr 5-6 times per year)
- Produce an annual report in collaboration with the Chairman on behalf of Council for presentation at the AGM (c. 3 hrs)
- Liaise with the Charities Commission and complete an annual return (c1 hr per year)
- Prepare for AGM (c. 2 hrs)
- Attend and take minutes of AGM (c. 4hrs)
- Take along minutes of previous year's meeting with copies available for attending members. Chair has presented the report in recent years.
- Prepare list of proposed Council Officers and committee members for election in liaison with the Membership Secretary. Ensure that the Chairman has copies of all relevant documentation

Please talk to Graham Bellamy ([graham\(at\)gcbellamy.plus.com](mailto:graham(at)gcbellamy.plus.com)) and Betty Cooke (secretary@bnhs.org.uk) if you are interested.

Maulden Dormouse Project

by Sue Raven, Senior Ecologist, The Greensand Trust

In 2018, the BNHS kindly awarded the year's Theed-Pearse Award to the Greensand Trust as a contribution towards its Maulden Dormouse Project. This Project started in 2017 with two main aims. Firstly to support the volunteers who monitor the dormice re-introduced to Maulden Wood and, secondly, to use the Greensand Trust's links to the local communities in the area to raise awareness of the dormice in the hope of encouraging more beneficial management of hedgerows and woodlands locally and perhaps even a few new dormouse records. Funding was received from the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, with in-kind contributions from the People's Trust for Endangered Species (which runs the re-introduction programme) and Forestry England (which owns Maulden Wood).



A dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* in Maulden Wood. Photo courtesy The Greensand Trust

A small number of hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* were re-introduced to Maulden Wood in 2001 as part of a national Species Recovery Programme. Members of the Beds Dormouse Group, now part of the Mammal Group, have monitored the wood's population regularly since then, checking nest-boxes for dormice, or their nests, during the summer months each year. In 2014 the first definite signs of dormice having spread out from the wood were found when a nest was spotted in a hedge along a lane to the north of the wood and positive dormouse signs were found in a nest-tube to the south-west of the wood. This was an important milestone in the re-introduction as the dormice will only survive more securely in the long term if they can spread to other woodlands.

The Project has supported the volunteers who monitor the dormice by organising a training event for licence holders (as the hazel dormouse is a European Protected Species you have to have qualified for a licence in order to be able to check nestboxes and handle them) and by supplying nest boxes, nest-tubes and other equipment used in monitoring. It has also funded a number of educational and display materials for the Greensand Trust's education team and the dormouse volunteers to use with school groups or at events. Given the difficulty of showing people a real dormouse or nest in the field, these props include a life-size felt dormouse and a giant dormouse nest that children can help weave with strips of willow bark!



A dormouse tube used in surveys. Photo courtesy The Greensand Trust

We've also put together an A4 information sheet about the Maulden re-introduction and dormice and their signs. This can be found at www.greensandtrust.org/dormouse-project or in the News section of the Beds Mammal Group website (www.bedsmammalgroup.co.uk/). The link has been publicised in the parish magazines of all the parishes surrounding the wood and the information sheet, together with management advice if appropriate, is being sent to neighbouring landowners. The Project has also allowed the Trust time to liaise with Forestry England over restarting coppice management in Maulden Wood.

A positive result of this work so far was being given permission to survey the hedges of a farm to the north of the wood and 40 nest-tubes were duly installed last August. No signs of dormice were found when the tubes were checked in the autumn, but that wasn't long after they had been put up. We were hoping that this spring would prove more productive but, not surprisingly, we haven't managed to check them yet! Now Covid-19 restrictions are being eased we hope to do so before too long and are keeping our fingers crossed.

Maggot's Moor has changed during lockdown

by Chris Boon

The Bedfordshire Natural History Society has been publishing books for many years and the latest, *Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife*, was published at the end of May in spite of the ongoing problems associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. This work, as its title implies, is about change and concentrates on those changes that have occurred in the past 20 years. Richard Revels' photographs of the county's habitats, as he recorded them during the years up to 2000, were published in that year in his book *Wild Bedfordshire – a photographic record*. In recent years he has been revisiting many of these sites and also many new ones. These wonderful photographs form the basis of this new book. We are also privileged to have a thought-provoking chapter contributed by John Comont who is Director of Conservation at the Wildlife Trust.

Change in the countryside is an ongoing process and is often so slow to occur that we do not notice for some time, for example scrub invasion on the chalk hills. However, some changes can be dramatic particularly those that are man-generated, for example the construction of infrastructure such as new roads. Some of these changes are highlighted in this new book.

Maggot's Moor, which is part of the Flitwick Moor SSSI, is featured on page 77. The photograph was taken by Richard on 24 May 2019 (Fig. 1). It is a fine meadow which, in the spring of this year, had an abundance of Meadow Saxifrage as well as Pignut, Bulbous Buttercup and Cuckooflower. This was followed in early June by Meadow Buttercup, Lesser Stitchwort, Common Sorrel and many other species including, naturally, several grass species and also, in the lower parts, a few sedges. This meadow is managed by the Wildlife Trust and, from June, is usually grazed by cattle.

Dramatic changes can also occur naturally and I am highlighting one such which has occurred on Maggot's Moor. Along the northern boundary of the meadow is a ditch, on the far side of which is a hedgerow containing several Ash trees. Over the last year or so these trees have shown signs of Ash-dieback disease. Their condition is clearly seen in the photograph. I am lucky to live on the edge of Flitwick Moor SSSI and I look over into Maggot's Moor and can see these trees from my study. In particular, the tallest specimen was quite a feature of the hedgerow. On 7 May 2020 I was working on my computer in the morning and, being a very windy day I had decided not to take my 'allowed' daily walk through Flitwick Moor. I heard a loud crashing noise and on looking through the window realised that the tallest Ash was lying prone across the meadow. A few days later when the weather had improved I took a similar photograph of the hedgerow to show the dramatic change that had occurred (Fig. 2).

The stock fencing was demolished over a short stretch and to enable its repair a few days later the main trunk was cut at a point some three metres from its base. I was thus able to count the rings and, although it would be more accurate to count nearer the base of the trunk, this would give some indication of the age of the tree (Fig. 3). Some areas of rings are not clear but there are about 105 rings and the variability of distance between them shows spurts of growth. Thus a 100+ year old Ash has succumbed, probably to the effects of Ash-dieback. I wonder how many more such fine trees will disappear from our countryside over the next year or so.



Fig. 1: Maggot's Moor showing a row of Ash trees 24 May 2019. Photo by Richard Revels



Fig. 2: Maggot's Moor on 11 May 2020 after the Ash blew down. Photo by Chris Boon

Maggot's Moor cont'



Fig. 3: Tree rings of the fallen Ash. Photo by Chris Boon

Lockdown highlights

Story and photos by Sheila Brooke

It has been a strange year so far and one we will not forget in a hurry. The field season was just about to begin when Covid-19 struck and all the meetings that we had been hoping to attend were cancelled. We couldn't go out for a meal or down to the pub for a pint, we couldn't go to the dentist or have our hair cut, we couldn't count orchids or monitor butterflies, we couldn't go to the gym...and so on. However, we had some beautiful weather when we could sit in or potter round our gardens or could seek out some new and varied footpaths, as I did, round our towns or villages.

Despite the restrictions there was still lots to see and do apart from tidying cupboards and clearing out lofts – both of which are still waiting to be tackled! Here are some of my lockdown highlights.

Seeing Holly Blue and Orange Tip in the garden was a good start in April and although a number of Bee-flies were around none seemed to have spots! A pair of courting Hedgehogs in the garden was unusual and entertaining! A Song Thrush singing its heart out while I walked near Toddington Manor lifted the spirits and I was really pleased to see my first Swallow taking residence in the stables at Griffin Farm in the village – I look out for them each year as I do for Orange Tip eggs and found one on Garlic Mustard after a short hunt.



Burnt-tip Orchid *Orchis ustulata*, Knocking Hoe

In May it was all taking off and Whitethroats were plentiful along the Chalgrave footpaths as were St. Mark's Flies, 7-spot and 14-spot Ladybirds. Green-veined Whites were common at Dropshort Marsh as were Orange Tips, and in my garden a Large Red Damselfly visited the pond while Hairy-footed Flower Bees found the flowers. At Knocking Hoe the Burnt Tips were going over but there were a few still looking good.



Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, Sharpenhoe

Totternhoe was calm and peaceful and there I enjoyed seeing the Man Orchids that had not been nibbled off as well as Twayblades and Common Spotted-orchids coming into flower. Brown Argus, Common Blue and Dingy Skipper butterflies were around and abundant mating pairs of *Micropha montana* (thanks Andrew!) Sawflies were perched on the white umbels. Toddington Manor bugs were waking up with Dock bugs, Nettle bugs and various grass bugs, as well as a few Hoverflies, numerous tiny Speckled Bush-crickets and a Hornet.

What will June and July bring? I guess we will have to wait and see but let's hope we can have a few field trips before the nights draw in!! Keep well!!

Review of BNHS publication

by Ian Woiwod

Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife (a photographic record)

Richard Revels, Graham Bellamy and Chris Boon.

Many years ago, when I moved to Bedfordshire I sought out all the local wildlife publications I could find and have done so ever since. The majority of these have been publications from the Bedfordshire Natural History Society (BNHS) so I looked forward eagerly to this one, the latest book to be published by the society. Unfortunately the official launch for this book was to be in April this year and so had to be cancelled, just another casualty of the coronavirus lock down. However the eventual arrival of my copy in the post was a most welcome diversion and a reminder of better times.

The first impression was of a substantial hard-cover publication with a very attractive Pasque Flower cover. So far so good. On flicking through the pages I was then immediately struck by the number of photographs it contained. Later I asked Richard Revels, the main contributor of the photographs, how many of his were included but as he did not know I had to count them myself and came to a total of 450 of which all but about 35 were his - wow. Most of you will be familiar with Richard's expertise as a professional wildlife photographer so will need no further encouragement to obtain a copy just for these. However, this is much more than a photographic guide to recent changes in Bedfordshire's wildlife and its habitats.

There are really three main chapters in the book. The first an excellent introduction to the main drivers of change in Bedfordshire's wildlife habitats over the last 20 years by John Comont, Director of Conservation at the Wildlife Trust. Most of us are well aware of and worry about these factors individually (e.g. agricultural land management, climate change, air pollution, water quantity and quality, housing and transport infrastructure etc.), but it's particularly useful to have them all brought together in this introductory chapter by an expert.

Chapter 2 covers the various wildlife habitats of Bedfordshire, woodland, mire and heath, grassland, freshwater and others (e.g. farmland, road verges etc.). This is where the photographs come into their own with most pages having four or five photographs, one or two large habitat photos of particular sites with two or three examples of interesting species likely to be found there. As an example here is one of the two pages about my local patch, Potton Wood.

This is a substantial chapter that can be studied at leisure, perhaps just to enjoy the photographs, to find out about changes to particular sites, as reminder of past excursions or encouragement to new ones.

Chapter 3 goes to the species level, which is of course the one where many naturalists are actively interested. Here there are photographs of over 50 species, just a few of the many that have notably changed in abundance and or distribution in the county over the last 20 years, some as new additions and some as extinctions to our flora and fauna.

Chapter 4 contains various maps and a table giving details of the habitat photos, in most cases with an 8 figure grid reference, so the sites can be re-photographed, to study future changes. Lets hope and work towards more of these being positive than negative.

I can certainly recommended this book, not only to BNHS members, but to any one interested in the wildlife of Bedfordshire and its surrounding counties. It's an excellent addition to the BNHS publications and has been produced to the very high standard to which we have become accustomed.

Hoopoe would like to remind everyone the book is £20 plus £4.25 p&p and can be ordered from the BNHS website at

https://www.bnhs.co.uk/2019/pub/Wild_Beds_orderform.pdf

Stay safe, everyone!



Garden Wildflower Survey

by Betty Cooke

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) launched a new initiative in Spring 2020. Named the Garden Wildflower Hunt, this is unusual in that it focusses on records within the garden boundaries and not on those records outside of gardens as is usually required. This seemed a perfect opportunity to hone my scant botanical skills in a familiar setting while confined by Covid-19 lockdown rules to my own garden.

For the past 20 years I have been listing, for my own interest, the wildflowers in my garden. Our garden maintenance policy has always been to use no chemicals, to hand weed, and to leave unfamiliar seedlings to see how they develop. This has resulted in some pleasant surprises, mainly donated by wind, birds, and other wildlife.



Oxeye daisies *Leucanthemum vulgare*. Photo by Betty Cooke

I began my survey on 13 April, checking flowers and leaves of wild plants that I already knew were in the garden, and was pleasantly surprised in that one morning to reach a total of 70 species. Knowing that there were still more to come, including the yet to be identified grasses, I aspired to reach 100 by the end of lockdown. Today 7 June that total is 120!

My list includes many common 'weeds': Daisies, Dandelions, Nettles, Docks, Plantains, Thistles, Buttercups, Clover, Sowthistles, Herb Robert, Wood Avens, etc.

However, many beautiful spring flowers were still evident: Violets, Celandines, Cowslips, Forget-me-nots, Star-of-Bethlehem. Also, shrubs, left to grow from berries dropped by birds, produced early blossom on Common Dogwood,

Cornelian Cherry (another Dogwood: *Cornus mas*), Guelder Rose, Hawthorn, Spindle.

In and around the pond are Water Forget-me-not, Water Plantain, Mares-tail, Duckweed, Ragged Robin, Purple Loosestrife. In the mini-meadow there's Germander Speedwell, Common Vetch, Flax, Ground Ivy, Lady's Bedstraw, Cut-leaved Cranesbill, and now awash with Ox-eye daisies.

In the wildflower border are some bought plants and some given by friends; there are Scabious, Knapweed, Thrift, Evening Primrose, Foxgloves, Stinking Iris, Lady Fern, Dotted Loosestrife.

This is just a few from my list, but my favourite is a Bee Orchid that has just today opened its first flower. Several of these have appeared on our front lawn each year since 2008.

Nature is a great comfort and those who are lucky enough to possess a garden can feel the benefits every day. Even the smallest plot can hold so much joy.

Return of the Swifts

by Graham Bellamy



The Swifts are back! The first I saw were on the 4 May close to their colony in Gravenhurst having worked their way back from Africa. They seemed to disappear during a spell of cold, windy weather returning again towards the end of May to re-find their old nest sites and for newly paired birds to find new nest sites.

The Bedfordshire Swifts group encourages the retention of existing nesting sites where possible and helps interested folk provide new nesting opportunities. Existing nest sites are easily lost during roof renovations and replacement of soffits and bargeboards. This loss of breeding sites is thought to be a main factor in

the stark decline of breeding swifts which have suffered a 57% reduction between 1995 and 2018.

Despite 2020 being such a difficult year for getting outside and doing work, the Bedfordshire Swifts group has been busy providing nest boxes to householders and supplying multiple-box cabinets for church towers. These have been placed in All Saints Church in Leighton Buzzard, St Mary's in Marston Moretaine, St Andrew's in Ampthill and St Michael and All Angels in Shefford. A pretty impressive tally, I think you'll agree! In addition, we hope boxes can soon be installed into St Andrews, Kimbolton Road in Bedford, and also into a lovely little church in Knotting.



Swift cabinets at St Mary's, Marston Moretaine

Once fitted, it helps to play swift calls from the boxes to attract birds searching for new nest sites, so you may hear swift calls from the towers of these churches. If swifts are nearby, we hope nest uptake will be faster. Two pairs are known to use holes in the stonework at St Mary's and up to nine have been seen around the tower once the calls were being played. Swifts also regularly race around the rooftops close to the new boxes in Shefford.

We hope that up to 15 double swift boxes can go behind the louvres in St Andrews which is next to one of Bedford's largest, but most precarious swift colonies, with around 20 birds in the old Victorian houses near Bedford Park. Many houses here have already been renovated in recent years. Swifts make minimal nests and keep the nest clean in most situations, so it is difficult to know in which properties they are even present, unless you are lucky enough to see them swoop into their holes, often at dusk.



Swift boxes installed under the eaves of a house

Boxes have also been provided this year to house owners keen to attract Swifts. Six boxes have gone up in Leighton Buzzard, with a waiting list of 12 boxes ready to go once lockdown permits each house receiving two or three boxes. Six more have been put up elsewhere in Beds and even some in Hitchin, where there is currently no swift group.

Patience is needed. My own boxes have been up for three years, and although Swifts have investigated the boxes, they will have to cope with the small army of house sparrows who have made these nest sites their own. Boxes with callers have been up at the Millennium Country Park visitor centre for several years....and we know that Swifts are now so close. Perhaps this is the year they will be used. But success is possible! One lucky houseowner had Swifts almost as soon as her box was put up last year and birds have returned again this year.

Our Bedford representative has also been testing out the new "swift mapper" mobile app developed by the RSPB and Natural Apptitude. It has an automatic geolocation function making recording of low flying swifts and nest sites easy to do using a smartphone while you are out for a walk locally.

If your phone is a museum piece, you can still use "Swift Mapper" on your PC without the geolocator. You can also record Swift colonies via the Wildlife Trust website. The Swift group will follow up records submitted and offer information about Swifts.

It's heartening to know that people care about these wonderful acrobats of the sky and want to protect and keep them.

One to look out for: the White-legged Damselfly

Story and photos by Rory Morrissey

The British Dragonfly Society has asked for a special effort to be made to find White-legged Damselflies *Platycnemis pennipes*. It is felt that they may be in decline, but on the other hand they are probably under-recorded.

Bedfordshire has some good populations of White-legged Damselfly along the Great Ouse from Kempston TL0247 to Stafford Bridge TL0054. There are regular sightings around Willington, where they are seen ovipositing in the Elstow Brook. Apart from that, they seem to turn up in small numbers in many locations and are known to travel a fair distance from water while they are maturing.

They are easily overlooked, usually with drab, cream or light blue colouring, they can easily pass for a Common Blue or Azure Damselfly at first glance. But when you look closely, there are some identifying features to look out for.

Firstly, there are the so-called 'white-legs'. This characteristic, where the tibiae on all the legs appear to bulge owing to the presence of long hairs, is not always visible, perhaps due to the angle or the light. If it is visible, it is a definite White-legged Damselfly (Photo A).

Secondly, there are the thoracic stripes. Most damselflies have some dark stripes on a varying ground colour and they are fairly strong and distinctive. The stripes on the "shoulder" of the White-legged Damselfly consist of two fairly thin, almost parallel lines that often meet at the front, but may also show small breaks. No other British damselfly has thoracic stripes quite like these (Photo B)

If you do see one, or think you do, try to take a photo and send it to the recorder. If you're certain, please record it using Adnoto on the BNHS website.

More information is available on the British Dragonfly Society's website at <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk>.

Thanks for your help. And by the way, the dragonfly season is progressing well, with some excellent sightings despite the lockdown and restrictions on travel. At the time of writing (mid-June) I have received nearly 1,300 records.

Trail camera report

Story and photos by Ken Winder, Chair, Bedfordshire Mammal Group

In February of this year the mammal group made an application to BNHS for a grant to purchase two trail cameras. Trail cameras are extremely useful for studying mammals, many of which are nocturnal and secretive. The intention was that these would be stored at the Working Woodland Centre (WWC) at Maulden Wood in order that members of the group could borrow one or both of these for specific projects. BNHS considered this application & decided that they could be purchased using the annual Theed-Pearse award. Subsequently, two Bushnell NatureView Essential cameras were obtained from NHBS. Unfortunately, their arrival coincided with the required government lockdown to stop the spread of Covid-19, which of course prevented unnecessary travel. Thus the cameras have remained in my possession.



A. White-legged damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes* with 'white legs' visible.



B. The White-legged damselfly's distinctive thoracic stripes can be seen here.

One opportunity arose to use one when a lady local to myself in Shefford contacted David Anderson with a bit of a mystery. She had found a hedgehog in her garden which had been killed & eaten by something which only left a bloody footprint. Our suspicion was that it could be a badger. So we lent her one of the cameras to see if we could solve this. Sadly after a couple of weeks neither a badger nor a hedgehog came into her garden.



A Pegsdon badger caught on camera

Recently I have installed two cameras at Pegsdon. One was near a badger sett and fortunately on one occasion, managed to get a couple of pictures of badgers. The other was placed near a rabbit warren in the hope I could get pictures of rabbit predators such as foxes, stoats or perhaps even a polecat. First pictures obtained were of course, all rabbits. However I will persevere with this.

As we have more freedom of movement now, I will soon be able to transfer the cameras to the WWC where they can be borrowed by others who will be able to obtain many more useful photographs which will help us to further understand our mammals in Bedfordshire.

Another Exciting Opportunity to help your society

Voluntary Officer Vacancy: Bedfordshire Natural History Society (BNHS) webmaster

Our Current Webmaster will be stepping down and we are looking for someone to maintain and help develop the BNHS website (www.bnhs.co.uk). This is a good opportunity to apply and develop web management skills to help the society promote its work to members and the outside world!

This is the home and hub for key information for the Society, announcements and news, contacts, archived journals and newsletters, recording wildlife sightings with Adnoto and Grab-a-Grid Reference (both bespoke to the website) and other mapping help. It is our shop window to the public and tool shop for our members.

The site runs on an Apache webserver with most pages being HTML wrapped with PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) that define the standard look of the website. The exceptions are some administration scripts, Adnoto which has a PHP core that is unlikely to require modification, and the mapping pages which again have a PHP core that shouldn't require modification. Apart from those exceptions the PHP code is pretty basic, it must be because the current webmaster wrote a lot of it having never seen a line of PHP prior to taking on the role.

The minimum requirements are a basic knowledge of HTML and CSS, a willingness to commit to a five-minute task most days and to undertake occasional additional tasks.

Task overview:

Daily

- monitor execution of automated tasks (back-ups and generation of latest news and events) (5 minutes); This simply means scan a few emails, that generally arrive by 10am, and check the size of any attached zip files. If the emails don't arrive then the site may be down, so check it.

Weekly

- have a quick look at the In the News and Events pages to check everything is working (5 minutes).

Quarterly

- edit and upload the Events CSV file into the database (up to 1 day)
- upload *Wild About Beds* newsletter (15 minutes);



Randomly

- create news items using forms, and post on social media (twitter, facebook and the news group) as required (5 minutes); e.g. changes to the BNHS Council or Recorders, posting of *Bedfordshire Naturalist*
- update the Contacts page and the email forwarding (5 minutes plus 5 per contact)
- perform general maintenance of existing pages usually just HTML, and create new pages as required – an infrequent event.
- ensure that the various licences get renewed on time.
- liaise with the BNHS council, recorders, website visitors and suppliers as required.

The successful candidate will be supplied with the following documentation with how to do it details for the tasks described.

- a guide describing the basic system set-up and how to perform the various maintenance tasks
- a reference manual for Adnoto describing the Adnoto system set-up and how to define and maintain the various recording forms
- a set of contact details

It is anticipated that the current webmaster will assist during the handover period and will provide advice if required thereafter. The length of the handover period will depend upon the amount of relevant experience of the new webmaster.

To express an interest and find out more details please contact the Webmaster at webmaster@bnhs.org.uk and the BNHS chairman Graham Bellamy at chairman@bnhs.org.uk.

Events Programme Summer 2020

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.


The field trips are often over uneven ground and meetings may be a source of infection. Although hazards are minimised, everyone is responsible for the health and safety of themselves and others around them.

For field meetings, wear stout footwear and appropriate clothing. Bring a hat, water and sun cream if hot.

OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

(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). For additional BBC meetings see the website www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk.

BIG – Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group, book your place with Alan Outen: alanouten@virginmedia.com 01462 811374

REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED.

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.

CURRENTLY ALL FIELD TRIPS ARE CANCELLED FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING COVID-19. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE PROPOSED EVENTS SHOULD GOVERNMENT ADVICE CHANGE. PLEASE CHECK ON THE WEBSITE BEFORE ATTENDING ANY MEETING.

WEDNESDAY 8th JULY, TODDINGTON 10:30am (F)

Visit Wadelows Nature Reserve, joint with BIG, a private NR behind Poplars Garden Centre. It is adjacent

to the River Flit and the mixed habitat will allow a good range of wildlife to be recorded. Meet in the car park, LU5 6HE, TL023302. Leader: John Pitts

WEDNESDAY 15th JULY, LEIGHTON BUZZARD 10:30am

Visit Astral Lake Park for dragonflies and other wildlife. Then going on to Stanbridge Meadows LNR. Keen birders may wish to visit Grovebury Quarry nearby afterwards. Meet at the Astral Park Sports and Community Centre car park, LU7 4AY, SP936239. Leader: Rory Morrissey

WEDNESDAY 22nd JULY, SHUTTLEWORTH 10:30am (F)

Guided walk in The Swiss Garden which is an important botanical collection within Bedfordshire with 11 of its trees being county champions, the largest or tallest of their species. Several are rare enough to have only been found on a few other sites throughout Britain and one tree, a Scarlet Willow, by the boat house, is the largest of any of this species known in Britain. The woodland also has exceptionally tall specimens of native Ash and Grey Poplar. Entrance fee is reduced to £6.50 for members entering with the group at 10:30 prompt. Meet in car park, SG18 9EP, TL150448. Please contact Julia Powell beforehand. Leader: David Alderman

THURSDAY 30th JULY, PULLOXHILL 7pm (F)

Evening walk around Centenary Wood which is a Central Bedfordshire Council-owned deciduous woodland planted in 1998 and covering 14 hectares. There is a variety of habitats including woodland, 3 ponds, woodland rides, coppice plots and meadows. Meet in the car park (which is very small). If the weather is dry the gate will be open allowing additional parking but please car share if possible. The car park is situated along Sand Road, between Pulloxhill and Flitton and is signposted. TL062350. Leader: Steve Halton

FRIDAY 7th AUGUST, DUNSTABLE 7pm 

Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works open evening, a joint meeting with BBC, for a variety of wetland species. Meet in Birdwatchers' car park inside the main gate, off Thorn Road via A5, TL004242. Leader: Peter Marshall

WEDNESDAY 12th AUGUST, SHUTTLEWORTH 10am – 4pm (F) (L)

Visit Swiss Garden for their Bug Hunt, joint with BIG. Walks through the grounds, insect recording activities and nature table display. Please book with Julia Powell. Entrance fee is waived for members entering with the group at 10:00 prompt. Meet in car park, SG18 9EP, TL150448. Leader: Julia Powell and Alan Outen

WEDNESDAY 19th AUGUST, BROOM 10:30am (F)

Walk from Jordans Mill following a path along the River Ivel with chance of Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail. Then along a bridle way across the fields to Broom East CWS to overlook the wetlands with waders and wildfowl, and areas of wildflowers and shrubs with butterflies and dragonflies. We end the walk with care along a short stretch of grassy, roadside verge. Meet in Jordans Mill car park, SG18 9JX, TL184430. Café on site. Leader: Betty Cooke

WEDNESDAY 26th AUGUST, HARROLD 10:30am – 1pm (F) (L)

Pond dipping at Harrold-Odell Country Park. There will also be quizzes, the nature table and a photographic display. Meet at the visitor centre car park, MK43 7DS, SP956566. Café on site. Leader: Sheila Brooke

SATURDAY 5th SEPTEMBER, MAULDEN 9:30am-12 noon (F)

Visit Duck End NR for Small Mammal Trapping (mice, voles and shrews) joint with the Mammal Group. Followed by a search for the Willow Emerald damselfly and other Odonata. Limited parking at the site in Moor Lane, Maulden, MK45 2DJ, TL051374. Leaders: Mick McCarrick and Rory Morrissey

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

Sheila Brooke: [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com) 01525 873396
or Julia Powell: [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com) 01582 661328

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

