



Wild About Beds

Autumn 2021

Bernard Stanley Nau 24 January 1937 – 24 June 2021

by Sheila Brooke



It was with great sadness that we learned that Bernard a long-standing member of Bedfordshire Natural History Society died aged 84, after a short spell in hospital following a fall outside his Toddington home.

Bernard was born in Middlesex and spent his early years in Cheshunt developing an interest in natural history and exploring the River Lea countryside. He went to Hertford Grammar School where he pursued physics and physical sciences. He read Physics at Imperial College, London and was funded to do a PhD in fluid mechanics while working at the British Hydromechanics Research Institute in Harlow. The company moved to Cranfield which brought Bernard to Bedfordshire and he settled in Toddington.

Bernard became a member of Bedfordshire Natural History Society in 1971 and quickly filled the post of Bedfordshire Recorder for Heteroptera. He also served on BNHS Council for 13 years, as Honorary Secretary of the Scientific Committee for eight years with further years as a committee member.

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society
www.bnhs.org.uk
Registered charity number 268659



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.

Editor: Heather Webb

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

Email: newsletter@bnhs.org.uk.

Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past Wild About Beds issue are welcome/essential for continuity. Please do send articles to me either as an attachment via email or through the post. Pictures are always welcome; material required by **15 December 2021** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **December 2021**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Hands up all creatives!

Wild About Beds is looking for a new editor to start in January 2022 with the first issue out at the end of March 2022. The role involves about 3-6 hours once a quarter and would be ideal for someone who has or wants to acquire some experience in design, layout, and/or communications. Tasks include:

- receiving and acknowledging articles submitted
- laying out copy in a template
- correcting any spelling, major grammar and mechanics issues, and editing articles for length
- ensuring correct copy and image attributions
- sending the finished newsletter to the printer (when hard copies are again produced) and BNHS webmaster.

Interest in or knowledge of natural history would be great but is not essential: the key thing is being able to produce a consistent and readable newsletter for the enjoyment of BNHS members.

The current newsletter template can be made available in Adobe InDesign, however it cannot be translated into other formats. After ten years WAB is due for a refresh anyway so this is an opportunity for someone to add their own creative flair.

This is a volunteer role and looks great on a CV! Please contact chairman@bnhs.org.uk with any questions or for more information.

Notes from the Chair

by *Graham Bellamy*

Here we are on the cusp of Autumn, a time to begin to reflect on the Summer and seek out Blackberries in the hedgerows. Readers of the last Chairman's notes will be ready for an update on the Toad tadpoles in the pond at Knocking Hoe. Happily, the pond stayed wet...the first time for several years, despite the dry August, and little toadlets have been emerging which I hope reflects what has been happening in the many members garden ponds.

I hope you have been able to get out and about to enjoy your local wildlife, and I am told that around 70 members have managed to join one or more of the summer events so ably organised by Julia Powell and Sheila Brooke. It's a real treat to meet up. With other meetings such as those of the Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group and Flora Group it's good to see the return to something like normality. Having said that, Council is keeping a close eye on the Covid situation and it's likely that our winter program of talks will be carried out using Zoom and Julia and Sheila have been planning accordingly.

We have had some changes to our County Recorders since the last newsletter. I'm sorry to report that Bernard Nau, our recorder for Bugs passed away over the summer. Bernard was very active in the society reflected in his recent honorary life membership; and became of national standing in the bug world. I'm sure there will be many members who have been helped by Bernard over the years readily helping others when he could.

I'm pleased to say that council have recently approved the appointment of new Recorders in two areas; Bev Fowlston as Recorder for Geology following on from Janet Monroe who has stepped down, and Peter Sutton as Recorder for Grasshoppers and Crickets from Kevin Sharpe who has also stepped down; welcome both, and thanks to both Janet and Kevin for ably recording their groups.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that this is the 200th edition of our BNHS Newsletter. It was known as The Muntjac until part way through 2009 when it became Wild About Beds, coinciding with Heather becoming its editor. Heather tells me that she intends to stand down as editor after the December edition; that being her 50th edition if I have done my sums right. Thanks Heather and everyone who takes the time to contribute articles to keep Wild About Beds a good read.

This does mean we are looking for a new Editor for 2022. Four editions per year coincide with Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter to keep members abreast of walks, talks and other events put on by your Society. The newsletter is sent out by email to members where possible and posted on the website. If you are interested in becoming Editor do get in touch for a chat with myself and Heather...as Heather has been editor for over ten years, it suggests it's not a bad thing to do!..maybe even enjoyable! Please consider it and get in touch.

BNHS Publicity and Communications

We'd love to reach more people and engage our members with the fabulous wildlife we have in Bedfordshire.

BNHS is looking for someone to help with our publicity and communications.

We think this would suit someone with a good working knowledge of social media and communication or someone seeking experience in this field, and who has an interest in Natural History.

Do get in touch for a chat?

For further information about the BNHS see our website <https://www.bnhs.co.uk/index.php>

For further information and an informal chat contact Graham Bellamy: chairman(at)bnhs.org.uk.

National Harvest Mouse survey

by Ken Winder, Chair, Bedfordshire Mammal Group

Harvest mice are the smallest rodent in the UK. They are also unique in having a prehensile tail which helps them climb through grasses etc. where they build their woven nests. They are fairly widespread around England & parts of Wales, with very few in Southern Scotland. Sadly, they are now thought to be in decline & have recently been included in the UK's red list of endangered species. However the problem with assessing the actual status of harvest mice is that they are not easy difficult to locate. Living where they do during a large part of the year makes them very difficult to live trap using Longworth or similar traps. Their remains do end up in some owl pellets, but at a very low percentage compared to other voles & mice. Fortunately, one of their other features can be used to show that they are present – their woven nests. In winter, once the vegetation has died down, these can be located with a lot of careful searching.



Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*. Photo by Michael Göbler (licensed under the Creative Commons [Attribution 3.0 Unported licence](#))

Due to this potential decline in numbers, the Mammal Society has decided to launch a national survey this year. This will mainly consist of searching for harvest mouse nests during this winter. The survey will begin at the start of October 2021 & will continue until the end of March 2022. The results from this survey will be used to assess the current status of the harvest mouse which can be used as a baseline for further surveys

The Bedfordshire Mammal group has agreed to take part in this survey & I have volunteered to be the regional co-ordinator for the county. We hope to undertake a few surveys as a group but also hope that individuals, whether group members or not, will be able to look for nests in their local or regularly visited areas. This hopefully will give maximum coverage for the county

If you wish to read more about this survey please look at the Mammal Society website which shows details of the study & the information the society requires. As co-ordinator I will be collating all the results & loading them onto the society's database. If you wish to take part in this survey, please email me on [mammal-group-chair\(at\)bnhs.org.uk](mailto:mammal-group-chair(at)bnhs.org.uk) and I will issue you with more details & recording forms.

Peatland Progress at the Great Fen

by Henry Stanier, Wildlife Trust BCN

We have just been awarded more than £8million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Peatland Progress: A New Vision for the Fens to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and youth wellness head-on. We are bringing together the north and south 'halves' of the Great Fen: www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/peatland-progress-new-vision-fens.

You can guarantee it will get busier over the next few years! We are coming up to the 20th anniversary of Darlow's Farm purchase, and to celebrate I am inviting botanists and entomologists to add to our records for the Great Fen as a whole, so spread the word!

Please contact Henry Stanier, Great Fen Monitoring and Research Officer if you'd like to arrange a visit.

Email: [Henry.Stanier\(at\)wildlifebcn.org](mailto:Henry.Stanier(at)wildlifebcn.org)



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.

Bernard Stanley Nau 1937 - 2021

Continued from page 1

In 1973 the county Heteroptera total was 222 and by 2016 the list had grown to 406 species. Several of those were also new British records, and many were new county records. Quite an achievement! He was one of the main initiators of setting up the Biological Record Centre in Bedfordshire, initially in Bedford Museum, which has developed into the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre, based at the Wildlife Trust offices in Bedford. He also had input into management decisions made by the Wildlife Trust BCN & the Greensand Trust. He played a large part in the publication of two books published by the BNHS, *Bedfordshire Wildlife* in 1987 and *Wild Bedfordshire – a photographic record* in 2000. He was granted Honorary Life Membership of the Society in 2020, and well deserved.

In the 1980s Bernard was involved with the Heteroptera Study Group. A regular newsletter, to which Bernard regularly contributed, was distributed to all those who were interested in the group. At this time he also helped Brian Eversham plan the National Terrestrial Heteroptera Recording Scheme, and took on the task of National Recorder for Terrestrial Hets as a temporary measure, but was involved until 2009. In 2003 Bernard persuaded me to take on the National Waterbug Recording Scheme from a fellow Scot, who had just published a UK atlas and was retiring from the post. He offered me invaluable help and support having co-ordinated the Terrestrial Scheme. We produced a biannual newsletter, *Het News*, for about ten years, which kept interested heteropterists up to date with the latest news.

Southwood & Leston's bug keys were very out of date, having been published in 1959, so Bernard set about updating these for the Water and Plant bugs. These were sent to various people to test and comment on and they became a very useful aid to many people and are still used today, although since the last update there have been many species added to the British list.

Bernard was always willing to pass on his extensive knowledge, and to help young naturalists develop their interest in the natural world. He published many papers over the years and has left a lasting legacy. He was a quiet man with a dry sense of humour and will be missed by many. I am very grateful for the help he gave me over the years.

An obituary will be published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* for 2021.

State of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland 2021 is Out Now!

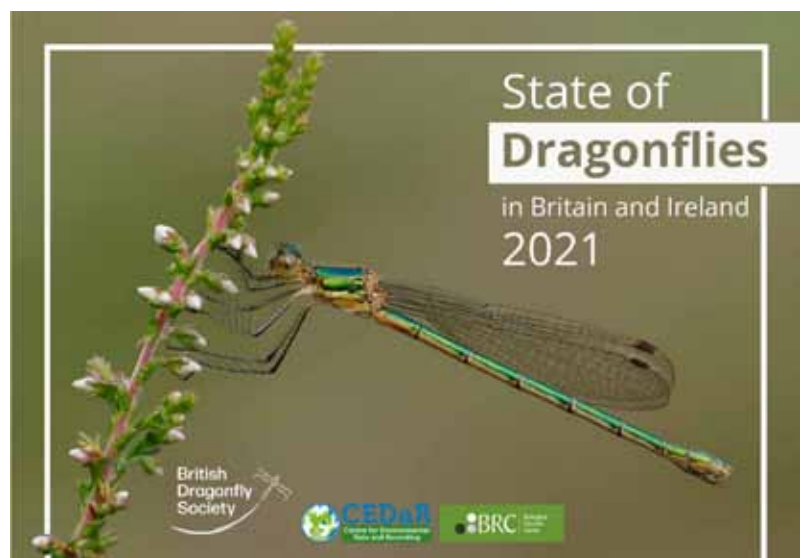
The 'State of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland 2021' report is out now!

The report outlines changes in species occupancy across Britain and Ireland over the past 50 years, including key species increases and decreases, and discusses potential causes of the observed trends.

The British Dragonfly Society would like to thank the 17,000 citizen scientists who submitted records, our network of County Dragonfly Recorders, our Editors Pam Taylor, Dave Smallshire and Adrian Parr for their months of hard work on this, as well as other members of our team who contributed information and support behind the scenes, and researchers from the UK Centre for

Ecology & Hydrology and the Biological Records Centre for crunching fifty years worth of data, plus the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording for providing valuable data from Ireland.

The full report is available at <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/recording/state-of-dragonflies-2021/>



Whipsnade Downs orchid hot spot ...a close shave

by Graham Bellamy and Wilf Powell

Back in March Pat Baker was contacted by Ken France, Chair of Whipsnade Parish Council. The Council had received details of a planning application to remove the overhead powerlines that cross the Downs and lay the cables below ground. Ken and Pat were worried about the effect on the chalk flora and butterflies of the Downs and got in touch with myself and Wilf Powell who knows the area very well.

The undergrounding of the cables was sponsored by the Chilterns Conservation Board to improve the landscape of the Chilterns and they had contacted relevant bodies to try and ensure that the route would cause minimal damage. Rather than trenching the cables in they were to be put underground using a technique similar to mole ploughing, dragging the cables beneath the ground which should cause less disturbance.

Wilf and I visited the downs with maps of the planned route. It was clear that the route would affect a section of one of the sunken tracks on the Downs that is the best orchid site. This sunken way has notable populations of Common Spotted, Twayblade, Pyramidal and Fragrant Orchid and is also known to be important for several butterfly species including Duke of Burgundy, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and Green Hairstreak.

The site of Special Scientific Interest boundary has a gap that includes this part of the sunken way and so only received general comments from Natural England about minimising damage. With the Parish Council we raised an objection to the proposed route, supported with a letter from our recorder for plants John Wakely. Despite assurances that the mole ploughing technique would be sympathetic to the value of the sunk way the width (2.9 metres) and size of machinery to be used would, we thought, surely cause significant damage. We proposed a site meeting to explore alternatives and we suggested an alternative route, bypassing the orchid rich section, which seemed to be viable. This was also up a parallel sunken way but one that, although still having some interest, had far less flower rich grassland than the proposed route. We agreed to remove our objection when the alternative route was accepted, and Power Network said they would tell us when work was to begin.

Wilf and I visited the area again in July after some visitors made facebook postings of work in progress, with concern about the damage caused. Damage was far more extensive than we had been led to believe with the whole bed of the sunk way and about half a metre of turf on each side being destroyed. Thank goodness this was not carried out on the original route along the Orchid rich sunken way, which would have been very damaging.



A section of the orchid- and butterfly-rich sunken way was originally proposed for the underground cabling. Photo by Wilf Powell



The alternative sunken way used for the work just after the cables were laid underground. Photo by Graham Bellamy

It had not been a very edifying experience with lack of communication of works starting and a lack of availability of the ecological survey that was supposed to inform the route chosen. It is hoped that when the works are completed the National Trust, who manage the area, can spread flower rich green hay on the bare chalk and manage the affected sunken way back to health. Thanks to the actions of the Parish Council together with BNHS worse damage was avoided, but it does show that vigilance is needed even on areas of wildlife habitat that you would assume are safe from damage.

Walk to Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve, 3 September 2021

story and photos by Ann de Winter

An enthusiastic group of 12 BNHS members gathered at Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve for a morning's walk to Knocking Hoe NR, led by Graham Bellamy.



Autumn Lady's Tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*

The morning started off rather overcast, but soon became very hot and sunny. Our prime target species was the delicate Autumn Lady's Tresses orchid which we were all very keen to see. These were having a good year with over 600 found so far on the main hill in recent weeks by Richard Revels and a group of BNHS members.

However, we were, of course, interested in any other plants found on the way and several were identified on the track leading to the Reserve, including Rough and Prickly Poppy and the exquisite Field Pansy. Wild Hop scrambled through the hedgerow, and it was near here that eagle-eyed Andy spotted the bizarre Pear Slug – the larva of the sawfly *Caliroa cerasi*.

We headed up toward the hill where we were watched by some very curious Herdwick sheep. We were also treated to some butterflies including Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and Common Blues. We also found a Migrant Hawker dragonfly perched on the hedge.

On our way up to the top of the hill, the slopes abounded with Clustered Bellflowers and

Devil's Bit Scabious. There were also a few stands of the lovely Autumn Gentian and delicate Harebells.

Graham soon found the markers by some of the Autumn Lady's Tresses and a few new plants were also discovered. The slopes and tops of the hill were covered with the lovely umbellifer, Moon Carrot – a rare species, but seemingly abundant in this location. We also found Ground Pine, classified as endangered, hence the protective netting around it.

There were several birds to be seen during the walk including a Common Redstart and a couple of Whinchats which was very pleasing.

We headed back to our vehicles with everyone having enjoyed the walk. We were all grateful to Graham for sharing his enthusiasm and expertise.



Moon Carrot *Seseli libanotis*

Hoopoe would like to remind readers that copies of the latest BNHS publication Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife, a photographic record is still available to purchase via the BNHS website. Christmas is coming so why not inspire someone (or yourself!) to visit new areas of our lovely county?



Summer Highlights including BIG meetings 2021

Saturday 19 June, Ampthill

by Julia Powell

We were invited last year to help with this Churchyard Mini Bioblitz, joint with BIG at St Andrews Churchyard to find out what calls the area home. This County Wildlife Site, designated for its acid grassland, is being monitored for grant funding. Circumstances being what they were, it had to be postponed for a year. The nature table and quiz for the children was set up in the Chapter House and half a dozen people went out to survey the churchyard. Unfortunately the weather was very grey and there were only a few passers-by so it was not possible to show off this wonderful little site to the general public.

Thursday 24 June, Clophill

by Andrew Green

Ten entomologists and one lichenologist enjoyed a visit for this BIG visit to the former Fuller's Earth works at Clophill Lakes. The site proved to have a variety of interesting habitats. Despite the weather being more overcast than forecast there were nonetheless some good finds and the temperature picked up a little after lunch. I was lucky to sweep a Six-belted Clearwing moth from Bird's-foot Trefoil as I was heading back to the car. Sue Raven found a stunning female *Xiphydria camelus* woodwasp close to dead willow. There were plenty of sawfly larvae about marking the beginning of the end of the adult sawfly season and an *Arge fuscipes* larva is only the second record of this species since 1982

We extend our thanks to Sue Raven for access to the site and Sue would welcome further visits from recorders by appointment. Do get in touch if you would like to visit.

Saturday 28 June, Leighton Buzzard

It was a fine, dry day which started off overcast, but very warm as the sun broke through later for our walk in Rammamere and King's Wood. Eleven of us joined Bob for a very enjoyable walk round the reserve, including an area not open to the public where we were pleased to see a slow worm under one of the corrugated sheets. Bob gave some details on the location of the Reserve (part Beds, part Bucks) and mixed ownership all of which presents challenges when undertaking conservation tasks.

Friday 9 July, Broom

by Ann de Winter

It was a fine, dry and very warm day which saw 19 BNHS members gather at Jordan's Mill. Our leader, Betty, gave us a brief history of the Mill before we set off for a very enjoyable walk, starting off by the River Ivel and leading to Broom East Reserve. This site, owned by Tarmac, had much of the work converting it to a nature reserve influenced by the late Graham Goodall. It is a lovely site, and we saw many invertebrates and wildflowers there.

Wednesday 14 July, Leighton Buzzard

by Rory Morrisey

There are several different habitats here in a small area of south Leighton Buzzard. Astral Lake (all within SP9323) is a new lake created with the building of the nearby Sandhills housing estate about five years ago. There is little emergent vegetation but there is plenty of habitat surrounding the lake. Astral Park is to the north of the lake with most wildlife interest at the balancing pond SP937238-SP938238 and the fruit orchard at SP939240-SP940240. There are football pitches and a running track.

There is a gate at SP940240 that leads into Stanbridge Meadows LNR, owned by the Greensand Trust, that covers three fields: SP940241-SP940243 and bits of other grid squares. This is unimproved grassland with several different soil types.

The weather during our visit on 21 July was mixed. It was a bit windy on the lake for many dragonflies and other insects, but some were seen. We also saw some interesting birds. The balancing pond, where the nine of us met initially, is small but quite sheltered and home to several insect species.

The three fields in Stanbridge Meadows were visited mostly in sunshine and it made for a very pleasant stroll with lots of interest from the flowers and insects.

Wednesday 21 July, Shuttleworth

story and photos by Betty Cooke

On July 21 ten BNHS members enjoyed a fascinating walk in Swiss Garden, which got off to a good start as members got in free due to a mix up with the arrangements. David Alderman, keeper of the National Tree Register, introduced us to some amazing trees, ranging from an over 300 year old Oak, to more recent discoveries, such as a Dawn Redwood, known only as a fossil until it was found alive and well in China in the 1940s, and the Wollemi Pine discovered even more recently in 1994 in Australia. We were enthralled by David's tales of unusual trees like the Pedestal Larch, which started life in a pot and became so pot-bound that even when planted in the ground, the tree continued to grow in a distinctive manner; only about 15 of these are known in the UK. Other fascinating trees included the Silver Hedgehog Holly, a Bedfordshire Champion, and the rare Golden Weeping Holly; only 13 are known in Britain and three are in Swiss Garden!



A Wollemi Pine *Wollemia nobilis*, once thought extinct but rediscovered in 1994



The distinctive and once pot-bound Pedestal Larch

The Scarlet Willow by the boat house is a British Champion, but we would need a revisit in the winter to see that at its best!

Thursday 29 July, Pegsdon

story and photos by Andrew Green

Five of us ventured out onto Knocking Hoe NNR yesterday accompanied by Steph and Holly from Natural England. We were treated to stunning floral displays and big skies over the rolling landscape. Conditions were tricky for those of us using nets, with a stiff breeze for the most part.

Peter Topley found Nautilus Ramshorn Snail (*Gyraulus crista*); one of fifteen mollusc species observed. Other highlights included Chalkhill Blue butterflies, a curious hunchbacked fly (*Paracrocera* sp.?) found by Colin LeBoutillier and an *Arge ochropus* larva which is only the seventh Beds record and only the second record from chalk.



Nautilus Ramshorn Snails *Gyraulus crista* (top) and a larva of *Arge ochropus* (bottom)

Sunday 1 August, Shuttleworth Family Air Show

by Julia Powell

The BNHS was invited to have a stand here alongside the RSPB and local Wildlife Trust among others. It is a popular event as people attend from all over the country. Fortunately the stand was set up inside a large marquee as there was some heavy rain during the day. But there was a steady stream of interest in the nature table and some children were persuaded to do the quiz. Thank you to Helen Muir-Howie, Ann de Winter, Betty Cooke and Graham Bellamy.

Wednesday 11 August, Shuttleworth

by Julia Powell

Another visit to Swiss Garden, this time by invitation to help out with their Bug Hunt at which we had the photo display, a quiz and the Nature table on show. Some BIG members were also present both collecting and helping the 20 children booked for the walk to use sweep nets and do some pond-dipping. The children were excited to learn what they had found and several families came back to the stand again and again throughout the day. There was great interaction with the public and members had a good day out too as the staff at Swiss Garden always look after us very well despite it being a bit chaotic at the start on this occasion.

Saturday 21 August, Southill Estate

by Andrew Green

Ten of our intrepid bunch from BIG descended on Southill Estate near Biggleswade on Saturday 21 August in pursuit of invertebrates, on what was to be a dull but mild day with some light rain and not much breeze. After negotiating the security perimeter gates, we parked by the cricket pitch and went on foot towards the lake, where we were surprised to see nothing more than a dried up and vegetated lakebed. The lake had been drained in mid-May to enable repairs to be undertaken to a major sluice gate. The image attached shows the lake as it was in May 2019 and from the same viewpoint as it is today.

Entomologists being entomologists we quickly dispersed across the mud flats in search of the rare and unusual. Painter's Mussel (*Unio pictorum*) shells littered the foreshore. Sapling willows and poplars were established well away from the shoreline suggesting the lake has been dry for most of this year at least. Good numbers of the fly *Lispe nana* were found on the shingle island, a species that is coastal, with few records, and is new to Bedfordshire. Identification was confirmed by our Moscow correspondent, Nikita Vikhrev. Sweeping the sapling growth, yielded numerous Herald moth larvae and several adult sawflies which turned out to be *Pristiphora luteipes*, a species only recorded once in Bedfordshire at Felmersham in 1982. An *Abax parallelepipedus* ground beetle was unearthed from under a log in the surrounding woodland and Sheila spotted a Purple Hairstreak at rest on oak whilst we sheltered from a passing shower.



The lake at Southill Estate in May 2019 (top) and August 2021 (bottom). Photos by Andrew Green

Monday 23 August, Harrold

by Julia Powell

Only five members turned up for the Pond dipping at Harrold-Odell Country Park but Janet had advertised it locally so we had two families booked in and another joined us for most of the morning. This was about as much as the site could accommodate safely near the gazebo where we had the tank to show off what was

found. The experience kept everyone happily occupied for a couple of hours and the children went away with new knowledge to pass on to their peers and families.

Saturday 28 August, Maulden

by Ann de Winter

Sixteen BNHS and Mammal Group members met at the lovely Duck End nature reserve to see what had been caught in the Longworth traps. Mick had put these out on Wednesday prior to baiting them ready for inspection on Saturday. We were delighted to see that, from 20 traps, the following were found:

- Bank Voles – 8
- Wood Mice – 5
- Common Shrew – 1
- Water Shrew – 1

Five traps were empty.

All animals were released shortly after capture, back to where they were found. We were hoping to find Harvest Mice but, unfortunately, they did not oblige. However, the Water Shrew was a very exciting capture as these are rare mammals and it was very encouraging to see that they are present at Duck End NR. Many thanks to Mick – and John who assisted before and during the day – for leading the event. We all appreciated his time, enthusiasm and expertise, and very much enjoyed seeing the small mammals that live on the nature reserve.

A close look at the Small Eggar

by Richard Bashford

Last year, in the midst of the first lockdown, with many working from home, Mrs Bashford and I took to pre-work walks along the local footpaths, mainly west of our home in Eaton Ford near St Neots.

In mid May, I noticed the impressive larval webs of Small Eggar (*Eriogaster lanestris*): two, near Colmworth. I'd seen one the previous year near Staploe when a friend posted a photo asking me what it was; I had assumed it would be the notorious Brown-tailed Moth *Euproctis chrysorrhoea* but the neat, silver tent-like and large characteristic caterpillars showed it to be the far rarer Small Eggar. This species is generally known from occasional sightings of these larval webs in the north and north west of the county. Over the course of the next month, I saw between 30 and 40 more in the hedgerows west of Eaton Ford, mainly around the villages of Duloe, Staploe, Honeydon, Begwary and Colmworth making this little corner of the county pretty significant (especially when you consider there are only 100 historical records). No doubt, concerted effort to walk along the hedgerows in other areas would find more. Appearing almost white, and often quite large, it is in theory possible to see them from the car, but walking or cycling is ideal.

So far this year, and just in the last two weeks I've found 25 webs, mainly in the Honeydon epicentre, but a few near Pertenhall and one near Souldrop. I've joined local villages' Facebook groups to highlight the species and hopefully generate more records. It is also useful to take the opportunity to stem any misinformation about similar species – this year we appear to have dramatic Spindle Ermine (*Yponomeuta cagnagella*) larval spinnings across our hedgerows. These look like the novelty spider web spray people use at Halloween! And by extension, confusion with the rather more notorious Brown-tail Moth which can cause irritation if you come into contact with the hairy caterpillars. It would not take much for people to conflate and exaggerate the dangers of all these larval spinnings. Already, there have been calls on the Facebook groups to remove bushes infected with Spindle Ermings! It would be a shame if the glorious and harmless Small Eggar was targeted.

And who knows, I might even see an adult moth one of these days!

Neglected Invertebrates Conference

by Alan Outen on behalf of the Conference Steering Committee

Back in April the steering committee reluctantly came to the conclusion that we should cancel the conference planned for last year and that we had hoped we could run this year. Clearly this is very disappointing but there remains a good deal of uncertainty over what is going to happen in the autumn with respect to Covid-19. Scientists and clinicians were saying then that we could face another wave in the Autumn and that remains a concern among many.

We felt it was unreasonable to keep speakers dangling and then have to cancel anyway. We were also concerned that rules regarding indoor gatherings might limit numbers such that the event became financially unviable. It was felt that a zoom event would lose much of the benefits that people derive from an actual live event.

Once things are more settled we will revive the planned programme and all the speakers have indicated that that would be willing to participate.



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10% discount on **microscopy** equipment

Plea for speakers

At present we do not know when it will be feasible to return to having face to face talks at Maulden Village Hall. The presentations via Zoom have been very successful and it is proposed to include some extra ones in the winter programme. So we are on the lookout for topics and suggestions for speakers. Please contact me or Sheila with any proposals. Juliapowell800(at)gmail.com, 01582 661328 or Brooke.se(at)btinternet.com, 01525 873396.

Many thanks

Julia

Autumn Programme 2021

THIS IS A PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME ONLY. Details may change and additional events may be organised at short notice. All places must be booked in advance.

Due to uncertainty about further Covid-19 precautions as yet unknown, the featured talks will be via Zoom. Please keep an eye on your emails or the newsgroup for last minute information. The Zoom links will be sent out via the members email before each talk. There is no need to book for the talks but it is essential that you do not share the link to prevent the talk being hijacked by an inappropriate group.

BIG – Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group, book your place with Andrew Green, emailsawflies(at)bnhs.org.uk telephone 01234 772555

Please book a place for other events as mentioned in the write-up with Julia Powell: JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com or 01582 661328, or Sheila Brooke: brooke.se(at)btinternet.com, telephone 01525 873396

WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER, SANDY 10:30am

Walk at The Lodge, RSPB Reserve. The leaves of the Silver Birches and Oaks should be changing in colour and it is possible that the Heather could still be lingering. There should be some interesting fungi to look out for, there could be Stonechats perched on the Gorse bushes and winter finches should be arriving. The shop and toilets are open. Parking is free for RSPB members, bring your membership card to display in the car. Meet at the Lodge gatehouse car park SG19 2DL, TL191484. Please book with Julia Powell. Juliapowell800(at)gmail.com 01582 661328

Leader: Betty Cooke.

TUESDAY 19th OCTOBER 8pm

Zoom Talk “The History and Ecology of Abernethy Forest” by Dr Ron Summers who is Principal Conservation Scientist at RSPB Scotland. Abernethy Forest is a nature reserve managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The forest has more Caledonian pinewood than any other wood in Scotland. The trees in these remaining fragments of Caledonian pinewood are descendants of an ancient forest that once spread across Highland Scotland. Since the Bronze or Iron Age, the forest has been used by people for hunting, exploitation of timber, farming and now nature conservation. This talk is an account of the changes caused by people and the natural process that have shaped the forest, providing an environment for an astonishing diversity of wildlife. Comparisons are drawn with natural forests in continental Europe, revealing the conservation measures that need to be taken to restore lost features in an attempt to create a present-natural forest that extends to a natural tree-line. The talk will end with a broader look at all Caledonian pinewoods and the factors that are creating new threats to their conservation. A full account of this topic has been published by the RSPB Conservation Dept: *Abernethy Forest. The History and Ecology of an Old Scottish Pinewood* and is available through the NHBS.

WEDNESDAY 10th NOVEMBER 8pm extra Zoom talk

Zoom Talk “Banking on Butterflies” – The Wildlife Trust BCN and University of Cambridge have collaborated for over 10 years looking at the requirements of the North Chiltern Chalk’s butterflies including the Duke of Burgundy and Small Blue. Andrew (University of Cambridge) & Ryan (WTBCN Banking on Butterflies project officer) have kindly agreed to do a joint talk on the butterfly research the university has been doing on WT reserves previously & the current Banking on Butterflies project they are working on together that has followed on from this. This talk will cover the academic research done to date as well as the exciting new Banking on Butterflies project. Join us on this presentation to find out what the huge letter “E” banks are about on both the Totternhoe and Pegsdon Wildlife Trust nature reserves...this should be a very interesting evening finding out about the habitat requirements of our downland butterflies.

FRIDAY 12th NOVEMBER, TOTTERNHOE 10:30am

Walk at Totternhoe in support of the “Banking on Butterflies” talk. This is an opportunity to see the practical work that has been put in place for this project. Some paths here are quite steep and are very slippery in wet or damp weather so please wear sensible footwear and bring a stick if you like to use one. Meet in the NT car park, SP986217, LU6 1QG. Please book with Julia Powell. JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com, 01582 661328

Leader: Ryan Clark

TUESDAY 16th NOVEMBER 8pm

Zoom Talk “Wildlife of North-east India” by Abidur Rahman. With many famous national parks and some wonderful wildlife to be experienced, the North-east states of India are popular destinations for international wildlife watchers. Abidur Rahman is an experienced guide and photographer who has led many wildlife and birding-focused tours for visitors to his home state of Assam. He will lead us through some of the highlights of the wildlife to be enjoyed in the region.

TUESDAY 7th DECEMBER Venue and time TBC

The Christmas Social evening will go ahead but it has yet to be decided whether this will be via Zoom as last year or if we will meet at Maulden Village Hall. A selection of members photos and videos will be shown and there will be seasonal refreshments should the meeting be at Maulden.

SUNDAY 26th DECEMBER, WOBURN 9.30am (F)

Boxing Day Walk through Woburn Park. Meet at the Woburn Village car park, opposite the church in Park Street, MK17 9PG, SP950331. Please book with Julia Powell. JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com, 01582 661328

Leader: Julia Powell.