



Wild About Beds

April 2023



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Photo above: Pyramidal Orchids by Richard Revels

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\(at\)bnhs.org.uk](mailto:membership(at)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: Nick Hammond

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

Email: [newsletter\(at\)bnhs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter(at)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 2023** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **July 2023**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Notes from the Chair

Graham Bellamy

These are my last “Notes from the Chair” as I stepped down as Chairman at the AGM on March 21st, which I missed attending due to a touch of ill health. It was particularly galling to miss our first in-person AGM for three years, the others having been forced to be held by Zoom due to Covid 19. Thanks to all our members for persevering with many of our meetings being held via Zoom. Thanks also to all those members who have served on Council, Scientific and Finance Committees and are Recorders for the many groups of wildlife covered by the Society. Thanks to everyone who makes the BNHS work -- from organising our annual programme of walks, talks and other events, editing and contributing to *The Bedfordshire Naturalist* and *Wild About Beds*, making cups of tea and coffee and making it the friendly and welcoming society the BNHS is. It has been a privilege to work with you to get us through Covid and be in a place where it looks like we can operate as normal again. It will be a new normal where we can retain some of the good things we have learnt, such as having some talks via zoom in those dark, cold winter months when it is safer to stay at home with a hot drink!



▲ *In the North Chilterns the acquisition of 586 acres of the Hexton Estate is good news for naturalists*

Covid has really impressed on me how valuable our wildlife and wild places are to us all. It is therefore great that we are set to embark on two very exciting enterprises in Bedfordshire. In North Beds the Wildlife Trust has secured a large new nature reserve at Strawberry Hill in Knotting Green, a haven for scrub warblers, Nightingale and Turtle Dove. Today (March 22nd), there was a press announcement from Natural England's West Anglia Team who have announced that they have just acquired 586 acres of Chiltern Hills part of Hexton Estate on the Beds and Herts borders. This goes a long way to linking up some of our most important North Chilterns nature-rich sites from close to Barton Hills to Pegsdon Hills. The mantra, for years, even decades, has been the necessity linking wildlife sites with quality habitat to enable our wildlife to move about and adapt to climate change --- bigger, better and more joined up. They've only gone and done it! Well done to all those whose application, belief and persistence has made this happen. We all need to get our shoulders behind these great initiatives to help it really happen and record the wildlife there now and into the future.

The Purple Emperors of Maulden Wood

Peter Sutton shows how persistence and some luck have helped to reveal the status of these dramatic butterflies

Despite a concerted effort to search Maulden Wood for Purple Emperors during the summer months of 2021, not a single specimen was seen (WAB 202). This highlighted what a difficult butterfly it is to see. It rarely coming down from the treetops where it spends most of its time feeding on the aphid honeydew that coats the leaves.

Last June, after Keith Balmer told me that the first Bedfordshire record for the year had been reported from a private garden and I resumed my search of Maulden Wood. I spent a whole day on Saturday 25th June looking, without success, for the Purple Emperor and recalling the words of Jeremy Thomas, “only seldom does the casual naturalist see one, even in its strongholds of Wiltshire and the western Weald” (Thomas and Lewington, 2010), I contemplated the possibility of another year without success. Nevertheless, bolstered by the news and excellent photographs of a magnificent male that had been photographed that Saturday by May Edwards at another Greensand Ridge woodland in the Flit Valley, Chicksands Wood, I continued my search the following day.



A male Purple Emperor with some damage to its wings in a pine at Maulden Woods.

As luck would have it, I observed two specimens in at Maulden Wood between 11am and midday on that sunny Sunday morning. I was able to get a couple of distant photographs that confirmed their identity before they vanished into the canopy. I patrolled the entire length of the path several more times over the next two hours. Eventually my persistence was rewarded when I located a somewhat damaged male flying among the fronds of a pine tree. It appeared to be feeding on either sugary residues from pine aphids or resinous/sugary secretions from the tree itself (see photo above)).

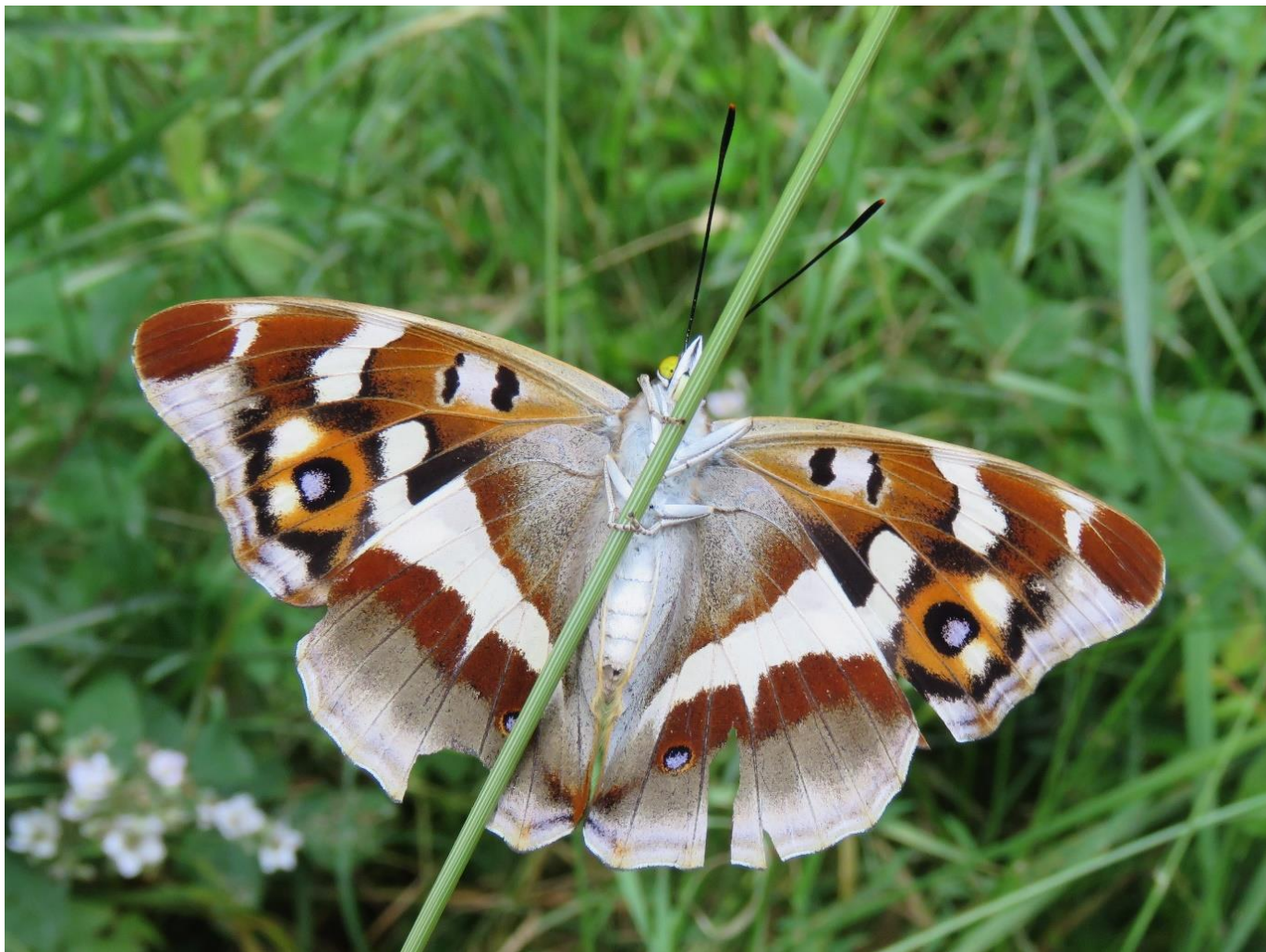
The next week I had even better luck, particularly in view of the statement, again by Thomas (*loc. cit.*) that, “Only the males descend to feed on other matter.” On Sunday 2nd July I visited Maulden Wood in the morning at 7.30 am. Strong winds had buffeted the trees overnight and the conditions were noticeably



Female Purple Emperor on path. Maulden Wood.



Female Purple Emperor in the hand. Maulden Wood



Spectacular underside patterning of a female Purple Emperor underside at Maulden Wood.

cooler than in previous days. A hundred yards or so from the A6 lay-by entrance, I came across a female specimen on the path. It may have been blown down from its treetop perch during the night and was certainly cold to the point of being torpid, barely offering any movement when I picked it up. Consequently, I was able to get several good photographs, including a picture of its spectacular tiger-faced underside before it inevitably warmed up and the moth disappeared up into the treetops.

Despite continued searching, this was the last specimen that I would see this season. Nevertheless, further searches revealed another woodland butterfly, the White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*. This species, while also feeding primarily on the sugary residues deposited by aphids, will, unlike the Purple Emperor, occasionally supplement its diet with nectar from flowers, and on 12th July, a male was seen feeding on the flower head of an umbellifer (left). This was followed by the observation of a second specimen taking minerals from the path on 15th July.

As always, the Maulden Wood complex revealed many other treasures, including the glorious sight of a woodland pool full of flowering insectivorous plants. These Greater Bladderworts *Utricularia vulgaris* are a very rare sight in Bedfordshire, but unfortunately, I heard that this population had subsequently been damaged by dogs that were 'playing' in the pond. In addition to the physical damage that these animals can cause, there is also another layer damage, because the release of potent neonicotinoid pesticides from their flea treatments has a devastating impact on aquatic insects, is still permitted in the UK.) This chemical pollution may also explain why not a single water beetle could be found in one pond studied in Maulden Wood. However, the wood remains an excellent place to see longhorn beetles (Cerambycidae) and in addition to species previously described, three new species were observed: the Black-spotted Longhorn



Greater Bladderwort, a very rare plant in the county, grows in Maulden Wood.

Rhagium mordax, the impressively large *Stenocorus meridianus*, and the Black-striped Longhorn *Stenurella melanura*. Another woodland species, the Hazel Leaf-roller *Apoderus coryli* was seen on 11th June, and on 9th July a specimen was observed in the process of cutting a leaf to roll into the characteristic tube in which its larva would develop.



The Black-spotted Longhorn *Rhagium mordax*. (left) and the unmistakably large longhorn beetle *Stenocorus meridianus* (right). Both were new records for Maulden Wood in June 2022.



Wood ants carry their prey to their nest.

Finally, Maulden Wood and Heath complex is the only place in Bedfordshire where the Wood Ant *Formica rufa* can be found. The nests are generally to be found on the eastern side of the wood and on 25th June, among the mass of activity of foraging workers, two ants were carrying a caterpillar back to the nest. This species was apparently introduced in the last century and was studied in the 1940s by none other than the coleopterist Charles Mackechnie Jarvis who passed away in 2009 at the grand age of 101. On one visit, desperate to find a myrmecophilous beetle in one of Maulden Wood's large nests, he apparently removed all his clothes (to ensure that he did not have to remove ants from them later) and plunged his arms deep into the nest. He was successful in his quest, but it came at a price -- he had been so badly attacked "from head to toe" by the ants that he was seriously ill for a number of days (Nau *et al.*, 1987).

On 11th June, close to the Wood Ants' nest was the Four-spotted Leaf Beetle *Clytra quadripunctata*, which was observed feeding on the petal of a Dog Rose *Rosa canina* (Figure 12). This myrmecophilous beetle drops its eggs onto the nest, and the larvae then develop inside the nest, feeding on detritus and the remains of insects brought to the nest, and also on the eggs and developing young of their host.

References

Nau, B.S., Boon, C.R. and Knowles, J.P. 1987. *Bedfordshire Wildlife*, Castlemead Publications, Ware.

Thomas, J. and Lewington, R. 2010. *The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland*, British Wildlife Publishing Ltd.

Join in the 2023 – 2024 two-year survey of Bedfordshire orchids, ten years after the original survey of 2013-14

Survey organisers: Richard Revels, Graham Bellamy, Chris Boon, Richard Hogg, Geraldine Hogg & Rosemary Brind

The first survey of the wild orchids of Bedfordshire started in 2013 and continued into 2014. This resulted in the BNHS publication of *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire* in 2015. Since then, there seems to have been changes in the distributions of a number of the county's wild orchid flora. Several species have become more frequently encountered, and often in new locations, whilst other species seem to have declined, with some apparently not having appeared above ground for several years. The appearance of both leaf rosettes and the flowering of the orchid flora at a location is often unpredictable, with some species not appearing for several years before again 'returning' to a former site. So, drawing a conclusion of their presence or otherwise on single visits every few years may not give an accurate account of their status.

No doubt our more volatile climate, with the summer heatwaves and droughts of recent years, is probably taking its toll of the county's flora, and other wildlife. Droughts are well known to affect the growth and flowering of many plants including orchids. However, some orchid species can remain 'dormant' underground for a few years appearing again when habitat conditions change more to their liking. Maybe old seeds in the ground from the past may have survived and germinate when conditions become favourable again.

Fungus in the ground is essential for orchid seeds to germinate, and is very difficult to monitor. When scrub is cleared or thinned in woodlands of former sites of butterfly- orchids they may return after many years.



Above left: the **Bee Orchid** is Bedfordshire's adopted wild flower, and in recent decades has become more widespread in the county. They can occur in a variety of sparsely vegetated habitats, and often on road verges if not mowed during the flowering season (late-May to early July).

Above right: the **Pyramidal Orchid** can also be found widely across the county. They often grow on road verges if not cut during mid-summer, where sometimes they can produce some stunning displays, as here on the Barton-le Clay bypass.

Also, if grazing returns to meadows that have become overgrown for a few years, or have perhaps been over-grazed, flowering orchids can and do sometimes reappear. Sometimes the reason for the presence or disappearance of orchids from a site may not be known. This survey is not a quest to solve such mysteries, but is to record the species present when habitats are visited. Ideas on possible reasons for any changes can be entered in a comments section on the survey form.

There is now access to several new nature reserves in the county, including Strawberry Hill Farm near Knotting Green, and also some old wet meadowland close to Flitwick Moor NR. Both are likely to produce new records of orchids. We are also hoping to get permission to visit several sites on private land.

The orchid species that generally seem to be increasing in the county include Bee, Pyramidal and Common Spotted-orchid. Several other species that are occasionally reported, mostly as singles over a wide area, include Southern Marsh-orchid and its hybrid with Common Spotted-orchid.



*Above left: **Greater Butterfly-orchid** appears to be steadily declining and seems to have disappeared from several of its former Beds locations. It seems to be most at home in woodlands but can also occur in more open conditions. Many of its leaf rosettes and stems are eaten by slugs, so some plants seldom manage to flower. Leaf rosettes can be found in late March and early April and will indicate that plants are still present (please take a picture to confirm identification).*

*Above centre: **Common Twayblade** was formerly more widespread in the county, and seems to be a declining species, so all records of this orchid will be welcome. It occurs both on open areas and in woodlands, and can tolerate a variety of different soils.*

*Above right: small numbers of **Lizard Orchids** have intermittently been recorded in Bedfordshire over the past 90 or so years, but they have not been recorded recently despite being found recently in most of the adjoining counties. This orchid prefers calcareous and neutral soils, and will grow over 80 cm tall.*

Several species that seem to have declined since the first survey include Frog Orchid, Musk Orchid, Common Twayblade and several helleborine species. Several other species seem to fluctuate in numbers from year to year and their presence may even vary between different habitats.

One species that is now occurring widely over southern England, mostly as singles, and has been found in all the neighbouring counties, is the Lizard Orchid. As it has occurred in the county in the past, it may be present now. What a find the spectacular Lizard Orchid would be for someone!

All photographs by Richard Revels

During 2023, please record all the orchids that you find in the county. Make a note of the species, number of plants, location and a minimum of a 6-figure grid reference (ideally 8-figure). As in the previous survey, the main way of reporting species found will be by using the Adnoto recording facility on the BNHS website. All known species occurring in the county are listed there, with spaces for estimated numbers and other comments. Records can also be added to iRecord if preferred.



Families at a Wilder Futures Project at Bradgers Hill

Wilder Futures Project Makes Progress

Matt Sutcliffe of the Wildlife Trust reports on the way this Luton-based project is developing and how you can become involved

Engagement opportunities are being delivered to a growing audience from across the various communities in Luton by Wilder Futures Project, based at Bradgers Hill in Luton. Funded by the National Heritage Lottery it is being delivered by the Wildlife Trust BCN.

We finished 2022 with some tree-planting arranged for young people from Youthscape and an open day of tree planting for all ages and abilities, which was attended by 15 people, despite the wet weather. Both were part of the Luton Borough Council plan to restore Hay Wood, a small ancient woodland found within nearby Stopsley Common, to its original size. We hope to continue this effort during next winter's planting season.

Our Little Bugs club for under 5's paused briefly for Christmas and resumed in January, despite the cold weather. That it is delivered out of central Wardown Park demonstrates how our engagement work is reaching out beyond the Bradgers Hill area. Our Wild Ed sessions for children educated at home also take place at Wardown, and like the Little Bugs club, they run fortnightly and have proved popular with the Luton Community. Both use nature and wildlife to inspire and educate children.

Monthly practical tasks continue at Bradgers Hill. The project has helped to clear more scrub for larger grassland areas and to improve access. The most recent task was laying a hedge alongside the main steps that lead up the hill. Tuesday Conservation Volunteers and Luton & Dunstable Conservation Volunteers also deliver task days at Bradgers and this concentrated volunteer effort really is helping to improve the site.

The Wildlife Trust is still relatively new to community engagement in Luton, and it takes time to create suitable partnerships, but the word about what we can offer is spreading. We now have six primary schools and two secondary schools actively engaged. Our services to these schools include practical sessions for older children who find classroom settings difficult, advice on improving school grounds for biodiversity and forest school activities. A teacher training session is planned for May to help teachers gain confidence in taking their lessons outside and into a natural setting.

The largest of our community events so far took place at February Half-term. Held at the Community Hub in Bushmead, approximately 80 people enjoyed a range of displays and activities based around nature and wildlife. Children were given the chance to make an apple birdfeeder, complete some quizzes and make a pledge for how they will help wildlife. There was the option to build and take away a bird box which 10 families signed up for and there were fantastic displays by the Bedfordshire Swift Group and from BNHS. The day culminated with a walk up to the main meadow area on Bradgers Hill with over 20 people. It was great to see the joy on their faces when the view from the top appears and when a pair of red kites put on a display overhead.

I would like to thank the BNHS for helping towards the success of this event. I look forward to working with you again later this year with monitoring butterflies at Bradgers Hill and helping lead one or two of the walks that we deliver there throughout the year.

For more information about how you can help, contact matt.sutcliffe@wildlifebcn.org or visit www.wildlifebcn.org/bradgers-hill-wilder-futures

Winter Programme Highlights 2023

In recent Januarys gone by there has been a visit to various museums with a natural history interest but none was arranged this year as Covid numbers are still high along with plenty of cold and flu infections. Hopefully we will resume them next year. Any suggestions about local museums that would be interesting to our members would be welcome.

The BNHS was invited to take part in the Family Day at Bradgers Hill on February 15th during half term. See the report from Matt Sutcliffe for details about this event and others.

On March 9th the society was invited back to Parkfields school, Toddington, for their Science Day through a connection with Sheila Brooke, which we had last visited on March 13th 2020, the Friday before lockdown!

John Pitts, Sheila, myself and Wilf, my husband, managed to hold the fort for four sessions with 22 children in each: three sessions in the morning with a coffee break and one in the afternoon after an excellent buffet lunch. No school dinners for us! We had lots of space in the sports hall which dissipated the noise a little and allowed the children to roam around a bit more. We took items from the nature table including a mini food web based on our Tawny Owl and some owl pellets. The furry creatures were very popular but had a bit of rough handling at times. We set up three quizzes as well. One was the original one with multiple choice answers admirably managed by "Big Bad John". A short distance away was a new quiz where the names of the creatures were scrambled up. Easy for those who knew what the photos were but a little harder to solve the anagrams. Seeing the sense of achievement on the faces of the pupils that worked it out for themselves was a joy to behold. The third quiz was much more challenging, especially as we had to make it visible to half a dozen children simultaneously. It comprised of a series of numbered photos of immature stages of animals and plants alongside corresponding lettered photos of the mature forms of the same. So it was necessary to identify what each photo was before matching the pairs correctly. Lots of children suggested an acorn grew into an acorn tree but matching the frog with its spawn and the dandelion clock with its flowers was much easier. Each session consisted of pupils from every year group and while some of them were not very interested, there were many that were very keen and some were really quite knowledgeable. There were some adults from the school at all the sessions and even they learnt something too. Seeing those pupils that knew some of the answers flourish and the sense of achievement of those getting correct answers when they thought they were guessing made what was a long day all worthwhile.



Wild daffodils at Maulden Woods on March 12th (Photograph by Julia Powell)

On March 12th there was a visit to Maulden Woods. It was a lovely sunny morning when 12 of us including a couple of youngsters, set off toward the southern, more sandy part of the woods. This was fortuitous as the paths leading to the ancient woodland were far muddier. We saw one or two spring flowers, Lesser Celandine and Climbing Corydalis on the way. Not far along the path we came across a Southern Wood Ant nest in the sun with the whole surface covered with ants. We had to be careful not to stand too close or we would have been covered too. An unpleasant prospect. We passed numerous ant hills on our walk but no more in the sun and none so lively. The ants are thriving here having been introduced by one of the former Dukes of Bedford, but are not common in the county and have not spread into other parts of the

woods. Our other target was the wild Daffodils and we came to a large patch right at the edge of the woods. It was a stunning display and the blooms were at their peak. Unfortunately the Holly is rather aggressive here and more management is needed to stop it encroaching the Daffodils. After admiring the flowers at some length, some people turned back while the remainder were to return by a more roundabout route over the heathland. We left the path here to investigate some holes dug amongst the heather in the vicinity of Rabbit droppings. Too big to be made by Green Tiger Beetles, there was speculation that these might have been caused by Minotaur Beetles, a large round dung beetle found on sandy grassland and heathland which feeds on rabbit droppings and other dung. The skies were now quite grey but everyone agreed we had had a lovely walk so a big thank you to Sue Raven for leading the day.

Julia Powell

Future 2023 meetings

Please check your emails on a regular basis for details of forthcoming meetings including those that may not be mentioned here.

FRIDAY APRIL 14th, MAULDEN WOOD 10:30am – 12:30pm

Find out what owls eat by dissecting their pellets. See the tiny bones and insect skeletons and try to identify them with a hand lens. Do the picture quiz and hold animal skulls, mummies and antlers. Children must be 8 years old or over and all children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Great fun for adults too. Limited places so advance booking essential at GST website www.greensandtrust.org/whats-on. £3 charge. Meet at the Working Woodland Centre off the A6 at Deadman's Hill layby, TL072394, MK43 3QT where there is a free car park.

Leader: Sheila Brooke.

TUESDAY APRIL 18th, MAULDEN 8pm doors open 7:15pm

This will be live in Maulden Village Hall

An introduction to common lichens - what they are and where to look for them by Martin Butler

Frances Davies' book *The Common Lichens of Bedfordshire*, published by the BNHS in 1981, contains a checklist of 133 species - mainly those most tolerant of Sulphur Dioxide. Since 1981, improving air quality has allowed a rapid increase in lichen diversity and density, especially on trees, and lichens in Bedfordshire have been studied in greater detail, so that well over 400 species have now been recorded in the county. With experience, some of the more common species can be identified in the field using a hand lens. Please a x10 hand lens if you have one as Martin is hoping to bring some lichens to demonstrate some of their features.

About Martin Butler: Martin is the Society's, a position Lichen Recorder which he has held in an honorary capacity since 2001.

FRIDAY APRIL 21st, 10:30am MOGGERHANGER, BEDFORD

Visit to Moggerhanger Park where the original grounds and woodlands were laid out by Humphrey Repton. However the original 200-odd acres are now reduced to 33. Of that, the area surrounding the house is open to the public and of a good size. It has a small piece of old woodland (including a 'bomb crater') with well-maintained paths and wood piles left after management, a pair of walled gardens which have venerable brick walls as do the adjacent outbuildings, larger areas of short grass and tussocky pasture and a more recently introduced orchard the understorey of which is not continually mowed. There are various corners and so on which are left untidy in a good way and excellent views including the Cardington Hangers. Entrance is free and open from 8am–4pm. The Orchard Tearoom opens 10am–4pm, the same building has toilets and a little museum detailing the history and restoration of the house and grounds.

Please book with Julia Powell on JuliaCPowell800@gmail.com or 01582 661328.

From the A1 direction (from Sandy) go past the Guinea pub (on right) and take last turning on left before leaving village (the first turning on left, to St John's Hospice, will curve around to the park entrance anyway), you will see a new building development on the left just before this. If travelling from the A421 direction (towards Sandy) then take the first turning on the right when entering the village. Either way you will see brown heritage signs for the park and boards for the Orchard Tearoom. In Moggerhanger, off Park

Road, follow the brown historic signs from the main road (A603). MK44 3RW, TL 14194934. Once at the main entrance, go over cattle grid. Follow the roadway and once over second grid bear right to visitors' car park (there is ample parking with an overflow at the end of it). Please meet in the car park at 10:30am. Leaders: Sheila Brooke and Julia Powell.

THURSDAY APRIL 27th, SILSOE 7pm – 9pm

Walk in Wrest Park - with 300 hundred years of landscaping, its history comes alive through its trees. Many survive today, from the early C18th, the Capability Brown designed influence and later C19th post war development shaping it into the landscape we enjoy today. Entrance free but **please book with Julia Powell on JuliaCPowell800@gmail.com or 01582 661328**. Meet in the car park TL088355, MK45 4HR. Leader: David Alderman.

TUESDAY MAY 9th, POTTON 10:30am

Walk in Potton Wood looking for Early Purple Orchids, Bluebells and other Spring flora and fauna. **Please book with Julia Powell on JuliaCPowell800@gmail.com or 01582 661328**. Meet and park by the water tower, Potton Wood, TL247494. SG19 2EA (approx). Leader: Graham Bellamy.

WEDNESDAY MAY 17th, WILLINGTON 10:30am

We will walk around this rather big site. There are several lakes and rides plus the Elstow Brook to investigate. Variable Damselfly was seen here last year and there will be other early species of dragonflies and damselflies emerging. There are no toilet facilities although we may stop at Danish Camp. **Please book with Julia Powell on JuliaCPowell800@gmail.com or 01582 661328**. Meet at the Dovecote (NT) car park. The Postcode for the Dovecote is MK44 3PX, the grid ref TL106499. Leader: Rory Morrissey.

SATURDAY JUNE 3rd, FLITWICK 10am to 4pm

Visit Flitwick Moor SSSI for the Flitwick Wood Bioblitz joint meeting with Flit Vale Wildlife Trust Local Group and BIG, recording invertebrates and other wildlife. Meet in car park at end of Folly Lane, off Maulden Road by Folly Farm, TL045354, MK45 5BZ. Leader: Colin Carpenter.

SATURDAY JUNE 17th, TODDINGTON 10:30am to 4pm

Picnic at Wadelows Nature Reserve, 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. In lieu of a social gathering in December, we have decided to have a picnic lunch at an all-day meeting at Wadelows. Please bring something to share. Meet in the car park TL023302, LU5 6HE.

TUESDAY 20th JUNE, CLOPHILL 7pm – 9:30pm

An evening walk around **Sandy Smith Nature Reserve**, Clophill, joint with BBC, looking for resident birds and other wildlife. Park and meet at the entrance gate to the reserve TL110387. Leaders: Stefan Baltruschat and Sue Raven.



Bedfordshire Naturalist and **Bedfordshire Bird Report**

The *Bedfordshire Naturalist* for 2021, Volume 76, was posted out to BNHS and joint BNHS/Bird Club members in February. At 200 pages it is one of the biggest editions ever (beaten by the journal for 2014 which was 208 pages). It is a remarkable achievement for a small society like ours to regularly achieve such a high standard of reports and articles across so many disciplines, and thanks are due to all the authors for their contributions, including some great photos. The journal forms an important record of the botanical and zoological knowledge of the county.

Work towards producing the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* for 2022 is beginning, and the first reports have been received – the deadline for reports and articles is the end of April. Members of the small Editorial Team, give generously of their time to help with the editing and proofreading. We do need someone to take on the lead role of co-ordinating this friendly team. It's very satisfying to have a task with an end date, and to see the finished product drop through the letterbox.

The 2021 *Bedfordshire Bird Report* is making slow but steady progress, and publication is still several months away. We're very grateful to three more volunteers who have stepped up to help with the 2022 report following recent requests for assistance. Richard North will be co-ordinating the sourcing and selection of photographs, Mike Bird will co-ordinate the receipt and editing of articles, and Steve Pritchard joins the editorial team - these are all critical tasks which will spread the workload amongst a larger team. Now we urgently need a Bird Report Editor, to take the lead role in the whole production. This would help the Bird Club enormously, as those currently leading the production of the Bird Report all have other important jobs within the society, resulting in undue pressure on a few individuals and putting the future production of the Bird Report at risk. **Please contact me at journal@bnhs.org.uk if you would like to find out more about getting involved with these important publications.**

Rosemary Brind
Hon. Editor

Kath Hindley, our Membership Secretary, has received a very thoughtful email from Peter Smith, about the 2021 *Bedfordshire Naturalist*, which he has kindly gave permission for us to publish.

Dear Kathryn

I received my copy a few days ago. I am taking my time reading the report because it contains so many interesting facts and comments. The photographs are absolutely splendid.

The editor, authors and all those that were involved deserve the highest praise on producing such an extremely high class annual report. I have been a member of the BNHS since 1960 and thoroughly enjoy both annual reports - it is one of the highlights of the year.

Please pass on my thanks to all involved for their time, effort and sheer professionalism. If you wish I am quite happy for you to make my comments public.

Regards

Peter Smith MBE