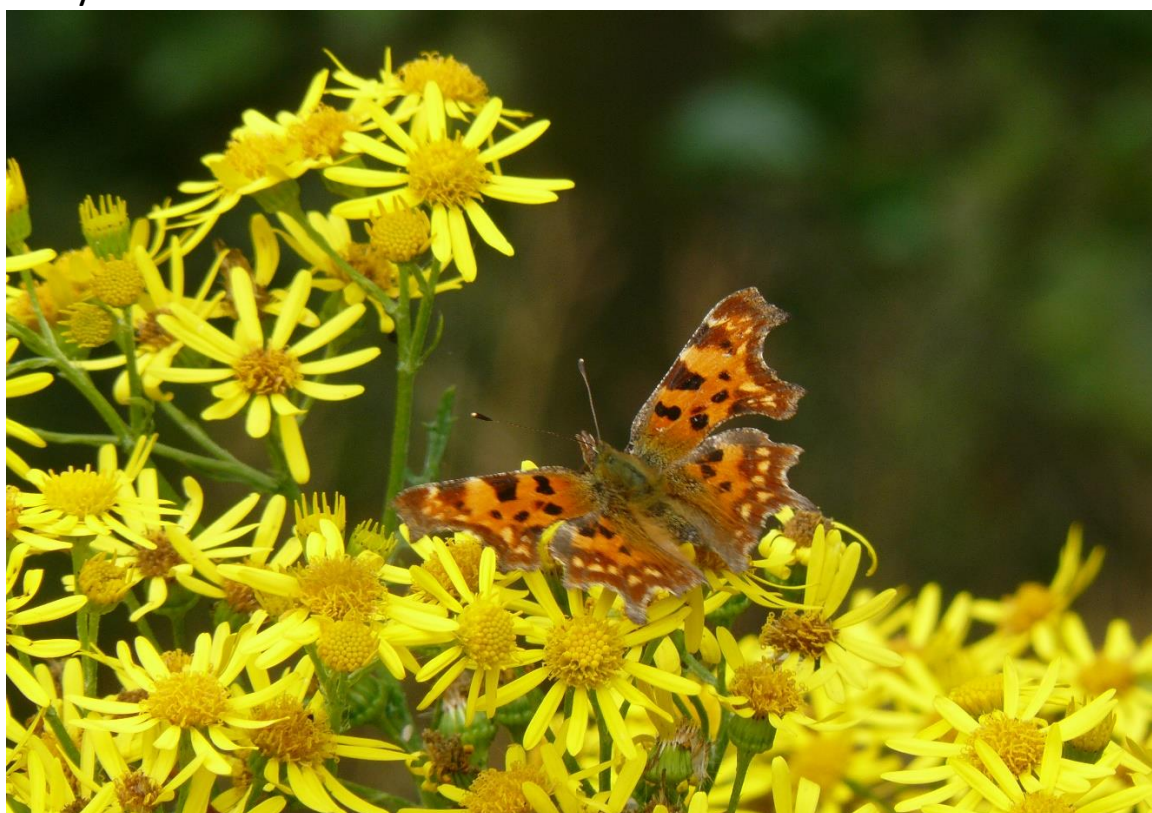




Wild About Beds

The Bedfordshire Natural History Society Newsletter

July 2024



Several species of butterfly have been seen later than usual this summer.

Included in the 210th issue:

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The BNHS Registered Charity Number 268659

www.bnhs.org.uk

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 **Lisa King**, 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: Nick Hammond

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 September 2024** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **October 2024**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Note from the Editor

The odd weather we have been experiencing this year has brought some super photographs and the need for a Weather Recorder for the Society. It has also caused problems for recorders of various taxa with affecting our ability to record wildlife as you will see from various comments in these pages.

People keep the Society going. There are an obituary for Dr Nancy Dawson, an influential naturalist and conservationist and a tribute by our chair to Graham and Pat Bellamy, who have been awarded Honorary Membership of the Society. If you want to become more involved, there are several opportunities in these pages.

Nick

Dr Nancy Dawson 1931-2023



Nancy Dawson, an active member of BNHS for many years, was one of those special people who was able to share her knowledge and enthusiasm with everyone from the very young to fellow experts. My first meeting with her was in the early 1970s when the RSPB created a Nature Discovery Room at Sandy and employed teacher-naturalists to show young people the wildlife around them. Among those teacher-naturalists was Nancy. Whenever I saw her working with school parties she was twinkling with enthusiasm as she shared her understanding of and passion for nature. "She was always lovely to us children," I was told by someone in their fifties who was remembering the Beds & Hunts Naturalists' Trust open days at Felmersham Pits.

Encouraged by her remarkable mother, Dame Kathleen Lonsdale, a pioneering crystallographer, one of the first two women to become Fellows of the Royal Society, a pacifist and prison reformer, Nancy showed an early interest in nature. Nancy's wildlife diaries beautifully documented observations of birds, plants and animals with meticulous care. One diary from 1941 (Nancy aged 9) has a foreword written by her mother.

"It is with the greatest pleasure that I have agreed to write a foreword to Nancy's book. Apart from giving her the opportunity of visiting the places which she so carefully describes and where she has made so many interesting observations, I have not been able to give her any assistance with the preparation of her manuscript. Nancy's knowledge of Natural History is limited, since she is only nine years of age, but she has a gift for sketching what she sees, and she sees more than would many older folk. How many people can tell the time on a winter's afternoon by the flight of birds to their roosting places? Nancy can. How many know on what dates to expect the return of the swallow, the house martin, the swift? Nancy does. Her interests are catholic: birds, animals, fishes, insects, trees, flowers, fossils – life to her has become a kaleidoscope of ever-changing events and discoveries, all exciting and all worthy of observation and description. Kathleen Lonsdale 1941"

After the war Nancy went to Lady Margaret College, Oxford where she obtained an MA in Zoology and then went on to Girton College Cambridge where she received a PhD working on beetles 'The Ecology of Fenland Carabidae', April 1957.

Marriage to John Dawson, a solicitor, brought Nancy to Bedfordshire in 1955. They lived for the rest of their lives in a lovely house in Ickwell, where they raised their two daughters and a son. They regularly opened their Ickwell wildlife garden to raise funds for the Naturalists' Trust. In the 1970s the Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Naturalists' Trust (later the Wildlife Trust) employed a secretary. The first two secretaries were retired RAF officers employed for their administrative



skills, but later it was decided that a naturalist with an understanding of the needs of conservation was required. When Nancy was employed as the Conservation & Admin Officer at their Mill Street, Bedford offices, it was a major step forward for the Trust.

In his book *A Tale of Trees: The Battle to Save Britain's Ancient Woodland* Derek Niemann recounts the Trust's efforts to save Waresley Wood from destruction.

"The Beds & Hunts Naturalist Trust was not, on the face of it, a promising prospect for a rescue operation. Only 13 years old, it was typical of wildlife trusts at that time, surviving on a shoestring. It had a staff of two, the overworked, part-time conservation officer also doubling-up as administrator. But she was an exceptionally resourceful individual and made the shoestrings go a long way. Dr Nancy Dawson, was the plain-speaking daughter of pioneering crystallographer Dame Kathleen Lonsdale. She had inherited her mother's genius for innovation and invention. Nancy was used to answering the phone to hear a caller pour forth a woeful litany of natural obituaries. 'People would ring me up and say 'this meadow has been ploughed-up' or 'that wood has been cut down'. But this time we had a chance to do something' Nancy was determined that the Trust would buy the wood and save it, even though it had no money to do so. To cut a long story short, the Trust did eventually manage to buy the wood, albeit in piecemeal fashion over a period of 6 years, buoyed along by a mixture of grants, sponsored walks and plant sales."

At the Ickwell house, Nancy kept a particular chest freezer which, inter alia, was used to keep specimens of dead animals and birds of all descriptions, a practice that led to some consternation amongst guests, and visitors. More recently, Nancy's wonderful carers got the impression that Nancy (who latterly had small appetite) was surviving by eating custard creams and roadkill from the freezer!

The celebration of Nancy's life at the Forest Centre in December 2023 was well-attended by her relations and friends and showed in what high regard she was held. The highlight of this celebration was the presentation put together by her family, which reminded us of just how much she had achieved. For example, when she was BNHS Dragonfly recorder in 1976, she produced *The Dragonflies of Bedfordshire: A Guide to their Identification*. It was typewritten and printed in black and white with her illustrations coloured by her children. The guide was extremely useful in the days before the publication of a reliable popular dragonfly guide. At the celebration we also learned that Nancy and John were keen canoeists with a photograph of Nancy in a skirt climbing into a kayak. She was also keen on riding and dogs. And importantly she was a woman at the centre of a large loving family.

Dr Nancy Dawson was a remarkable woman. She enriched the lives of so many people. Her own was a life well lived, for which our community of naturalists should be extremely grateful.

Nick Hammond

Weather watchers wanted for Bedfordshire

Rosemary Brind

Everyone is talking about the weather, every day. Too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, too windy and, very occasionally, just perfect. Our climate is changing and we wonder what effect that will have on our wildlife populations. The changes may be disruptive to the growth of plants, the breeding cycles of insects, and survival of those that feed on them.

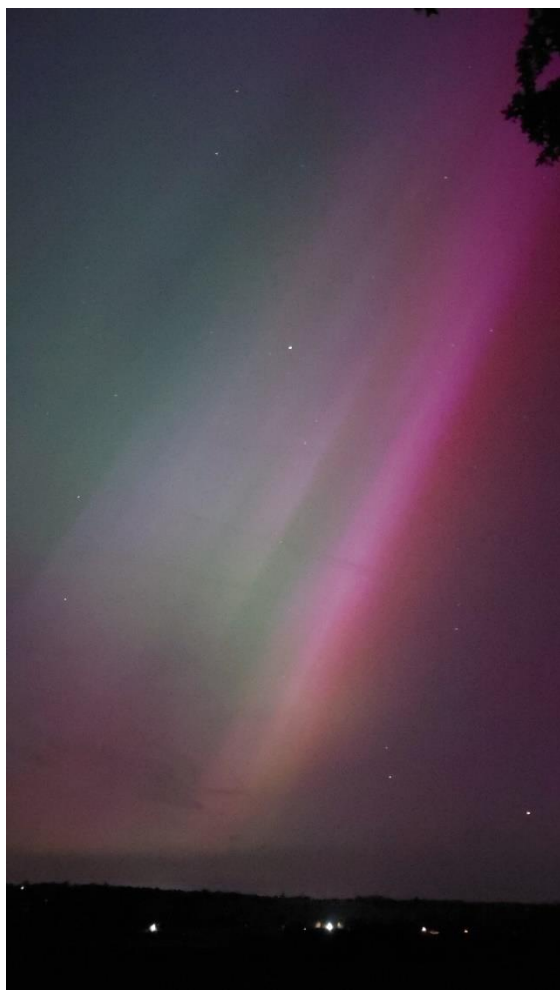


▲ Bedford January 2024. Photograph by Keith Balmer

The Met Office provides long-term weather records for the United Kingdom, for example, in 2024 the country experienced its warmest May on record, in a series going back to 1884. But what of Bedfordshire?

For twenty years, from 2004 to 2023 when she stood down, Angela Bucknell was our Meteorological Recorder, publishing an annual report of our county's weather in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist*. Before her, Mike Williams was Meteorological Recorder for twenty-seven years, and so it goes back to the establishment of the BNHS in 1946 with Arthur Guppy writing the very first report. The annual weather reports, providing more detailed information on local weather records, are very important in interpreting what might be happening with changes to the pattern of wildlife records that we are observing. Archived copies of the earlier journals can be found on the BNHS website <https://www.bnhs.co.uk/2019/journal.php>

It is important that we fill the current vacancy of Meteorological Recorder and we hope that someone, perhaps you, will show an interest in taking on the role. You may already have an



Aurora Borealis in May 2024.
Photo: Keith Balmer

interest in the subject, and perhaps have a weather station at home, but those are not essentials. Speaking with Angela, she said that she made weather notes every day, whether relating to her weather station at home, general observations, or from highlights mentioned in the media. There is also a network of people around the county that provided regular weather updates to her, such as rain gauge records. Angela would be happy to talk with you about the role and share information. Her first report, for 2004, was published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* for 2004, page 4, and her last report was in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* 2022, page 3.

Photographs of weather events are also of interest and, occasionally, meteorological phenomenon occur, the most spectacular recent occurrence being the Aurora Borealis in May, which many people were lucky enough to see, even in Bedfordshire (Please see the photograph above).

Please do consider whether you would like to get involved, and contact Rosemary Brind at journal@bnhs.org.uk.

A Wilder Luton

Matt Sutcliffe describes the successes of the Wilder Futures in widening an interest in the Luton area

Regular readers may recall that this newsletter has featured articles in recent years about the community engagement work being delivered by the Wildlife Trust in Luton. This work was born out of some emergency covid funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and titled 'Wilder Futures'. The project came to an end in July having made some significant progress promoting the wonderful landscape found in North Luton, engaging with a broad selection of people from all the diverse communities living there and also to help physically improve the chalk grassland found at Bradgers Hill.

Working in partnership with LBC and the Friends of Bradgers Hill, the project paid for five new interpretation boards, 25 way-marking posts for three new walking routes in addition to regular volunteer tasks that repaired steps and cleared scrub to open up more areas of grassland. Various groups also helped to plant 2500 trees to complete the extension of Hay Wood on Stopsley Common.



Bradgers Hill

One of the main areas of focus for the Wilder Futures team was going into schools to engage with students about nature, to help improve their well-being and to provide various opportunities to visit the local green spaces of Bradgers Hill, Stopsley Common and Warden Hill. This was achieved via Forest School activities, tree planting, assemblies, field work visits, workshops about the tiny creatures living in the chalk hills and improving the school grounds for wildlife. In total, six primary schools and five secondaries were involved with over 550 students attending these various sessions between January 2022 and July 2024.

Regular clubs were established at the Bushmead Community Hub and Warden Park that not only helped educate and excite children, but also brought people together from different communities to form new friendships. Eight community events were delivered, some of supported

by the BNHS, and various walks were run for both wildlife enthusiasts and people simply looking to improve their well-being and enjoy the views.



The National Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wildlife Trust were very keen to ensure this work could continue so the Trust were encouraged to apply for further funding earlier this year, and we are pleased to say we have been successful! Starting in September we are launching 'Wilder Luton', which recognises how the initial project reached beyond the initial aim of engaging people in the Bushmead area and the landscape north of Luton.

We believe that to truly make a difference in protecting nature we need to encourage more people to understand the various issues and to actively partake and we are always trying to find new and innovative ways to reach more people, including those who may not traditionally be involved. Wilder Luton hopes to create a central space to reach the new, young and diverse communities living there, that showcases all the fantastic conservation work that various organisations are delivering in Luton and the North Chilterns. Working with partners we will deliver larger events, establish regular walking opportunities in more accessible spaces and further our work in schools. We want to engage more with the 14-25 age group by providing educational and practical training sessions in schools and outside of school and ultimately, we hope to identify at least 4 young people interested in a paid traineeship with the Trust during 2025-27.

Partners such as the re-titled Chilterns National Landscape, Natural England, LBC and the BNHS all recognise that for us to be successful in protecting the natural environment and restoring nature in this part of the country we need the next generation of conservationists and activists to be actively involved, and we hope that 'Wilder Luton' can plan a small part in bringing that aspiration to life. We also hope that both of our Luton projects have helped raise the profile of the Chalk Hills found in Luton, as they are equally as important and interesting as those found elsewhere in the North Chilterns.

If you would like to find out more about how the Trust engages with schools and communities across Luton and Beds please contact Matt Sutcliffe on matt.sutcliffe@wildlifebcn.org



Photo by John Pitts

Award of Honorary Membership to Graham and Pat Bellamy

Honorary Membership is an important and prestigious award for the society to make to members who have made a major contribution to the work of the BNHS. Council conferred Honorary Membership to Graham and Pat Bellamy at the AGM in March. Graham and Pat made a significant contribution to the Society at a very difficult time during the Covid-19 pandemic. They played a key role in enabling BNHS to move forward in the use of technology and reach out to newer, younger members, and in strengthening the financial sustainability of the society.

Graham, a member of Council since 2013, was Chairman of the BNHS from 2020 – 2022. His chairmanship began in challenging circumstances as the Covid-19 pandemic began to spread.

The first AGM for his appointment in March 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 followed in April by cancellation of the launch of our book *Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife* in April and of all in-person indoor and field meetings. A more positive period began as the Society adopted the Zoom technology for indoor meetings and for Council and committee meetings. Pat was instrumental in setting up and running the Zoom technology, enabling remote meetings to take place. Important improvements to the Society's membership renewals came with the adoption and tailoring of the online membership system, Membermojo, which has greatly aided the speed and ease of member's renewals each year. In addition to establishing this, Pat was instrumental in setting up the electronic payment systems, Stripe and PayPal, which have made joining and renewing simpler and enabling online purchase of publications.

Graham is a co-author of two society publications, *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire* published in 2015, and *Bedfordshire – our changing habitats and wildlife*, published in 2020. He was Recorder for Crayfish, and then Crustacea, from 2001– 2022. Graham has often represented the Society at external meetings and public events, led field meetings and given talks, and continues to be active in recording and conservation activities. The society has benefited from Graham's extensive knowledge of the county through his career in wildlife conservation, and working with what is now Natural England and the Wildlife Trust BCN in nature reserve management. Links with nature conservation organisations have been maintained and strengthened under his watch. Graham championed the Flora Guardian project which is a partnership between BNHS, Greensand Trust and Wildlife Trust BCN, and is now going from strength to strength, monitoring populations of plants that are rare in the county.

Long may your interest, enthusiasm and positive action for the county's wildlife and nature conservation continue, and thank you for all the work you have done already!

Terence Ilott, BNHS Chairman



Over the last couple of years Bedfordshire Geology Group (BGG) have been carrying out various condition monitoring visits to our Local Geological Sites (LGS). We currently have fifteen sites across the county. These vary from whole areas of landscape, such as Dunstable and Whipsnade Downs, to key geological

outcrops that are often used by education groups as at Potton Scout Hut Quarry. Other sites include buildings that highlight local rock types that are no longer exposed at the surface, for example, Bromham Bridge.

During these monitoring visits, we take images of the key features that helped to designate the sites some twenty years ago. Features such as dry valleys, outcrop characteristics and rock exposure are photographed, and their coordinates recorded. This allows the same places to be re-visited in the future and their condition to be examined.

We are also considering some new LGS, as some of our older and working sites are no longer revealing its geology or have become inaccessible over time. These will be dropped from our list in due course, therefore, leaving space for new sites in our portfolio of exceptional geology in Bedfordshire. Some of the sites we are considering include Husborne Crawley church for its unique use of 'green' Greensand in its structure, Sundon Quarry for its wonderful exposure of Chalk and Totternhoe Stone as well as Silsoe Quarry with its well preserved cross-bedding.



Potton Scout Hut Quarry Local Geological Site

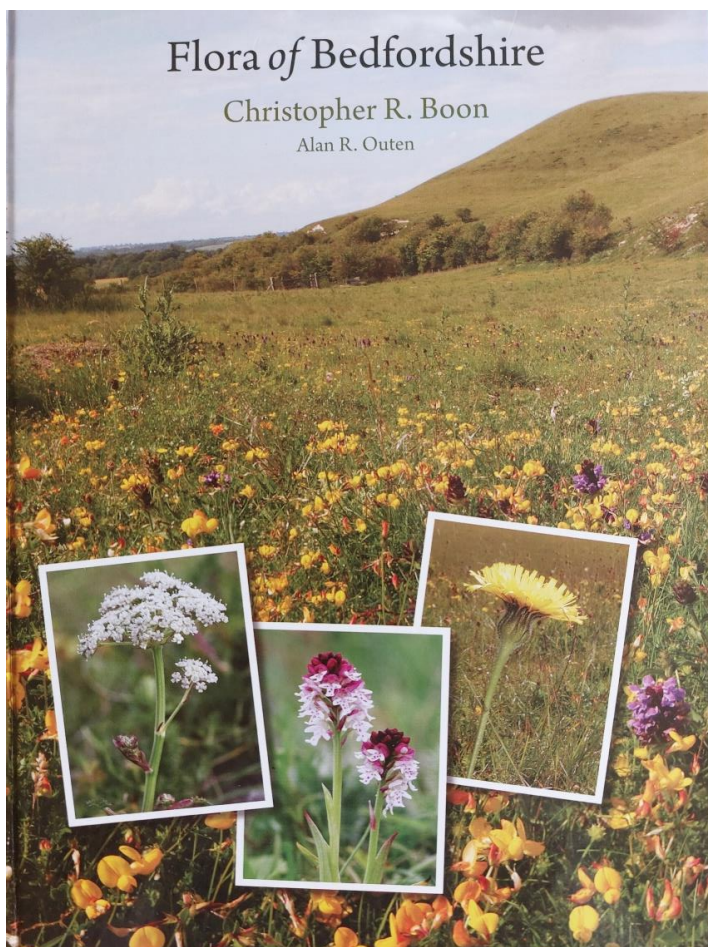
In September, we celebrate 20 years of BGG and plan a day of celebration at Potton Scout Hut Quarry with a look at our prime educational outcrop of Woburn Sands Formation as a backdrop. We will share a buffet lunch and drinks with you whilst enjoying a presentation depicting our 20 years of success as a local voluntary group. We extend a warm invitation to anyone who wishes to join us. Please check out the details here:

<https://www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk/events.html>

Bev Fowlston MSc

Flora of Bedfordshire – digital download

Chris Boon



The *Flora of Bedfordshire* by Chris Boon and Alan Outen was published by the BNHS in 2011, latest in a line of comprehensive Bedfordshire Floras from that of Charles Abbot in 1798 onwards. Both authors, Chris Boon for the vascular plants and Alan Outen for the bryophytes, spent many years researching the literature and recording in the field. They were helped by members of the BNHS and the national societies in the collection of some 400,000 records which form the basis of this Flora.

The subjects of the introductory chapters, several of which were written by experts in their field, include: a history of botanical recording in the county; an account of the geology and soils; conservation of the important sites of natural history interest; changes in the flora based upon studies carried out by John Dony

in 1949-1951; the botanical hotspots. The book is enhanced with photographs by Richard Revels, the renowned natural history photographer, taken especially for the Flora. Also included are some superb 19th century watercolour paintings by Caroline Gaye.

For the vascular plants there is an account of all species recorded in the county from the first known published record in 1597, including those that are considered extinct in the county. The modern recording period was the 20 years from 1987-2006 and the data collected are presented in the form of tetrad maps which show the distribution over the county and, by colour, whether the species is native or not. Superimposed on the map are also the distribution data from a survey by John and Chris Dony 1970-75. For rare species recorded in five or fewer tetrads there are no distribution maps but all records are given with grid references – to six-figure if known.

For the bryophytes this was the first full account for 60 years. The modern records were collected over the period 1970-2010. Distribution maps for all species occurring in over four tetrad records are shown. For the rarer species the tetrad data is given in the text. The photographs in the Bryophyte chapter are by Alan Outen with, again, some paintings by Caroline Gaye.

This Flora has been out of print for many years. Recently, the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland has instigated a scheme to make out-of-print Floras available for download. The BNHS, as the publisher, has given its permission for the Flora of Bedfordshire to be included in this scheme. It is available, for £5.00, from:

<https://bsbi.org/publications/ebooks/flora-of-bedfordshire>

Beds Otter Survey 2023 to 2024

Amanda Proud

The weather was not kind to us for the 2023 to 2024 Beds Otter Survey. This was the sixth of the surveys that take place every five years. It is meant to take place from 1st November to 31st January. But it rained and rained and flooded and flooded. You do not actually expect to see Otters, but they leave their faeces, called spraints, at obvious places along water courses. These mark territories and may impart information on the sex of the Otter which means there is no point in leaving your spraint anywhere along a riverbank where it may never be found by another Otter, so they leave them on prominent markers such as rocks, tree trunks in or by the water and best of all under bridges where they are protected from the rain and hence can be there for some time, unless of course it floods. Surveyors look for spraints at these sites and in 1996/1997 the first Otter survey in Bedfordshire was set up using bridges as the main survey point. If no spraint is found at the survey site, you search for 600m along the riverbank for any other likely sprainting place. I once found a spraint on top of an old television that had been thrown off a bridge. The results of the 2003/4, 2008/9, and 2018/19 surveys are published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist*.

The results of the 2003/4, 2008/9, and 2018/19 are published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist*. After the 2018/19 survey was completed, it was decided that many of the check sites were in unsuitable locations and had never had otter spraint, also it was difficult to cover all 75-80 sites that were being checked. The number of sites was therefore reduced to 52. Thank goodness we did as it was hard enough with the flooding to check all 52, let alone over 70. So hard did it rain that the survey was extended until 28th February, but even then it was not possible to visit all the sites at times when they were not flooded. In the end 48 of the 52 sites were covered. The percentages of positive sites from previous surveys had to be recalculated using only the 52 sites and the results are given below.

.Date of survey	Percentage of positive sites
1996/97	37
2003/04	54
2008/09	69
2013/14	67
2018/19	84
2023/24	75

Table 1. Year of survey and recalculated percentage of positive sites.

There was also flooding in 2013/14 when the survey was extended until 24th March, which could account for the slight drop in numbers of spraint recorded in that survey. It will be interesting to see what the 2028/29 survey brings and I hope it does not rain all the time.

Many thanks are due to Ken Winder, Richard Lawrence, Linda Fennick, Lindsay Stronge, Sue Raven and Jamie Proud for all their help with the survey work and to the Bedfordshire Natural History Society for a grant to help with travel expenses.

Dragonfly Recording in Bedfordshire to June 2024

Rory Morrisey



Beautiful Demoiselle by Rory Morrisey

There is some interesting news, but firstly I must apologise to those who have had difficulty recording on-line this year. I decided to use iRecord rather than Adnoto this year. I know that any new system takes a bit of getting used to. Please email or ring me, if you're having problems.

Last year we had a new, or rather a returning, species in Bedfordshire in the Scarce Emerald damselfly. It has been seen again this year in the same location near Milton Bryan, this year "emergent" so it is another breeding species for the county. Before last year the most recent sighting was in 1971.

Lesser Emperor has been also been seen. This is early so it is likely that this species is also breeding in the county.

Beautiful Demoiselle was only recorded at Cranfield last year, where it was pretty regular, but this year it has started to turn up in and around Bedford. These have only been single individuals maturing in woods and hedges, but they must be breeding somewhere.

Most species that we would expect to see have appeared by now, but not all. This may be due to last year we had a warm spring but this year it has been variable and mostly colder and wetter.

In my own garden I had Southern Hawker first emerging in May, then a pause, and now emerging again. The latest departure today had emerged three days ago but had suffered soaking and cold weather before it finally experienced a little warm sunshine and flew.

With several more species yet to be seen, good luck spotting.

Surveying in Woburn Safari Park

John Pitts

An invitation came from Katie Chapman of Woburn Safari Park for BNHS/BIG members to carry out another survey of their native flora and fauna, thus continuing an almost annual association since 2014. Despite its being 11th June, in weather terms the day wasn't conducive to finding, but it didn't stop a good assemblage of enthusiasts before 10am by the Woburn Lions, where we were greeted by Katie and fellow employee Amy. We convoyed from there through the park passing Rothschild's giraffes, rhinos and elephants to the main car park at the centre where we transferred to the park Land Rovers and on to the emptied rhino paddock for our first area of interest.

We entered square SP97103452 through the rhino house and a series of challenging narrow gates. Here the gang spread out far and wide in a hunt for their target species. My highlight was a very fresh Broad-Bodied Chaser with three inquisitive ostriches outside the enclosure. After an hour or so we moved on to another even larger area of wooded grassland (SP964338) from which its occupant, a beautiful Somali wild ass *Equus africanus somaliensis* had been temporarily evicted. It was difficult terrain to negotiate, but like true explorers life was revealed and documented before tummies rumbled and bladders urged a withdrawal for lunch at the centre, generously provided by Woburn to sustain our endeavours.

After lunch grey clouds and spits of rain decided several members of the group to retreat leaving a small band to continue to the wild flower area being cultivated by Woburn (SP960342) where even without any sun there was lots to interest everybody including a small pool for Graham.

From there we finally wandered down the nearby bank and across to the Xmas Tree Field in search of rare sawflies etc (SP959341) where to noisy trumpeting of an excited elephant we made yet another net search and I found my first exciting butterfly of the day (a flighty Meadow Brown) and two sawflies for Andrew. Overall a good but quite exhausting day. Thank you, Katie, Amy and Woburn for taking us old farts off the streets for a day.

Honorary Officers and Council Members 2024

Following the AGM, and appointment of Honorary Officers and Council members, the following positions have been confirmed. Council would like to thank everyone who has offered their time and expertise to keep the Society running, and to liaise with other conservation organisations in the county.

Council Officers:

Hon. Chair – Terence Ilott
Hon. Secretary – Ann de Winter and Sue Raven
Hon. Treasurer – Colin Le Boutillier
Hon. Journal Editor – Rosemary Brind
Hon. Scientific Secretary – Helen Muir-Howie
Hon. Membership Secretary – Lisa King
Hon. Bird Club Chair – Kathy Blackmore

Council Members:

Mike Bird, Sheila Brooke, Gwen Hitchcock, Julia Powell, Wilf Powell, Mike Roberts, Mike Robinson

Scientific Committee:

Helen Muir-Howie (Hon. Scientific Secretary), Keith Balmer, Rosemary Brind, Martin Butler, Phil Cannings, Richard Coppins, Bev Fowlston, Andrew Green, Gwen Hitchcock, Richard Knock, Sue Raven, Jackie Ulyett, John Wakely

Finance Committee:

Colin Le Boutillier (Hon. Treasurer), Lisa King, Mike Jones, Helen Muir-Howie, Sonnie Wing As Chair, Terence Ilott is invited to attend Finance Committee

Other posts:

Webmaster – Mike Robinson

Wild about Beds Editor – Nick Hammond

Facebook – John Pitts

Instagram – Andrew Green

Indoor meeting programme – Mike Bird

Field meeting programme - vacant

Outside events with the nature table - Julia Powell

Bedfordshire Naturalist Editor – vacant

Representatives on outside groups:

County & District Wildlife Sites – Helen Muir-Howie and Kathy Blackmore

Rushmere Users Group – Mike Bird

BRMC Steering Group – Keith Balmer

Dunstable Water Treatment Works - Mike Jones, John Tomlin, John Lynch, Josh Matthews

East Hyde Water Treatment Works – Allan Cutts

Beds & Luton Wildlife Working Group – Sue Raven

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership – Terence Ilott

Flora Guardians – John Wakely & Graham Bellamy

If any members are interested in becoming more involved in the work of the society and any of the committees, please do contact a member of Council. Current vacancies include a co-ordinator for the programme of field trips, and an editor for the *Bedfordshire Naturalist*. All emails are on the BNHS website, where details of all the BNHS Recorders can also be found.

WANTED URGENTLY TO JOIN THE TEAM OF EVENT ORGANISERS - CAN YOU HELP?

For the last ten years the events have been organised by Julia Powell and Sheila Brooke, but they stood down at the BNHS AGM in March 2024. Despite pleas for assistance no-one has yet come forward to organise the field trips, although Mike Bird has kindly stepped up to arrange the indoor meetings and Mike Robinson is emailing out information about meetings that have been arranged. Julia Powell is continuing to organise attendance at outside events.

Organising field trips is a job that can be split up and shared between different people so do please consider offering to help so we can offer a full programme to members. There is plenty of potential already, as you will see below, without having to think of new events, but it urgently needs someone to coordinate it all so that the field trips may continue. They are held throughout the year but with fewer during the winter months. We have aimed for at least two each month during the better weather and to spread the venues over a large part of the county so that members feel that there is an event near where they live. We have tried to cover different interest groups with the help of the Recorders and associated BNHS groups.

Some meetings that are repeated each year such as pond-dipping somewhere, Boxing Day walk at Woburn Abbey, the small mammal trapping and dragonfly walk at Duck End, Maulden and a bird walk with Beds Bird Club. We sometimes have joint meetings with other groups such as the BNHS Bird Club, the Wildlife Trust, the Greensand Trust, Bedfordshire Bat Group, the local Butterfly Conservation group and local Fungus or Geology groups. We liaise with Beds Invertebrate Group (BIG) over dates. Meetings may be at weekends or on weekdays and some may be in the evening. Members quite often suggest possible sites or aims for the walk such as a butterfly walk. Sometimes these come as a result of a talk during the winter. Walks associated with projects taken on by the BNHS such as the Flora Guardians may suggest a theme for walks as was the case when *Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire* was being researched and after its publication.

We urgently need someone to coordinate a programme of field trips, so if you think you might be able to help, please contact Mike Robinson at bnhsevents@bnhs.org.uk to find out more.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 10th August: TURVEY ABBEY

10:00am Visit to Monastery of Christ Our Saviour and Turvey Abbey to view grounds and walled garden. Grounds good for birds, butterflies, other insects, ferns and flowers, newts and lots of other species you can tell me about. Highlights of past two years include Water Shrew, Emperor moth, Grass Snake, Adders Tongue Fern and up to 17 species of butterfly on a summer's day..

Address: Monastery of Christ Our Saviour, Jacks Lane, Turvey, MK43 8DH SP94495241

Directions: Please access us via first turn almost immediately on left in Jacks Lane (speed camera on corner). Proceed up drive marked Abbey Dove House until you enter monastery courtyard below clock tower. If in doubt phone 01234 881211.

Guesthouse available for tea/coffee etc. If time we could also have look at Abbey Park. Arrival from 9.30am onwards for start time 10am. If people want to stay into the afternoon they are welcome to bring a packed lunch and/or visit the Three Cranes or Three Fishes at the other end of the village

Places limited to 15 cars, so please book with Mike Robinson at bnhsevents@bnhs.org.uk.

Leader: Brother John

Saturday 7th September 2024: DUCK END NATURE RESERVE, MAULDEN

09:30am Small Mammal Trapping at Duck End Nature Reserve. Once the mammals have been recorded and released, the County Recorder for Odonata, Rory Morrissey will lead a walk round the ponds to look for damselflies and dragonflies. The meeting may conclude around 12:00.

Limited parking at the site in Moor Lane, Maulden, MK45 2DJ, TL051374

Leader: Dr Sue Raven

WINTER PROGRAMME – more details will follow nearer the time for each meeting.

We are pleased to announce that there will be three indoor meetings of the BNHS to be held at Maulden Village Hall starting at 8pm. The programme will be:

Tuesday 15th October, Mr Andy Sands - British Bees and Wasps

Tuesday 19th November, Mr Vince Lea - the Mink Eradication Project

Tuesday 3rd December, Members' Social evening

In early 2025 we will have two talks online via Zoom followed, in March, by the AGM at Maulden.

Tuesday 21st January, Prof Ian Rotherham - Wilder Hedgerows for Nature and History

Tuesday 18th February, To be finalised

Tuesday 18th March, AGM and Records' Reports - at Maulden Village Hall

More details will follow nearer the time for each meeting.