



Wild About Beds

Summer 2014

BNHS Nature Table on show

by Julia Powell

The BNHS Nature Table artefacts were put on show at the Studham May Fair on 10th May. You may recall that the weather before the event was quite violent and a marquee blew down the day before!

'The rain poured down, the wind blew and sometimes the sun shone but lots of young people and grown-ups came to look at the Nature Table in the Friends of Studham Common gazebo. They felt the weight of the red deer antler, watched newts swimming in a tank of pond water and looked at the skulls and live insects. Some studied the scales on a butterfly's wing under a microscope and others did the quiz. Good fun for everyone.'

I welcome any donations from as broad a range of natural history subjects as possible. I would very much like more insects (or species that interact directly with insects) especially those that are the subject of the Neglected Insect Conference in November as the Nature Table will be on show there.

If you want to show off the Nature Table at an event you are attending, please contact Julia Powell juliapowell800@gmail.com, tel 01582 661328. Please give me plenty of notice to arrange collection of the Nature Table box, display boards, photographic display, banners and quizzes as required. Other material recently used at Jordans Mill Family Activity Day may also be available from other members.



Photo courtesy of Charles Baker. Used with permission.

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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 Elstow, Haynes, Toddington and Maulden.

The Society depends on annual subscriptions which are devoted to its working, as all offices are honorary. Membership is open to anyone, whether resident in the county or not. If you would like to join the Society, please contact **Mary Sheridan**, Honorary Membership Secretary, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2TR. Tel: 01525 378245, www.bnhs.org.uk.

BedsLife

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership is a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire's biodiversity. The Partnership oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan, which can be found online at www.bedsbionet.org.uk.

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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 2014** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next *Wild About Beds* will be published in **September 2014**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Changes to Recorders

by *John O'Sullivan*

As members are well aware, the role of our Recorders is vital to the success of the Society. However, these hard working volunteers have to balance their demanding duties with already busy lives. We are sorry to have to report the recent resignation of two of them: Richard Lawrence, the Recorder of Mammals, and Jason Chapman the Recorder of Lacewings. A warm thank you Richard and Jason, and we are glad to note that you both plan to continue your involvement with the Society.

Melissa Banthorpe, who is of course one of our Recorders of Macro Moths, has very kindly offered to take on the recording of lacewings and allied species in a caretaker capacity. She will maintain the records and manage the county list. She is happy to receive specimens for identification, but notes that species cannot usually be reliably identified from photographs alone. Records without specimens are welcome, and observers should indicate how the identification was made, for instance using the key published by the Field Studies Council. Melissa aims to produce a short annual report.

As to the mammals, our members most closely involved with these species are now discussing the best way forward for recording in the county: more on this in due course. In the meantime, all mammal records are most welcome via the Adnoto facility on the Society's website.

The Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire

by Graham Bellamy

2014 has been an interesting year for orchids. Flowering is earlier than last year and it is likely that Bee Orchid which can usually still be seen in July will be over by the end of June.

Slug and snail activity has been high, perhaps due to the mild winter or damp conditions, and Butterfly Orchids in woodlands have suffered badly. The only known Lesser Butterfly being demolished early on into the season. Molluscs have also taken the blame for the felling of Man Orchid flower spikes at Totternhoe.

It does show how fortunate we were with 2013 which was a good flowering year for many orchids.

However Stephen Oakes-Monger re-found Bird's Nest Orchid near Woburn which had a single flowering spike which indicates how tenacious our orchids can be and searches of locations of old records can still yield surprises! Additionally the hawk-eyed Richard Revels has located Marsh Fragrant Orchid on Dunstable Downs; this was one of our target species for this year, so well done him!. It is worth looking at Fragrants, particularly unusually robust plants in case it is the Marsh species.

Burnt Orchids have had a good year with over 100 flowering spikes. We were keen to see if pollination occurred this year, and i'm pleased to say that it has. Nearly 50% of spikes had one or more swelling seed pods.

This is still a low level of seed set compared with most of our other orchids, but is an improvement on previous years when none or very few swelling pods were seen.



Bird's Nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* has no leaves or chlorophyll, and parasitizes other plants for nourishment. Photo by Virole Bridee



Lesser Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia*. Photo by Graham Gavaghan

Records continue to come in on the Adnoto system found on the BNHS web site, and there is an interactive map of orchid locations that need checking this year provided by Chis Boon and Keith Balmer which I think is impressive. We have received over 1800 entries and look to easily reach 2000 soon now that we are in the peak flowering time for our commoner orchids. Common Spotted Orchids have been reported in the hundreds and in some cases thousands, and Dallow and Dunstable Downs are excellent locations to visit.

Bee Orchids have continued to pop up in locations that are new or where they have not been seen for many years.

Richard Revels has been even busier this year with his camera it seems, and has spent many hours waiting for pollinating insects to visit flowers.

It will be interesting to see if the late summer to autumn flowering orchids are earlier this year as well so please

keep an eye open for the Helleborines and check on colonies that you know of.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in records, please keep them coming!

Family Activity at Jordans Mill, Broome 18 May 2014

by Julia Powell

Good weather was predicted for the BNHS Family Activity Day hosted by Jordans Mill, Broome on Sunday 18th May and so it turned out. It might have been a little too good or maybe there was too much sport on Saturday but the numbers of visitors to Jordans Mill was rather less than anticipated for the weekend. However for everyone that turned up a good time was had by all. There was a magnificent display with many of the members' interests on show. High praise to all those that contributed including those that were unable to attend on the day.



Jordans Mill. Photo by John Curd

CDs of Bedfordshire's wildlife and the orchids that we are seeking to record this year were set up in the education barn. Both old and new display boards were filled with a collection of local wildlife photographs. A new quiz has been devised that features common insects, flowers, orchids, butterflies and birds and was popular with children and adults alike although there were few formal entries for the prize book. A Jordans cereal bar was given to all the children that took part as they all scored very highly.



BNHS display. Photo by Toby Frost/Jordans

All the table top displays generated a lot of interest but especially the crystals and the petrified tree from the geology group and the huge land snail attracted people to the rest of the Mollusc display and mini quiz. Giant tadpoles and a nest quiz also featured with nature table objects scattered throughout. There were word quizzes, colouring and making daisies to keep the younger children occupied too.

The microscopes attracted the attention of both adults and children. However most interest was shown by the moth trap and its contents already boxed up ready to be shown off by four members. More pleasures were to be had in the meadow. Several members stationed themselves under the gazebo. Families were sent off with nets to sweep the meadow while members dunked the pond nets in the river to see what could be found. Great excitement was generated over the contents of all the nets and everyone was busy identifying what was found.

A lot of members did their own thing and there were several good finds amongst the many species identified. A summary of what was recorded can be found on page 7.

Many of the objectives of holding such a meeting were achieved:

- Giving members a good time
- Raise the profile of the society
- Encourage more people to join: there were 5 new YounGnats signed up
- Bring together as many of the Society's resources in one place to enable people see what is available for use at other events.

There was an enquiry about a school assembly next year and the loan of the nature table. If any member wishes to borrow anything for an event they are attending please contact me (Julia Powell: 01582 661328 or JuliaCPowell800@gmail.com).

Once the site at Jordans Mill had been flagged up as a possible venue, it has been very easy to work with Toby Frost, the Business Development Manager there giving us a lot of personal attention when we met.

The Society benefitted from the Jordans staff expertise in running a commercial outlet for the public and all the facilities were free of charge to the society. We were allowed to set up pitfall traps and moth traps beforehand and were well looked after on the day. I also personally wish to express my gratitude to all the members that volunteered their time not just on the day but preparing displays and collecting (and returning) various bits of equipment borrowed or retrieved from our partner organisations. We had a lot of help from the Greensand, Community Tree and Wildlife Trusts.

Members contributing to the whole day either on site or preparing material include Graham Bellamy, Erika Pratt, Carol and John Curd, Helen Gebler, Martin Day, Sheila Brooke, Ian Woiwod, Andy and Melissa Banthorpe, Colin Carpenter, Mary Sheridan, Mike Bird, Peter Topley, Peter Glenister, Janet Munro, Anne Williams, Helen Muir-Howie, Tom Thomas, Peter Lally, John Pitts, Richard Revels and of course my husband, Wilf.



YounGnats Quiz. Photo by John Curd



Examining a pitfall trap. Photo by John Curd

Other members came with their families and friends so thank you to them as well for supporting the occasion.

It is hoped that there will be other events at Jordans as the facilities are so good and the people there are welcoming and very accommodating. It is also hoped that an event in a similar style will be put on every year at different venues around the county. Sites already suggested are Rushmere Country Park, Harrold-Odell Country Park and Old Warden. Please contact me if you are able to provide more details of these venues or can suggest other places.



Photo by Graham Bellamy



Photo by Toby Frost/Jordans (we think!)



Photo by Graham Bellamy

Upcoming events

5 Jul Visit to Sewell Cutting in search of neglected insects with the Invertebrate Group. Park and meet at 10.00 am on the roadside at the top of Frenches Avenue, Dunstable TL004227. Leader: Alan Outen.

13 Jul All day escorted visit to the Great Fen, Cambridgeshire, for wetland birds and other wildlife and to get an appreciation of this hugely important conservation project. Meet at 9.00 am in the car park of Wood Walton Fen NNR, TL235849. Leaders: Peter Glenister and Don Green with Natural England wardens Terry and Helen Moore.

19 Jul Sharpenhoe Clappers field meeting, looking for Dark Green Fritillary butterflies, other butterfly species and orchids. Joint meeting with Butterfly Conservation. Park and meet at 10.00 am in the car park TL065295. Leader: Peter Glenister.

3 Aug Dunstable Downs field meeting, looking for butterflies and other wildlife. Especially suitable for young families, in conjunction with BNHS YounGnats Group. Park and meet at 10.00 am at Dunstable Downs visitor centre. Leader: Wilf Powell.

7 Aug Tewin Badger Hide: first of two nights. If you would like to see live badgers then book with us for the Tewin Badger Hide. There is a charge of £5.00 adult £3.00 children. *We are limited to 10 people per night so booking is essential.* Contact Peter Glenister 01582 524994.

Meet at 8.00 pm in the car park at the hide at Tewin Orchard, TL268155. From the B1000 Welwyn to Hertford Road turn north to Tewin; the entrance is 200 yards past the Plume & Feathers, on the right. Leader: Peter Glenister.

8 Aug Tewin Badger Hide: second of two nights. If you would like to see live badgers then book with us for the Tewin Badger Hide. There is a charge of £5.00 adult £3.00 children. *We are limited to 10 people per night so booking is essential.* Contact Peter Glenister 01582 524994.

Meet at 8.00 pm in the car park at the hide at Tewin Orchard, TL268155. From the B1000 Welwyn to Hertford Road turn north to Tewin; the entrance is 200 yards past the Plume & Feathers, on the right. Leader: Peter Glenister.

9 Aug Morning meeting at Houghton Regis Quarry LNR, looking for butterflies, dragonflies and other wildlife. Park and meet at 10.30 am along Lake View Road — turning is by the traffic lights on B5120 Houghton Road, TL014232. Ends at 12.30 pm. Leader: Rebecca Pitman, Reserve Warden.

23 Aug Day visit to Kempston Fun Day. The BNHS will be there with the Nature Table and Quiz; there will be many other attractions and displays all day from 11.00 am until 5.00 pm. Park at Hillgrounds Road Park, TL031487, turning off B531.

24 Aug Morning visit to Dunstable Sewerage Treatment Works, Houghton Regis, looking for resident species and possible migrants. Meet at 8.30 am in the Birdwatchers car park, off Thorn Road, TL003243. Leader: John Tomlin.

6 Sept Small mammal trapping at Duck End NR. Park and meet at 9.00 am at Duck End NR, Moor Lane, Maulden TL051374. Suitable for youth groups and families. Leader: Richard Lawrence.



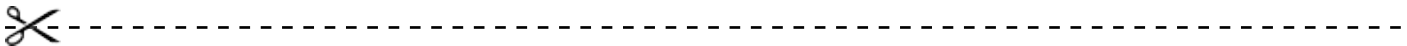
While trawling online for images to go with Graham Bellamy's orchid project article I happened upon this extraordinary photo. Please note it is not from Britain and I have just this once deliberately not credited the photographer.

What I can't help wondering is, which is worse? That someone picked a handful of delicate orchids which might have been left to grow and proliferate? Or that some species are now so unusual we feel we can't afford to lose a single specimen? What kind of world is it where we can no longer pick the flowers? -Ed.

Just look at what one day of recording can do!

The entire spreadsheet was so long it would have taken up almost the entire issue of WAB! Instead, here's a summary to show just what a moth trap — set up for one night — and a day of dedicated rummaging and recording can do. Well done to Alan Outen, David Withers, Graham Bellamy, Colin Carpenter, Wilf Powell, Sheila Brooke, Tom Thomas, Andy Banthorpe, Melissa Banthorpe, Ian Woiwod, Janet Munro, John Curd, John O'Sullivan, Peter Topley and anyone else we missed on **300 species recorded!**

Number of species recorded at Jordan's Family Activity Day 18 May 2014			
Flowering plants	102	Insects: Coleoptera	26
Bryophytes	3	Insects: Dermaptera	1
Fungi	12	Insects: Diptera	9
Arachnids: Aranaea	27	Insects: Hemiptera	23
Arachnids: Opiliones	1	Insects: Hymenoptera	12
Arachnids: Acari	1	Insects: Lepidoptera	38
Crustacea	1	Insects: Mecoptera	1
Mollusca	12	Insects: Megaloptera	1
Fishes	8	Insects: Odonata	7
Birds	9	Insects: Orthoptera	1
		Insects: Psocoptera	1
		Insects: Trichoptera	4



Neglected Insects in Bedfordshire:

A conference of interest to specialists and enthusiastic naturalists alike

Venue: The Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park, Marston Moretaine MK43 0PR

Date: Saturday 15 November 2014. Open at 9.30 for 10.00 prompt start/finish at 16.00hrs

Entrance: £10 for BNHS and Bedfordshire Bird Club members, £12 for non-members

This fee includes all refreshments and cold buffet lunch. *Note ticket price is NON-REFUNDABLE.*

Please complete and tear off the application form overleaf and return with a cheque for the appropriate amount to:

Mike Bird, Treasurer, BNHS, 69 Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3DN



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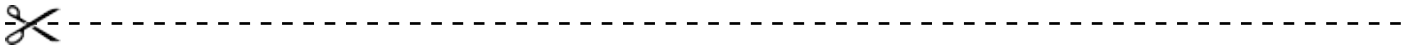
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Please complete and tear off the application form below and return with a cheque for the appropriate amount to:

Mike Bird, Treasurer, BNHS, 69 Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3DN



Please send me [] conference ticket(s). I enclose a cheque, made payable to **Bedfordshire Natural History Society** for the sum of £ _____

I understand that the ticket price is non-refundable. [] (please tick)

Please name all the delegates below or on a separate sheet:

Delegate 1 Name: _____ Tick if BNHS member []

Delegate 2 Name: _____ Tick if BNHS member []

Address to which tickets should be sent: _____

My email address is: _____

My telephone number is: _____

Please indicate if you have any special dietary requirements: _____
