



Wild About Beds

Autumn 2014

Can you 'adder' to our knowledge?

by Sue Raven

The adder must be one of Bedfordshire's most elusive residents, with few of us ever coming across one. Although they are widespread across the UK, and relatively common in places like the New Forest, Scotland or the Dorset heaths, they are thought to be declining. This is particularly the case here in the Midlands. So our adders are important, even if we hardly ever see them!

Bedfordshire has only three sites with confirmed records of adders since 2000, all on the Greensand Ridge — and we know very little about these populations. Are they large enough to be sustainable in the long term? How far do individuals travel from where they hibernate, what habitats are important to them? And are there any other populations we don't know about: where on earth did the injured female which turned up in a rubbish bag at a waste depot in Luton a few years ago come from?!

To even begin trying to ensure our adders survive we need to know more about them. As a start I am collecting current and historical information that might not have already reached Helen, our county recorder. So if you recall seeing an adder in the county many years ago, your grandfather used to tell you where he saw them, or if you heard a more recent rumour of an adder sighting, please let me know! Even anecdotal information could tell us where adders might have hung on, or where they move around in the summer months, and so help us to plan future survey work.

You can contact me at sue.raven@greensandtrust.org, on 01234 743666 or at The Greensand Trust, Working Woodland Centre, Maulden Wood, Bedford, MK45 3QT.



European Adder *Vipera berus*. Photo by Tor Ivan Bolne

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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.

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 2014** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

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

BNHS Recorders...and you

by John O'Sullivan

A primary role of the Society is of course to record nature, and our Recorders exist to facilitate this. As noted in the last edition of *Wild About Beds* (Summer 2014, page 2), there have been recent changes to recording as regards two groups, Lacewings and Mammals, with the former now being covered by Melissa Banthorpe. As an update, it is good to be able to record that while we still do not have an appointed Recorder for Mammals, a small group of enthusiasts has been formed to cover the duties of the post: they are Bob Cornes, Richard Lawrence, Mick McCarrick and Susan Raven. They will receive Adnoto and other records and verify them, as well as answering enquiries and producing annual reports — for 2013 and 2014 in the first instance. Council is grateful to these individuals for taking on this important work.

All of our Recorders are volunteers: some are retired, and some are still employed. Both men and women are of course involved, and there is a wide span of ages represented. Although we have a strong team, there is plenty of room for more. Could you be a Recorder? Why not remind yourself of who they all are by looking in the *Journal*, or visiting the 'Contacts' page on the website: www.bnhs.org.uk. Take a look at the areas they cover: can you see a gap that you could fill?

To be a Recorder for the county, you do not have to live in Bedfordshire, but you will probably be a regular visitor to its natural habitats. You will of course be interested in the particular biological group concerned, but you certainly do not need to be a renowned expert. Indeed, most of our Recorders have learnt while doing the job (and they are all still learning!). The Society has evolved some clear guidance on what you would need to do if you were to join their ranks, and you can find this by going to the website above, and

following 'Society Documents' to the 'Guidelines for Recorders'. You can also get an electronic or hard copy from the Hon. Scientific Secretary (see below). The Recorders are a helpful and approachable bunch, who would be happy to welcome you, and to advise you if you wish, including at meetings in the field and at the Recorders' indoor meeting, which takes place in January each year.

It would be excellent if you decided to work with us in this way, but if, having read the Guidelines, you consider that you are not ready to take on a Recorder's duties, you might like to consider the possibility of becoming a "caretaker" in the role. This is more limited and more flexible, and could be as straightforward as acting as a recipient for county records of a group of wild organisms, and storing them for future use and reference. Should you wish, you could start in such a way, and gradually take on new duties, en route to becoming a full Recorder. Another possibility might be to "shadow" an existing Recorder, with a view to taking over when the time comes. All sorts of options are possible.

If you are interested to learn more about any of the above, please write to the Hon. Scientific Secretary, John O'Sullivan, at science@bnhs.org.uk or at 14 East Hatley, Sandy, SG19 3JA. You can also telephone him on 01767 650688. He will be delighted to hear from you.

Nature Table on the Road

by *Julia Powell*

As I write this, I am waiting for the return of a Nature Table box lent to the Wildlife Trust for a Mother and Toddler group. You cannot start too young! The collection for the Nature Table is a very valuable educational resource, although uninsured, that is unique to the Bedfordshire Natural History Society. None of the other local wildlife organisations have anything comparable and I have only seen a small, unlabelled collection elsewhere at RSPB Arne, Dorset this year.

The collection is used as much by others as it is by the Society. It has been on display this year by the Greensand and local Wildlife Trusts to support their work. It catches the eye and attracts people to the rest of the display so giving an opportunity to pass on the message about wildlife. A BNHS member has also taken it to a local village Fete, again to endorse the value of local wildlife that can be seen in the area.



Hopefully, it will have been on display in support of the BNHS at Kempston Fun Day on Saturday 23rd August which was rather sadly completely washed out last year. After that, it can be seen again at Bromham Mill on Apple Day, 19th October supporting the BNHS display there. This time I will be including the few reptilian items in the collection to reflect the interests of the volunteers that will be showing it off that day. Then it will come back to me so I can include some of the large collection of birds' nests, skulls, wings and feathers for display at the 'Give Nature a Home' event at RSPB Sandy on Sunday October 26th. Bird Club members please note that it would be very nice to have some of you behind the table to help show off the collection, even if only for a few minutes to give others a comfort break. Everything is labelled but as I am only a casual bird watcher I do not have the level of enthusiasm you can bring. You only have to be an expert at being a member of the society!

After that, a lot of the bird material will come out in favour of the insect stuff to go on show at the Neglected Insects Conference on Saturday November 15th. If anyone has any insect items to add to the collection, I would welcome them with open arms as the insect collection is quite small. Insects are much less robust than the other material on show. I am confident that there will be experts in the audience that will be able to answer questions. There will also be a stunning photographic display here too.

Then the box comes back for another sort out before going off the Greensand Trust Christmas Fair at Rushmere Country Park on Sunday December 7th. Only one day this time; somewhat of a relief as two

years ago although being in a marquee, it was extremely cold for both days. This time there will be more antlers and a wider range of mammal skulls and skins on view.

The Nature Table material forms only a part of the display that the society can put on when attending an event. I try to ensure that the items on show are themed to the event/helpers as much as possible. There are display boards holding a wonderful selection of photographs and also at least one quiz. We have our own gazebo (with sides) to keep everyone under cover if we are outside and a new vinyl banner and pull up poster to announce our presence. I always ask organisers of these events if we can be inside though, as it makes setting up and looking after the display much easier.



We have had to turn down some opportunities for attracting new members to the society as we did not have enough volunteers to take everything and put up the stand and take it down again. In addition to these people willing to stay all day, it is always nice to see our members and persuade them to spend a few minutes on the 'other' side of the table. The events we go to are usually good family entertainment with plenty of attractions to entertain everyone. They are frequently free to get in or there is usually only a small entry fee. The Neglected Insects Conference is, of course, ticket only.

I am always grateful to receive any additions to the Nature Table material. It would be nice to have some more Insects and Crustacea and apart from snakes' skins there is little to represent the reptiles and amphibians. Plaster casts of footprints are fun to do with your children/grandchildren (or even by yourselves) and I would love to have some in the Nature Table box.

If you would like to use the nature table artefacts or the photographic displays and quizzes, my contact details are below. Please give as much notice and information about the type of event as possible, so I can dig out the most interesting bits from my garage. You will have to collect and return it and ensure a responsible adult supervises its use. It is free but I would like some photographs (with permissions from parents) and some information about what happened at your event for an article in *Wild About Beds* or the YounGnats website.

Please put these dates in your diary and I hope to see you (and your families) at:

- October 19th Apple Day, Bromham Mill
- October 26th Give Nature a Home, RSPB Sandy
- November 15th Neglected Insects Conference, Marston Vale
- December 7th Christmas Fair, Rushmere Country Park

Julia Powell
Juliapowell800@gmail.com
01582 661328

Mums & tots session at Tithe Farm Houghton Regis
by Ruth Sneath, Education and Community Officer, Wildlife Trust BCN

A lovely morning was spent with Mums and Tots at Tithe Farm Community Centre in Houghton Regis. At the start of the session some of the children were very unsure of the wildlife that they would find locally. They enjoyed an interactive story about the 'Very Busy Spider', went hunting for soft toy wildlife and ended the session with an inspiring look and touch of natural history objects on the BNHS Nature Table. The children and mums were amazed by some of the objects such as a large star fish and a fox skull, providing an opportunity to discuss wildlife found on our doorstep.





Events Programme Autumn 2014

All indoor talks start at 8pm and are held at Maulden Village Hall, grid reference TL048380, post code MK45 2DP. Parking is free. OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

Visitors are encouraged. A small charge is requested for refreshments at the talks and possibly on other occasions too. Donations are always welcome.

Please check the web site www.bnhs.org.uk or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

For field meetings, bring stout footwear and warm clothing.

REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED.

(F) Particularly suitable for families and young people.

(L) Bring food to meetings. Lunch is eaten in the car park area. If joining the meeting for the afternoon, please arrive by 1.30pm.

 Meetings organised in conjunction with the ornithological section, the Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC).

TUESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER, Maulden 

BBC talk by Adam Rowlands. '**Stray Feathers and Tall Tales**' – behind the scenes at the BBRC. Adam Rowlands is the chairman of British Birds Rarities Committee and will provide an insight into the workings of the BBRC. At Maulden Village Hall, 8pm.

SUNDAY 19th OCTOBER, Bromham **(F)**

Apple Day 11.00am to 4.30pm. Visit the BNHS stand at Bromham Mill, TL010507, MK43 8LP. See the touch and feel nature displays, test your knowledge with the quiz. There may be a small entry fee. There will be a wide range of entertainment and refreshments for all the family. Visit the mill, taste and buy apples and cider. Check out the details at www.friendsofbromhammill.org.uk/events.html.

TUESDAY 21st OCTOBER, Maulden

Talk by Professor Tim Sparks, Senior Lecturer, Coventry University: '**Spring forwards, fall backwards; are our seasons changing?**' The timing of the seasons has been recorded in some instances for several centuries and examination of these records reveals our seasons are changing and whether change is a consequence of global warming. Professor Sparks founded the UK Phenology Network in 1998 and remains an advisor there. Phenology: the study of the timing of naturally recurring events as diverse as ice-melt, bear hibernation, bird migration, insect flight, plant flowering and lawn cutting. There should be something to interest everyone. At Maulden Village Hall. 8pm. Chair: David Withers.

SUNDAY 26th OCTOBER, RSPB Sandy **(F)**

Give Nature a Home Discovery Day 11.00am to 3.00pm. Join us at the RSPB Lodge, Sandy for a day of wildlife exploring. There will be mammal trapping, quizzes, touch and feel displays and much more to do and see with other groups also present. Light refreshments available. Families welcome. Adults £4, Children £3, RSPB members £3, wildlife explorers £2. Lodge car park, TL191484, SG19 2DL. There may be a car parking charge for non RSPB members.

TUESDAY 28th OCTOBER, Maulden 

BBC talk by Richard Crossley on his UK lecture tour '**Past, Present and Future**'. Richard Crossley is the author of the acclaimed Crossley Guides. Richard was raised in Yorkshire but now resides in Cape May, USA. At Maulden Village Hall, 8.00pm.

SUNDAY 2nd NOVEMBER, RSPB Sandy **(F)**

Fungus Foray. Joint meeting with RSPB and Herts Fungi Group at The Lodge, Sandy. This is a well-studied site and many interesting fungi have been recorded here. Meet in the car park at 10.00am or for the afternoon at 1.30pm TL191484, SG19 2DL. Families welcome. Free parking for BNHS members: look for signs directing you to the parking. Leader: Alan Outen.

SUNDAY 9th NOVEMBER, Ouse Washes 

BBC day trip to Ouse Washes area for wintering wetland species. Meet at RSPB Ouse Washes Reserve, Welches Dam, near Manea, Cambs, TL469859, at 9.00am. Visit WWT Reserve, Welney, in the afternoon. Leader: John Tomlin.

SATURDAY 15th NOVEMBER, Marston Vale Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park

Neglected Insects of Bedfordshire conference

From 9.30am to 4.00pm. Booking is essential £10 members, £12 non-members. Ticket includes refreshments and a cold buffet lunch. There will be seven specialist speakers, some national recorders as well as several displays. The BNHS will have a separate stand. Book with Mike Bird 01525 375771 or use the booking form on the BNHS web site. Park at Forest Centre car park, TL004417, MK43 0PR.

TUESDAY 18th NOVEMBER, Maulden

Talk by Tom Perret: **Redevelopment of The Higgins, Bedford, the changes and displays available.** Learn more about the history and recent redevelopment of this major attraction in Bedford. At Maulden Village Hall, 8pm. Chair: David Withers.

TUESDAY 25th NOVEMBER, Maulden 

BBC talk by Dr Nigel Collar '**Inglorious Busters and their Conservation**'. A light-hearted title for the serious business of saving some of the world's highly threatened busters. Nigel is a member of Birdlife International and is an outstanding player in bird conservation worldwide. At Maulden Village Hall, 8.00pm.

THURSDAY 4th DECEMBER, Tring 

BBC outing to Natural History Museum, Tring. 'Behind the Scenes' visit to the Bird Room at the Natural History Museum Tring. There will be a charge of £7.50 each including coffee on arrival. Book with Don Green on 01582 876258 as numbers are limited. Meet in the museum car park, SP923109, at 10.30, finish 1.00pm.

THURSDAY 4th DECEMBER, Haynes

BNHS Christmas Social Evening. Bring a selection of your digital photos and a contribution to the seasonal refreshments. Meet at Haynes Mission Hall, Northwood End Road, Haynes, TL099419, MK45 3PP at 8.00 pm. This is a chance to socialise with your friends in the society while enjoying a selection of photographs members have chosen to share and also partaking of some early seasonal refreshments. Members bringing digital photos should arrive promptly to allow time for them to be set up. Chair: David Withers.

SUNDAY 7th DECEMBER, Heath & Reach (F)

Rushmere Christmas Fair 11.00am to 3.00pm. Visit the BNHS stand to see the Nature Table, photographic displays and quizzes. Park in the car park, Bragenham Lane, off Linslade Road, SP913277, LU7 0EB. Parking £2.00. Families welcome. A chance to do some shopping for that little extra gift for Christmas or buy your Christmas tree. Refreshments are available.

FRIDAY 26th DECEMBER, Woburn

Boxing Day morning walk through Woburn Park. Meet at the Woburn Village car park, opposite the church, SP950331, MK17 9PG at 9.30am. Families welcome. Another social occasion while on the lookout for the 10 deer species present in the park plus any other wildlife of interest. Leader: Mary Sheridan.

THURSDAY 29th JANUARY, LONDON

Visit to Natural History Museum, London. Visit behind the scenes of the insect collection with Dr Ben Price, Odonata curator. Limited numbers: *please contact Julia Powell on 01582 661328 by Monday 5th January to book.* Please ask if there is anything special you would like to see.

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

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE: Contact Peter Glenister 01582 524994 for details of venues, help with transport etc.

Bedfordshire Flora Group 2015

by John Wakely

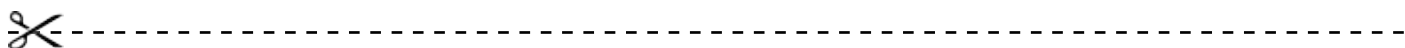
In order to obtain records for his excellent 2010 *Flora of Bedfordshire*, Chris Boon recruited an enthusiastic team of amateurs. Some were allocated a portion of the vice county (usually a 10km square). Members recorded the plants in their 'patch' over several flowering seasons. Chris provided help with advice and resources. Many of us learnt a lot as a result and became half decent field botanists.

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) is due to publish a new *Atlas of the Flora of the British Isles* in 2020. This will enable changes in the flora to be identified. In turn we can then attempt to explain these changes. This is likely to be vital in monitoring such factors as climate change, agricultural practice and urbanisation. Without the raw data we will not be able to target conservation effort.

BNHS is keen to establish a new flora group to gather records for the BSBI 2020 Atlas project. We would welcome anyone who wishes to get involved. Experience is not essential. We would welcome any level of expertise. It is appreciated that everyone will be able to devote different amounts of time. Help, support and tuition will be given as appropriate.

I would like to invite anyone interested to an initial meeting to discuss aims, objectives and methods. This will be held at Priory Park at 19.30 on Mon 6th October. The meeting will last a maximum of 2 hours. I would appreciate if anyone interested would let me know.

John Wakely, co-ordinator
vetjw@btinternet.com
01525 860085



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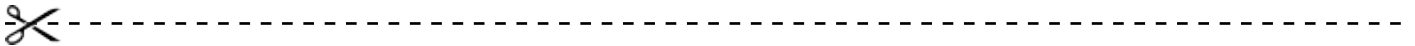
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Please complete and tear off the application form below and return with a cheque for the appropriate amount to:

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: _____
