



# Wild About Beds

Autumn 2016

## Tea at Tiggywinkle's



A somewhat shy Tiggywinkles resident. Photo by Julia Powell

It was difficult to get sufficient numbers of members together for this 8<sup>th</sup> September visit especially as seven people dropped out at very short notice but a mixed group of members and friends made it to Tiggywinkles, the largest wildlife hospital in Europe.

On a beautiful sunny afternoon after the introductory welcome, we had a little talk about hedgehogs with plenty of photo opportunities with one of the permanent residents. Then we had a little free time to look around before meeting up for tea and coffee and a slide show about the hospital. People were then at leisure to continue to look around at the animal enclosures containing foxes, deer, badgers, red kites and tortoises and some lucky folk were on hand when the albino hedgehog was brought out. It was also possible to view the nursery where the baby birds and animals were being fed every few minutes.

Those people that ventured upstairs were amazed at the exhibits on show that all related to hedgehogs from post cards and Beatrix Potter material to bombs from WW2 and a lot more besides. We were well entertained for our afternoon out.

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society  
[www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk)  
Registered charity number 268659



BedsLife  
[www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://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 Haynes.

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, email [membership@bnhs.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk).

### Editor: Heather Webb

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

Email: [newsletter@bnhs.org.uk](mailto: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 2016** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **December 2016**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

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Let freshwater life amaze you!

*from the Freshwater Habitats Trust*

Take part in a volunteer survey to discover more about your local ponds, streams, rivers and ditches, and contribute to vital research. Initially this survey was for the Thames Water region but it has now been extended nationally.

Freshwater habitats, from the biggest lakes to the tiniest trickles, pools and springs, are home to a vast array of plants and animals. Sadly it only takes a little pollution to cause the loss of much of this wildlife. Despite these harmful effects very little is known about the water quality of many of these habitats. Use quick and simple nutrient testing kits to measure the levels of nitrate and phosphate, two widespread pollutants. Help to discover flourishing freshwater habitats, where wildlife still thrives, and uncover the facts about nutrient pollution. The survey is open to individuals, groups and schools. For more information or to sign up for your free nutrient testing kits see the details below:

W: [freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/thameswaterforwildlife](http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/thameswaterforwildlife)

E: [hworker@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk](mailto:hworker@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk)

Supported by Thames Water and the Heritage Lottery Fund



*Please note: to reduce the risk of email spam being sent to contributors and others, '(at)' appears in email addresses in place of '@' in this newsletter. -Ed.*

### Field visit reports:

#### Wicken Fen outing 10<sup>th</sup> July 2016

*article and photos by Sheila Brooke*

Six of us enjoyed a day at Wicken Fen on Sunday 10 July. The morning was spent with volunteer Alan, who took us on an interesting and informative guided walk taking in the last working windpump and explaining the working of the fen. In the afternoon we had an electric boat ride along Wicken Lode to Reach Lode. Strong winds made the trip exciting for us but challenging for our captain who had to struggle to steer the boat out of the reeds! We saw a wide variety of fauna and flora during the course of the day and finished our tour with a visit to Fen Cottage and Workshop, giving us an idea of past life on the fens. We enjoyed the day but know there was still much of the reserve left to see.



Windpump



In the boat

#### Flitton Moor 30<sup>th</sup> July 2016

*by Julia Powell*

About two dozen people from near and far turned up at Flitton Moor on a beautiful Saturday morning. David Sedgley led us first to the pond with a large platform from which we could see several species of patrolling dragonflies including the Emperor Dragonfly and Large Red Damselfly. Then we moved round the site marvelling at the height of the vegetation which seems to be a feature of the wet spring and early summer weather this year. One eagle-eyed member spotted a resting Southern Hawker just as a family with three young boys were passing as they walked the dog. They were greatly amazed at this large insect which they probably had not known about before.

#### Bug Lab 2016 Greensand Trust August 2016

*by Julia Powell*

Society members joined forces with rangers from the Greensand Trust at seven different venues in Bedfordshire in August for their annual Bug Lab. Over 500 children took part with a whopping 233 at Rushmere Country Park. Armed with nets and pots, both children and adults spent a happy hour swiping at the vegetation to catch mini-beasts although one small child managed to catch a dragonfly in their bare hands! When tired of this, they went on to make a ladybird from a jam jar top.

The week culminated in the Rushmere Summer Fair where the BNHS had a stand. Half a dozen Society members were on hand to show off the nature table artefacts enhanced by a recently deceased Long-eared Bat found that very morning when the Centre was opened. Quite a few families were also encouraged to take the quizzes too.



The Rushmere Summer Fair BNHS stall. Photo by Julia Powell

### A note on spiders in the house

by Tom Thomas

Graham Bellamy's article in *Wild about Beds* (Summer 2016) made me think about how many spider species I had found indoors. There are over thirty families of spiders amounting to more than 650 species in the British Isles. In my house I have collected species from thirteen of those families, a casual count showing 29 species, some regularly for amongst them are those that are synanthropic. It is natural that there is going to be some inadvertent pest control because spiders are carnivores.

For ease of distinction, spiders may be treated as guilds from their methods of collecting prey i.e. hunters, grabbers and trappers (web builders). Amongst the hunters are many of the six-eyed species; *Dysdera crocata* and *D. erythrina*, whose big chelicerae allow both to prey particularly on the armoured woodlice. Not easily seen because of their size (2-3mm), the tiny pink *Oonops pulcher* and *O. domesticus* scavenge under other spiders' webs, whilst the slowly moving *Scytodes thoracica* stalks its prey, then, when within striking distance, sprays silk from her chelicerae to net the intended victim. The latter, known as the "Spitting Spider" has not been found in my house though it is in some of the older Luton houses and a garden.



Zebra spider *Salticus scenicus*. Photo by Paul Green



*Drassodes lapidosus* with a flying ant.  
Photo by TJ Thomas

Amongst other hunters, these having the usual eight eyes, is the black and white striped "Zebra Spider" (*Salticus scenicus*), with its quaint habit of stopping then tilting its carapace as it searches for prey. Two close relatives, *Pseudoeuophrys lanigera* and *Sitticus pubescens*, are dull in appearance so not so readily spotted. The former seems to like being high up on the roof. Three large and formidable spiders are *Herpyllus blackwalli*, *Drassodes lapidosus* and *D. cupreus*. From the dark grey dense coating of hairs on the abdomen *H. blackwalli* is known as "The Mouse Spider".

Occasionally during warm weather or, as autumn settles in, some other spiders find their way into the house; these are the very active "grabbers", crab spiders of the Family Philodromidae.

In the autumn an often disturbing sight is the rapid movement of a big, long-legged spider, whose sudden swift movements across the floor can be disturbing, made worse by suddenly stopping, seemingly to watch before darting away. This is the cobweb builder, *Tegenaria gigantea*. It has two relatives, the much smaller *T. domestica*, and *T. parietina*, much, much larger with legs nearly

seven times its body's length. The latter prefers older houses where there likely to be fewer disturbances. (This species is also known as "The Cardinal Spider" and "The Hertfordshire Spider").

Not all web-builders (trappers) are as active and mobile as the *Tegenaria* group. The Family Theridiidae has small rotund tangle web constructors, which are usually woven across the angles of door and window frames. Amongst these is the uncommon synanthropic *Theridion blackwalli*, looking like a black spherical dust particle. More readily found is *Theridion melanurum* that has a creamy-white triangle of spots in front of its spinners. If the tangle of threads has the suggestion of a sheet then the occupier is probably the larger chocolate-coloured *Steatoda bimaculatum*. (The related *S. nobilis*, recently notorious as the False Widow, has been found in Bedfordshire but always outside).

*Pholcus phalangioides*, mentioned in Bellamy's article, has an untidy web of threads that readily pick up dust. This species was rare, probably under recorded in the county, when I first took an interest in this group of invertebrates. Apart from one specimen being reported from a pheasant rearing most records were from indoors. Gradually over the years they have become more frequent, even being found in webs outside. I have seen them, outside at night, hunting *Zygiella x-notata* in their orb-webs. In an abandoned

house being checked for pest infestations *Pholcus* was seen eating German Cockroaches. If the house has a basement or cellar then the Cellar Spider, *Nesticus cellulanus*, may be there in its messy web of threads.

Provided disturbance is kept to minimum then members of two other families, Linyphiidae and Araneidae, respectively the Hammock Web and Orb-web Spider, may come indoors. The former has many small dark species often called Money Spiders that during humid and stormy conditions will "aeronaut" on silken threads to disperse. From this activity much released silk falls the ground forming gossamer.

Webs are often a problem as they collect dust, being very untidy and unsightly. (It has been suggested that a factory fire was caused by a cat moving through the roof-space with many dusty webs, the cat's fur creating a static spark and hence dust fire).

It is worth while looking at Mourier and Winding's book, *Wildlife in House and Home*, Collins 1977.

### Grand Day Out?

This year's winter programme includes two occasions where the BNHS has a stand at an outside event, Apple Day at Bromham Mill October 16<sup>th</sup> and the Christmas Fair at Rushmere Country Park on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Not listed is the Give Nature a Home Day at The Lodge, Sandy with our RSPB Partners on October 30<sup>th</sup>. At all these events we have a Nature Table and a photographic display. These are all prepared but we need volunteers to set out these items and show them off. It is a lovely day out giving you an opportunity to get to know other members better, find out some interesting facts about the Nature Table items (they are labelled) and a great study in people watching. At some events you even get in free and if enough volunteers are present, you get to enjoy a lot of the other entertainment too. Please let me know by email [JuliaCPowell800\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell800(at)gmail.com) or phone 01582 661328 if you would love to help out at any of these events (plus any others that occur during the year that do not always get into the programme). In the past we have been at garden centres, Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable Kite festival and local bioblitzes.



### Amazing Insects and Spiders in Beds - Some Neglected, Others Not



Another Bedfordshire Natural History Society Conference  
of interest to specialists and enthusiastic naturalists alike.

Venue: The Forest Centre, Millenium Country Park, Marston Moretaine, MK43 0PR ,  
Date: Saturday 5 November 2016 Open at 09:30 for 10:00 prompt start – finish at 16:00hrs  
Entrance: £15 for BNHS & Bird Club members, £20 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 below and return with a cheque to:  
Mike Bird, Treasurer, BNHS, 69 Cotefield Drive, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3DN

*Hoopoe says with all those yummy insects he wouldn't miss this for the world, and hopes to see you there!.*



Remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November

... is the date for the 2016 BNHS Conference!

Amazing Insects and Spiders in Beds — Some Neglected, Others Not

Members have now had time for priority booking so we will now be advertising nationally as we did in 2014. We are again limited to 100 places and with over two months to go half are already filled so we expect it to be full again this year. There will also be various displays including specimens and books by some of the speakers, the BNHS nature table, information on various groups of insects in the county and sales by Opticron and On Stop Nature.

The format will be much the same as in 2014 with four talks in the morning and three in the afternoon. There will be a coffee/tea break mid-morning and lunch will be provided as part of the entry fee so the cost for the day is excellent value. The venue will again be at the Marston Vale Forest Centre, which has plenty of free parking and excellent facilities, as well as being easily accessible for those coming from a distance.

We have another excellent lineup of highly acclaimed specialists:

Weevils: Mark Gurney [The Lodge, Sandy]

Ground Beetles (Carabidae): John Walters [Buckfastleigh, Devon]

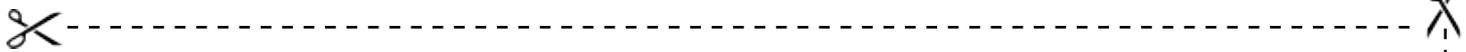
Bees, wasps and Ants (Aculeates): Rosie Earwaker & Bex Cartwright [The Lodge, Sandy]

Sawflies (Symphyta): Andrew Halstead [Retired former Principal Entomologist for the RHS]

Robberflies (Asilidae): Malcolm Smart [Wolverhampton]

Soldierflies and Bee-flies (Stratiomyidae and Bombyliidae): Martin Harvey [Bucks]

Spiders: Tom Thomas [Luton]



Amazing Insects and Spiders in Beds — Some Neglected, Others Not  
conference booking form

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:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if you have special dietary requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

✂ Events Programme Summer 2016

Please check the website [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk) or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

In bad weather, the leaders may cancel the event if conditions are unsuitable. Please check early on the day.

Indoor talks start at 8pm except the AGM which starts at 7:30pm and all are held at Maulden Village Hall (MVH), grid reference TL048380, post code MK45 2DP. Parking is free.

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

For field meetings, please wear stout footwear and warm clothing, bring a hat, water and sun cream if it is hot. OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

**REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED and children under 16 years must be accompanied by a responsible adult.**

**Unfortunately some trips will not be suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs. Please contact the leader in advance if you have any concerns about accessibility.**

Please check the web site [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk) or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

(F) Particularly suitable for families and young people.

(L) Bring a picnic lunch for all day events.

✂ Meetings organised by the ornithological section, the Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC).

**TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, MAULDEN 8pm** ✂

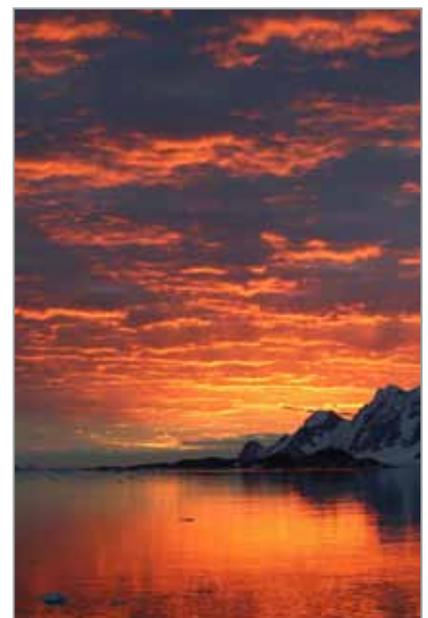
**BBC talk "Amazing Birds"**, by Chris Collins, freelance tour guide and photographer discusses some incredible facts from the avian world.

**SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, BROMHAM 11am - 4.30pm (F)**

**Bromham Mill Apple Day.** Visit the BNHS stand at Bromham Mill, TL010507, MK43 8LP. See our nature table where you can touch the preserved material. Marvel at the photographs of the local wildlife. Test your knowledge with the quiz. Lots of apple related stands too.  
(There may be an entry fee.)

**TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, MAULDEN 8pm**

**Talk "Surviving Antarctic Extremes"** by Lloyd Peck, Science Leader at the British Antarctic Survey. The talk will be about Antarctica's extreme environment — not just the coldest continent, but the driest, the highest and windiest as well. Professor Peck will then talk about how we as humans survive in this environment, and the clothing needed to work at low temperatures. The second half of the talk is about how animal life copes in these conditions, and how their adaptations compare with our technological solutions. **There will be a practical demonstration for which a charge will be made: members £1, visitors £2.**



Antarctic sunset. Photo by Lloyd Peck



Antarctic seals. Photo by Lloyd Peck

### TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, MAULDEN 8pm

**BBC talk “Birdwatching in Italy” and “The Work of LIPU, Birdlife partner in Italy”** by David Lingard, LIPU UK. A country rich in bird life but suffering serious human persecution.

### SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, SANDY 10am (F)

**Walk** at the Lodge, RSPB headquarters for a fungal foray joint with the RSPB and the Herts and Beds Fungi Group. Bring lunch if you plan to stay on. Meet at the gatehouse car park. TL191485, SG19 2DL.  
Leader: Alan Outen.

### SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, MARSTON VALE 10am - 4:30pm (doors open 9:30am)

**CONFERENCE: Amazing Insects and Spiders in Beds, some neglected, others not.** Entrance by ticket only - £15 for members (includes lunch and tea/coffee in morning and afternoon). See website for further details.

### MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, LINSLADE 11am

**Visit Linslade Water Recycling Education Centre.** Water is essential for life and a finite resource. Find out how used water is recycled for the benefit of us all and sustainability of the environment. **Everyone must wear trousers & wellies or stout shoes.** Meet at the site in Globe Lane, Leighton Buzzard SP913262, LU7 2TA.  
Leader: Julia Powell

### TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, MAULDEN 8pm

**Talk “Alien Species: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly”** by Dr Helen Roy, Principal Scientist, Biological Records Centre. The number of new species arriving in the UK, and indeed across Europe, is increasing rapidly. There are now more than 2000 established non-native species in the UK and about 15% of these species pose a threat. Here Dr Roy provides an overview of invasion biology and highlights the invaluable contributions of the volunteer recording community to our understanding of invasion biology.

### TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, MAULDEN 8pm

**BBC talk “Fighting for Birds” by Dr Mark Avery.** Topical issues of the birding world addressed by our campaigner-in-chief, always interesting, often controversial.

### SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, HEATH & REACH 11am-3pm (F)

**Rushmere Christmas Fair.** Visit the BNHS stand to see the Nature Table, displays and quizzes. Park in the Rushmere car park, SP912284, LU7 0EB. Parking £2.00 (coins only).  
Leader: Julia Powell. 07958 161938

### THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, HAYNES 8pm

**Christmas Social evening,** with seasonal refreshments. Bring along a selection of your photos (on a CD or memory stick) and some food to share. Meet at Haynes Mission Hall, Northwood End Road, Haynes, TL099419, MK45 3PH.

### MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, WOBURN 9:30am – 12 noon (F)

**Boxing Day Walk through Woburn Park.** Meet at the Woburn Village car park, opposite the church in Park Street, SP950331, MK17 9PG.  
Leader: Mary Sheridan.

If you wish to know more about any of the events please contact either

Sheila Brooke Tel: 01525 873396 Mobile: 07905 949901 Email: [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com)

Or Julia Powell Tel: 01582 661328 Mobile: 07958 161938 Email: [JuliaCPowell80\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell80(at)gmail.com)