

YounGnats Newsletter March 2015



Wildlife Recording

Do you know what wildlife you have in your garden?

- How many different types of birds visit your feeders?
- What wild flowers do you have growing in your lawns?
- Are there any ladybirds on your plants?

If your answer is '**I don't know**' then you're probably like nearly everyone else. But what if everyone said '**I don't know**', does that matter? **Yes it does**, by recording wildlife, organisations like the RSPB know which bird species are in decline and can promote ways to change these trends.

Recording wildlife is fun, and you can join in. The easy way to start is in your own garden and the list below is some common things you may see in your garden. You just need to look out as often as possible or have a search in your garden and write down what you see. Then after a while, you will start to see the changes in your garden.

- Robin
- Blackbird
- Dandelion
- Daisy
- Buttercup
- Butterfly
- Ladybird
- Bee

We know there are different types of butterflies, ladybirds and bees, so when you get more confident you can start learning and recording the different types. Or perhaps you want to learn to recognise other types of birds or flowers.

Don't forget you can tell us what you see at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/records/send-a-record/>

Recording the weather is also important as many wildlife events are linked to the weather. For example when trees come into leaf, or bluebells flower or when we see frog spawn. No two years are the same and from wildlife records, made by lots of people over many years, we know that in recent years spring has been coming earlier and autumn has been starting later. **How?** Records show that trees are coming into leaf earlier and some spring flowers are blooming in November and December. In fact, there were a record number of plants in bloom on New Year's Day 2015. Frogs and toads are also known to be spawning earlier. This type of wildlife recording is known as phenology, which compares the timing from year to year of these naturally occurring events.

Have you been to one of our YounGnats events? The next one you may like to come along to is:

- Saturday 18th April – Pond dipping at Harrold-Odell CP, meet at 2pm in visitor centre car park.

See <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/category/things-to-do/> for more details and remember to keep checking the website as new information is regularly being added. There are also other ideas of things to do and look out for in spring at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/to-do/in-spring/>

Solitary bees

One species you could look out for and give a helping hand to are solitary bees.



The female bees that have survived the winter will be emerging in spring and looking for somewhere to nest. She looks like a small ginger honeybee. They are common in gardens and sometimes use holes in the mortar of walls or beetle holes in logs or even keyholes for their nests.

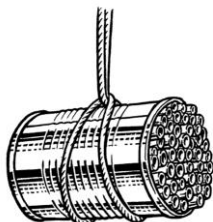


Illustration by
Alan Batley

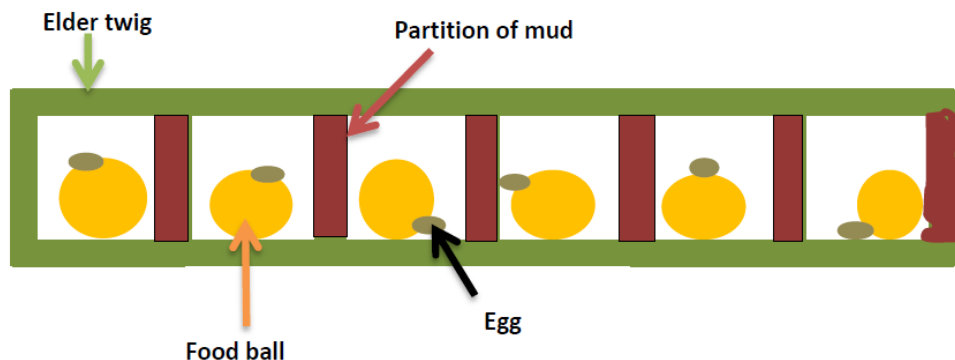
You can use bundles of Elder twigs to tempt the female **Tawny Mining Bee *Andrena fulva*** to nest. Drill out the pith nearly to the end of each twig which should be about 20 cm long. (Use a knitting needle or skewer **very carefully**). Make sure the ends of the twigs are not very rough. Tie the twigs together to form a bundle with the open ends facing outwards. Hang the bundle in a sunny spot sheltered from the wind and rain as much as possible. Make sure it is not too high for you to watch it. For more information go to <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/to-do/make-a-bee-hotel/>

The female bee will go in carrying pollen and nectar to make a little ball of food on which she will lay an egg. Then she will make a partition to block it off. This takes about a day. She will then fetch more food and lay another egg and so on, making a series of compartments, each containing an egg, before sealing the end of the twig.

The eggs hatch and the grubs eat their food, pupate and then become adults which sleep inside their twig until spring. The fun starts next April when the bees start to emerge. The oldest bee, (which developed from the first egg to be laid in each twig) is at the end furthest from the entrance. Bad news, as her way out is blocked by her younger brothers and sisters who are still dormant. Her technique is to gnaw away the partition between her cell and the next. Then she BITES the BUM of the sleeping bee in the next cell. What a way to be woken! The bitten bee bites the next and so on until they all trundle out together.

So why not try making a nest for solitary bees.

Inside of elder twig



Please upload any photos of solitary bee nests you make to www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/contactus/