



Beds BioNews



BedsLife
Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership



The sky's the limit: the World Green Roof Congress 2008

Julia Scott, Bedfordshire County Council

With very little knowledge of green roofs I travelled to London with a buzz of anticipation to attend the two-day World Green Roof Congress.

Green roofs are not a new phenomenon. For millennia humans used local materials like turf, moss and grass for protection against the elements and for thermal insulation. Green roofs absorb and retain storm water, improving thermal insulation of buildings. They can cool buildings in summer and reduce heat spots. Roof gardens and terraces, balconies and green 'living' walls can also be attractive building features.



A green roof meadow in downtown Toronto, Canada.
Photo by Padraic Ryan

Included within new developments or retrofitted to existing buildings, the range of 'green roof' systems is growing. The vision of providing rooftop habitats for insects and birds – creating 'meadows in the sky' – is appealing. But to develop a truly sustainable green 'living' roof, ecosystems need to be clearly defined and be integral to the roof design.

Defining the key purpose, or aims, of a green roof is the key to its success. 'Intensive' green roofs include rooftop gardens with a mix of native and non-native plant species, or vegetables and fruits for cultivation. 'Extensive' green

roofs allow natural colonisation of plants, or have a simpler selection of plant species, (including meadow grasses and flowers) with relatively minimal maintenance needed.

Both forms will provide some support for local flora and fauna but if the green roof is to be integral to local ecosystems then quality in design and attention to detail is paramount. Roof top habitats have to withstand the harshest environments with extremes in climate. They are physically separated from the support of neighbouring habitats: what works on the ground may not at two, five or ten-plus storeys high.

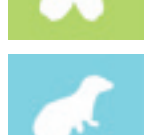
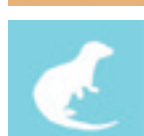
If green roofs are to become integral to ecosystems and add to local biodiversity in the long term then ecologists and landscape architects need to take the lead in their design and specification.

I hope that as green roofs are developed, 'living roofs' are established to contribute to local biodiversity, linked to Biodiversity Action Plans, possibly leading to 'Green Roof Green Infrastructure' or even 'Green Roof Landscape Characterisation'! Who knows - The sky's the limit!

Woodworks! 2008: a report from muddy Marston Moretaine

Alexis Pym, Forest of Marston Vale

Woodworks! festival of wood, woodlands and wood products was a wild and wet event! Everyone who braved the weather came with good cheer and





Woodworks! 2008 looked more like Glastonbury but it didn't stop everyone from enjoying themselves! Many thanks to the FMV staff who handled the whole thing like troopers! Photo by Heather Webb

a keen interest in woodcraft, music and exhibitors. The highlight of both days was definitely the chainsaw carve up with four chainsaw carvers, speed carving individual sculptures for auction along with the British Lumberjack Sports association. The new exhibitors this year included a wheelwright, clog maker, timber frame building and traditional tools. Woodworks! opened with a bang from Bobbies Rhythms drummers and the toe tapping continued with live folk music from nine bands, including Megson and Suntrap.

It was a glorious weekend of British spirit triumphing over British weather!

Arable Plant Areas help put Bedfordshire on the map

The Natural England Higher Level Stewardship target areas map, that is! The Wildlife Trust and FWAG have just finished surveying potential 'Important Arable Plant Areas' around Bedfordshire and Luton. These were identified in a desktop study last year, and we were chuffed to get support from SITA for some follow-up field surveys.

This is more than just an excuse to get outside and enjoy the flowers, though. Natural England has just finished a round of Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) targeting. A range of criteria was used to identify the areas in our region that would yield the most benefit from agri-environment scheme funds. There is only so much money to go around, so the criteria were pretty strict. And one of them was the presence of Important Arable Plant Areas.

The results of the field surveys will be out early next year. But our arable plants work has already helped get more of Bedfordshire into the HLS target area. This means more potential to bring HLS money into the county. It's a great example of how biodiversity data can lead to huge benefits for nature!

Biodiversity Action Plan review: we're almost there!

For the past 18 months we've been reviewing the county Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This document sets out how organisations around Bedfordshire and Luton work to protect and enhance our important habitats and species. It is a local version of the UK BAP. Progress on the UK BAP is reported to the world biodiversity secretariat in Montréal. So although small, our BAP is an important part of a huge effort!

The original plan was released in 2001 so it was time to have a look and see what we could improve. We've kept the bits that worked and worked on the bits that didn't. The new BAP is based on better species and habitat information, collected since the original BAP was published. The new plan also has more precise targets and actions so we can track how we're doing.

Reviews are almost complete for all the habitat plans and some of the





species plans. Back in 2001 stakeholders around the county and around the region formally endorsed the BAP. We'll be going back to them with our new and improved plan in hopes that they will continue their endorsement and support. The BAP review has been a big job: to the many folks who have helped out, hang on, we're almost there!

Nature nuggets

2008 is a UK BAP reporting round. **All updates on BAP actions must be input into the Biodiversity Action Recording System (BARS) by September 30!** Many thanks to those of you who have reported either back to Heather or directly into the system. To those of you who haven't, a suitable penalty will be imposed, starting with revocation of home-baked meeting treats...

A **Bedfordshire & Luton environmental education group** has recently formed, with the aim of coordinating formal and informal learning opportunities around Bedfordshire and Luton. The group currently includes the Wildlife Trust, Greensand Trust, BTCV, Forest of Marston Vale, Groundwork and Bedfordshire Libraries. For more information or to tag along to a meeting please contact Heather at heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk.

The East of England Biodiversity Forum have been working on a regional biodiversity action 'Delivery Plan' since the 2006 Wild Ideas conference. Forum members have consulted widely and the new **Regional Biodiversity Delivery Plan** is the culmination of nearly 2 years work. The official plan launch is taking place on October 16 at the Gonville Hotel in Cambridge.

Our Nude Ewe wools are now available in one of our local yarn shops. [Moonstone Yarns](#) has a stock of our original 'Heb' as well as some other goodies. Moonstone is located in the Olde Watermill Shopping Village just off the A6 south of Barton-le-Clay. We're thrilled to have such great support from a local business! Drop by Moonstone and tell them we sent you!

New publications

The 2008 **Indicators of Sustainable Development in Bedfordshire** has been prepared by The Greensand Trust. This is the latest in a series of reports giving a broad picture of the health of the natural environment in Bedfordshire. The report can be downloaded from the BedsLife website: www.bedslife.org.uk/publications.

Greenspace Scotland and partners have developed a new guide to assist greenspace, health and other practitioners to assess the health and equity impacts of greenspace policies, strategies, plans frameworks, programmes and projects. **Health Impact Assessment of Greenspace: A Guide** is available at www.greenspacescotland.org.uk.

LIFE on the Farm: Supporting Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture in Europe is the latest in the LIFE-Focus brochure series. The brochure covers sustainable agriculture projects active in the fields of water and soil protection, biodiversity and waste, as well as the processing of agricultural products. It showcases practical approaches to dealing with present and future agri-environmental challenges. Visit the LIFE website to download the brochure: <http://ec.europa.eu/life>.





Upcoming events

Oct 5-14: The **IUCN World Conservation Congress** is being held in Barcelona. This is the world's largest and most diverse environmental congress. Co-hosted by Spain and Catalonia, the Congress will welcome more than 8,000 people from around the globe. Themes include "a new climate for change", "healthy environments - healthy people" and "safeguarding the diversity of life". Check out the website for more information: www.iucn.org/congress.

Oct 14-16: The Welsh Biodiversity Partnership with the support of CCW are holding a course: **The Biodiversity Duty - focus on local action**. Aimed at biodiversity officers and other LBAP partnership members and/or those with biodiversity conservation responsibilities within the voluntary, local government or statutory sectors. The £233 fee includes accommodation and meals. For more information visit the [conference website](#).

Oct 18: The Bedfordshire Natural History Society, Bedfordshire Badger Network, Bedfordshire Bat Group and Bedfordshire Dormouse Group invite you to a one-day conference. **The Beasts of Bedfordshire** is taking place at Parkside Hall, Amptill. The day will feature a wide range of presentations on our county's wildlife. *Advance booking is essential*; for more information visit the [BNHS website](#).

Oct 21-23: The Forestry Commission are holding a **woodfuel supply chain training course** at the Chilterns Gateway Centre, Dunstable. This 3-day course is the UK's only accredited woodfuel supply chain training course and provides a comprehensive introduction to woodfuel production and essential background to the market. Fees and other details are available on the [Rural Development Initiatives Ltd. website](#).

Nov 12: The Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) 14th annual conference is taking place at the Britannia Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. **Joined Up Thinking: Planning for Green Infrastructure - What's it all About?** will explore the statutory and policy underpinning for green and/or habitat networks. The event will also include a number of case studies. For information visit the [ALGE website](#) or email info@alge.org.uk.

July 5-9, 2009: The **Second International Youth Symposium for Biodiversity** is being planned for Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Students aged 12-19 are invited to submit biodiversity project proposals to attend. If you, your school or community is involved in something valuable for biodiversity and you want to share it with the world then you should apply to be part of this great event! Details are available on the symposium website: www.biodiversitymatters.org.



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**Just contact Heather at
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