



Action for Biodiversity

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**NEW publication(s):**

**Sixth Annual Biodiversity Review** published by Beds & Luton Wildlife Working Group (copy enclosed)

**Life Support** (Defra 2004) - a framework document for Local Strategic Partnerships to take account of the environment in the community strategy process. Download from [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd)

**Sustaining biodiversity; revitalising the Biodiversity Action Plan process** (published by RSPB June 04) Download from [www.wcl.org.uk](http://www.wcl.org.uk)

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For more information about biodiversity in Bedfordshire and Luton visit our website [www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)

Working for wildlife and our quality of life

# Beds BioNews

Issue 2

September 2004

## Heathland habitat around Sandy

**Two ongoing RSPB projects – the installation of concrete natterjack pools and the introduction of sheep grazing – have been successful.**

To our surprise, the four new pools were used by natterjacks this summer, who laid 41 strings in three of them. The eggs hatched and have developed fully, providing good numbers of young toads to increase the Lodge population. In total, 125 strings were recorded on the whole

site, quite a good year. Three kilometres of sheep fencing, gates, and two grids were installed, and 24 Manx Loghtans arrived on loan from Minsmere at the end of July. We are monitoring the effect that they have on the acid grassland and heather, but expect that it will be highly beneficial in producing a

more complex bio-structure that should benefit plants, invertebrates and birds. The sheep will go back in October, and return again next May.

**The conversion of Sandy Warren to heathland must wait for the approval of the Environmental Statement by the Forestry Commission.**

The intention is to create about 40ha of dry heath / acid grassland, with scattered trees. The slopes overlooking Sandy will keep their wooded cover, in recognition of local interest in maintaining the existing landscape, although as the conifers reach the end of their lives we will gradually replace them with native broadleaved trees. We hope we may have full approval by early 2005, and should be ready to start

felling the following autumn. The clearance will mostly be conifers and some sycamore. We will then need to strip the dense litter layer before re-establishing heather and gorse. If anyone knows who might want several thousand tonnes of acidic humus, please let me know! For further information contact:

Peter Bradley  
RSPB Site Manager  
The Lodge Reserve  
☎ 01767 680551 or email [peter.bradley@rspb.org.uk](mailto:peter.bradley@rspb.org.uk)



heather

## Floodplain Restoration

The Environment Agency Fisheries, Recreation and Biodiversity team is currently working to identify the best areas on the freshwater River Ouse and its floodplain that have the potential to be rehabilitated for the benefit of biodiversity and fisheries whilst supporting flood defence needs.

The first phase has focused on identifying sites such as old backwaters and gravel pits that have the potential to be connected to the main channel. The next phase will involve extensive liaison with a range of

internal and external stakeholders to develop the most promising schemes further. To move our floodplain restoration plans forward and develop partnerships with other interested partners, we are planning a stakeholder workshop to be held in early 2005.

Further information can be obtained from

Ian Hirst [ian.hirst@environmentagency.gov.uk](mailto:ian.hirst@environmentagency.gov.uk)

☎ 01 480 483830 or

Paul Jose [paul.jose@environmentagency.gov.uk](mailto:paul.jose@environmentagency.gov.uk)

☎ 01 480 483920



Action for Biodiversity

## An urban oasis

Situated at the southern end of the Clapham Wildlife Corridor and less than one hectare in size, Hill Rise is a small, unique nature reserve sited a quarter of a mile from Bedford town centre. It is surrounded on three sides by urban housing and is adjacent to the old Foster Hill Road cemetery. The site is looked after solely by volunteers and maintained as a patchwork of scrub. This has helped to keep the biodiversity high.

The reserve supports a wide variety of plants, insects, amphibians, birds and small mammals. Over 200 species of flowering plants have been identified since the official opening in 1990. Twenty-five species of butterfly have been recorded on the site including the unusual white-letter hairstreak and boasts the largest population of gatekeepers within the

urban boundary of Bedford. The two ponds are home to the common frog, newt and toad. Some 50 bird species have been logged, including the declining species of turtle dove and unusual visitors to an urban district such as the bullfinch and water rail. The mammal population includes grey squirrel, rabbit, muntjac deer and hedgehog. From the outset, foxes have been resident and this year the dog fox and two vixens produced 12 healthy cubs. Without management, the biodiversity of Hill Rise

would fall into decline quite rapidly. Currently the reserve has a significant educational role, catering to the needs of all ages from primary school children to undergraduates seeking source material for dissertations. In this way alone, Hill Rise goes some of the way to achieving a public understanding of biodiversity as a practical and accessible example.

Shalaine Aldis  
Hill Rise Residents



## Are you interested in finding out more about wildlife in Bedfordshire and Luton?

If the answer is yes, then the developing Local Record Centre can help.

Perhaps you would like to know...

- if and where a particular species might be found in the county;
- what kind of habitats we have and which animals and plants live there;
- where good sites for wildlife are or
- what wildlife may be living on your doorstep.

We are collating available information on our species and habitats so that it is available to all who wish to use it and are encouraging more people to find out about and record our wildlife.

The Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC) for Bedfordshire and Luton has been established to bring together information on the County's natural environment. The BRMC is a valuable information tool for everyone, but particularly for people who...

- \* want to learn more about our natural environment
- \* manage areas of land for people and wildlife

- \* make decisions about the nature and location of new development
- \* are undertaking scientific research for a project at work, school or university
- \* would like to get involved in or undertake any surveys of fauna and flora.

The development of the BRMC is financially supported by Bedford Borough Council, Bedford Group of Drainage Boards, Bedfordshire County Council, Bedfordshire Natural History Society, English Nature and The Wildlife Trust.

If you would like more information about the Centre, what we do or how you could get involved in recording wildlife, please contact us at the address below or visit our website.

**BRMC, c/o The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Visitors Centre, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9SH**  
Tel: (01234) 355435 Fax: (01234) 346752

Email: [brmc@bedsbionet.org.uk](mailto:brmc@bedsbionet.org.uk)

🌐 [www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)

Bedfordshire & Luton

**Biodiversity  
Recording &  
Monitoring  
Centre**



Action for Biodiversity

## Highlights from the local biodiversity reporting round

**Are we making any progress? The good news is yes we are. The Biodiversity Action Plan contains quite a few challenging targets and actions to further biodiversity in the County. There are areas of course where we need to do more, however the examples below highlight some of our successes, demonstrating what has been achieved in a short space of time.**



skylark

### **Farmland**

**Target:** Create 10ha of species rich grassland using local seed sources by 2005 and 50ha by 2010

**Progress:** Approx. 30ha of species rich grassland has been created using local seed where available

### **Heathland & acid grassland**

**Target:** To increase the amount of acid grassland/heathland mosaics on the Greensand Ridge to 200ha by 2005

**Progress:** Approx. 63ha has been reported with more planned

### **Lowland calcareous grassland**

**Target:** Secure favourable management of 100% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) calcareous grassland by 2005

**Progress:** Of the 12 SSSIs supporting calcareous grassland, 8 (67%) are managed for biodiversity, not all are in favourable management, yet

### **Woodland**

**Target:** Increase by 10 the number of woods with permissive public access by 2010

**Progress:** 15 woodlands with permissive public access have been reported

### **Waterways & wetlands**

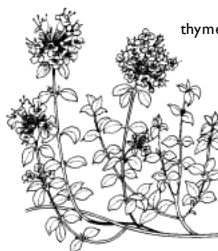
**Target:** Plant 50 native black poplars from local stock within river valleys by 2005

**Progress:** 36 trees have been planted so far across the County

### **Urban**

**Target:** Increase by 10% the number of appropriate trees in urban areas by 2010

**Progress:** At least 900 trees have been planted and managed



thyme



black hairstreak

**Black hairstreak**-Ongoing management at Marston Thrift has meant that the black hairstreak has been seen in other parts of the wood

**Dormouse**-Nest boxes at 33 sites are being monitored for dormice each year

**White-clawed crayfish**-Habitat enhancement for our only native crayfish has been undertaken at 2 sites

**Community involvement**-Over 200 volunteers have been involved in collecting seed from our native trees and shrubs for planting back into the surrounding landscape

## Discovering your environment

Your parish environment is the background to everything you do. It is what makes the difference to your quality of life: a complex mixture of history, landscape, wildlife, buildings, footpaths, bridleways, open spaces, surrounding countryside and farmland.

You can protect and enhance your local environment. Planning now will help you keep your favourite places and make your environment a better place to

live.

We can offer specific advice on the following aspects of the environment, and

point you in the right direction for others, e.g.

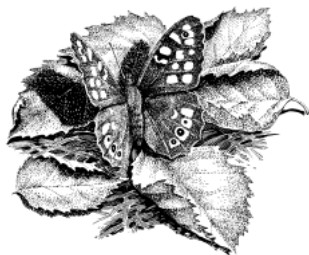
recycling, pollution.

**Wildlife** – Do you have any old flower rich meadows, interesting birds or flowers? We can help you survey them and give advice on

protecting them.

**History** - Looking at features in the landscape such as ancient woodlands or “ridge and furrow” earthworks and learning about local history from maps, books and photographs.

**Open space** – Providing new areas or improving existing areas by hedgelaying or putting in a bench and making space available to everyone.



speckled wood

**Rights of way** – Investigating your local network. Do you know what you have and who can use it? We can give advice on putting in gates, clearing paths, developing leaflets or even redesigning the network to meet modern day needs.

**Landscape** – What are your views like? Would you like to improve on them? Are there views you would like to get rid of? Do you have ancient hedges or need to replace ones that have been lost?

Please contact one of the following for help in your area.

**For parishes along the Greensand Ridge**

Greensand Trust  
The Forest Office  
Haynes West End  
Bedfordshire  
MK45 3QT ☎ 01234 743666

**For parishes to the North and East**

Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project  
The Smithy  
Old Warden  
Biggleswade  
SG18 9HQ ☎ 01767 626326

**For parishes to the South and Luton**

North Chilterns Trust  
Three Valleys Water  
Crescent Road  
Luton  
LU2 0AD ☎ 01582 412225

**For parishes in the Marston Vale**

Forest of Marston Vale  
The Forest Centre  
Marston Vale Millennium Country Park  
Station Road  
Marston  
Bedfordshire  
MK43 0PR ☎ 01234 762608

*(Supported by Bedfordshire County Council - Parish Paths Partnership (P3) Scheme)*

## Forthcoming events...

**Heathland Forum** - The heathland and acid grassland habitat action plan group are holding their annual event on **Friday 15th October 2004**.

The day will include an indoor session followed by site visits.

If you would like more information, or would like to attend and are not already on the mailing list, please contact Phil Irving, The Greensand Trust

☎ 01525 237760

**What future rural Bedfordshire? -**

Bedfordshire Rural Affairs Forum (BRAf), a county-wide forum set up to champion rural interests in the county is holding a **free** one day conference on **5th October 2004** at Shuttleworth College. This **first** county

conference by BRAf is an opportunity for **you** to:

\* debate the key challenges facing rural

Bedfordshire

\* learn more about BRAf and help shape its

future work plans

\* influence the rural policy agenda in

Bedfordshire

\* meet rural grant funders and service providers.

The event will be of interest to parish councils, community groups, local authorities and the voluntary sector, service providers, businesses and individuals who want to see rural Bedfordshire prosper.

For more information, please contact Jane Markham, BRAf Co-ordinator on ☎ 01525 878149 or email

[janem@bedsrcc.org.uk](mailto:janem@bedsrcc.org.uk)

**News in brief...**

**Wavendon Heath South** - CPRE have been involved in the campaign to save Wavendon Heath South from destruction caused by open cast mining for fullers' earth. A decision by the High Court in 2003 finally rejected the mining company's appeal to be allowed to proceed with this proposal, which would have damaged the beautiful hillside between Woburn and Woburn Sands.

Ann Collett-White and Alice Crampin (CPRE Bedfordshire 08/04)

Please contact Michelle Edwards (Editor) at the address overleaf if you have any articles or events you would like included in future editions.

**Copy deadlines: 1st March and 1st September each year.**

This newsletter is also available by email. Please contact us if you would prefer to receive it in a digital format.



Action for Biodiversity

**Beds BioNews is produced in March and September each year by Bedfordshire & Luton Wildlife**

**Working Group. It aims to keep people up to date with progress on the biodiversity action plan and local record centre.**

*Pictures courtesy of English Nature*