

# Beds BioNews



## Another new face in the BAP community

On June 26 Becky Ward took up her position as Bedfordshire's new FWAG Officer, and will be working with Matthew O'Brien. Becky is working three days per week for the time being, based out of both her home and County Hall. She has hit the ground running and will no doubt be out to see some of you very soon!

## Another critter makes its Bedfordshire debut

First it was the spider-hunting wasp. Now a rather less macabre creature appears to be making its home here. A probable breeding colony of the Downy emerald dragonfly *Cordulia aenea* has been discovered in a local sandpit.

The Downy emerald is one of three emerald dragonflies found in Britain. Adults have a metallic green body with a copper sheen, and apple green eyes. It is easily confused with other British emeralds. Its distribution in Britain and on the continent is large but scattered. It tends to be widespread in areas of suitable habitat. The British Dragonfly Society (BDS) reports that the Downy emerald's East Anglian distribution is likely declining, making this discovery all the more significant. For more information on this species, check out the BDS website at [www.dragonflysoc.org.uk](http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk).

## Taking a close look at priority habitats

BedsLife has recently received funding for surveys of two priority BAP habitats. A successful bid to Defra is funding a detailed survey of the hedgerows of Studham parish. This area is home to the county's largest population of dormouse, a national priority species. The study will assess the quality of the area's hedgerows and will identify locations for restoration to provide dormouse habitat. Pending additional funding, next year should see us expanding the survey into Whipsnade and Kemsworth parishes. Becky Ward, our new FWAG Officer, is organising the survey and will be looking for volunteers. Training will be provided so if you are interested in helping out please contact her at 01234 228826 or [becky.ward@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:becky.ward@bedscc.gov.uk).



Hedgerows in Studham parish will be surveyed this summer, in part for their suitability as dormouse habitat. Photo © English Nature.

Following up on a Masters Degree project, BedsLife will be conducting a survey of Bedfordshire and Luton's chalk springs. A grant from the Environment Agency will allow us to find, map and assess their condition. Chalk rivers are a national priority habitat. Bedfordshire's chalk rivers are few and short, and we know very little about them. This survey will allow us to evaluate the quality and risks to our chalk streams, and what we need to do to protect or restore them.



## Report from Brussels: Europe Green Week May 30-June 2

I'm recently back from the Europe Green Week conference in Brussels, which I attended with my counterparts from Cambridgeshire and Essex. It was truly an amazing week and the three of us all returned with lots of ideas, enthusiasm and determination to return next year. Oh, and bellies full of chocolate too!

Biodiversity was the theme of this year's conference, and "biodiversity is life" was its motto. Held at the European Commission the conference included 22 sessions, 3 floors of exhibits, evening activities and a superb gallery of biodiversity-themed drawings by European school children. The many esteemed speakers included Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment, Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organisation, Dr. Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdaya, a movement for biodiversity conservation and farmers' rights, and Vaclav Havel, writer and last president of



Delegates at the opening session of Europe Green Week 2006. Photo by Heather Webb

Czechoslovakia and first president of the Czech Republic. The exhibit halls were a gold mine of information on everything from biodiversity mapping in Andalucia, to organic and heritage produce, to a Belgian online animated biodiversity game for children. Over 4,000 people attended the event.

It was great to see some of our BAP partner organisations there too, in particular English Nature, Defra and the Environment Agency. Next year's Europe Green Week theme has not been determined yet, but whatever it is I heartily urge you to go. Perhaps we'll see you there!

## Plant invaders – are they in your neighbourhood?

Help Plantlife this summer by looking out for three of the UK's most destructive plant invaders! Your support will help us understand the extent to which our countryside and gardens are under threat.

Imported plants can be fast growing and can quickly become invasive in the countryside. They can damage natural habitats, out-competing native plants and blocking up ponds and rivers. Most problem species have escaped from gardens and some are still sold in garden centres. Controlling and eradicating them is hard work and can cost millions of pounds.





Plantlife's Plant Invaders Survey asks you to look out for three of the UK's most invasive plants:

- Japanese knotweed
- Indian balsam
- New Zealand pygmyweed.

Plantlife is keen to know what kind of habitat has been invaded (e.g., woodland) as well as the approximate number of plants.

Please visit Plantlife's website for more information about the survey and the problems of invasive plants: [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk). If you would like to receive a postcard to complete, please contact Katherine Stewart at 01722 342755 or [katherinestewart@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:katherinestewart@plantlife.org.uk).

## Nature nuggets

**Congratulations to the Community Tree Trust**, runners-up for Flora Locale's Go Native! Planting for Biodiversity awards. The John Niles Memorial Woodland, located next to Marston Thrift, was runner-up in the New Native Woodland award category.

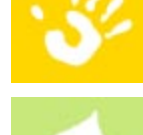
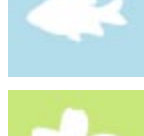
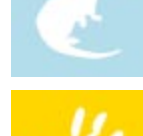
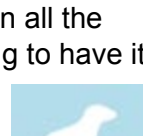
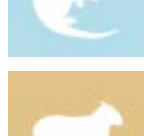
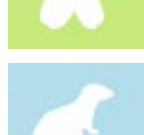
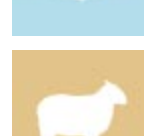
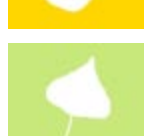
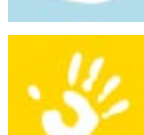
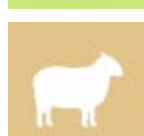
And **congratulations to the Bedfordshire Natural History Society**, who held their big Diamond Anniversary event on June 10 at the Marston Vale Millennium Country Park! Check out their website for more diamond celebration events running this year.

**Biggleswade has some new wetland habitat.** A lagoon near the Stratton Business Park has been specially designated by the county. The 6 ha site will provide flood protection for the area, and habitat for wildlife. This is a great example of integrating biodiversity into engineering structures. For more information check out the press release on the county website: [www.bedscc.gov.uk](http://www.bedscc.gov.uk).

**Many thanks to the Forest of Marston Vale** for their excellent job hosting the BBC's Eastern Region Springwatch event on June 3. Over 7,000 people came through the gates to enjoy the sunshine and the many activities.

After a mention in RSPB's *Conservation Planner* newsletter, **requests are coming in for copies of "Rebuilding Biodiversity"**. Prepared by BedsLife and the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre, this strategic document outlines the opportunities throughout the county for biodiversity conservation and enhancement. News of our good work is spreading!

A **new BedsLife website** is on its way! Work has begun on a new site that we'll be able to update much more easily than the old one, so we can keep you informed on all the goings-on. The site will have a new look and some new features. We're hoping to have it ready for the new school year so stay tuned!





## New publications

*Making contracts work for wildlife: how to encourage biodiversity in urban parks.* Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [CABE]. Available at [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk).

*The UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Highlights from the 2005 reporting round.* UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Available at [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk).

## Upcoming events

July 5: The next **Beds & Luton Biodiversity Partnership meeting** will be held on Wednesday July 5 at 2:30 pm at the Wildlife Trust offices at Priory Country Park, Bedford.

Aug. 8-10, “**Changing Landscapes**”, the **9<sup>th</sup> National Heathland Conference** at King’s College, University of Aberdeen. RSVPs were requested by May 25 however if you are still interested in attending try contacting Mrs. Helen Forster at 0131 4462420 or [heathland.conference@snh.gov.uk](mailto:heathland.conference@snh.gov.uk).

Aug. 18-20: **British Birdwatching Fair**, Rutland Water, Oakham, Rutland. Come out and see artist Ptolemy Elrington’s amazing shopping trolley sculptures of East Anglia’s river creatures. For more information call 01572 771079 or [www.birdfair.org.uk](http://www.birdfair.org.uk).

Aug. 22 and 23: Pond Conservation is holding a **pond survey training course** at Oxford Brookes University in Oxford. The cost for each one-day course is £200 for government/statutory bodies and £50 for charities and volunteers. Contact Olive Gearing at 01865 483249 (afternoons only) or [info@pondconservation.org.uk](mailto:info@pondconservation.org.uk) for more information.

Sept. 14-15: The **6<sup>th</sup> national seminar on common land and town and village greens** will be held at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham. The seminar flyer and booking form are available at [www.glos.ac.uk/faculties/ccru/seminars/cl-2006.cfm](http://www.glos.ac.uk/faculties/ccru/seminars/cl-2006.cfm).

Sept. 19-20: The British Ecological Society is hosting **Scrub – The Cinderella Habitat?**, at Reading University. For more information contact Nicki Read at [nicki.read@bto.org](mailto:nicki.read@bto.org) or John Hopkins at [john.hopkins@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:john.hopkins@english-nature.org.uk).

Nov. 18: The Suffolk Bat Group will be hosting the **East Anglian Region Bat Conference** at the Needham Market Community Centre. Places must be booked in advance and the cost of £10 includes lunch. The flyer/booking form can be obtained from Mary Norden, Suffolk Biodiversity Coordinator, at [mary.norden@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:mary.norden@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk).



Have you got some news you’d like to crow about?  
Email Heather at [heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk) to get  
your titbits in the next Beds BioNews!

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership  
County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Room 550  
Bedford MK42 9AP  
(01234) 228063  
[www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)