



Beds BioNews



BedsLife
Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership

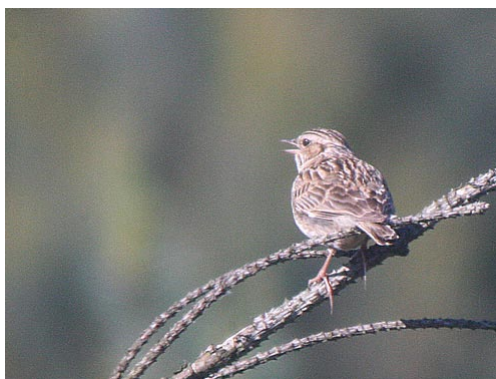


New paths and new wildlife at RSPB headquarters

Peter Bradley, RSPB

After just two years of restoration at The Lodge nature reserve, the first visitor trails through the new heath are open, and the first heathland birds have returned to use the site after an absence of more than a decade.

A nightjar on the old heath at The Lodge is the first to churr on site for 12 years. Although the reserve's new heathland is at an early stage of development, a churring nightjar is a good sign, and follows the discovery of a woodlark on 11 April. Over the next weeks, fencing work is extending grazing across the new heath on Sandy Warren, so that Minsmere's Manx Loghtan sheep can begin chewing through unwanted bramble and birch seedlings.



Woodlark, *Lullula arborea*. Photo by Alastair Rae

Introducing ADER



Agricultural Development in the Eastern Region is a European Socially funded project administered by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA). As its name suggests, it aims to support farming and other rurally based businesses by informing them of events; sign posting them to partner organisations; provide

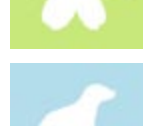
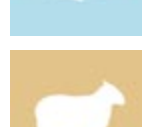
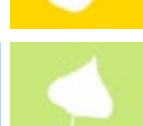
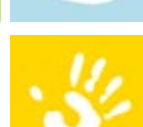
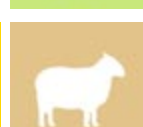
training courses and give 1:1 visits to discuss their business etc. Anthony Goggin is the County Officer for Bedfordshire and he is based at Shuttleworth College near Biggleswade.

Anthony joined the ADER team in April 2005 and he is pleased to be back in the farming environment. He has a broad experience ranging from practical agriculture, voluntary work overseas, MAFF administration, educating children on a city farm and primary school teaching. He gained his HND in agriculture at Seale Hayne College. He is married to Sarah and they have 3 children who keep them both young at heart.

New list of priority species and habitats finally released

After months of anticipation and a huge amount of work by many people the updated list of priority habitats and species in the UK is now ready and can be viewed on the UK BAP website (www.ukbap.org.uk).

New additions to the list of habitats include traditional orchards and ponds. The scope of some plans, including hedgerows and wood-pasture and parkland, has been expanded. But perhaps the most incredible news is that the new list of priority species stands at a whopping 1149, almost doubling the current 577. Of the 1149, 124 require only research and monitoring, 496 require actions at the habitat level, and 403 require actions specific to the species or a number of named sites. Most of the current species have made the new list, however 123 have been dropped for a variety of reasons, all of which are explained in the report.





We are still going through the new list to determine which species make their home in Bedfordshire and Luton. We'll be sure to keep you updated!

Report from Europe Green Week June 12-15

This year's Europe Green Week linked in with the festivities for the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, by looking back on the past 50 years and planning for the future. "Past Lessons, Future Challenges" was once again held at EU headquarters in Brussels, and featured a wide range of excellent speakers, innovative displays and evening events.

Highlights from the conference included a talk and video presentation by Justin Rowlatt, the BBC's "Ethical Man", about the conflicts between living well and living green. Discussions on climate change included a transatlantic debate, with speakers in Washington DC brought in by videoconference. And delegates had the opportunity to discuss and critique various "future scenarios" regarding land use and biodiversity. As usual, the display hall was full, and included representatives from farming groups, urban renaissance projects and even an Irish company that makes environmentally-friendly computers.



Dr Gianparlo Sarno of the Servizio Sviluppo del Sistema Agroalimentare talks about the impacts of urban sprawl on farmland. Photo by Heather Webb

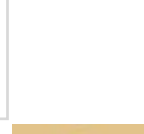
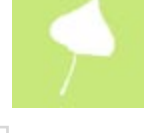
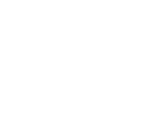
Nature Nuggets

BedsLife has just received a grant from Defra to survey the hedges of Maulden Parish. Besides surveying the hedges themselves, we'll be looking for signs of dormouse activity to find out if Maulden Wood's resident dormice are expanding their range. Maulden Wood is surrounded on all sides by roads. Roads are a major barrier to range expansion for many species. So the survey team will also be checking the roadside hedges for dormouse activity, to see if the little guys might use a dormouse "bridge" over one of the roads. The Peoples Trust for Endangered Species is currently looking into the feasibility of dormouse bridges, so we'll be working and sharing the survey results with them.



Wild radish, *Raphanus raphanistrum*, one of our more common arable plants. Photo by Carlos Franquinho

Thanks to the initiative of County Ecologist John Comont, and the enthusiasm of Keith Balmer of the Beds and Luton record centre, we now know that Bedfordshire is home to approximately 16 nationally important arable plant areas. Using a methodology devised by Plantlife International and the plant records held by the Centre, Keith has calculated where these important reservoirs of farmland biodiversity are located. We're hoping to do much more detailed research in the near future, to identify precisely where these special sites are. But for now the results of our preliminary research are





being completed and will be posted on the BedsLife website during the week of June 25. Many thanks to Keith for his hard work!

We now have a detailed map of where the county's opportunities for calcareous grassland creation and restoration are located. Sponsored by the Chilterns Conservation Board, this important piece of work will be the foundation of our new calcareous grassland habitat action plan. Lowland calcareous grasslands are a rare and important habitat that supports a wide range of plant and animal species. Here in Bedfordshire we have a belt of shallow chalky soils around Luton and Dunstable, perfect for calcareous grassland species. As usual, our record centre staff were at the heart of this project, advised by our knowledgeable local chalk grassland managers.

The BedsLife partnership is in the throes of habitat action planning. We expect that several updated habitat action plans will soon be completed. Wet woodland and calcareous grassland will likely be first, followed by fens, reedbeds and lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Watch this space for more information!

New publications

A new guide has just been published on how climate change considerations can be incorporated into biodiversity conservation action. It can be downloaded from www.ukbap.org.uk/Library/BRIG/CBCCGuidance.pdf.

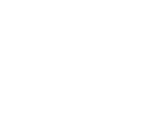
Upcoming events

Jul 25: The University of Birmingham is hosting a one day seminar: **Actions to Combat Climate Change & Benefit Biodiversity in an Urban Environment**. The event will explore the challenges that climate change is likely to pose for biodiversity in urban settings and the benefits that green roofs have in mitigating these effects for both people and wildlife. The registration form can be downloaded from the BedsLife website: click on "news and events".

Jul 25: The Forestry Commission and Natural England are co-hosting **Understanding Short Rotation Coppice** at the Drax Power Station in North Yorkshire. The event will provide an opportunity to tour the biomass part of the power station, to show the processes that are involved. For more information or to book your spot, please contact Juliette Hovells on 0113 2303778 or juliette.hovells@naturalengland.org.uk.

Jul 27-29: The Mid-Derbyshire Badger Group will be hosting the **2007 Badger Trust Annual Conference** in Swanwick, Derbyshire. The registration deadline has passed, but if you're interested in attending, try contacting Dorothy Evans on 07759 924259 or derbyshireconference@tiscali.co.uk.

Sept 3-6: **Monitoring the Effectiveness of Nature Conservation** will take place in Birmensdorf, Switzerland. This conference provides an opportunity to critically assess the achievements of nature protection in general and the scientific methods that are currently used internationally. Details are available at www.wsl.ch/event_07/monitoring/.



Sept 5-7: The **Sixth International Conference on Ecosystems and Sustainable Development (ECOSUD 2007)** will be held in Coimbra, Portugal. Biodiversity is among the many topics being covered in this event, which will aim to facilitate communication among scientists and other professionals working in ecosystems and sustainable development. For more information please visit www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2007/eco07/index.html.

Sept 17-19: The Biodiversity and Landscape History Research Institute, in association with IUFRO and Sheffield Hallam University, is hosting **The History, Ecology and Archaeology of Medieval Parks and Parklands**. This cross-disciplinary meeting will appeal to historians, archaeologists, ecologists and conservationists. For more information contact Diane Harrison on 0114 272 4227 or info@hallamec.plus.com

Sept 18-20: The next **UK LBAP conference** will be held at the University of Exeter. The programme is still being finalised but will include a range of topics including farmland habitat action planning, and communicating biodiversity. Details will be available on the BedsLife website as they become available.

Oct 26-27: Wildscreen and Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year are hosting **WildPhotos, an event exploring the power of nature photography**. The event will take place at the Royal Geographic Society in Kensington, London, and is for anyone with an interest in nature photography. For more information or to register, visit www.wildphotos.org.uk.

The third national **Great Stag Hunt** is now online at www.greatstaghunt.org. The Peoples Trust for Endangered Species asks that you please log on if you see any stag beetles, and record the details of your sightings. If you would like a copy of the survey form sent to you in the post, just email stagbeetle@ptes.org.



Stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*. Photo by Erica Bower

Have you got an announcement or event to tell us about? Don't keep it to yourself; put it in the next issue of Beds BioNews! Just contact Heather Webb at heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk.



Grant Neufeld