



# Beds BioNews



**BedsLife**  
Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership



## A busy field season comes to a close

Summer 2007 found many BedsLife partners and volunteers out in the field. In spite of the foot and mouth and other scares Bedfordshire's landowners graciously allowed us onto their land. Here are some highlights from a very busy season:



Well Head, Eaton Bray, site of several calcareous springs. Photo by Heather Webb

Headwaters and chalk rivers are national priority habitats, and chalk springs fit into both of these categories. The **BEDSprings Project** had a look at the springs located on the chalk soils of South Bedfordshire, to see if ours are typical chalk springs. What we found is that our chalky springs do share some similarities with typical chalk springs found in places like Lincolnshire and Oxfordshire. However Bedfordshire's springs are missing some key chalk stream species and the water pH is too low. Reasons for this are not clear, but it may be that the groundwater is more influenced by the Lower Greensand and Gault geology than by Chalk.

While our calcareous springs are not typical chalk springs, they are still ecologically important. Our springs reflect a more transitional ecology, between the chalk grasslands in the south and the acid grasslands of the Greensand Ridge.

The **2007 Survey of the Ponds of Bedfordshire** was a continuation of work begun by the County Council in the 1970s. Ponds are a new national priority habitat. The first Bedfordshire pond survey took place in 1976, and another one followed in 1991. The new survey provides us with an updated picture of how our county's ponds are faring. The project consisted of a field survey of ponds in 33 1-km sample squares, followed by detailed surveys of several individual ponds.



Harlington Village Pond. Photo by Heather Webb

Overall, ponds in Bedfordshire have been disappearing. The highest rate of loss was between 1902 and the 1976 survey. Since then the trend has slowed: ponds are still disappearing but are being replaced by new ones. But while the overall number of ponds is now more or less stable, there are concerns that the new ponds are not as good in quality as those that have been lost. We did find one notable exception to this trend, however. The village pond in Harlington is in great shape. Well done to the village for maintaining a great little bit of local habitat!

Once again we conducted a **parish hedgerow survey**, this time in **Maulden**. The Bedfordshire Natural History Society had done a similar survey in the mid-1970s, and analysed the species richness of hedgerows on the Lower Greensand and Boulder Clay. This year's survey included another look to see how hedgerow species composition had changed in the last 30 years. And as with last year's survey in Studham, we looked at local habitat connectivity for the local hazel dormouse population.

Now that the results are in, it appears that the species richness of Maulden's hedgerows has decreased. Common, "weedy" species like blackthorn and





elder have spread, while climbers like dog rose and white bryony were much less common. Field maple and elm were also less common than before. It may be that not only have the hedgerows become less species-rich, but that they are becoming more homogenised as well. On a good note, there was some evidence of dormouse activity in one of the hedgerows. This may mean that the population introduced into the wood in 2001 is starting to spread.

Reports from these projects are online at [www.bedslife.org.uk](http://www.bedslife.org.uk). Many thanks to the Environment Agency for sponsoring BEDSprings and the pond survey, and to Defra for sponsoring the Maulden hedgerow survey!

### It's now easier being green!

Jules Howard, Froglife

Froglife is introducing 'Frogbites', free email bulletins from Froglife, aimed at providing up-to-the-minute information on upcoming events, updates on Froglife's campaigns, along with further details on the part you can play in helping conserve the UK's amphibians and reptiles.

Signing up takes less than twenty seconds - visit:

[www.froglife.org/sign\\_up.htm](http://www.froglife.org/sign_up.htm).



Common frog, *Rana temporaria*.  
Photo by Ian S

Frogbite subscribers will also be first to hear more details about Froglife's upcoming 'Life in Cold Blood' event on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008. Undertaken jointly with the BBC, this fascinating talk – taking place at University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge – will feature producers from the show, alongside speakers from Froglife, the Institute of Zoology and others – interested? Sign-up: [www.froglife.org/sign\\_up.htm](http://www.froglife.org/sign_up.htm).

In the meantime, if you have further questions about any aspect of Froglife's work please feel free to get in touch, alternatively visit [www.froglife.org](http://www.froglife.org).

### More comings and goings

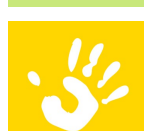
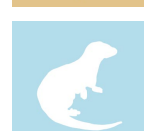
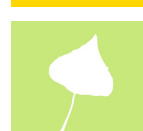
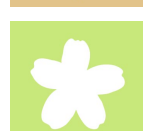
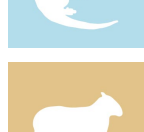
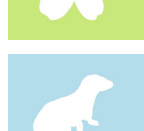
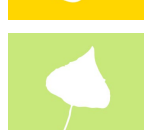
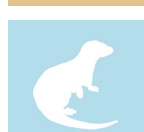
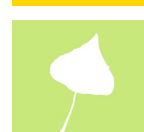
It's with great sadness that BedsLife says farewell to Chantal Hagen, our long-time Natural England rep and general buddy. While Chan is staying with NE she's heading back up north and will be based in York. Justin Tilley will be taking over Chantal's work. This is great news: Justin will be familiar to many of you so we can rest assured we'll be in good hands! Best of luck, Chantal, we'll miss you!

We'd also like to welcome Janet Nuttall as our new policy contact for Natural England. Janet is taking over for Stella Baylis, who is now working with NE's Cambridgeshire team.

Finally, we say another goodbye to Nick Hall from Bedford Borough Council. Nick is moving on to new challenges but is leaving us in the capable hands of Simon Fisher. Have fun in the new job Nick!

### Nature Nuggets

Congratulations to the **Forest of Marston Vale** on winning an award of £67,712 in the Big Lottery Fund "People's Millions" contest! The money will be used to plant over 23,000 more trees at Shocott Spring. FMV are still looking





for volunteers to come help with the planting on February 10. For more information visit their website: [www.marstonvale.org](http://www.marstonvale.org).

We are sad to report that **ADER – Agricultural Development in Eastern Region** – came to a close at the end of 2007 when funding was not renewed by EEDA. The project helped and supported many farming and rural businesses across the region during its seven years. Bedfordshire's ADER rep Anthony Goggin has moved on to become the part-time facilitator for the Hertfordshire Year of Food and Farming until March of this year.

Are you mad about bugs? Authors Peter Marren and Richard Mabey are looking for stories, sayings, songs and even recipes about bugs and bug life for the upcoming publication **Bugs Britannica**. This is a great opportunity to contribute to an original book about our relationship with invertebrates. Full details are available on the project website at [www.randomhouse.co.uk/bugsbritannica/](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/bugsbritannica/).

Natural England's '**Access to Nature**' grant scheme will be launched this spring. The programme is part of the Big Lottery Fund's £25 million Changing Spaces programme. The focus of the scheme will be on creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds to have greater access to the natural environment. Grants between £50K and £500K will be awarded. For more information stay tuned to [www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/grants-funding/default.htm](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/grants-funding/default.htm).

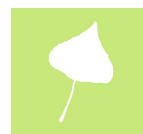
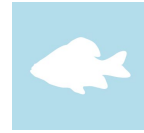
While we're on the subject of funding, **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation** is changing their funding guidelines as of January 2008. This will be an open, less prescriptive way of working, through which they will listen to your ideas. They hope to fund a wider range of work than before, so there is no need to rush applications through under existing guidelines. Alongside this new approach, they will also run a small number of more focused funding strands. In preparation for this new approach their current Application Guidelines are no longer available. To view the new guidelines visit their website [www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk).

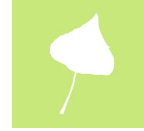
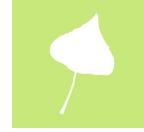
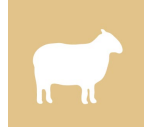
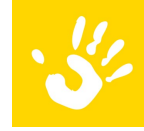
We've got a few copies left of the **Biodiversity Inspirations 2008 calendar**. The calendar was put together by the East of England Biodiversity Forum. Designed for parish councils, it highlights 12 parish projects that are benefiting biodiversity in our region. Steppingley, Stanbridge and Tilsworth are the Bedfordshire parishes featured. If you'd like a copy of the calendar, please contact Heather at [heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:heather.webb@bedscc.gov.uk).

**Correction:** the email address for Diane Budd at **Business Link East** is [d.budd@businesslinkeast.org.uk](mailto:d.budd@businesslinkeast.org.uk). Please disregard the email address published in the Autumn 07 Beds BioNews.

### Upcoming events

Jan 16: Natural England, the Environment Agency and partners are hosting an expo for farmers and land managers who want to find out how to save money and help the environment. **The Heat is On: Practical Solutions for Land Managers in Dealing With Climate Change** will take place at Rowley Conference Centre, Newmarket. Learn how creating clean energy, reducing the farm's carbon footprint and reducing water use can financially benefit land managers. Event details are available at [www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east/theheatison.htm](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east/theheatison.htm).





Jan 25: The next **Chiltern Woodland Conference** will be held at St Katherine's, Parnoor, Frieth, Bucks. The Theme is "Chiltern Beechwoods in a Changing World". Tickets are £25 and include lunch. To book your spot contact John Morris at [woodlands@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:woodlands@chilternsaonb.org).

Feb 5: Butterfly Conservation is hosting **Brownfields for Butterflies and Business** at the NFU Mutual Buildings in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Brownfield wildlife can coexist with industry and regeneration: this conference will show how with examples from some of the UK's biggest managers, developers and users of brownfield land. To book a place or for more information visit the brownfield conference link at [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org).

Mar 6: Sheffield Wildlife Trust and Harper Adams University College are hosting **Fundraising for Environmental Projects**, a one-day event being held at Victoria Methodist Church, Stafford Road, Sheffield. For more information contact the Sheffield Wildlife Trust Training Team on 0114 2634335 or [training@wildsheffield.com](mailto:training@wildsheffield.com).

Apr 2-3: The VINE Project is holding its first conference at Lancaster University. **Inspirational Nature - Harnessing Passion, Inspiration and Creativity for Nature Conservation** is designed for nature conservation practitioners, managers and volunteers and will focus on improving our ability to communicate with others about nature. For further details please contact Sophie Lake at [sophie@vineproject.org](mailto:sophie@vineproject.org) or 01929 558159. Or check out the website: [www.vineproject.org](http://www.vineproject.org).

Jun 8-13 (tentative dates!): Following from their successful trip to Holland two years ago to look at shepherded grazing, the Grazing Animals Project is organising a **grazing study tour to Poland**. Delegates will have to organise their own travel but once there, all accommodation, meals and fees will be included in the cost of the event. To register your interest please contact [enquiries@grazinganimalsproject.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@grazinganimalsproject.org.uk).

October 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](http://www.iucn.org/congress).



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