

## Bee Friendly Monmouthshire: Winter Newsletter: January 2017

Welcome to the winter edition of the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire newsletter. Here is a brief update on all our events, activities and meetings over the past six months and our plans for the spring and summer 2017.

### Events, activities and meetings July – December 2016

**April – July: National Garden Scheme Gardens (NGS):** This year BfM held stalls at more gardens and more than doubled the amount of money raised for NGS. Altogether our support amounted to £370. The pollinator-friendly message is certainly spreading, helped perhaps by the advertisement for BfM placed in the Gwent NGS booklet, and the fine summer weather swelled the numbers of visitors. These magnificent gardens just get better and better every year, on aesthetic grounds as well as from the pollinators' point of view. The flower beds were just buzzing with pollinating insects of all kinds.

**July 29<sup>th</sup> – August 6<sup>th</sup>: Eisteddfod, Abergavenny.** Our pollinator-friendly planters at the main entrance looked fabulous and were a magnet for visitors and insects alike. Hundreds of bi-lingual BfM leaflets were distributed and MCC did a roaring trade selling our Monmouthshire Mix seeds in the MCC pavilion. Seed sales raised £278 for BfM. It was a wonderful opportunity to showcase our work. [See a full report plus photos on our website.](#)



**August 2<sup>nd</sup>: Presentation to Bwlch Gardening Group (near Crickhowell).** Sue Harrison and Roger Ruston did a "double act" for the gardening group so they got two talks for the price of one. Roger concentrated on solitary bees and Sue focused on honey bees and bumblebees. They tried very hard to persuade the group to give up Begonias and switch to more pollinator-friendly planting.

**August 11<sup>th</sup>: BfM Steering Group meeting**

**August 13<sup>th</sup>: Chepstow Show:** Once again this year our stand proved very popular and visitor numbers were up. BfM shared a marquee with other local environmental groups. The competition for Best Pollinator planter arranged by Transition Chepstow was well supported with some colourful entries.

**September 7<sup>th</sup>: Welsh Government Caru Gwenyn/ Bee Friendly Scheme:**

Launch of this new Welsh Government pollinator-friendly initiative at the Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference at Bangor University. Part of the Wales Action Plan for Pollinators. Community groups, schools, organisations, even whole towns etc are invited to apply for official Caru Gwenyn recognition, and eventually accreditation, for taking action to protect and support pollinators. The scheme has been based on the bee-friendly criteria established by BfM for Monmouthshire.

**Bee Champions** have been identified to act as advisors and assessors. Bee Friendly Monmouthshire members have been nominated as Bee Champions. This is an ambitious project and we will pass on more information as it becomes available. In the meantime you can find out more from the Wales Biodiversity Partnership website. <http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Action-Plan-for-Pollinators>

Look under Caru Gwenyn.

The minutes of the Wales Pollinators Taskforce meetings can also be found on this webpage.

**September 10<sup>th</sup>: Usk Show:** BfM was invited to share a stand with Gwent Energy CIC. We had a mostly dry but somewhat chilly day, plenty of visitors to the stand and we recruited a number of new supporters.

**September: Re-siting of BfM Eisteddfod raised beds:** Our two raised beds from the BfM pollinator-friendly display at the Eisteddfod were moved to the Laurie Jones Community Orchard in Abergavenny and sown with our own Monmouthshire Mix wild flower seeds. In memory of our friend the late Laurie Jones who was one of the founding members of Bee Friendly Monmouthshire and a tireless environmental campaigner.

**October: BfM Hedgerow Manifesto for Monmouthshire,** co-authored by Dr. Nicola Bradbear, Monica Barlow and Dr. Stephanie Tyler, was completed this month. Wye Valley AONB kindly donated £700 towards the publication costs of the document. Some MCC councillors are keen to support this manifesto which will be launched in the New Year. The manifesto stresses the immense value of Monmouthshire's hedges which provide vital shelter and food for a wide range of wildlife, including, of course, our pollinating insects. They are an intrinsic part of our countryside and provide green corridors to enable animals and insects to move around in an otherwise hostile environment.

In 2014, as a result of persuasive campaigning and initial drafting of the policy document by BfM, Monmouthshire County Council adopted a Pollinator Policy to care for insect pollinator populations. It is hoped that the best practice for the management of our hedgerows outlined in this manifesto will also be adopted in due course as an official policy by the County Council and put into practice by farmers, landowners and gardeners.

[The full document will be available shortly on our website.](#)

**October 7<sup>th</sup>: Gwent Best Kept Village Awards Ceremony, Chepstow Garden Centre.** 80 villages participated in this competition. They would like our support to become more pollinator-friendly. BfM handed out leaflets and sold seeds at this event. The organisers showed interest in widening the scope of the competition to include an award for the best pollinator displays next year.

**October 20<sup>th</sup>: BfM Steering Group meeting. Short presentation by Roger Ruston**

As a special treat Roger repeated the talk he gave to the Bwlch gardening group in August for the benefit of our members. Roger's gradual re-wilding of his garden in Monmouth has led to a significant increase in the number and variety of insects, especially solitary bees, found there. Roger's approach is to leave areas of his lawn un-mown, encouraging valuable "weeds" to grow. We all do our best to grow plants that benefit pollinators in our gardens but Roger's garden is especially pollinator-friendly. Beneficial flowers Roger grows include dandelions; spear thistle (up to 6ft – biennial); ground elder; hedge woundwort (+ all woundworts including deadnettles); comfrey; white bryony; hemp agrimony; yarrow (+ varieties); musk mallow (local wild plant); and white clover (allow to grow in short grass in June)

**Check Roger's new Blog on** [www.monnowwildbees.org.uk](http://www.monnowwildbees.org.uk)

**Invaluable books on bees and plants of benefit for them used by many BfM members:**

Steven Falk: Field Guide to the Bees of Gt. Britain and Ireland

F.N.Howes: Plants for Bees (out of print but try Amazon)

W.D.J. Kirk & F.N. Howes: Plants for Bees (an updated version of the original above)

**October 27<sup>th</sup>: Talk by Professor Dave Goulson, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.** Five BfM members attended a talk entitled "Saving our Bumblebees" by Professor Dave Goulson arranged by the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and held at the Sixth Form College in Hereford. Informative, entertaining and inspiring.

**Professor Goulson's research project into the use of pesticides on garden centre plants:** There is as yet no progress to report on this project that we highlighted in our July 2016 newsletter. We will keep you posted about the results as soon as they become available.

**Recommended books by Dave Goulson:** “The Sting in the Tale (Yes, tale not tail!)” and “A Buzz in the Meadow.”

**October 30<sup>th</sup>: Apple Day: Drill Hall, Chepstow** BfM stall at this event. Very popular as always.

**November 6<sup>th</sup>: Usk in Bloom Awards Ceremony, Glen yr Afon Hotel, Usk.** Sue Harrison was invited to give an illustrated talk about the dangers facing our pollinating insects, the causes of their decline and the positive steps we can take to support them in our gardens and public green spaces. [For a summary of Sue’s talk see our website.](#) We hope the Usk in Bloom Committee will be persuaded to apply for accreditation as the first Bee Friendly Town in Wales in 2017. (See item on September 7<sup>th</sup> above) Apart from the value to the pollinators themselves a Bee Friendly Town award from the Welsh Government could not fail to impress the Wales in Bloom judges.

**December: BEES (Breeding, Environment, Education and Skills about bee-keeping)**

Alison Howard (MCC) brought us up to date about a local honeybee project called, appropriately BEES, funded by the RDP. A number of authorities are involved in this project, including Monmouthshire. The educational aspect of the project will involve school visits to beekeepers and their hives. The scope of the project may be expanded to support potential **Caru Gwenyn** initiatives locally.

## **Plans for Spring and Summer 2017**

**Talk to Usk Rotary Club:** Sue Harrison has been invited to give a talk on pollinators on behalf of BfM to the Usk Rotary Club on Tuesday April 11<sup>th</sup> at the Glen yr Afon Hotel in Usk. Title: “Pollinating insects – our part in their downfall and their recovery”.

**Launch of BfM Hedgerow Policy:** Date to be confirmed. BfM will be working with MCC with a view to implementing this policy throughout the county.

**Caru Gwenyn/Bee Friendly scheme:** BfM will continue to work with the Action Plan for Pollinators Task Force to promote this new Wales-wide scheme.

“**BEES**”: We hope to be able to give practical support to this project.

**Pesticides, Herbicides and fungicides:** We hope to produce information on this issue in 2017

**NGS Gardens:** BfM will continue to hold stalls at as many NGS open gardens as possible in 2017.

**Pollinator Day:** We hope to organise a public event in the summer together with other local environmental groups.

## **Bee Friendly Monmouthshire Steering Group**

If you would like to get more actively involved in the work of our organisation you would be very welcome to join us in our Steering Group meetings. We currently meet every other month. Please get in touch with me via the email address below if you would like to attend the next meeting [Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 2pm] and I will send you more details.

**Sue Harrison**

Secretary: Bee Friendly Monmouthshire

[schyouknowwho@talktalk.net](mailto:schyouknowwho@talktalk.net)

January 2