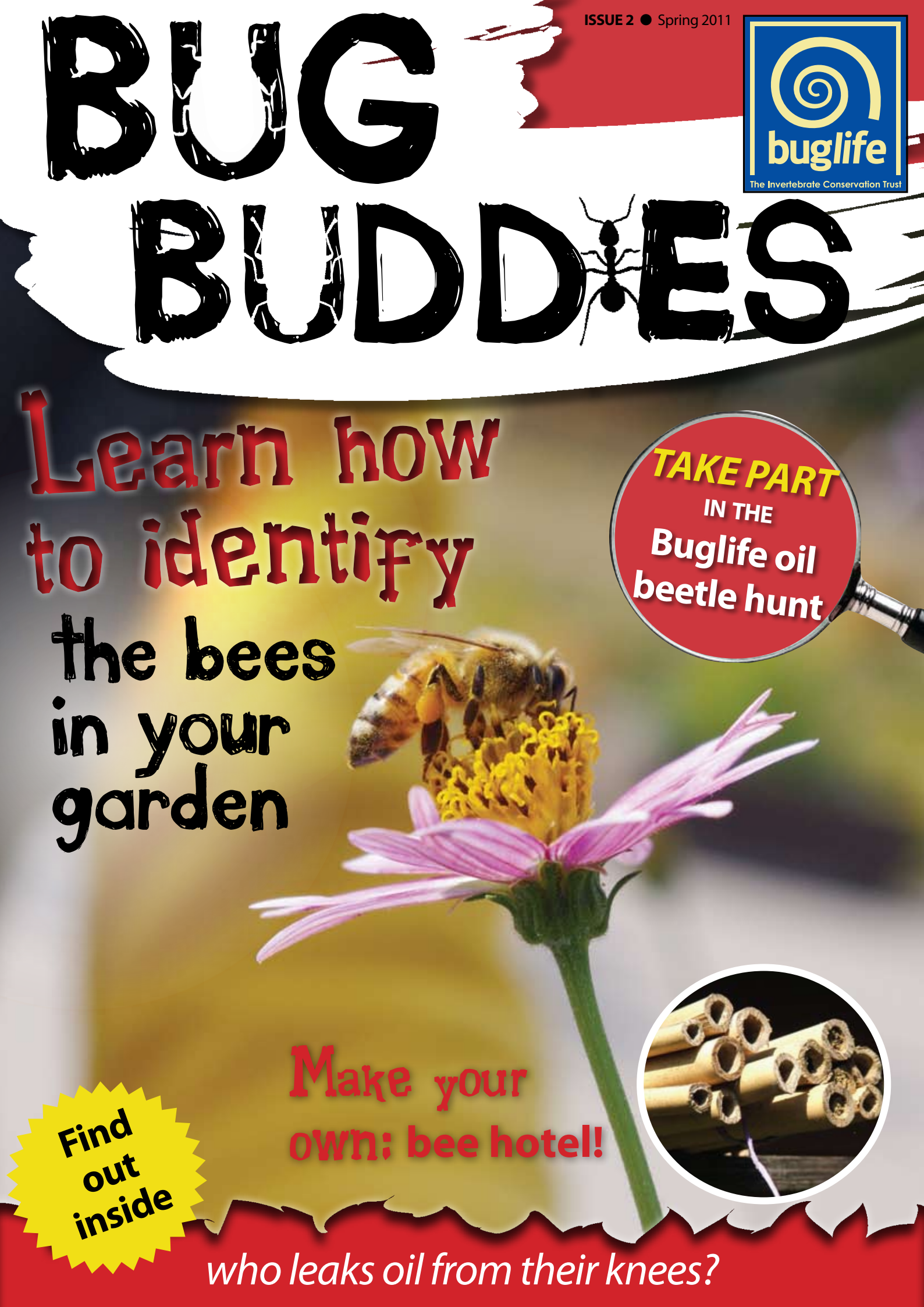
ISSUE 2 ● Spring 2011

BUG BUDDIES

buglife
The Invertebrate Conservation Trust

Learn how to identify the bees in your garden

TAKE PART IN THE Buglife oil beetle hunt



Make your own: bee hotel!

Find out inside

who leaks oil from their knees?

Contents

BUG WORD

Greetings fellow budding bug hunters!
In this edition of Bug Buddies you'll find out ways to attract exciting minibeasts into your own garden, and also learn about some of the most unusual and rare insects to be found in Britain. When you look up close at the tiny Scarlet malachite or Violet oil beetle, I think you'll agree they are every bit as glorious as any butterfly or bird. Maybe you'll be inspired to start taking your own photographs of the miniature world; it's quite a challenge, but I'm guessing you all love a challenge as much as I do...

STEVE BACKSHALL
Wildlife presenter and Buglife Vice President

A BIG THANK YOU

Buglife would like to thank Ernest Cook Trust and Ryklow Charitable Trust for their kind support towards Bug Buddies. A special thank you goes to our members and for their continued support.

Ryklow Charitable Trust

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BUG SPOTLIGHT

Scarlet malachite beetle

Scarlet malachite beetle *(Malachius aeneus)*

Scarlet malachite beetle *(Malachius aeneus)*

The Scarlet malachite beetle (*Malachius aeneus*) is about the size of your little fingernail (7 mm long). This beautiful green and red beetle only flies for three weeks each year in May and June and is found on flowers and tall grasses in meadows, overgrown hedgerows, village greens and road verges, often close to thatched cottages.

The beetle is found mainly in Essex, Cambridgeshire and Hampshire, although it was once found in counties across the south and east of England. The reason for its decline is unknown; however, it is thought to be caused by habitat loss and intensive farming.

We need your help to track it down, especially on new sites where it hasn't been seen before. For more information on this project visit www.buglife.org.uk

Rare-O-meter

COMMON → RARE

BUG MAKES

Make a bee hotel

Hollow tubes are perfect for nesting solitary bees. These bees, unlike honey bees or bumblebees, are solitary, which means they live alone. They use the empty holes as a nest site for their young. They lay their eggs in the holes and seal them with a clump of chewed mud or leaf. It is worthwhile encouraging these beautiful bees into your garden as they are brilliant at pollinating flowers.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Tubes – hollow plant stems or bamboo canes

Garden twine or string

Saw or Stanley knife to cut the canes

A nail or hook to attach the bee hotel to the shed with

HOW TO MAKE IT:

1. Prepare the tubes: ask an adult to help you cut the hollow tubes into 10-20cm long sections.
2. Tie a bundle of tubes together with garden twine or string.
3. Hang them up in a sunny but sheltered area of the garden at about five feet above the ground for example, on the side of a shed or on a trellis.
4. Observe and enjoy. In spring solitary bees may use the nest holes - it may take them a year to find it. Spiders and other minibeasts may use your hotel in the meantime.

Let us know how you get on by sending a photo of you and your bee hotel to: info@buglife.org.uk.

GET INVOLVED

Join the oil beetle hunt

Black oil beetle *(Meloe proscarabaeus)*

Oil beetles are incredible insects, but they are also under threat. Four of Britain's oil beetles are extinct, and the remaining four species have disappeared from large parts of our countryside. Oil beetles depend on solitary mining bees to complete their life-cycles. Unfortunately we have less wild flowers in the countryside than 100 years ago. Less flowers means fewer bees, and fewer bees means fewer oil beetles.

See if you can find a Black, Violet, Rugged or Short-necked oil beetle when you are out and about this spring. Visit our website www.buglife.org.uk for more oil beetle facts and fun, and to send us your oil beetle sightings and photographs.

Oil beetles have a special relationship with solitary mining bees. The beetle larva will jump onto the back of a bee when it lands on a flower and jump off in the bees' nest. The beetle larva eats the bees' eggs and later changes into an adult beetle.

A female oil beetle can lay up to a thousand eggs.

Violet oil beetle *(Meloe violaceus)*

Rugged oil beetle *(Meole rugosus)*

Short-necked oil beetle *(Meloe brevicollis)*

Violet oil beetle *(Meloe violaceus)*

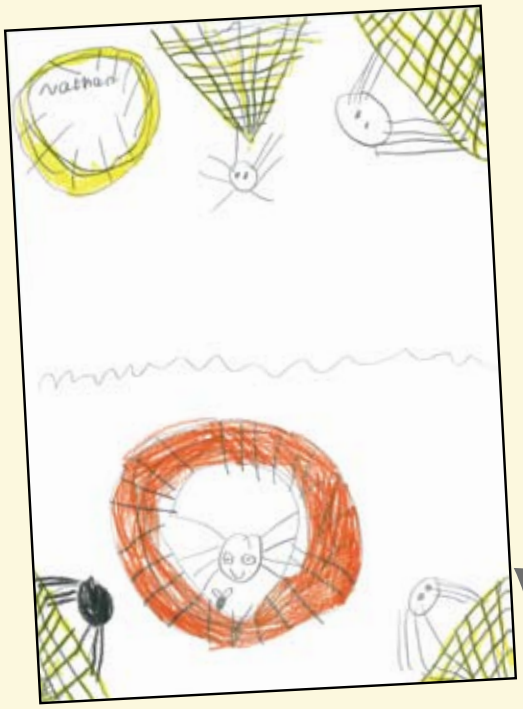
Oil beetles get their name from the oily liquid they leak out of their knee joints to ward off birds and other predators. This liquid can make your skin sore - make sure you wash your hands after handling oil beetles.

SNAIL MAIL BOX

Rafe, aged 5 said the spider was "very soft." And he enjoyed holding it. Buglife think Rafe is a star for showing people that you don't need to be scared of spiders!

'Rafe aged 5, from Weston Primary School, Harrogate - holding a tarantula'

Thank you to the children in year 2 from Hastings & St Leonards School for their letters about spiders. We especially liked Nathan's question:

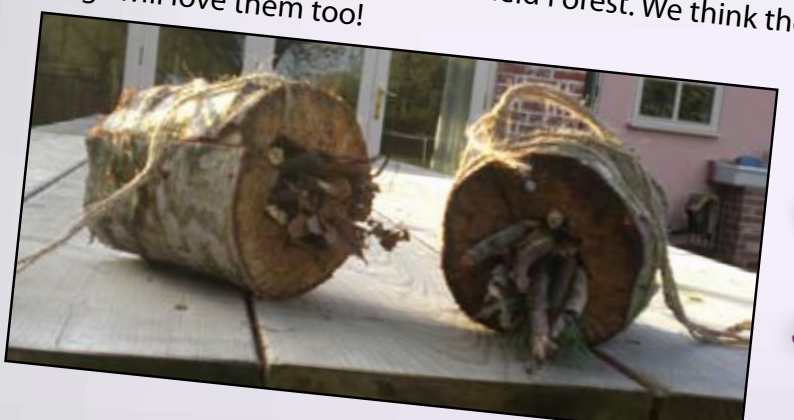


Q. WHY DO SPIDERS HAVE HAIR?

A. Spiders can have different types of hair; some is spiky and helps to protect the spider, some is soft and colourful and helps make up the pattern on the spider and some is long and thin and spiders can use this to sense the world around them.

Special snail mail

We love this photo of bug hotels made by Amanda and her kids in the school holidays at Hatfield Forest. We think the bugs will love them too!



BEGINNERS GUIDE TO BUGS

Bees in your garden

There are over 250 different species of bee in the British Isles, 28 of which can be commonly seen in your garden.

Red-tailed bumblebee

This bumblebee is easy to identify because it has a distinctive black body and a red tail. The queens hibernate in the winter. In spring, they look for a suitable underground nest site such as an old mouse nest.

Bombus lapidarius

Common carder bee

This bumblebee is common and you may see it in gardens and parks. It collects moss to make its nest above ground in long grass. This bumblebee has orange-brown hair with a smoky black stripe across its middle.

Bombus pascuorum

Tree bumblebee

Arriving from Europe in 2006, the tree bumblebee is spreading quickly through the country. It has a distinctive ginger body and black tail with a white tip.

Bombus hypnorum

Leaf cutter bees

This is a solitary bee which means that it does not live in a group. Check your rosebushes and other plant leaves for circle or half moon shaped holes made by this bee. They chew through a leaf to make a lining for a small cell where they lay a single egg. In this leaf- lined cell they leave a mixture of nectar and pollen for the young bee to feed on when it has hatched.

Megachile centuncularis

Hairy-footed flower bee

Although the female looks like a completely black bumblebee this is a solitary bee. It is known for its unusual behavior, moving extremely quickly darting from flower to flower unlike the slow, bumbling bumblebee. The golden brown males have hairy feet that help them attract a mate.

Anthophora plumipes

Tawny mining bee

This bee looks like a mini bumblebee but it is actually a mining bee. It has a bright ginger body and black, hairy legs. It burrows into bare ground or soft lawns in parks and gardens. Watch their burrow closely and you might see a cuckoo bee crawling into the burrow to lay her eggs.

Andrena fulva

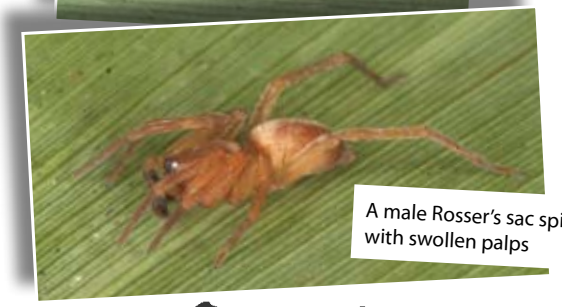
Buglife NEWS

This stunning photograph of a Blue leaf-beetle taken by 14 year old Adam Hawtin won the Young British Wildlife Photography Award back in 2010.

Buglife sponsors the 'Hidden Britain' category of the British Wildlife Photography Awards.

Are you a budding wildlife photographer? Would you like to win a prestigious award and have your photo showcased in an exhibition? Take part in the British Wildlife Photography Awards 2011. The competition is now open for entries and the closing date is 2 June 2011. There are also three special awards to encourage participation by young people, schools and youth community groups. Entrants will be able to submit entries on-line or via post. For more information on the competition and to get involved visit www.bwpawards.co.uk.

A female Rosser's sac spider with slim palps (the two bits at the front that look like little legs)



A male Rosser's sac spider with swollen palps

Found - the spider that was feared extinct

These are the first pictures ever taken of the Rosser's sac spider, an incredibly rare creature that some scientists feared was extinct in Britain. It's ten years since the elusive Rosser's sac spider was last seen. Now a colony has been discovered at Chippenham Fen, a nature reserve in Cambridgeshire. The Rosser's sac spider is particularly choosy about where it lives. It prefers wetland areas, the kind of habitat which has been largely destroyed by the draining of the fens and changing farming methods since the Second World War.

BUG BRAINERS

Can you work out what these bugs are?

A 

B 

C 

A - Woodlouse B - White-clawed crayfish C – Field grasshopper