



# Science Community Focus

## Little Things that Run the World

Television chat show presenter Jonathan Ross played host to mini beasts of all sorts when he launched National Insect Week 2014, at the Natural History Museum in June. Highlighting the theme of this year's events – 'Little Things That Run The World' - Jonathan said: "You might not think insects can be fun but they are! They're also hugely important and National Insect Week is a great way of improving everyone's knowledge about them and the role they play in habitats not just in the UK but across the world. I never knew there was so much to learn about insects!"



Up close and personal, Jonathan Ross with stag beetle at the launch of National Insect Week 2014.

Now in its sixth year, National Insect Week is organised by the Royal Entomological Society (RES) which partnered with the Natural History Museum – home to the largest collection of invertebrates in the world - to set off a chain of events across the UK during the week, from bug hunts and bioblitzes to minibeast safaris and moth nights. This year's launch event at the Natural History Museum also featured a 'Question Time' style panel of eminent entomologists – chaired by Jonathan Ross – who answered questions from the public about insect species and the role they play in different habitats.

National Insect Week coordinator Luke Tilley said: "We're delighted Jonathan could join us for the launch of Insect Week 2014 which has proved even more popular this year with more than 350 events being held right across the

UK. All of them will play a vital role in our campaign to inform and educate people of all ages about insects and how they really do run the world."



Blister Beetle (family Meloidae) - credit Wanyoike Wamiti

The launch event was attended by Year 4 pupils from Drayton Park, Highbury, as well as partners of National Insect Week who include the Natural History Museum, the National Trust, the RSPB, the Royal Horticultural Society, the Association of Science Education and the Environment Agency which provided the insects for the day.

A royal bioblitz was also staged in the grounds of Highgrove, the private residence of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, to celebrate National Insect Week 2014.

Schoolchildren from across the country joined a team of entomologists to take part in the invertebrate bioblitz, a snapshot of insect activity, in the organic Highgrove gardens. The Prince of Wales has previously taken part in a National Insect Week bioblitz at Clarence House in June 2012.

The schoolchildren were all winners in this year's Green Ambassador Awards run by the World Wildlife Fund and supported by HRH The Prince of Wales. The awards highlight the very best examples of where pupils have put environmental issues at the heart of their school.

The Royal Entomological Society's (RES) team of entomologists were on hand to help the pupils hunt for insects in the Highgrove gardens. RES Honorary Fellow Peter Smithers presented the schoolchildren with their Green Ambassador Awards.



Highgrove Bioblitz 27th June

The Highgrove bioblitz revealed comb-footed spiders, damsel bugs, froghoppers and 500 moths of different species caught overnight in a moth trap.

## Photographers: Capture the little things that run the world - with pics

Budding photographers are encouraged to put invertebrates under the lens and enter the National Insect Week (NIW) 2014 Photography Competition.



Anthony Cooper's Hairy Footed Flower Beetle, first prize winner in the National Insect Week Photography Competition 2012

Launched at the start of NIW 2014 (Monday 23 June) at the Natural History Museum in London, the competition generates a legacy of outstanding insect images biennially and attracts hundreds of entries from all ages and locations.

This year's theme is The Little Things That Run the World, and the competition is sponsored by the Royal Entomological Society, the organisation that stages NIW. Entries are split into two categories:

**Insects Alive!** Photographs that show live insects in their normal environment playing their part in running the world. The competition judges hope to see a wide range of insect activity in this category, great or small, lone insect shots or images of group activity.

**Small Is Beautiful.** Judges are looking for close-up views of individual insects, from the not-so-small small (like damselflies and cockchafers) to the very small (such as aphids and ants). Extreme close-ups of insects' eyes and other parts of the body are also welcome!

Entries are open to all ages and nationalities with up to three images per subject category permitted. Each category has a first place cash prize of £500 and a second place prize of £250 donated by the RES, with winning photographs also published in the Society's quarterly journal 'Antenna'.

As always the judging panel will select a series of commendations for the best runner-up images which will be featured online at [www.nationalinsectweek.com](http://www.nationalinsectweek.com) where previous winners' work can also be viewed.

The National Insect Week 2014 Photography Competition judging line-up comprises writer and editor Sophie Stafford (formerly of BBC Wildlife Magazine), Alastair Driver, national conservation manager of the Environment Agency, and Chris Haines, NIW advisor and Emeritus Professor at the Natural Resources Institute.

National Insect Week advisor Chris Haines says: "This is a great opportunity for young people and adults alike to get involved and demonstrate their skills in insect photography. We've had some super entries in the past which have made judging very difficult and I'm sure this year will be no different!"

More information and application forms are available on the National Insect Week website ([www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk](http://www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk)).

The competition closing date is **Friday 31 October 2014** and winners will be notified in early December.

"We trapped and recorded around 1000 moths (~100 species). The children were shown poplar hawkmoths and elephant hawkmoths and they were introduced to all the major groups of insects and other invertebrates," said Luke Tilley.



"It's been a fantastic opportunity to carry out an extensive insect survey in the gardens of Highgrove and we will be sending His Royal Highness with a report of our findings. The children have enjoyed hunting for insects and learning more about the important roles insects play in different habitats," he added.

Alastair Driver, National Conservation Manager for the Environment Agency said: "Not only are insects hugely valuable pollinators, cost-free pest controllers, superb indicators of water quality and the canary in the mine for climate warming, but they can also be stunningly beautiful and charismatic. It's time we started valuing them much more than we have in the past."



Oryctes nasicornis – credit Pawel Bienewski

### Insect-Friendly Garden Dos and Dont's from the Royal Entomological Society

Everyone can do something to encourage insects into their garden. Not all of the suggestions given below will be possible in every garden; some are clearly only feasible if you have a larger plot. However, many of these suggestions will be possible, even with the tiniest of gardens. Appropriate food plants in containers will help attract insects into the garden and small piles of broken pots can help provide shelter.

*If you have a garden that is large enough for you to have a small patch of 'waste ground', allow native wild plants to grow. Nettles in your garden will support a number of butterfly and moth species, but should be in full sun to attract butterflies.*

*Allow a section of your lawn to grow into a small meadow. Even a very small section can be effective. Different grass species interspersed with wild flowers such as ox-eye daisies can look beautiful and will attract more insects into the garden. If you buy wild plants or seeds, do make sure that they originate from the UK.*

*Try to have some form of hedgerow made from native plants such as hawthorn or hazel underplanted with woodland plants such as the bluebell Endymion nonscriptus and wood anemone Anemone nemerosa.*

*Make small piles from broken crocks and stones to provide shelter for ground beetles and other nocturnal insects.*

For further information on helping insects and mini-beasts visit the Royal Entomological Society website: [www.royensoc.co.uk](http://www.royensoc.co.uk)



Peacock Butterfly