

I've learned a new word!

John Clarke

Recently I read an article in *British Wildlife* (Volume 26, Number 5, June 2015) by the well-known naturalist Simon Barnes. Like so many of us he had become fed up with people banging on about 'biodiversity'. This modern word in wildlife conservation matters has been bandied about by everyone involved – from expert naturalists to non-expert politicians. "What we need is more biodiversity" they all shout, but what do they mean? Do they want more ponds – or trees – or meadows – or bird and plant species? And what about more species of bumblebees – or snails – should we make room for everything? Bringing back Lynx and Wolves would add a bit of biodiversity but who wants them eating their sheep or their Jack Russel?

For years I listened to this banging on about biodiversity and like many other people I was swept along on the tide of popularism stirred up by the press and funding providers in varying amounts. All the time I had a feeling that this was good – very good - but not quite right – until I sat myself down and asked a few simple questions:

When did you last have to use flypapers in your house to cope with the hordes of flies that invaded every summer and autumn?

When did you last have the doors and windows open on a warm summer's evening and find your house invaded by moths drawn to the electric light?

When did you last drive home on a warm evening and have to clean your windscreen to get rid of the bloody, squashed mess caused by your car swatting all in front of it?

For cowpat enthusiasts (yes, there are a few of us left!), when did you last see cowpats covered in flies and gradually broken down and recycled by a succession of fly and beetle larvae?

How many wasps do you see these days? Still enough to be a nuisance, I'm sure but no longer droves of them fighting over your lunch, your strawberries and cream in the garden – or your picnic.

I agree that we are losing some wildlife species and habitats at an alarming rate and that it is good we try to retain biodiversity. Well, we have been doing that for years. Take a long look at what has achieved over the past 30 years or so and yes, we have biodiversity – and we have done it well. So why do I need to ask the above questions? The answer lies in something that we never had a word to describe – until the eminent Simon Barnes came up with one – **Bioabundance!!**

What? Yes, **bioabundance**. Brilliant! We have been so busy saving habitats and species so that we have at least a few of each left but we didn't address properly the problems of populations. We need swarms of flies (including Dung Flies), thousands of pollinators (including wasps, bees, bumblebees, hoverflies, beetles – etc – etc.). And what about those species that prey on them – bigger insects, spiders, beetles, birds – the list goes on – we need millions more – well, perhaps not of wasps! I remember noticing during my studies of breeding Spotted Flycatcher around our villages that often there was not enough food to rear their chicks and many died. The same is true of Lapwings, where studies, many years ago, showed that the very habitat provided for them did not have bioabundance (we didn't have that word back then) and so their chicks died too.

So, what can we ordinary folk do? Well, we can start by using the word '**bioabundance**' as often as possible. Drop it into conversations with friends. Put it in your next letter to your MP – surely you write to him/her? Get it on '*The Archers*', '*Countryfile*' and in all county wildlife trust magazines. Blog it, Tweet it, Facebook it, Squeak it (got you there!) – do what you like with it - but say it! Then just wait and see how long before those in charge of

our wildlife conservation pick up on it and tell us sagely that what we all need is – **Bioabundance!**

We have biodiversified (my new word Simon!), biosecurified (not sure about that one) and now we need to Bioabundify? Bioabundancify? Bioabundicate? Forget it! Leave it to the bureaucrats – they will come up with something. After all, it will turn out to be their idea and not Simon's!