

**Jean Young November 2019**

## **Life and Death on the underside of leaves**

We admire birds, mammals and butterflies but few consider the minute ecosystems of insects and bugs. Jean, a self-confessed Nosey Naturalist, tells us to 'Learn to love the little things'. Her close-up photos revealed the lifecycles and behaviour of some of the most overlooked but extraordinary creatures. Each species has evolved strategies to survive. Larvae and pupae can use hairs, toxins, disguise, warning colours and camouflage to avoid predation. A lacewing larva piles debris on top to avoid being seen, and the Green tortoise beetle uses its own faeces as a disguise! In some spiders, matricide ensures offsprings' survival, the dead body of the mother feeds the young, while the parent shieldbug (below) protects its eggs and young until large enough to fend for themselves. The invertebrates are at the bottom of the food chain and vital for birds and higher animals. We can support them by being less tidy in the garden and leaving plants to die down naturally in autumn. It is inspirational that Jean only began researching this mini world in the last few years.



