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New Forest Commander Chief Insp Tony Rawlinson hands awards to beach heroes from left, Michael Pitchers, Matthew Bland, Christopher Bland and Kelly Surplice.

Lepe Beach heroes honoured

FIVE off-duty lifeguards have been praised for their extreme bravery after saving two teenagers from drowning on a Hampshire beach.

They were among dozens of members of the public and police officers recognised for going above and beyond the call of duty in the Western Area Awards, held at Totton's Hangar Arts Centre.

Among those receiving awards were Christopher Bland, 18, Matthew Bland, 21, Michael Pitchers, 21, Luke Surplice, 21, and

Kelly Surplice, 18, all from Totton.

They were at Lepe Beach on July 26 last year when three 13-year-old girls got into trouble in deep water, 50 yards from shore.

While one of the girls was able to swim to shore, the lifeguards rushed into the water and got the other two girls safely out.

Handing over their award, New Forest Commander Chief Insp Tony Rawlinson said: "Had it not been for your quick and brave actions, two of the girls may not be here to tell the tale."

NEW TENANTS ON PROBATION

HOUSING chiefs have unveiled their latest weapon in the battle against antisocial behaviour on New Forest council estates.

New tenants taken on by the district council will have to complete a one-year probationary period before they are offered a permanent home.

The scheme will enable the authority to evict problem tenants more quickly, including those behind with their rent.

Members of the council's ruling Cabinet approved the

By Chris Yandell

launch of "introductory tenancies", to start next month.

Glynne Miles, head of housing, said: "Most of our tenants are really good but a small proportion cause problems for others."

"This will help us identify potentially difficult tenants at a much earlier stage and, in the last resort, make it easier for us to evict tenants."

A report to councillors said: "New tenants will be supported, assisted and educated in maintaining a tenancy suc-

cessfully. The aim will be to enable them to move on to a 'fixed term' tenancy after a 12-month period."

Improvements to the council's computer system have made it possible to introduce the scheme, available to local authorities for several years.

The report said: "Introductory tenancies are designed to help in the fight against antisocial behaviour by making it easier for local authority landlords to evict tenants who persistently engage in such activity, before they achieve security of tenure."

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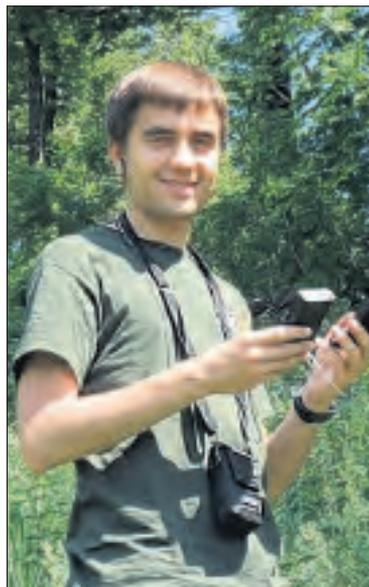
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Elusive Forest insect is one of UK's most endangered species



CALL OF THE WILD: PhD student Davide Zilli using a cicada app on his mobile phone.

IT IS the elusive creature with a high-pitched song that only lives in one part of Hampshire.

But now the New Forest cicada has been named as one of the most endangered animals in the entire country.

The insect – the only one of its type in the country – has not even been seen since 2000, and there are fears it may already be extinct.

But a dedicated team of environmentalists set up to hunt for the cicadas say they believe they still live in some areas of the New Forest.

The Species Recovery Trust, an online project looking at the UK's most endangered animals, has revealed that more than 400 species – including the great auk, orange-spotted emerald dragonfly and the wildcat – have become extinct in the country in

the past 200 years.

And the trust says the New Forest cicada is one of the ten animals most likely to follow them in disappearing from the UK altogether.

The last unconfirmed sighting of a cicada was in 2000, with the trust saying change in habitat and weather pattern has led to a decline in numbers.

The New Forest Project was set up to track the insects down, and its members even set up a special phone app so members of the public can help track them down.

And they say they will head back to the remotest areas of the Forest this summer in a bid to find them.

If they are successful, a captive breeding programme may be set up to boost the insects' numbers.

One of the team, University of Southampton lecturer Alex Rogers, said: "It has



ENDANGERED: The New Forest cicada.

not been observed for the past 20 years, but it hasn't been seen for long stretches in the past too, such as the 1940s or 1960s.

"It's not at the previous sites it's been seen at, but it may have just moved some-

where else and the New Forest is such a large area that it's very hard to detect them.

"It could be there – it's just a case of finding it."

Davide Zilli, a PhD student at the university, said:

"We have been working hard to improve the app.

"We had about 2,000 people downloading it last year and we think that if it's sunny it could be a good summer to find them this year."



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