

**LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND
ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**The status of Diptera in
VC55**

**Large families with few
species in VC55**

**Ceratopogonidae, Chironomidae,
Mycetophilidae,
Phoridae & Sphaeroceridae**

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INTRODUCTION

This LESOPS continues the reviewing of the status of the Diptera of Leicestershire & Rutland (VC55) as known up to the end of 2020 with the aim of encouraging more recording of our flies.

The five families considered here all have a high number of species nationally but are under-recorded in our locale (Table 1). The identification of species from these families tends to be difficult for the amateur enthusiast which may explain the paucity of records.

Table 1: Families in this LESOPS

Family	Number of UK species*	Number of VC55 species	Total number of VC55 records to 2020
Ceratopogonidae	172	1	8
Chironomidae	630	15	104**
Mycetophilidae	500	27	40
Phoridae	356	8	46**
Sphaeroceridae	145	15	40

*As of July 2022

**Includes records with no speciation

CERATOPOGONIDAE

These very small flies (<3mm) are known as "Biting Midges" worldwide and the genus *Culicoides* has been implicated as vectors of a range of animal diseases e.g. bluetongue disease and African horse sickness. However, these flies are not thought to be significant carriers of human disease organisms.

Whilst both male and females feed on nectar it is the females that take blood in order to support the growth of developing eggs after fertilisation. Accordingly insecticides are widely used to control the infestations.

The British list for this family has 172 species (as of July 2022) but, to date, only one species has been recorded from Leicestershire & Rutland although the family is noted along with a single record from the *Bezzia* genus. The family was not mentioned by the Victoria County History of Leicester (1901) and apparently the first known records for our locality did not occur until 2004 when seen at New Lount LNR by David Gibbs. The family was further noted at Cossington Meadows NR by Matthew Hill between 2011 and 2014. The only other mention of the family came from Mark Herus who observed them at Syston in 2020.

Two other records deserve mention: (i) a *Bezzia* species was reported from Skeffington seen in December 2015 (record listed by the Biological Records Centre, BRC) and (ii) *Stilobezzia gracilis* seen by a Dipterists Forum (DF) member in the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during the visit to the county by the DF in July 2015.

The main difficulty with recording this family had been the lack of any easily used modern keys. However, in 2011 an unpublished monograph on the family was produced by John Boorman complete with keys and illustrations. His keys to initially separate specimens into genera followed by more detailed examination to ascertain identification for many (but not all) British species.

More recently Mike Hackston (2018) produced keys (available on the internet) to the genera treating males and females separately which may encourage local recorders to, at least, identify some of the Ceratopogonidae that may be present in VC55 even if it is only to genus!

CHIRONOMIDAE

Known as “Non-biting Midges” this family is second only to the Cecidomyiidae in the number of British species (630 vs 657 as of July 2022). So it is surprising that there are so few species identified in VC55. This LESOPS only considers the records of adult insects with the possibility that there are many more species recorded where the larvae have been identified as part of aquatic invertebrate surveys by, for instance, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA), the latter having produced keys for such investigations e.g. Cranston, 1982.

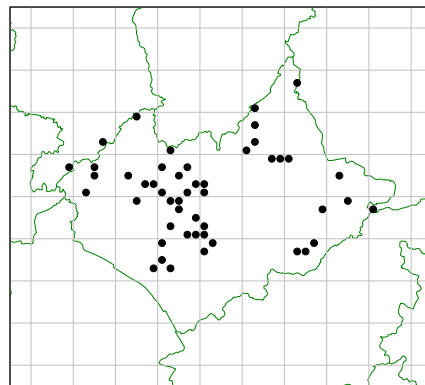
Initially, identification of Chironomidae adults was achieved by use of one of the Royal Entomological Society Handbooks (Coe, 1950; 289 species considered). This was succeeded by a substantial update nearly sixty years later published by the FBA (Langton & Pinder, 2007). Even so, the tendency in VC55 has been to record these flies as the genus only with few species being identified. Coe (1950) illustrated a range of wing patterns which may be useful in initial sorting out the flies but this should be done with care.

The larval stages of the family may be terrestrial or aquatic in their habits. Adults of those associated with wet habitats can be seen swarming over the breeding sites. Whilst these flies are usually associated with stagnant or slow-moving waters, some species have also been seen in vast numbers from sewage filter-beds (Learner, 2000).

Annotated species list

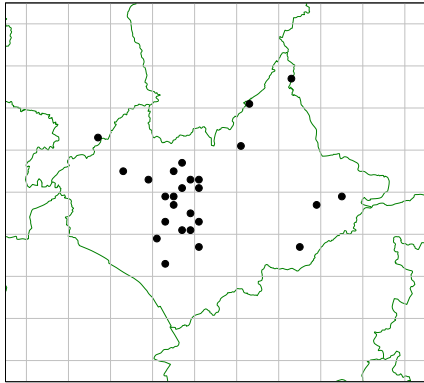
Maps (MapMate®) have been included for the more numerous species.

Chironomidae overview in VC55 (104 records) – as the family is challenging to identify to species level, all VC55 records of Chironomidae have been mapped to show the general distribution of these flies in VC55. It is apparent that some areas have no records due to lack of recording activity.



Chaetocladius perennis Meigen (1 record) – nationally few records appear on the NBN Atlas. A single record came from Uppingham in 1985. However, studies of fly populations associated with filter-beds at sewage treatment work indicate that this fly will be regularly encountered (Learner, 2000) and perhaps survey work near to such situations would increase the incidence of this fly locally.

Chironomus plumosus Linnaeus (37 records) – frequently recorded in England but sporadically in Wales and Scotland. The fly is usually green with brown legs and males possess feathery antennae. It is one of the largest of the chironomids (<12mm). The most commonly recognised of the family in VC55.



Ulverscroft NR 2008 ♂
David Nicholls (NatureSpot)

Chironomus tentans Fabricius (2 records) – most records on the NBN Atlas come from the Nottinghamshire-South Yorkshire area. The two VC55 records were both as a result of survey work by Andy Godfrey at ponds at a Measham brickworks in 2006.

Clinotanypus nervosus Meigen (1 record) – scattered in England with low numbers of records. The sole VC55 record is an undated specimen in the collections of the Nottingham City Museum & Gallery with only a general grid reference of SK50.

Dicrotendipes nervosus Staeger (1 record) – the few national records are mainly scattered in England. It was noted at Barrow upon Soar in 1981 but with no further data – the specimen is in the County Resources Collections (reference CRC 27/3/3B/1 as *Limochironomus nervosus*).

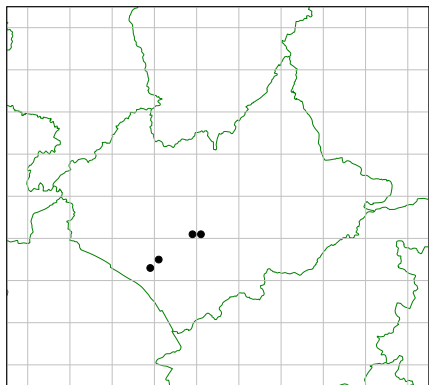
Glyptotendipes cauliginellus Kieffer (2 records) – scattered in England. The two VC55 records were both as a result of survey work by Andy Godfrey at ponds at a Measham brickworks in 2006.

Macropelopia nebulosi Meigen (1 record) – scattered in England & Wales. The only local record came from Sapcote in 2019 when taken by Graham Calow and identified by Tony Irwin of Norwich Museum.



Sapcote 2019
Graham Calow (NatureSpot)

Microtendipes pedellus De Geer (4 records) – found throughout England into Scotland. Recorded mainly from the south-west of VC55 all in 2019.



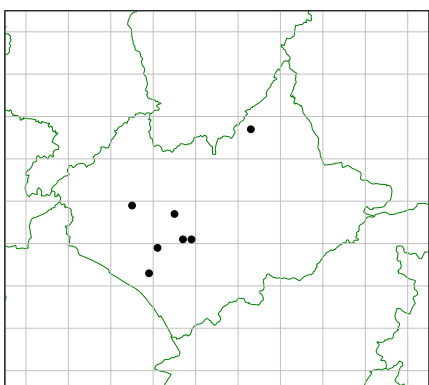
Knighton Park, Leicester, 2019
Alan Cann (NatureSpot)

Orthocladus glabripennis Goetghebuer (1 record) – the NBN Atlas has two records from southern Scotland only. The single VC55 record came in 1975 from the Holwell Mineral Line NR as part of a WEA visit but its national scarcity suggests that this identification is probably erroneous.

Procladius choreus Meigen (4 records) – one of the commoner species in England also appearing in Wales and Scotland. Three of the four VC55 records came from survey work at a proposed quarry at Hemington in 1996 with the only other local record from the Spring Cottage area of the Ashby Wolds in the same year all by consultant Jeff Lewis.

Prodiamesa olivacea Meigen (4 records) – regularly seen across England & Wales. First noted in VC55 at Quorn in 1924 probably by John Saunt of Coventry NHS. A further three records came from the Gilwiskaw Brook at Packington Nook (north-west Leicestershire) by Andy Godfrey in September 2008.

Psectrotanypus varius Fabricius (11 records) – scattered throughout England & Wales. Quite a beautifully marked fly seen at several localities in VC55 the first being from Sapcote in 2013.



Spearwort Fields, Aylestone 2020
David Gould (NatureSpot)

Smittia aterrima Meigen (3 records) – scattered in England especially the south-east. VC55 records came in 1985 from a malaise trap at Great Merible Wood on two occasions with a further record from Uppingham also in 1985.

Stenochironomus fascipennis Zetterstedt (1 record) – the NBN Atlas has two records from Scotland which suggests that the VC55 record should be dubious. However, the fly, taken at Sapcote by Graham Calow in 2016, was examined by Tony Irwin of Norwich Museum and so the record is considered plausible.

Stenochironomus gibbus Zetterstedt (1 record) – the few records are scattered in England & Wales so the addition of a 2020 record from Sapcote (Graham Calow identification by Tony Irwin) is a notable addition to the British records for this fly.

Zavreliomyia nubila Meigen (1 record) – nearly all national records come from East Sussex. The addition of a Sapcote record from 2014 by Graham Calow (with identification by Tony Irwin) is welcome.

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MYCETOPHILIDAE

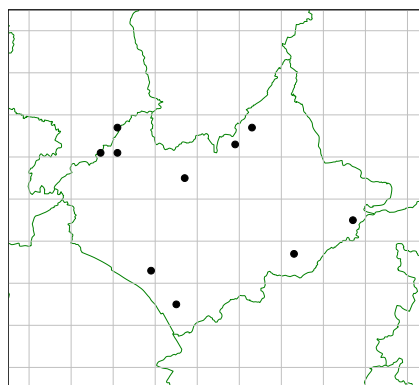
The group of flies known in Britain as “fungus gnats” is made up of five families – Bolitophilidae (LESOPS **45**), Diadocidiidae (LESOPS **40**), Ditomyiidae (LESOPS **40**), Keroplatidae and Mycetophilidae the latter being the largest within the definition. Hutson *et al* (1980) produced the first workable keys for these families but omitted a major sub-family in the Mycetophilidae. In 2022 Peter Chandler remedied this omission by the publication of extensive and well-illustrated keys (Chandler, 2022). Even so, the family remains challenging and requires detailed examination of specimens to ascertain certain identification. The latest publication also includes notes on separation of the five families from each other.

Currently (as of July 2022) there are 500 species of Mycetophilidae recognised in Britain but only 27 have been recorded from VC55 to 2020, predominantly by visiting expert dipterists as part of survey work. The national distribution notes are drawn from the NBN Atlas although some species covered by Chandler (2022) have more recent coverage details for the sub-family Mycetophilinae obtained during survey work as part of the publication. To date it has not been able to access the records accumulated by Chandler to check for VC55 records.

Annotated species list

Maps (MapMate®) have been included for the more numerous species.

Mycetophilidae overview in VC55 (39 records) – as the family is challenging to identify to species level, all records of Mycetophilidae have been mapped to show the general distribution of these flies in VC55. It is apparent that the family would benefit from a concerted recording effort!



Acnemia nitidicollis Meigen (2 records) – scattered throughout Britain particularly Wales. First noted in VC55 during malaise trapping at Great Merrible Wood NR in 1985 and then again during a visit by members of the Dipterists Forum (DF) in 2015 to Dimminsdale NR.

Allocotocera pulchella Curtis (1 record) – scattered across England & Wales with a single local record from the Great Merrible Wood NR malaise trapping in 1985 (identification by Geoff King).

Allodiopsis rustica Edwards (1 record) – Chandler (2022) considers this species to very common throughout Britain but to date there has only been a single VC55 record which came from the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during a visit by a DF member in 2015.

Boletina dubia Meigen (2 records) – scattered throughout Britain being recorded in VC55 on two dates during the 2015 visit of DF members to Dimminsdale NR.

Boletina gripha Dziedicki (1 record) – scattered throughout Britain with the sole VC55 record coming from Great Merrible Wood NR during malaise trapping in 1985.

Brevicornu fissicauda Lundström (1 record) – Chandler (2022) considers this fly to be common throughout Britain. David Gibbs swept the fly near the River Swift at Misterton during 2018 survey work.

Brevicornu griseicolle Staeger (1 record) – very common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) but to date there has only been a single VC55 record which came from the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during a visit by a DF member in 2015.

Coelosia flava Staeger (2 records) – scattered throughout England & Wales, less so in Scotland. Jonathan Cole found the fly at Ketton Quarry NR in 2006 with a further record from the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during a visit by a DF member in 2015.

Coelosia fusca Bezzi (2 records) – few scattered records from England & Wales being noted locally from two samples during the 1985 malaise trapping at Great Merrible Wood NR.

Exechia neorepanda Lindemann (1 record) – a wetland species found in Wales and up to Yorkshire in England. Noted at Donington Park in 2014 by Andy Jukes.

Leia crucigera Zetterstedt (1 record) – only a handful of records in England & Wales. Jonathan Cole recorded the fly at Ketton Quarry NR in 2006.

Megalopelma nigroclavatum Jenkinsoni (1 record) – scattered throughout England & Wales. Seen at Cloud Wood NR during 2015 by DF members.

Megophthalmidia crassicornis Curtis (2 records) – scattered throughout England & Wales. Seen on two occasions (2017, 2018) by Barbara Cooper (NatureSpot) at Long Clawson.

Mycetophila brittanica Laštovka & Kidd (2 records) – very common in Britain (Chandler, 2022). Seen at Donington Park (Andy Jukes, 2013) and again from the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during a visit by a DF member in 2015.

Mycetophila cingulum Meigen (2 records) – frequent throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022). First noted at Sapcote in 2015 (Graham Calow with identification by Tony Irwin & Peter Chandler). Swept by David Gibbs during 2018 survey work at Misterton.

Mycetophila curviseta Lundström (1 record) – common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) but only noted once in VC55 when seen in the Grimston area (possibly Old Dalby Wood) during a visit by a DF member in 2015.

Mycetophila edwardsi Lundström (1 record) – common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022). The sole VC55 record came from Sapcote in 2020 (image).



Mycetophila fungorum De Geer (1 record) – very common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) although only one record has been located for VC55 – Donington Park 2013 (Andy Jukes).

Mycetophila ocellus Walker (2 records) - very common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) being recorded twice during the visit to the county in 2015 by members of the DF – Grimston (possibly Old Dalby Wood) and Dimminsdale NR.

Mycetophila ornata (2 records) – common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) again seen locally as a result of the 2015 visit by DF members - Grimston (possibly Old Dalby Wood) and Dimminsdale NR.

Mycetophila pictula Meigen (1 record) – widespread in Britain (Chandler, 2022) being recorded once in VC55 when found at Sapcote in 2015 (Graham Calow identified by Peter Chandler; image).



Mycetophila tridentata Lundström (2 records) – frequent throughout England but scarce in Scotland (Chandler, 2022). Both VC55 records came from Donington Park – 2009 (Keith Alexander) and 2014 (Andy Jukes).

Mycomya cinerascens Macquart (2 records) – scattered across Britain with the local records coming during the DF visit in 2015 – Dimminsdale and Cloud Wood NRs.

Mycomya circumdata Staeger (1 record) – few records, predominantly from England. Seen during survey work at the Mountsorrel Quarry complex in 2011 by Andy Godfrey.

Phronia humeralis Winnertz (1 record) – common throughout England (Chandler, 2022) being seen at Dimminsdale NR during the visit by DF members in 2015.

Pseudobrachypeza helvetica Walker (2 records) – common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022). VC55 records were as a result of the 2015 visit by DF members - Grimston (possibly Old Dalby Wood) and Dimminsdale NR.

Zygomyia pictipennis Staeger (1 record) – common throughout Britain (Chandler, 2022) but only recorded in VC55 from Ketton Quarry NR when spotted by Jonathan Cole in 2006.

References

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PHORIDAE

Known as Scuttle Flies, the Phoridae are very much under-recorded in Leicestershire & Rutland. This is despite keys being available that enable identification of most of the species in the family listed as of July 2022 by the Dipterists Forum. The main key for the Phoridae (with the exception of the *Mesagelia* genus) was published in 1983 (Disney, 1983) with the *Mesagelia* treated in a separate publication six years later (Disney, 1989). Some genera have received updates since the publication of these keys and these are indicated were appropriate in the species listing.

One of the characteristics of these flies is reportedly their habit of “scuttling about” rather than flying although this does not mean they have foregone this ability as they have been seen coming to water traps (Disney, 1989; Morris, 2018).

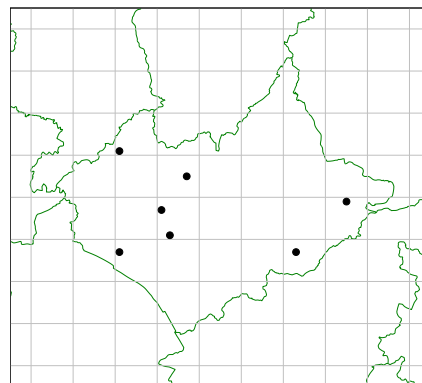
The flies show a humpbacked appearance and can be seen in a wide range of habitats and show diverse feeding habits. The wings have reduced venation and, along with their general appearance, enables the flies to be recognised as Phoridae with ease. Only nine species have been noted to date in VC55. This may have been increased if speciation had been carried out during water trapping (Morris, 2018) which will be remedied in the forthcoming seasons.

The distributions described in Disney's publications rarely include details of records and so it is possible that VC55 records are present.

Annotated species list

Maps (MapMate®) have been included for the more numerous species.

Phoridae overview in VC55 (47 records) – as the family is challenging to identify to species level, all records of Phoridae have been mapped to show the general distribution of these flies in VC55. It is apparent that there is a need to greater recording activity!



Borophaga incrassata Meigen (2 records) – scattered in England occasionally occurring elsewhere. First noted by Andy Godfrey during survey work at the Mountsorrel Quarry complex in 2012 and then in 2013 at Martinshaw Wood by David Nicholls.

Conicera dauci Meigen (1 record) – scattered in England & Wales. The sole local record came in the 1985 malaise trapping carried out at Great Merrible NR Wood.

Diplonevra nitidula Meigen (1 record) - scattered in England & Wales being noted once in VC55 during the Great Merrible Wood NR malaise trapping in 1985.

Gymnophora arcuata Meigen (1 record) – scattered in England & Wales. Noted at Swithland by Peter Chandler in 1979 (cited in Mostovski & Mikhailovskaya, 2003). Updated keys were published by Disney (2017).

Phora atra Meigen (1 record) – a species seen throughout Britain with record numbers higher than many other species. However, only recorded once in VC55 at Enderby (1987) during survey work as part of the Invertebrate Site Register effort.

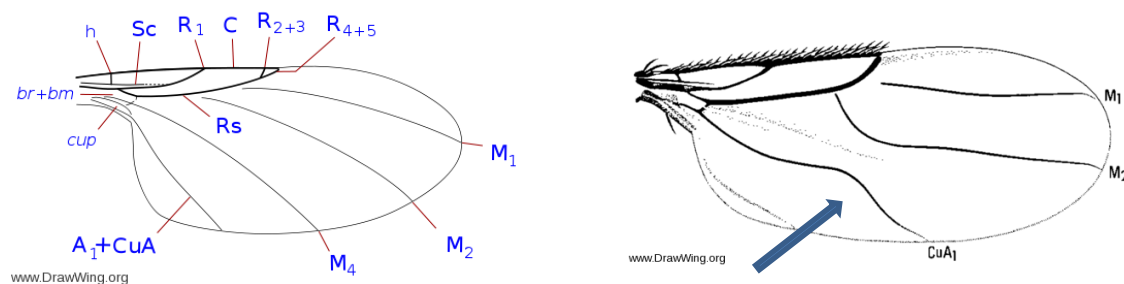
Phora holosericea Schmitz (1 record) – scattered in England. Only recorded once in VC55 at Enderby (1987) during survey work as part of the Invertebrate Site Register effort.

Phora speighti Disney (1 record) – only a handful of records in Britain but noted at Enderby (1987) during survey work as part of the Invertebrate Site Register effort.

Spiniphora dorsalis Becker (1 record) – the few national records are scattered in England & Wales. Seen at Cloud Wood NR when the Dipterists Forum visited in 2015.

Spiniphora maculata Meigen (1 record) - scattered in England & Wales the sole VC55 record coming during malaise trapping at Great Merrible Wood NR in 1985.

Metopina species (23 records) – this genus of Phoridae is easily recognised by the wing venation where vein M4 has a distinct curve absent in other genera of the family (images below). Predominantly taken at white and yellow water traps (as experienced by Disney, 1979) during 2018 at the author's Dadlington garden (Morris, 2018) but without further speciation. This genus accounted for over 90% of the total Phoridae catch during this exercise. The genus has been found in Cretaceous and Tertiary ambers (Grimaldi, 1989).



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SPHAEROCERIDAE

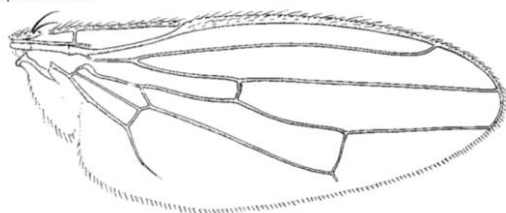
The Sphaeroceridae, also known as Lesser Dung Flies, show saprophagous behaviour i.e. they can commonly be seen in large numbers around rotting materials varying from vegetable matter (compost) to carrion and faecal matter. The flies themselves are small to minute and are usually dull coloured. The family can be encountered throughout the world except in icy situations.

Characteristically, the first segment (tarsomere) of the hind leg is swollen and the wing has distinctive venation the latter enabling progress to the three sub-families during identification (figures below). Currently (July 2022), there are 145 British species of which sixteen have been recorded in Leicestershire & Rutland up to 2020. Identification is primarily achieved using Pitkin (1988) although some new species have been added since. The latter can be traced through entomological journals or by referral to the Dipterists Forum Lesser Dung Fly (Sphaeroceridae) Study Group.



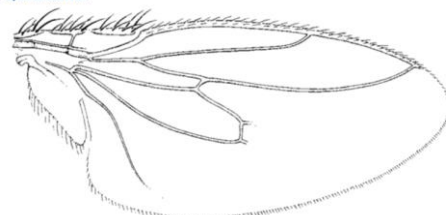
Swollen tarsomere on hind leg of Sphaeroceridae (Dipterists Forum)

Copromyza equina, wing
Sphaeroceridae



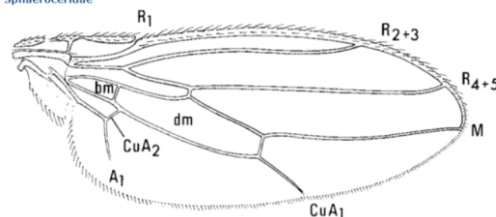
Copromyzinae

Leptocera fontinalis, wing
Sphaeroceridae



Limosiniinae

Sphaerocera curvipes, wing
Sphaeroceridae



Sphaerocerinae

Sphaeroceridae sub-family diagnostic wing venation (DrawWing)

Annotated species list

No distribution maps have been included due to the paucity of records for all species known in VC55.

Chaetopodella scutellaris Haliday (1 record) – mostly in Wales being scattered elsewhere. The single record for VC55 is a mention of the fly coming from "Leics" in the keys of the RES Handbook (Pitkin, 1988) but it has not yet been possible to trace this record.

Copromyza equina Fallén (1 record) – scattered throughout England & Wales. The sole VC55 record came from Sapcote in 2018 (Graham Calow, NatureSpot).

Copromyza nigrina Gimmerthall (4 records) – throughout England & Wales and in the Scottish Highlands. Found by P.A.H. Muschamp (with identifications by E.A. d'Assiz'Fonseca) in the 1930s at Wistow, Holywell Wood (Loughborough) and Bradgate Park with specimens in the county collections. A further record came from Barkstone Wood (near Stathern) in 1949 by O.M. White with specimens in the collections at Nottingham City Museums & Galleries.

Crumomyia nitida Meigen (6 records) – scattered throughout much of Britain. Five of the six VC55 records come from the late 19th century with records (some in the county collections and others cited in the Victoria County History for Leicester 1901) from Blaby, Bradgate Park, Longcliffe and Mountsorrel probably from W.A. Vice. Since then noted from the Mountsorrel Quarry complex survey of 2012 by Andy Godfrey.

Crumomyia pedestris Meigen (2 records) – scattered across England & Wales. First recorded at Saddington Reservoir by Keith Alexander in 2009 and then not again until 2020 at Glenfield (David Nicholls).

Gonioneura spinipennis Haliday (1 record) – records are scattered across Britain with only one record found for VC55 – Holywell Wood, Loughborough by P.A.H. Muschamp (identification by E.A. d'Assiz'Fonseca) in 1935 the specimen being in the county collections (CRC 42/8/2C/2).

Ischiolepta pusilla Fallén (1 record) – scattered throughout England & Wales. Recorded during the Mountsorrel Quarry complex survey in 2012 by Andy Godfrey.

Leptocera fontinalis Fallén (2 records) – most records seem to come from Wales with scattered records elsewhere in Britain. Seen at Barwell in 1985 (J. Lewis) and near Cademan Wood (part of the Grace Dieu complex) in 2012 (Steve Woodward & Helen Ikin).

Leptocera nigra Olivier (1 record) – records nearly all come from scattered locations in England & Wales. Found by Keith Alexander at Lockington Marshes in 2010.

Limosina silvatica Meigen (4 records) – scattered throughout England & Wales. First recorded in VC55 at Ulverscroft in 1985 during survey work by the National Trust. Andy Godfrey noted the fly at the Mountsorrel Quarry complex in both 2011 and 2012 with a further record from Buddon Wood in 2013.

Lotophila atra Meigen (6 records) – numerous records found throughout Britain. In 1935 seen by P.A.H. Muschamp at Holywell Wood (Loughborough). All other records came from survey work by Andy Godfrey - Mountsorrel Quarry complex (2012), Shawell Quarry, Cotesbach (2014, 2016) and at a former aquatic nursery at Ashby de la Zouch in 2018.

Opacifrons coxata Stenhammar (1 record) – numerous records from England & Wales and also the Scottish Highlands. The sole local record came from Wistow in 1939 by P.A.H. Muschamp with the specimen in the county collections (CRC 42/8/6B/1).

Pseudocollinella humida Haliday (1 record) – scattered throughout England & Wales and into Scotland. Found at Lockington Marshes by Keith Alexander in 2010.

Spelobia clunipes Meigen (5 records) – mainly in Wales with scattered records elsewhere in Britain. A National Trust survey showed the fly to be present at Ulverscroft in 1985. Previously noted from Braunstone (1933) and Holywell Wood (1935) by P.A.H. Muschamp with mention in the Victoria County History for Leicester (presumably from W.A. Vice) at Blaby and Bradgate Park.

Sphaerocera curvipes Latreille (2 records) – scattered mostly in England & Wales. Noted at Blaby by W.A. Vice (Victoria County History of Leicester, 1901) and at Holywell Wood (Loughborough) in 1935 by P.A.H. Muschamp. [The only other VC55 record came in 2021 when seen at Anstey by Mike Higgott (photograph, NatureSpot).



Sphaerocera monilis Haliday (1 record) – scattered in England & Wales. Found at the Mountsorrel Quarry complex during the 2012 survey by Andy Godfrey.

References

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Leicestershire Entomological Society Occasional Publications Series (LESOPS) covering

(a) detailed studies of insects and other invertebrates carried out by Society members and

(b) matters of historical entomological interest to VC55 Leicestershire & Rutland

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