LEICESTERSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VC55

NEWSLETTER 53

September 2015

Beewolf new to Leicestershire

The Beewolf is a wasp (*Philanthus triangulum*) that hunts Honey Bees. A few were found at Asfordby Hill on 6 August by Steve Woodward & Helen Ikin. Superficially like a vespid, it is actually the largest of the solitary wasps (up to 17 mm). It can be distinguished by the unfolded wings and thickened antennae. The abdomen and face are extensively yellow and the back of the head behind the eyes is reddish-brown. The wing venation will confirm identification.

The female paralyses a bee before flying it back to her nest, where her larva will feed on it. The nest is a tunnel up to a metre long in sandy ground that may contain dozens of larval cells. In the mid 1980s this impressive insect was confined to a few sites in southern England. Since then it has spread northwards as far as Yorkshire and is no longer considered rare. For more details see http://www.bwars.com/index.php?q=content/beginners-bees-wasps-philanthus-triangulum

This is the fourth large and conspicuous wasp to turn up in the county in recent years, the others are *Cerceris rybyensis*, *C. arenaria* and *Astata boops*. They have all moved up from the south, presumably due to climate change. Others may be here, or on their way, so members are encouraged to look closely at wasps (preferably in a glass tube!).

Steve Woodward

LEICESTERSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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The editor will be happy to receive articles, short notes and photos (in focus please!) about insects or other arthropods in Leicestershire and Rutland, also news of members' activities further afield. Photos to be sent separately please at high resolution. Unless otherwise credited, photos are by the author of the article.

Next Copy Deadline: 10 Jan 2016

Editorial

"Next year will be better"

That's what we keep telling ourselves after each disappointing season for insects. 2015 was one such, as far as I am concerned. A few groups seemed to do well, for example grasshoppers and crickets were abundant at several sites; likewise Common Blue butterflies were more numerous than recent years. At Bradgate Park, robberflies (Diptera: Asilidae) were difficult to miss in late summer. But the bees, wasps, butterflies in general, moths, longhorn beetles, ladybirds, lacewings, dragonflies, scorpionflies, hoverflies, conopid flies and galls that I usually record were hard work to find. Of course, I cannot back up this claim with figures - but others are saying similar things.

A trip to the USA in 2008 reminded me that car number plates (see below) and windscreens used to get

splattered with insects during the summer. This no longer happens in the UK. We used to be pestered with flies and wasps in our homes, but not any more. I started moth trapping in the late 1960s, when a single trap would regularly catch hundreds of moths. At the recent *National Moth Night* session we ran five mercury vapour lamps and an actinic light on a mild, calm night (11 Sept 2015) in one of the most promising sites (Swithland Wood) yet we caught a total of only 116 moths. A discussion on the Garden Tiger Moth *Arctia caja* ensued, a species whose numbers have declined by 89% in 35 years (Fox *et al*. 2006).

The pages of this Newsletter seem to be adding to our "biodiversity" as members report yet more new species, but populations of many of them are plummeting.

Reference

Fox, R., Conrad, K.F., Parsons, M.S., Warren, M.S. & Woiwod, I.P. (2006) *The state of Britain's larger moths*. Butterfly Conservation and Rothamsted Research.

Steve Woodward

Brushing up on Spiders

Steve Woodward and I have recently joined the British Arachnological Society http://wiki.britishspiders.org.uk. Castle Head Field Centre in southern Cumbria was the venue for the society's AGM and workshop at the end of May.

After a pleasant day in the Lake District fells on the way up, we assembled for Friday evening dinner and after the AGM business we had an introduction to the weekend before retiring to the bar. On the Saturday we explored the extensive grounds of the Field Centre with expert guidance from Francis Farr-Cox and Alistair Lavery on various spider collecting techniques and the delights of electric toothbrushes (see right). In the afternoon workshop we had help identifying our captures and were able to get some of our provisional IDs of Leicestershire specimens checked.

Talks after dinner were Jan Beccaloni - *Behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum* and Richard Gallon talking about his research on Tarantulas. Sunday was more microscope work and checking of specimens. Had the weather been better, we might have ventured out to learn more field craft.

It was really good to have so many friendly experts to turn to and we both gained in knowledge and experience over the weekend. Some members remembered with affection John Crocker (a founder member of both BAS and Loughborough Naturalists' Club) and we arranged to supply the BAS with some copies of our local spider atlases (Crocker & Daws, 1996 & 2001). These are also available to LES members.

We lack a spider expert in the county now that Jon Daws has moved to Lincolnshire but Jon is still willing to help with IDs and we shall be sending him some specimens for verification.

Castle Head is a Field Studies Council centre next to the River Winster at Grange over Sands and is used mainly for school groups (thankfully not during our stay).

To a spider, the vibrations of an electric toothbrush gently touching a web sound like the whirring wings of a trapped fly, so the spider rushes out to investigate and may grab the toothbrush. Apparently, a toothbrush which vibrates at about 20,000 times a minute (333 Hz) is the most successful. House spiders (*Tegenaria* spp.), comb-footed spiders (*Steatoda* spp.) and lace-web spiders (*Amaurobius* spp.) have been known to react to it. Of course, you still have to be fast enough to catch the spider before it realises it has been tricked and retreats. Don't forget to wash off the dead flies before cleaning your teeth. Photo: Steve Woodward

An illustrated book on Harvestmen (Wijnhoven, 2009) has received much praise, but the text is in Dutch (hooiwagens = harvestmen) so the BAS commissioned an English translation (available on the BAS web site) which can be used in conjunction with the illustrations in the book. Alistair Lavery was good enough to take away some of our Leics harvestman specimens to check and we were pleased to meet him and other members at the Bird Fair recently, where the BAS again had a stand.

References:

Crocker, J. & Daws, J. (1996) *Spiders of Leicestershire & Rutland*. Loughborough Naturalists' Club.

Crocker, J. & Daws, J. (2001) *Spiders of Leicestershire & Rutland Millennium Atlas*. Loughborough Naturalists' Club.

Wijnhoven, H. (2009) *De Nederlandse hooiwagens (Opiliones)* [in Dutch], Entomologische Tabellen. Obtainable from Pemberley Books.

http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal/p/Harvestman%20Resources

Helen Ikin

Some Beetle Highlights from Bradgate Park, 2015

Recent permissions to undertake survey work on this incredible site have enabled a small team to get into parts that are not normally accessible. Our gratitude must go to the management for allowing this to take place. All of us know the area well, albeit predominantly by casual walks through the park but it still remains that very little serious, investigative entomological work has been done. Before starting this project we knew between us that over time, surely we would make at least a few exciting entomological discoveries, we just did not know what they would be. We know that Derek Lott managed the odd foray into the park in the 1970s and 80s and it seems he mainly concentrated on the Carabidae and Staphylinidae and where he could, the loose and varied group we class as "Water Beetles". Some of this work was undertaken almost 30 years ago, so it is long overdue for review. Hiding among the general species that are found everywhere are the specialists, they just need to be looked for on a site as exceptional as this. The deer and their management are by far the most important aspect of the park and have a bearing on everything that happens here, particularly the beetle fauna. So studying their dung is probably the most obvious choice, but we also have the rare opportunity to examine the odd dead deer carcass. Both "mediums" have provided new county records plus others that have not been seen in the county for a very long time, some as far back as 1870.

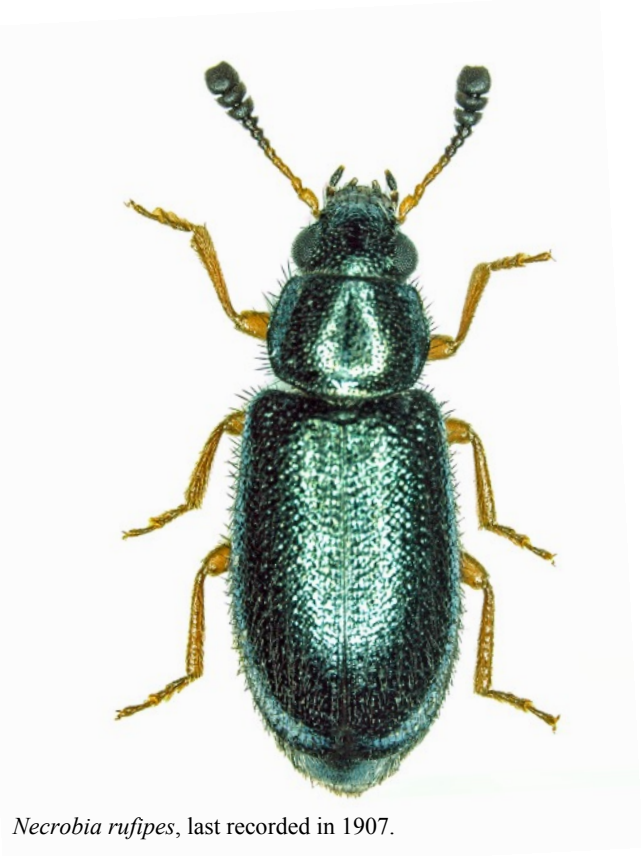
On the 22 April I had the opportunity to join professional entomologists Steve Lane and Darren Mann when their main objective was to search for beetles associated with dung and carrion. The targets for the day were *Aphodius borealis, coenosus, fasciatus, merdarius* and *zenkeri* plus *Trox sabulosus* and *Trypocopris vernalis*. There are records (although some historical) for all species mentioned, realistically several were going to be long shots and it was not the best time of year for a couple of others. Not deterred by these odds we crossed the River Lin about mid morning and headed up the slope sampling deer dung on the way to start the list off. I was a little concerned that I would not be able to find a deer carcass that the rangers had shown me several days ago, but there was no need to worry. Blessed with a scorching hot sunny day we were greeted with the "aroma" of rotting flesh hundreds of metres away, all we had to do was follow our noses. I won't go into too much detail but after several hours of poking, prodding, beating and bashing of various body parts (the deer's, not ours) with a gardening trowel over a white sheet I think we produced more beetles than I had ever seen in such a small area in such a short time. The two of them were soon in there picking out burying beetles, dung beetles, rove beetles, ground beetles and even a few click beetles amongst others, a couple of hours later we all had tubes full of beetles of all shapes and sizes, several other carcasses were given the same treatment, even I managed to add a few to the list.

A deer carcass is the habitat for some specialist beetles.

Approaching midday, having worked up an appetite, we headed down to the Deer Barns cafe for refreshment but not before a thorough scrub of our hands. Suitably refreshed we made our way back to the car park at Newtown Linford however, on the way more dung was pulled apart, heaps of grass were sieved from ditches and piles of wet leaves given a systematic going over, adding extra species as we went. All in all, a superb day with a total of 90 species, two new for the county and several species that had not been seen for 100 plus years. The added bonus was, I had a master class in the noble art of "corpse bashing" by two of the best coleopterists in Britain and all I had to do was buy them a cup of tea at the cafe..... you see there is still value for money out there!

"The eagle has landed". A pitfall trap with an elaborate cover to protect it from animals and rain.

The new species for the vice-county were *Anotylus mutator* and *Philonthus spinipes*, other notables were *Philonthus parvicornis* (two previous records, last recorded 1947), *Aleochara intricata* (four previous records, last recorded 1992), *Aphodius borealis* (six previous records, last recorded 1985), plus numerous others.



Necrobia rufipes, last recorded in 1907.

Carrying on from this I made a particular effort, almost weekly to check deer dung for *Coprophagus* species and any deer corpses for *Necrophagus* species. The results have been nothing short of amazing. Notables from the dung were *Aphodius borealis* (detailed above), *A. granarius* (eight previous records, last recorded 2013). Inspecting the corpses has produced *Necrobia violacea* (ten previous records, last recorded 1989), *N. rufipes* (two previous records, last recorded 1907), *Omosita colon* (three previous records, last recorded 1894), *O. discoidea* (eight previous records, last recorded 1988), *Thanatophlus rugosus* and *T. sinuatus*. Although there have been 16 and 18 records of the last two species respectively both are seldom found. Out of interest the two *Necrobia* spp. have been seen on every subsequent visit to the site, usually in double figures, so they really are established here. Various other invertebrate groups are producing equally interesting species Helen Ikin and Steve Woodward have found a comparably notable Hymenopterous fauna (Woodward *et al*. 2015).

Omosita colon, last recorded in 1894.

Considering the time factor from start to present being less than 12 months and the quality of species involved, highlights not just the incredible significance of the park but also the importance of being allowed in to carry out this sort of investigation to actually document our finds.

The total number of species recorded from the beginning of the year to end of August tops out at 136, a conservative count of individual beetles comes to 2066. Remember, the actual total will be considerably higher as not everyone counts every specimen. An impressive five species were of Nationally Notable status plus we have two new vice-county records and numerous others that have a local rarity significance as can be seen from the above account. Not surprisingly, the majority (111 species) were found through daytime observation which involved a variety of methods such as beating, sweeping, turning over dead wood and looking under stones, sieving grass tussocks plus wet/damp concentrations of leaves and the occasional sightings of the more obvious individuals sitting out in full view. Also included here is the regular inspection of deer dung, and finally the beating of deer carcasses, which contributed most of the scarcer finds. Although only operated on a single night, a mercury vapour lamp attracted 15 species, made up from the most diverse selection of families, Dytiscidae (two species), Carabidae (three species), Hydrophilidae (one species), Scarabidae (one species) Scirtidae (one species), Elateridae (two species), Cantharidae (three species) Coccinelidae (one species) and Tenebrionidae (one species). The pitfall traps caught 42 species, mainly Carabidae, with a few Staphylinidae, Elateridae, Geotrupidae and a single individual of *Omosita colon* (Nitidulidae).

Altogether a formidable list in a relatively short time, and looking down the species list at what has been recorded for the park in the past, there are several desirable species still awaiting to be found. I think this ongoing project emphasizes the importance of utilizing a site as a focus and to employ a diversity of methods over a period of time. Using the many different methods on such a quality site has “forced me” to have a go at families I would not otherwise have tackled, and hopefully be a little more clued-up and organized for the future.

Reference:

Woodward, S., Ikin, H. & Finch, G. (2015) Invertebrate recording at Bradgate Park. *Leicestershire & Rutland Recorder* **11**, 8-14.

Graham Finch

Another new Shieldbug for Leicestershire

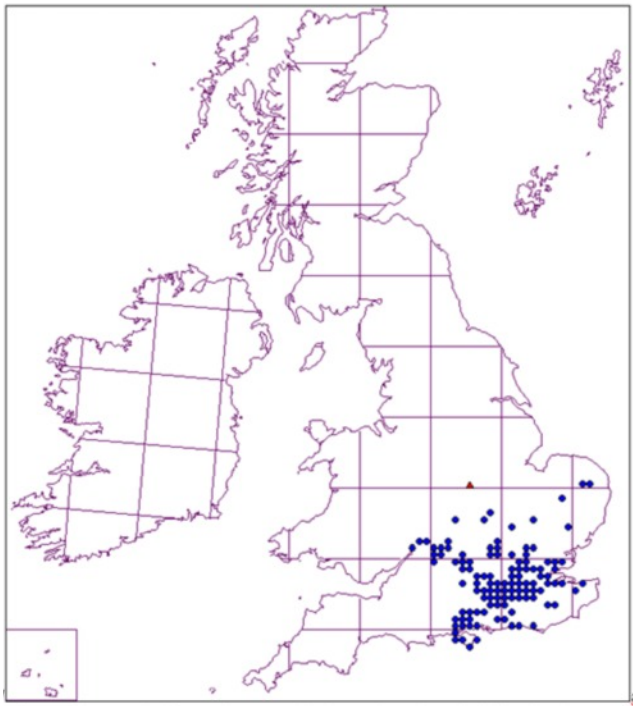
Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*. Photo: Dave Nicholls

New bug species continue to drift into Leicestershire and each year another one is added to the vice-county list. A significant species for 2014 was the so-called Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*. This was discovered in a car park at County Hall, Glenfield, by Mike Higgott on the 27 August and subsequent visits revealed several adults along with immature specimens; indicating that the species had successfully bred. There was a further County Hall record on the 23 September* but another site record was reported from Beaumont Leys on the 28 September by Gary Freestone.

It is assumed that the bug species had only appeared at the site in 2014 since the recorder has paid regular lunchtime visits to the same stretch of hedgerow since 2013 and not seen them previously. How this arrived in the county is obviously unknown but could well have been transported since the bulk of records are in the London area. In the earlier years it was given the vernacular name of Box Bug since it was only known to occur in Box Hill, Surrey and Box was assumed to be its specific foodplant. It has, however, now expanded its range and records extend eastwards into Kent, at more locations in Surrey and as far as Norfolk to the north east. The more direct northward leap to Leicestershire is quite remarkable and this is illustrated in the map below (red symbol) which shows the locations of all other records to date (blue symbols), including the nearest in Warwickshire & Northants. The species is now known to feed on other plants including Hawthorn, Yew and plum species. The sightings in Leicester were of individuals on bramble but this may well have been a sunning position rather than foodplant.

* Dave Nicholls tells me that breeding has been recorded here again in 2015 - Ed.

British and Irish distribution of Gonocerus acuteangulatus



Map: courtesy of Tristan Bancock

The bug is in the family of squashbugs (Coreidae) of which there are eleven species recorded in the British Isles and four of these are found in Leicestershire. The insect is quite large at about 15 mm body length when adult.

Do please keep looking for the species in other areas and ideally take a photograph for confirmation. Also illustrated is another Coreid, the Dock Bug (*Coreus marginatus*) which is now more widespread in the Leicester area and a wider and more angular insect. Interestingly this is another species which is marching northwards with the first county records being about 2004; this has now reached Derbyshire

Dock Bug Core*us marginatus*. Photo: Dave Nicholls

Dave Budworth

Black Hairstreak Survey at Luffenham Heath Golf Course 2013-4

Luffenham Heath Golf Course, Rutland (SK9502), holds a precarious population of the Black Hairstreak butterfly *Strymonidia pruni*, which has been monitored annually by Lenny Holton (see previous editions of this Newsletter). Here are his results for 2013 - 2014.

The weather conditions in 2013 during the butterfly's flight season were, once again, very poor and it seemed the chances of seeing any Black Hairstreaks seemed very remote. So it turned out - in the eight weeks that Lenny visited the golf course there was no sign of the butterfly at all.

It was with the blank result for 2013 in his mind that Lenny began the survey in 2014, between the ninth and the end of June. The first to the sixth visits produced nothing. On the seventh and eighth trip, Lenny recorded one specimen of the butterfly each day. It was a great relief to know that this rare butterfly was still here. The fact that June had been much hotter and drier than 2013, may help numbers to recover in 2015.

During Lenny's visits he recorded the other butterflies that he expected: Large White *Pieris brassicae* (although these were in small numbers), Small White *Pieris rapae*, Green-veined White *Pieris napi*, Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*, Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*, Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* and Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* (these were all in good numbers).

There were very few day-flying moths which was a surprise, considering weather conditions were good. Those that were seen were Silver-ground Carpet *Xanthorhoe montanata*, Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata* and Common White Wave *Cabera pusaria*.

The survey is carried out with the kind permission of the members of the golf club. LES members who wish to see this butterfly there may be able join Lenny on one of his surveys - please get in touch in late May via the Hon. Secretary of the LES.

Harry Ball

Ovipositing Marathon by the Common Spangle Gall Wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*

The bout of warm, sunny, dry days in April brought the overwintering agamic females of *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* out in force in this neighbourhood (Leicester). This is a tiny wasp that causes currant galls on oak leaves and catkins (photo) in spring, then causes common spangle galls on the underside of oak leaves in late summer. I collected an ovipositing female and a few oak twigs to see if I could get some video of her ovipositing using my little USB microscope. I did this, initially, in a rush. But I need not have bothered. After running around in my microscope chamber for 10-15 minutes, she located the small twig I had included and begun ovipositing. Being the friendly guy I am, and it being rather late, I subsequently put her in a seed propagator in a dark study, along with some fresh oak twigs with the intention of a release to nature in the morning. I happened into the study twice later in the evening and both times, when I switched on the light, she was on buds ovipositing. Surprised by this, I sneaked in once more (about 2 am) and she was still at it. She carried on ovipositing (or, at least thrusting her ovipositor into buds and distorting her body as these wasps do when they are extending their ovipositor) until 4 pm the day after her collection. I collected her at about 2 pm on 6 April and she was still at it 27 hours later. By 9 pm on the 7th she was just sitting on a bud looking absolutely shattered and her abdomen appeared to be much thinner (that might however, just have been my imagination). At the rate she was working, it is no doubt that she must have been exhausted. I did not see her ovipositing again and this morning she had passed on to the paradise for gall wasps.

Currant galls develop as a result of egg-laying by agamic females of *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* in spring. Photo: Steve Woodward

Once she was on a bud, she seemed to be ovipositing every 1-2 minutes. I don't know how much time she spent going from bud to bud during the night but she may well have laid several hundred ova in total.

Chris Leach

Supporting the Bumble Pollinators

As well as recording any bumblebees and their foraging choices (Fig. 1) that I see on my travels in VC55, another enjoyable aspect of studying them is to share knowledge and experiences with members of the public, who want to find out more about them. For this reason in 2015, as a volunteer for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) http://bumblebeeconservation.org, I have taken my bumble stand to various events, led several basic bumble identification workshops and walks and answered quite a few email queries, often with photos of bumbles attached for identification or verification. Some photos are very good and the clues are clearly shown, so identification is possible, but poor images of faded or worn bumbles at the end of their life, remain "tricky" and unidentifiable. Other emails have asked for advice about newcomer *Bombus hypnorum* the Tree Bumblebee, taking over bird boxes - a common occurrence; or bumbles "swarming". They do not really swarm like honeybees, but males (which cannot sting) sometimes gather in a "drone cloud" (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1. *Bombus terrestris* foraging on French Marigold.

Fig. 2. A *Bombus hypnorum* "drone cloud", of males checking out new queens emerging from a wall-mounted bird box, Rothley. Photo: Marion Vincent.

The bumble message

2015 has seen increasing public awareness of the threat to our pollinators, especially bumblebees, and the important, if unwitting role that they play in the pollination of the fruit and vegetables that we grow and eat. Problems arise for our wild bumbles with the ever-increasing loss of habitat to land development; or the transmission of parasitic diseases; and any possible sub-lethal effects of pesticides such as neonicotinoids. The best way to help is with the support of a better informed general public.

Of the 24 wild bumblebee species found in the UK, we have about half of them here in VC55 (although there are a few historic records of rarer species). The commonest are known as the "Big Seven": *Bombus hypnorum, B. terrestris, B. lucorum, B. hortorum, B. pratorum, B. lapidarius* and *B. pascuorum*. Even the "common" species are in decline, so the bumble message remains the same for all - if we still want to carry on appreciating the aesthetic beauty of wild and garden flowers; and grow delicious fresh fruit and vegetables in our gardens, then we should treat all bumbles as special. They need the help and understanding of everyone at critical times in the bumble life cycle. This can most usefully be done by providing a continuous range of nectar and pollen-rich flowers throughout the season, suitable for both short-tongued and long-tongued bumbles. In early spring, starving queen bumbles emerge after up to eight months in hibernation. During the summer months bumble colonies continue to develop. In late autumn, newly mated daughter queens need to feed up and put on body mass prior to hibernation. Think about it - these hibernating queens are the future of their species and their workers are next year's hard working pollinators. All other bumbles - the current old queen, all her remaining workers and drones will die.

Hints for beginners

First gently catch your bumble in a magnification cube, or use a net and carefully transfer it. Don't handle bumbles directly, because if provoked, females will sting. First check that your insect really is a bee and

not a hoverfly - it should have two pairs of wings. Match the clues against BBCT identification charts - you will need to look at the number and colour of bands on thorax and abdomen; tail colour, facial hairs, pollen baskets on the hind legs, long-tongue or short-tongue. When people are familiar with their "regulars", it is then that they will notice anything different, such as a new species, or a melanic (black) form; or cuckoo bumbles (species that are parasitic in the nests of their hosts).

Events 2015

The best way to get the bumble message across to the biggest audience, is to have a stand at a popular local event. The first was back in February at the 2015 Recorders Conference in Rothley, hopefully preaching to the converted. Chatting away to visitors for hours at a time, whilst stimulating, informative and fun, can also be repetitive and very exhausting, so here was an opportunity for me to hone my skills once again and try out my new display boards, featuring "Local VC55 Bumbles" - with basic species identification; lifecycles; nest sites, gardening for bumbles - foraging choices and bumbles as important pollinators, etc. There was also information about the ongoing BBCT national BeeWalk survey, recording basic bumble data over a fixed transect.

Two further public events were also held at Brocks Hill, Oadby, with hundreds of visitors joining in - the *Edith Murphy Environmental Garden Party* on 7 June; and the *Birds, Bees and Butterflies* event on 21 June. My BBCT bumble stand and information leaflets attracted interest, with brief excursions with families to check out the bumbles around the flower borders. The annual *Plant Sale and Family Day* at the University of Leicester Botanic Garden, Oadby, on 28 June, also offered an opportunity to connect with families, introducing them to bumbles - showing them how to catch and match bumble patterns to the basic BBCT ID charts. Children are so full of enthusiasm and curiosity and love furry bumblebees - however, parents (who often cannot tell the difference between a bumblebee, a honeybee and a wasp) are often much more cautious - some obviously having been primed with negative information via scary TV programmes with themes mostly based on the words "sting", "swarm", "killer" and "attack"!

Identification Workshops

A more practical way of passing on the bumble message was via the three bumblebee identification workshops that were held at the Botanic Garden, Oadby, on 31 May, 5 July and 2 August. These were basic sessions for groups of ten adults with little or no prior bumble knowledge - a quick dip into what bumbles might be found in a two hour session around the herbaceous borders. Participants enjoyed the experience - and some couldn't wait to get home and see what flowers the bumbles were foraging in their own gardens.

All I can hope to do is pass on a bit of knowledge to other interested people and help the pollinators.

Maggie Frankum

DERBYSHIRE & NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

www.danes-insects.org.uk

INSECT EXHIBITION

Saturday 21st November

1100 – 1600

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY
Brackenhurst Campus, Southwell

(location NG25 0QF or SK 6946 5243)

This is the Society's annual exhibition and provides an opportunity to develop a wider interest and participate in the study of insects and other invertebrates

The exhibits and displays will include:

- **live & preserved insects**
- **overviews of studies and projects**
- **news of research and conservation**
- **entomological equipment**
- **photographs and powerpoint presentations**
- **books and CDs**

and

- **an opportunity to meet with other entomologists from the area who will be keen to advise and encourage your interest**

The college has catering facilities with hot & cold snacks and drinks

entrance and car parking FREE

access and WC for disabled

Registered Charity 519240 16.09.2015

Caddis Update

Since my 2013 review on the caddis of VC55 (Morris, 2013) even more records have been forthcoming, allowing me to more critically evaluate the current database of about 9,000 records. This has resulted in the identification of eight species which are of dubious provenance (mainly based either on misidentification of larvae or species outside their normally range). As a result 112 species have been validated as being present in VC55.

Notable records in 2015 so far include:

(1) Grammotaulius nigropunctatus, previously known from seven adult records before 1980, turned up at light traps run by Adrian Russell at Mountsorrel Marshes NR and Saddington Reservoir;

(2) a third adult record of *Athripsodes albifrons* from Graham Calow's light trap at Sapcote on 11 June 2015;

(3) Ceraclea nigronervosa taken on two occasions at Sapcote bringing the VC55 records to five, all since 2013;

(4) following on from the two records of *Glossosoma boltoni* in 2013 and 2014, it has now turned up at light in Dadlington (x2, Andy Johnson) and Sapcote.

A few days ago larval records from Environment Agency surveys were sent by Ian Wallace, National Recorder. These await sorting and verification but already a handful e.g. *Apatania muliebris*, have been identified as potentially new to VC55 whilst others are very dubious e.g. *Glossosoma intermedium* (known only from the Lake District). The data set provided summarised records for 2010-2014 but I am hopeful of eventually having all the details which should add considerably to our local archive.

Hydropsyche saxonica, known only from streams feeding into the Eye Brook in east Leicestershire, has been verified by the new EA data along with several new sites. Unfortunately the other local species, *Tinodes pallidulus*, was not recorded by the EA although it seems, from the grid references supplied, that samples were not taken from the area of Wood Brook at Nanpantan where the caddis was recorded thirty years ago.

One thing that has emerged is that even when identifications are carried out by supposedly experienced entomologists, errors do occur and the retention of voucher specimens of species which give most concern should be retained for independent checking.

Reference

Morris, R. (2013). *Provisional status of Trichoptera (caddis flies) in Leicestershire & Rutland*. LES Occasional Publication **29**.

Ray Morris

More scarce carabids at Priory Water

A general survey of ground beetles (Carabidae) of Priory Water carried out between 2010 and 2013 (Cook & Clark, 2013) recorded 68 species. During a current study at Priory Water on the effect of creating bare patches of ground at the edge of a *Phragmites* reedbed on carabid diversity, a further nine species have been added to the list for the reserve. Most of the new species are fairly widespread in VC55 but one, *Dyschirius aeneus*, is nationally scarce and in the last 25 years has been recorded in VC55 mainly along the River Soar, the last record being 2003 (Finch, 2013). *D. aeneus* is a species that burrows in soft mud at the edge of aquatic habitats and has been found twice this year at Priory Water, in the same patch of bare ground. There are four patches in the experiment design, interspersed by similar areas of natural vegetation. We have also recorded *Pterostichus gracilis* for the second time, a nationally scarce species with few VC55 records.

Dyschirius aeneus
3.1 - 3.6 mm

References

Cook, T. & Clark, F. (2013) *The ground beetles (Carabidae) of Priory Water NR, Leicestershire*. LES Occasional Publication **30**.

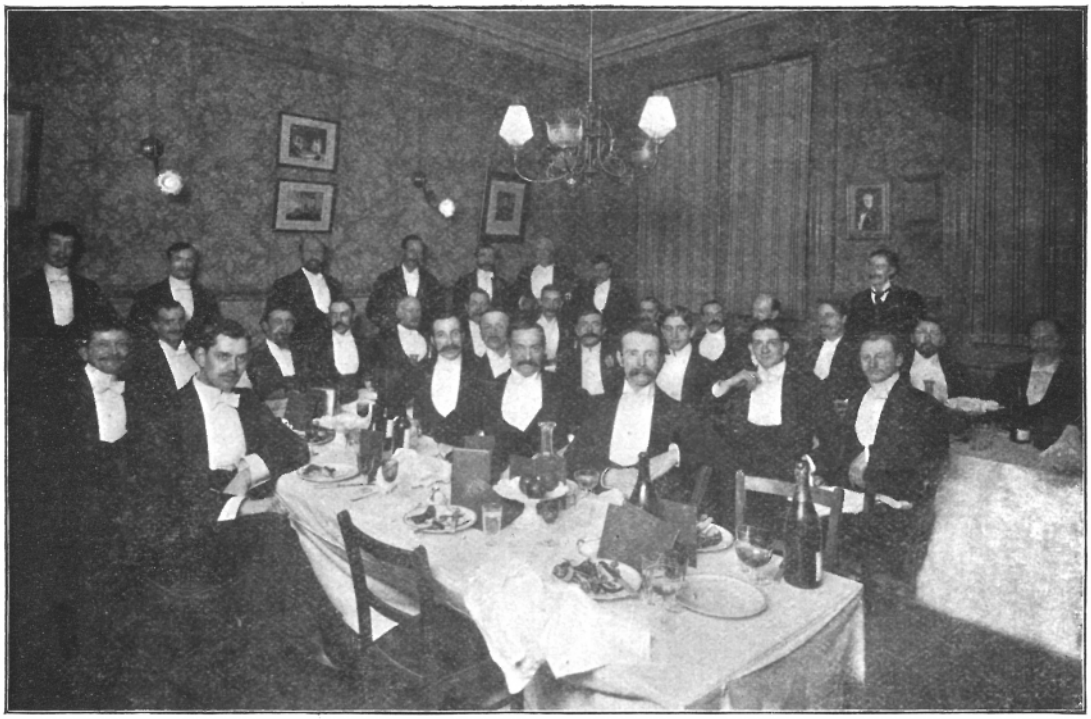
Finch, G. L. (2015) *An Annotated Checklist to the Beetles of VC55*. Private publication.

Tony Cook & Frank Clark

Dress code reminder for LES members

Vol. XI. Plate III.

Annual Dinner of the Leicester Entomological Society, 1899.



G. Neighbour. G. B Dixon. T. Powell. F. B. Jones. C. B. Headly. F. Bligh Bond.
F. R. Rowley. W. A. Vice. F. B. Wilmer.
W. J. Kaye. J. W. Tutt. A. Colson. T. Hudson Beare. F. Bouskell. H. Russell. J. Dodd.
J. E. Tyers. W. J. Hall. J. Goddard. J. Orgill. H. St. J. Donisthorpe.
G. B. Chalcraft. Montague Gunning.
A. Cholerton. M. Burr. A. M. Corah. R. Overton.
W. Pearson.

Entom. Record, etc., 1899.

Above: LES members of yesteryear were just as fond of eating as the present cohort, but evidently took the dress code more seriously. Thanks to Adrian Russell for enhancing the photo.

Right: A lady lepidopterist of the "Jules Verne" era, as imagined by one of the participants in the Lincoln *Steampunk Festival*, 29 Aug 2015. Photo: Steve Woodward (yes, I did go!).

VC55 Soldierflies

During the sorting of caddis from Rutland Water NR malaise trap catches in 2014 I collected these easily-recognised flies at the same time. Stratiomyidae or soldierflies (with the exception of the *Pachygaster* genus) have distinctively spreading veins and an obvious discal cell (Fig. 1), the latter not being so noticeable in *Pachygaster*. As there are only 47 species of Stratiomyidae in Britain and a highly usable key for identification is available (Stubbs & Drake, 2014) I am now accumulating the records for this group. Information has been obtained from LRERC, NatureSpot and the collections at Barrow upon Soar amounting to 314 records of 24 species (Fig. 2).

Amongst these records are observations of the nationally rare *Odontomyia argentata* found at Hugglescote (Steve Lane, 2014) and at the end of April 2015 at the Grange Fields, Broughton Astley (Graham Calow, Dave Nicholls). According to the NBN Gateway there are only 141 British records of this species, mostly coming from East Anglia and southern England. In contrast, the nationally common *Chloromyia formosa* (Fig. 3), with about 5,000 national records, accounts for almost a quarter of the VC55 soldierfly records. I am more than happy to receive specimens for identification with the usual proviso for full accompanying data.

Reference

Stubbs, A. & Drake, M. (2014) *British Soldierflies and their allies*. BENHS.

Ray Morris

Fig. 1. Stratiomyid wing.

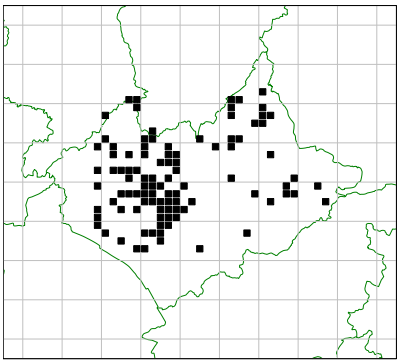


Fig. 2. Distribution of located VC55 Stratiomyidae records to date.

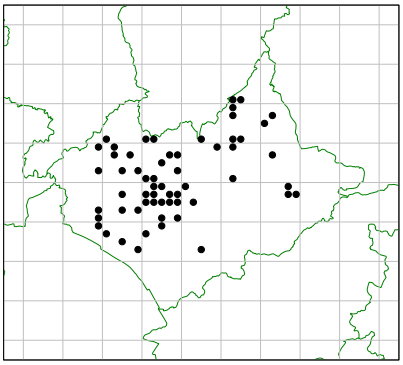


Fig. 3. Distribution of *Chloromyia formosa* in VC55.

Something will turn up!

The main thrust of my recording effort this year has been directed towards flora and the BSBI 2020 Atlas, so insects have received a little less of my attention than usual, but as most of you will know, there is usually something of interest out there just waiting to be noticed.

One of these 'interesting' finds turned up almost literally on my doorstep in Sapcote – well on the house wall very close to it, actually. It was a spider very similar in appearance to *Steatoda bipunctata*, but this one got my attention straight away because it was so large. Fortunately I am still able to call on the services of Jon Daws for help with identification of spider specimens, so I sent it for him to check out, and after a short wait he came back to me to say that this was *Steatoda nobilis* - only the second record for VC55 that we are aware of. Also known as the False Widow Spider, the female has a body length of 15 mm and measures 25 mm including the leg span. It is also reputed to have a bite similar to a bee sting, so I am quite pleased to say that I tapped my specimen straight from the wall into a pot with no handling involved!

Steatoda nobilis False Widow Spider.

Graham Calow

Some Leicestershire Galls

Galls are abnormal growths on plants caused by another organism, which provide nourishment and shelter for the causer. The examples shown here are all caused by invertebrates. The causers are often tiny creatures that would never be noticed, were it not for the galls which, in contrast, may be conspicuous. Fortunately, it is usually possible to identify the causer from the form of the gall and the identity of the host plant. The best identification guide is Redfern & Shirley (2011) and a detailed account of gall biology is given by Redfern (2011).

This is an arbitrary selection from my 2015 rambles.

References

Redfern, M. & Shirley, P. (2011) *British Plant Galls*. Field Studies Council.

Redfern, M. (2011) *Plant Galls*. Collins New Naturalist.

The thickened and distorted leaves on *Galium aparine* (Goosegrass) are caused by a mite *Cecidophyes rouhollahi*.

A marshy field near Barrow upon Soar had many Redshank plants *Persicaria maculosa* affected by the midge *Wachtliella persicariae*, whose orange maggots live and feed in a thickened roll at the edge of the leaf.

I have looked at Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea* in hundreds of churchyards and never seen this gall. It turned up in some abundance on a disused railway at Shawell. The swellings on the leaf often occur in pairs, giving rise to a rude vernacular name that I will not repeat here (see Redfern, 2011). The causer is a cynipid wasp *Liposthenes glechomae*.

Also on Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea* can be found the so-called Lighthouse Gall, caused by a midge *Rondaniola bursaria*. When the lighthouses fall off, a neat round hole is left. This is much commoner than the previous species.

Walnut trees *Juglans regia* nearly always have some leaves affected by a mite *Aceria erinea*, which makes a smooth, round bump on the upper surface. The cavity on the underside is lined with dense, short hairs. This form of gall (called an erineum) is typical of mites.

Steve Woodward

Speckled Bush-crickets - where are they?

As insects go, Speckled Bush-crickets *Leptophyes punctatissima* are large beasts (female up to 18 mm plus ovipositor), yet seeing them is proving to be a challenge. They occur in gardens and thick, mixed hedgerows but are very good at blending in with the green leaves. The best way to establish their presence is by listening for the song of the male using an ultrasound or bat detector - at 40 kHz, the pitch is too high for human ears. The song (or stridulation) is not continuous, but is modulated into very short bursts, each separated from the next by 3-4 seconds. The burst is barely more than a click, and might easily be dismissed as some kind of interference.

Using this technique we have found several sites recently, each with dozens of males. They include Odstone, Woodhouse, Cossington, Great Dalby and Asfordby. After 15 minutes of searching we sometimes set eyes on one or two crickets - but very often we fail to find a single one, even though we are certain they are just a metre or so away! "Where are they?!".

This leads us to think they are under-recorded. Owners of bat detectors are encouraged to scan suitable places in late summer and send in records to HI (Orthoptera Recorder for Leics) or Phil Rudkin (ditto for Rutland).

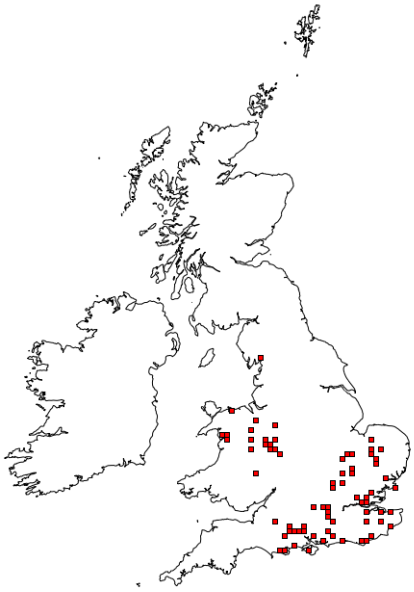
Female (above) and male (below). Photos: Steve Woodward

Helen Ikin & Steve Woodward

New Cranefly species for VC55

The Dipterists Forum held its 2015 Summer field meeting based at Nottingham University from 11-18 July, which meant that sites in North Leicestershire were within range. A full report of this meeting, by Alan Stubbs, is to be found in the Dipterists Forum Autumn *Bulletin*. The most interesting record for me was that of *Tipula helvola* (Diptera, Tipulidae) at the LRWT Reserve at Dimminsdale (SK3721). Two females were netted by John Showers from Northants, and myself in very wet conditions. The ovipositor (left) is of medium length.

It is a smaller brown member of the sub-genus *Lunatipula* with the wing showing the characteristic white lunule. It is found in dry woodland, so its presence on the limestone at Dimminsdale was unsurprising and fills a gap on the distribution map. This is a first record for Leicestershire and brings the total to 41 species of Tipulidae, out of a total of 88 nationally.



Map reproduced with permission from the NBN (www.searchnbn.net)

John Kramer

ID Signpost

Tomorrow's Biodiversity is a Field Studies Council project aimed at supporting biological recording. One of its initiatives, called the ID Signpost, is to help recorders find identification resources: books, journal articles, web sites, etc. The following link presents a list of resources and method searching for the relevant entries. Those that are available on-line can be downloaded.

http://www.tombio.uk/idsignpost

Auchenorrhyncha Recording Scheme

This is the national scheme for leafhoppers, planthoppers & related groups.

The latest newsletter (LEDRA Issue 3, Summer 2015) can now be downloaded from the Ledra website:

http://www.ledra.co.uk/index.html or:
http://www.ledra.co.uk/newsletter.html

Looking for help?

The following are willing to act as an initial point of contact for providing advice and information to members.

Arachnids (Mites & Ticks):- Ivan Pedley, 48 Woodlands Drive, Groby, Leicester LE6 0BQ. 0116 287 6886. ivan.pedley@gmail.com

Arachnids (Opiliones, Harvestmen): - Ray Morris, see page 2.

Arachnids (Spiders, pseudoscorpions):- vacant.

Biological Recording:- Sue Timms, Leics & Rutland Environmental Records Centre; Room 400, County Hall, Glenfield LE3 8RA. 0116305 4108 Sue.timms@leics.gov.uk

Chilopoda:- Helen Ikin, 237 Forest Road, Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves, Leics LE12 8TZ. 01509 890102. helen@canids.freeserve.co.uk

Coleoptera:- Graham Finch, 14 Thorndale, Ibstock, Leics. LE67 6JT: m.finch4@ntlworld.com

Diplopoda:- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Diptera (Acalypterates, Syrphids & Brachycera):- Darwyn Sumner, 122 Link Road, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7BX. 0116 212 5075. Darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com

Diptera (Syrphids & Stratiomyids):- Ray Morris (see page 2).

Diptera (Nematocera - Mosquitoes, Blackflies & Craneflies):- John Kramer, 31 Ash Tree Road, Oadby, Leicester LE2 5TE. 0116 271 6499. john.kramer@btinternet.com

Hymenoptera (Symphyta - Sawflies):- Dave Nicholls, 69-71 Church Lane, Ratby, LE6 0JF. nicholls.99@btinternet.com

Hymenoptera (Bumblebees):- Maggie Frankum, see page 2.

Hymenoptera (Other aculeates - Bees, Wasps & Ants):- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Hemiptera:- Dave Budworth, see page 2.

Isopoda (Woodlice):- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Lepidoptera:- Adrian Russell, 15 St Swithin's Road, Leicester LE5 2GE. 0116 241 5101. Adrian@wainscot.demon.co.uk

Mecoptera, Neuroptera, Plecoptera :- Steve Woodward, see page 2.

Mollusca: - Dave Nicholls (see Hymenoptera (Symphyta)).

Odonata:- Ian Merrill i.merrill@btopenworld.com

Orthoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda.

Phthiraptera, Siphonaptera:- Frank Clark, 4 Main Street, Houghton on the Hill, Leicester LE7 9GD. 0116 243 2725. ClrFlea@aol.com

Plant Galls:- Maggie Frankum, see page 2.

Psocoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda.

Thysanoptera: - Ivan Pedley, see Mites.

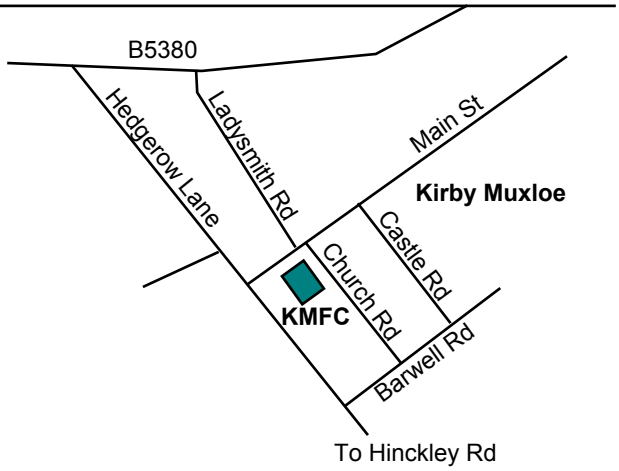
Trichoptera (adults):- Ray Morris, see page 2.

Pesticide Lecture

Jan Dawson, Hon. Prog. Sec. of the Leicester Lit. & Phil. Natural History Section, has given notice of a meeting that will interest LES members. The same speaker gave a superb presentation on ladybirds last season (which many members missed).

Wednesday 14 October, Richard Comont (now with Bumblebee Conservation Trust) talking on the *Neonicotinoid Pesticides*. Venue: Lord Mayor's Rooms, New Walk Museum, Leicester, 7:30 pm.

Indoor Meetings Programme



Our venue is Kirby Muxloe Free Church, Main Street, Kirby Muxloe LE9 2AN SK517042. The session starts at 7:30, but most members arrive half an hour earlier for a natter and a cuppa. Visitors are welcome.

Thursday 15 October 2015 - Members' evening

This is your evening, a chance to share the highlights or disappointments of the entomological year. Bring along any digital images* or 35 mm slides plus anything you want to exhibit. New books or gadgets and your comments on their practicality are also welcome. If you are bringing slides then please bring your projector.

Thursday 12 November 2015 - "From Bradgate to Borneo - In Search of Insects"

Steve Woodward will share highlights from various trips, local and exotic, temperate and tropical. His presentations are always extremely interesting and informative whilst his photography covers many aspects of entomology.

Thursday 17 December 2015 - Annual General Meeting

The first part of the evening is our AGM. The second part of the evening is a feast of mince pies and Christmas cake, whilst watching members photo presentations and/or exhibits.

Thursday 14 January 2016 - 'Leicestershire Gall Causers under the Microscope, focusing on Midge and Fruit Fly Galls'

Chris Leach is secretary, membership secretary and invertebrate group recorder for the British Plant Gall Society. Now he is available on Thursday evenings so we are very pleased to welcome him back since his last presentation to the society was at Holly Hayes in January 1999. Chris has been working on a new website to assist recorders in the identification of our county's gall-causers, he also has 'video clips' showing the behaviour of these fascinating insects.

Thursday 18 February 2016 - 'Fear no Weevil,' Beetles and Beetling in VC55

Graham Finch, Coleoptera co-ordinator for VC55, will update us on methods and results of recent fieldwork. Have the historic sites and the species recorded in the historical documentation survived until present day? There are both losses and gains in terms of sites and species, come along to find out what they are.

Thursday 17 March 2016 - 'Annual Moth Recorders Meeting'

Adrian Russell is the County Recorder for Lepidoptera and in 2014 received 50,599 moth records, for 931 species. He will summarise the results of data received from such recorders including the work of the VC55 moth group during 2015. Adrian will tell us, based on his analyses, which species are increasing and which species are declining in number. He will mention those under-recorded areas of VC55 and reflect on the 'pros and cons' of visiting such sites. How many new county records will there be? Will the number of moths for 2015 exceed those of 2014?

* if bringing digital media, please be sure to virus check them.

Anona Finch