



No. 204

1 October - 31 December 2011

Editorial Panel: Helen Ikin, Steve Woodward, Jim Graham.

Hon. Sec. Judy Johnson, 27 Sandalwood Road, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3PR (01509-214711)

SOME CONCERNS ABOUT FEEDING BIRDS IN GARDENS AND FEEDING STATIONS

During recent years most of us have grown to believe that the feeding of birds in our gardens and at feeding stations in the countryside is an important conservation activity benefiting many small bird species but there is undoubtedly a downside to this activity. In attracting birds into our gardens or assembling them together at feeding stations, we are subjecting them to an increased risk of predation

from Sparrowhawks and, in gardens, also from predation by the huge domestic cat population. Sparrowhawks must find numbers of busily feeding birds easy prey as they perform their characteristic surprise attacks around trees, shrubs and buildings.

There is also a real danger from lethal bird diseases contracted from unclean bird-tables and feeders, something much more likely nowadays when the super abundance of food offered and reduced numbers of many species ensures that some food remains uneaten for long periods, in which time it can get wet and polluted with droppings. Up until about the 1980's food put out on bird-tables in my parish of Quorn was quickly consumed and what wasn't eaten by the local garden birds soon disappeared when flocks of hungry Starlings descended into the garden, but now food can remain on the bird-table uneaten for days, if not weeks. Similarly, peanuts, etc., can remain in feeders too long for safety.

Several years ago *Trichomonos* decimated the Greenfinch population throughout much of the country and although the Greenfinch is still present, its numbers seem to be well down on what they were. It seems likely that this parasite or the *Salmonella* bacteria may have also been partly responsible for the catastrophic decline in the communal House and Tree Sparrow populations that have taken place over recent decades. During the last few years I have noticed birds, particularly Great Tits, suffering from the 'Avian Pox virus' which produces tumour-like growths, especially next to the eyes and beak, making it difficult for

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CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

such birds to feed and subject to an increasing risk of predation. I believe the intensive feeding in our gardens can give us a wrong idea of species abundance. For example, during recent years Goldfinch have become common visitors to our gardens, attracted to Nyger or other small seed, but personally I don't see the large flocks (c. 100) feeding on Teasel or thistle seed in the countryside or in waterside Alders as I used to. I never remember small birds, as a whole, being so scarce away from gardens and hot spots such as feeding stations and much of the countryside in the winter seems largely devoid of small song-birds though with no shortage of Carrion Crows, Magpies and Woodpigeons.

I also wonder what effect the feeding of birds throughout the breeding-season is having on the distribution and size of territories of breeding birds. Is there a greater density in fields, hedgerows and woodland adjacent to gardens or feeding stations than in the wider countryside and, if so, is this necessarily a good thing? When small birds feed in a more natural way throughout the whole of our countryside it is less likely that they will be predated than when attracted into the small space of our gardens and less easy for their natural food to get polluted. Again, what effect is feeding birds throughout the summer having on nestlings which require an invertebrate-rich diet at the start of their lives.

Moreover in feeding birds in our gardens and at feeding stations we are inadvertently helping the Grey Squirrel to maintain its extremely high population levels which may well prove counter-productive in helping populations of small birds in the long run. Where domestic cats are present, gardens can be particularly dangerous for small ground-feeding birds and especially so for juveniles, fresh out of the nest, which are easily stalked and trapped against walls and fences.

We all love feeding our local song-birds and viewing them at close quarters but we need to be ever mindful of the constant dangers they face from predators and disease. Bird tables and feeders are therefore best placed close to some cover and should always be kept clean and disinfected.

Peter Gamble

Hedgehogs have been active and visiting for food in ATO's Loughborough garden throughout the quarter until 21 December. At least two and possibly four individuals were seen. In Swithland, DAP had a small hedgehog feeding on the lawn on 15 November and it appeared to be nesting under the garden shed. In a neighbouring garden two adults were visiting for food and had made a nest of leaves in the undergrowth. DAP wonders if the dry summer had restricted the food supply for Hedgehogs and resulted in slow growth and small specimens late in the year. Charnwood is an area with a high Badger population and subsequent high rates of predation on Hedgehogs so any Hedgehog records are good. SFW had one in his Groby garden on 2 October.

Many fresh molehills were noted in the Kinchley fields near Buddon on 30 December.

We have no shrew or bat records this quarter.

The only **Brown Hares** were three seen by PHG in fields at Great Easton near Eye Brook Reservoir on 31 December.

Rabbits were again plentiful at Swithland throughout the quarter.



Grey Squirrel © Steve Woodward

Grey Squirrels were much in evidence at Quorn through the quarter – raiding the bird feeders and collecting and burying the bumper acorn crop. Later they were digging holes all over PHG's garden as they tried to retrieve the acorn cache. Squirrels were also noted at Ulverscroft NR and Grace Dieu.

Both **Bank Vole** and **Field Vole** were caught in the Longworth Traps set at Grace Dieu. The

two Bank Voles weighed 15 g and 17 g and the Field Vole 19 g.

Five **Wood Mice** were also trapped and weighed between 14 and 18 g.

A **Red Fox** regularly visited DAP's Swithland garden and was watched stalking Rabbits. Foxes were seen by GP in Mill Close, Birstall and in Birstall Meadows.

One **Stoat** was seen crossing a road in Swithland at 11 am on 5 October and, on the same date, a **Weasel** was seen briefly as it crossed Barrow Road in Quorn near the allotments .

Dead **Badgers** were seen beside roads in Cropston and Swithland and evidence of their presence throughout the quarter was noted in the gardens and paddocks of Swithland village and at Ulverscroft NR and Grace Dieu.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Mute Swans at Swithland Reservoir peaked at 95 at the end of the year. Two **Bewick's Swans** were at Swithland Reservoir in November. What must have been the largest number of **Greylag Geese** ever locally were at Swithland Reservoir on 16 November when 610 were counted. Groby Pool and Dishley Pool produced the only reports of **Canada Geese** with a quantity (unstated) at Groby on 15 December and 23 at Dishley Pool on 20 November. The number of records of **Egyptian Geese** outnumbered the previous species as a pair was seen with some regularity at Cropston Reservoir and Bradgate Park throughout the quarter.

Three **Shelduck** were found at Cropston Reservoir on 28 December. A pair of **Mandarin Ducks** was at Cropston Reservoir early in October and a male at the same site at the end of the quarter. In December the numbers at Blackbrook Reservoir rose to 27. **Wigeon** in single figures were at Cropston Reservoir but the maximum count was at Swithland Reservoir with 289 on 30 October. Thirty **Gadwall** were at Watermead Park and 64 were at Cossington Meadows on 16 November. Swithland Reservoir provided the maximum **Teal** numbers with a massive 487 on 18 December, Cossington Meadows held 105 on 16 November. **Mallard**



Shoveler © Jim Graham

reports were scarce with 53 at Cropston Reservoir on 21 December the only significant count. A few **Shoveler** frequented the local waters but Watermead Park had 40 on 16 November increasing to 60 by the end of the year. There were 87 at Swithland Reservoir on 23 October. Four **Red-crested Pochard** were at Thornton Reservoir on 17 October, one at Swithland Reservoir on 23 October and one at Sence Valley Forest Park on 30 November. The only **Pochard** records of note were 27 at Swithland Reservoir on 30 October and a count of 41 at Albert Village on 24 November. Double figure counts of **Tufted Ducks** came from Dishley Pool and Cropston Reservoir but Swithland Reservoir recorded 208 in late December. **Goldeneye** were regularly at Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of seven, all females on 18 November. The maximum count at Swithland Reservoir was 68 on the last day of the year. The only other site was the new lake at Longmoor near Ravenstone with one on 22 November. Eight **Goosander** were at Watermead Park at the end of the year and three at Willesley Flash on 24 November.

There were only a few Partridge records, these were 30 **Red-legged Partridges** at South Kilworth on 29 October and twelve at Dean's Lane the following day. Two **Grey Partridges** were at Shenton on 15 October and five at Edmondthorpe in late December. **Pheasants** again were grossly under-recorded but there were 80 at Kegworth on 3 November.

Little Grebes were only noted at Watermead Park, Swithland Reservoir and Cropston Reservoir with three, ten and two respectively. The latter site provided regular **Great Crested**

Grebe records with regular counts over 30 including 47 on 4 December.

Most of the larger waters attracted **Cormorants** with numbers building up to 87 at Cropston Reservoir on 18 December. The early year cold spell seems to have affected the **Little Egret** population as there was only two reports, one at Groby Pool on 28 November and one at Swithland Reservoir on New Year's Eve. **Grey Herons** do not seem to have been affected in the same way as there were more reports with a maximum number of six - apart from twelve at Swithland Reservoir at the end of the year.

Single **Red Kites** were over Bradgate Park and Burrough on the Hill, both in October, but ten were noted at Branston on 30 November. There were not as many **Sparrowhawk** sighting as usual, all were single birds and most were hunting through members' gardens. **Buzzards** were again widespread but with a maximum of four together at Shenton on 15 October. Unusually in recent reports, twice as many **Kestrels** were observed than Sparrowhawks, they were widespread across the area. Single **Peregrines** were noted at Buddon and Sheet Hedges Woods, Albert Village, Shenton and interestingly one at Leicester City Football Club's King Power Stadium on the first day of the quarter.

Cossington Meadows and Dishley Pool provided the only **Water Rails**, on 30 October and 18 December and **Moorhens** were in short supply, the only counts exceeding ten were at Swithland Reservoir with 40 and Kelham Bridge where up to twenty could be seen in the first half of the quarter. **Coots** were also taken for granted, with very few records apart from a count of 370 at Swithland Reservoir on 5 November

A solitary **Ringed Plover** put in an appearance at Cropston Reservoir on 2 October. At the end of October there was a flock 700 **Golden Plover** at Branston and 60 at Sence Valley a few days later. On Boxing Day a group of 34 flew north over my house at Hugglescote and the following day what were presumably the same 34 made the return journey. There were a few **Lapwing** flocks around the area the largest being 250 at Branston and 200 at Cossington Meadows in October and November

respectively. A **Temminck's Stint** was found at Swithland Reservoir on Christmas Eve. All **Snipe** records apart from two at Bishops Meadow Loughborough on 7 December were from Kelham Bridge where there was a maximum of four on 18 October. Likewise the only **Green Sandpipers**, apart from one at Swithland Reservoir on 4 December, were noted at the same site, all singles and last seen on 10 November. On 23 October a **Grey Phalarope** appeared at Swithland Reservoir.

The only **Mediterranean Gull** of the quarter was at Albert Village on 3 November. A lone **Little Gull** was feeding over Cropston Reservoir on 13 November. The maximum number of other gulls is as follows, all at Albert Village except where stated. **Black-headed Gulls**, 4500 on 15 December. **Common Gulls**, 300 at Swithland Reservoir on 30 November. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, 2200 on 17 November. **Yellow-legged Gulls**, seven on November. **Herring Gulls**, 400 on 15 December. **Glaucous Gull**, one on 22 October and 15 December. **Great Black-backed Gulls**, 90 on 29 December.

There were 110 **Stock Doves** at Blackbrook Reservoir on 28 November, 8000 **Woodpigeons** over Dean's Lane during the last week of October but no one mentioned **Collared Doves**.

The only **Barn Owl** noted on Charnwood was at Bradgate Park with another four sightings from the east of the county. **Little Owls** were only seen at Rothley, Bradgate Park and Stockerstone. **Tawny Owls** were seen or heard at six sites around Charnwood which included two separate gardens in Rothley. It has been a good winter for **Short-eared Owls** (numbers increasing into 2012) in November three were seen regularly at Cossington Meadows, one at Hick's Lodge and one at Longmoor.

The previous winter appeared to reduce **Kingfisher** numbers but a partial recovery was made this autumn, they were noted at six sites in all three months.

Green Woodpeckers were only found in six areas but this did include five in Bradgate Park on 5 December. **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were far more widespread and members mentioned regular visits to their garden feeders. Unfortunately, no **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were reported.



Great Spotted Woodpecker © Steve Woodward

Three sites had single figure counts of **Skylark** but twenty were seen at Branston Cross Roads and also at Longmoor in October and November and just over a hundred passed over Dean's Lane on 26 October. A late **Swallow** passed over the same site on 16 October. Eighty **House Martins** were feeding over Cropston Reservoir on 3 October and the last three were over Kaye's Plantation, Quorn, on 17 October. Most **Meadow Pipit** sightings were from around the Cropston area with ten on 18 December. Others were at Barrow upon Soar, Dean's Lane and Charnwood Lodge where there were twenty on 12 October. Another species that suffered in the previous winter was the **Grey Wagtail**, in spite of this single birds were found at six sites with two at Dishley Pool on 16 October. Of the few **Pied Wagtail** observations the largest number was seven at Shenton on 15 October.

A lone **Stonechat**, the only autumn record, was at Cropston Reservoir on 9 October.



Redwing © Steve Woodward

At the Dean's Lane watch point, 1600 **Fieldfares** passed over in late October and early November, including 920 on 22 October. Over a hundred were seen Branston, Edmondthorpe, Great Easton, Charnwood Lodge and Kelham Bridge. Compared with the previous species

Redwings were almost scarce, 450 passed over Dean's Lane but the most seen elsewhere were 60 at Watermead Park at the end of the year. Only two **Mistle Thrushes** were mentioned and only eight **Song Thrushes**!

A very late **Lesser Whitethroat** was feeding with tits at Kelham Bridge on 18 October. Two **Chiffchaffs** were noted at Cropston and the Outwoods in early October. **Goldcrests** were only found at five sites but all contained a few birds, seven in Swithland Wood being the highest total.

A few double figure flocks of **Long Tailed Tits** were found, mostly on Charnwood. A single flock at Cropston Reservoir on 4 December contained 33 birds. **Blue Tits** and **Great Tits** were quite common, especially Great Tits, seventeen were counted in Swithland Wood in December. **Coal Tits** visited gardens and were regularly seen around the Cropston / Bradgate area. Single **Willow Tits** were occasionally noted around Cropston Reservoir but up to four birds were reliable around the feeders at Kelham Bridge. **Marsh Tits** were only found at Grace Dieu, The Outwoods, Puddledyke and Swithland Wood. All **Nuthatch** and **Treecreeper** reports apart from a Nuthatch at Shenton came from an area around Cropston and Swithland Woods where there were nine Nuthatches on 4 October.

Jays were found in half a dozen sites mainly around the Cropston area. Three were reported at the Reservoir on 6 November. **Magpies** were under-reported but two groups of fourteen birds were observed at Kelham Bridge and Barrow upon Soar, both in October. **Jackdaws** were watched going to roost towards Bradgate Park on 4 December when 100 were present. There was a similar situation at Ravenstone when 200 were seen on 22 November. The only place where **Rooks** were noticed was Thornton Reservoir but I am sure there were more about than that. There was hardly a **Crow** mentioned in any notes. All **Raven** records were of two birds apart from one bird at Swithland Reservoir on Christmas Eve. The double counts were all in October at Swithland Reservoir, Branston, Dean's Lane and Charnwood Lodge.

Around 4500 **Starlings** passed over Dean's Lane in a westerly direction during late October and early November, this number included 1870

on 23 October. Albert Village hosted around 1000 on 1 December.

Tree Sparrow was the only sparrow mentioned and then only one record, that of twelve birds over Dean's Lane on 22 October. There are, incidentally, always Tree Sparrows at the feeding station at the round car park at Staunton Harold Reservoir (Derbyshire).



Greenfinch © Jim Graham

The flock of **Chaffinches** at Swithland Reservoir rose to 55 by late November and there were counts in the teens at Cropston Reservoir. In an autumn of few **Brambling** numbers, it was not surprising that only three birds were noted, two at Dean's Lane and one at Edmondthorpe. The maximum number of **Greenfinches** reported was 30 at a garden feeder in Cropston on 24 December and there were 36 **Goldfinches** in the same garden in November. Up to 60 a day passed over Dean's Lane in October. **Siskin** were noted at seven sites with 30 at Swithland on 20 December. All **Linnet** records, apart from 25 at Longmoor in November, were from around Cropston Reservoir with a total of 104 on the second day of the quarter. **Lesser Redpolls** were found at two sites, in early November, there were 24 at Cropston Reservoir and later in the month up to 65 at Benscliffe. A few **Crossbills** were noted over Dean's Lane in October. Members reported **Bullfinches** at around a dozen sites with seven birds noted at Watermead Park on 28 December.

A **Snow Bunting** was at Albert Village Lake on 10 November and two spent a few days at Longmoor around the same time. **Yellowhammers** were few and far between with only a total of 32 birds mentioned, unfortunately 25 of those were in one flock at Branston cross roads in late November. **Reed**

Buntings were even worse with only two sightings, at Dean's Lane and Shenton.

Longmoor is the new name for the old opencast coal mine between Ravenstone and Normanton le Heath and will be the site of the flagship Jubilee Wood, one of many throughout the country. It is anticipated that there will still be a large area of grassland when the wood is planted but the final plans have not yet been drawn up.

Bas Forgham

*A report in the last edition of Heritage mentioned five **Little Gulls** at Hick's Lodge. This was unfortunately a data inputting error. Please accept our apologies.*

Our thanks to Ken Goodrich and LROS who coordinated the bird records for this period.

FISH, AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

As we had very few records, the report for the two winter quarters will appear in Heritage 205.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Another poor quarter for Odonata with records received for just four species and nothing noted after 15 October.

Single **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** were found at two sites, Colony Reservoir at Charnwood Lodge on the 12th and PHG's Quorn garden two days later.

The only **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** was on the River Soar near Barrow the 5th.

Small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** were noted at just two sites at Groby Pool and Colony Reservoir, Charnwood Lodge both on the 12th.

The only other, and final record for the year was of a mating pair of **Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*** in HS's Quorn garden on the 15th.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed during 2011.

Jim Graham

GRASSHOPPERS AND BUSHCRICKETS

Report for 2011

Thanks to the members and friends who sent in records of the usual ten species during 2011.

Grasshoppers made an early start with the warm spring but later months were not so good and numbers were less than expected.



Lesser Marsh Grasshopper © Steve Woodward

Lesser Marsh Grasshoppers *Chorthippus albomarginatus* were again the most common species and did not appear to have suffered greatly from the cold winter weather and was recorded from 18 sites.

Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* was recorded from Ulverscroft NR, Lea Meadows, Tilton Cutting, Grace Dieu, Markfield, Swannington, Rough Hill, Forest Rock at Whitwick, Bagworth Heath, a rough site near Ashby and lastly at Bradgate on 13 October.

Field Grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* at Castle Hill, Mountsorrel, Markfield, Loughborough Big Meadow, Grace Dieu, Morley Quarry, Bagworth Heath and near Ashby.

Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus parallelus* is more selective about habitat and was only seen at Loughborough Big Meadow and Bradgate.



Mottled Grasshopper © Steve Woodward

Mottled Grasshopper *Myrmelleotettix maculatus* was in its usual stronghold at Bradgate and at Buck Hill.

The **Roesel's Bushcricket *Metrioptera roeselli*** and the **Long-winged Conehead *Conocephalus discolor*** were less common in Charnwood than in 2010 but the latter was found at Aylestone Meadows, Cossington Meadows, Groby Pool Rifle Range, Stonesby, Bagworth Heath and Little Stretton and at Cademan in a rough grassy field but it was difficult to find and numbers seemed lower than in previous years.

HB recorded Roesel's at Aylestone Meadows, Glen Parva and Watermead and other records came from Cossington Meadows, Little Stretton, Bagworth Heath, Ellistown, the Gynsills (Glenfield), Kirby Lakes, Frisby Gravel Pits, Huncote Embankment, Glenhills and Ibstock. In the east of the county RF recorded Roesel's at Garthorpe, Stonesby and on a verge south of Eastwell.

Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum* sightings came from Barkby Thorpe Lane, Cossington Meadows, Woodhouse and a nymph at Grace Dieu on 11 June.



Slender Groundhopper © Steve Woodward

On 21 March SFW found the **Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata*** at Cademan and later in the year it was at New Lount, Bradgate and Grace Dieu Wood. MB recorded it at Beacon Hill, Owston Wood, Huncote Embankment and Egleton, while the **Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata*** was only recorded in Grace Dieu Wood.

Helen Ikin

BUTTERFLIES

Small numbers of some nine species remained active into October, two species in November and one species during December.

Pieridae

The only **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni* reported was seen by HS in her Chaveney Road garden at Quorn on 2 October.

Also in October the **Large White** *Pieris brassicae* was still active along Ethel Road, Leicester on 12th and a **Small White** *P. rapae* was noted at Quorn on the 2nd.

Lycaenidae

A late **Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas*, probably a third generation butterfly, was noted in HS's Quorn garden on 28 October.

During October the **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* was noted in 15 widely scattered localities. Most sightings were of singletons attracted to Ivy blossom or of individuals sunning themselves on walls or pavements. Four were present at Charnwood Lodge on the 12th. On 1 November GP saw one flying in sunshine in Birstall Churchyard and JK saw one at a Loughborough Allotment on 23 November.

The only **Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui* reported was one nectaring on an Ice Plant in ATO's Loughborough garden on 2 October.

Two **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* were reported: one in FTS's Barlestone garden on 15 November and one flying along a hedgerow at Birstall Meadows on 3 December.

During October, active **Peacock** *Inachis io* were seen at Ethel Road on the 12th and in MS's Quorn garden, where one was sunning itself on a white garden seat on the 22nd.

In October the **Comma** *Polygonia c-album* was seen at Barlestone on the 1st, at Groby Pool on the 12th at Thurnby Lodge and Grace Dieu on the 14th and at Quorn on the 24th.

Satyridae

The last **Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria* were two at Buddon Brook Meadows on 1 October, one at Pilling's Lock, Quorn on the 5th and seven at Charnwood Lodge on the 12th.

Peter Gamble



Comma © Steve Woodward

MOTHS

A mixed start to October, from hot and sunny to showery and blustery, which brought migrants all along the south coast and especially to the Scilly Isles but, only a few seemed to reach the Midlands. We ended up with just a few mild nights dotted throughout the rest of the month and the whole of November was similar. No let-up in December with most nights being very cold. **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* continued to put in appearances, all in October with four of the five sightings found nectaring on Red/Pink Valerian. The odd one out was HS finding one resting on the wall of a house and then nectaring on Heather in Quorn on 22 October. First records were FTS at Barlestone and then GP at Birstall both on 1 October. In fact FTS had three sightings from 1 to 10 October. All records were of singletons.

Members' Sightings

Casual and mainly daytime records first, followed by members' light trapping results.

PHG watched two **Vapourer** *Orgyia antiqua* in typical erratic flight at the Willow Holt at Pilling's Lock on 5 November.

Grace Dieu continues to supply interesting species: SFW recorded the leaf mines of **Ectoedemia septembrella** in two different areas in October, it makes a snake-like gallery leading to a blotch on St John's Wort. On the same day, the folded cones of **Parornix anglicella** were found on Hawthorn.

On 29 November HB's cat decided to deposit what Howard initially thought was a slug on the living room floor, but on closer inspection turned out to be a caterpillar when it began to

crawl over the carpet. The uninvited guest turned out to be a **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum* and as it was unharmed was duly returned to the garden to get on with what it should be getting on with at that time of year.

Light trap results

PHG operated his moth trap at Quorn on 21 November and recorded just a single moth which was in fact **November Moth** *Epirrita dilutata*.



November Moth © Steve Woodward

SFW operated his Actinic light trap in his Groby garden on nine nights all in October for nine moths of seven species. His admirable determination was rewarded with **December Moth** *Poecilocampa populi*, **Juniper Carpet** *Thera juniperata*, **Winter Moth** *Operophtera brumata*, **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba*, **Green-brindled Crescent** *Allophytes oxycanthae*, **Red-line Quaker** *Agrochola lota*, and **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*. A pleasant surprise find was an adult *Phyllonorycter lautella* flew to a lighted window on 19 December. The latter is stated to be a fairly common species, but is not at all found regularly in our county. It is an oak feeder and the mines are quite distinctive with, often, numerous mines in a single leaf. It could be getting overlooked but it is a species we consciously look for every year, either way it should have been in deep hibernation by now.

Charnwood Forest Survey

Ulverscroft Nature Reserve

26 November was a mild but very blustery night and the traps struggled to attract 36 moths of just four species. In addition, several pairs **Winter Moth** *Operophtera brumata* were found in cop on tree trunks plus individuals of

November Moth agg *Epirrita sp* and a few **Satellite** *Eupsilia transversa*. At the traps 14 **December Moth** *Poecilocampa populi* were the most abundant.

Around the county

Great Merrible Wood

A leaf mining day here 19 October returned 20 species including the larval feeding tubes connecting the small black fungi on dead Hazel of *Nemapogon clematella*. The tiny larvae of *Bucculatrix ulmella* were found grazing on oak and larvae of *Diurnea fagella* on Ash.

Narborough Bog Nature Reserve

35 species of micro moth were recorded here as 33 mines, one case and one larva on 20 October. Just a few of the highlights were dozens of the dark reddish/brown circular blotches of *Ectoedemia occultella* on birch, *Stigmella lemniscella* and *Phyllonorycter schreberella* were found on the elms at the reserve entrance. *Stigmella catharticella* has only been found at a few localities in the county, so finding a lonely two Buckthorn bushes, almost at either end, of the reserve and both with mines was a surprise. Yet more mines of *Bedellia somnulentella* on Bindweed entangled on the chain link fence along the railway and quite late *Acroplaepia autumnitella* mines in the same place.

Bagworth Heath Wood

A daytime session here near to Thornton on 22 October produced 34 species of micro moth either as mines or cases. A good start was finding *Stigmella catharticella* on Buckthorn and *Bedellia somnulentella* on Bindweed. *Parornix* is a genus that is almost impossible to identify to species level as adults without dissection but fortunately very easy on their early feeding stages. The mine finishes up as a fold on the leaf of their respective foodplant, allowing us to record *Parornix betuale* on Birch, *P. anglicella* on Hawthorn and *P. devoniella* on Hazel. As well as cases of *Coleophora gryphipennella* on Rose, many *Coleophora argentula* were on patches of Yarrow.

Another daytime sortie here but this time, more towards the Merry Lees area where the public car park is. Altogether this is quite a large site and although most is newly planted, around

OTHER INSECTS

fifteen years old, there are some lovely areas. The plantations are mainly native deciduous, incorporating old hedgerows with some mature trees. There are plenty of open grassy/flowery areas and even wet hollows with a couple of reed beds, and ponds. The site is quite undulating and the spoil banks look like they will be excellent for invertebrates in the summer. A promising couple of hours here on 11 December returned 18 species by finding their early feeding stages of either mines or cases.

Cloud Wood

One of the few decent nights was at Cloud Wood 12 October when we had 72 moths of 18 species probably the moth of the night was the five *Epinotia maculana*. It is another mainly Aspen feeder stated as widespread but local throughout the UK. We have recorded this at Cloud for a couple of years running now, so it must be reasonably established here. Other worthy species were seven **Figure of Eight** *Diloba caerulecephala*, although fairly common, it is a lovely moth and a great total of 16 **Green-brindled Crescent** *Allophyes oxycanthae* including five of the melanic form *capuchina*.

Launde Park Wood

30 October was another mild night, so with a couple of hours before setting the light traps up, a quick search produced a good selection of 18 species of leaf miners and one Coleophora. *Ectoedemia subbimaculella*, was particularly abundant. An easy species to identify on oak, it has a triangular blotch with a small slit on the underside of the mine to facilitate the ejection of frass. The Rose-feeding *Coleophora gryphipennella* was really widespread with cases on most of the Rose briars. The evening session gave 76 moths of 11 species. **Feathered Thorn** *Colotois pennaria* was in force with 23 individuals but **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii* just had the edge with a total of 29.

Many thanks to everyone, who has sent in their moth records for this difficult quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

Despite this being one of the warmest quarters for many years at this time of year, very few species took much advantage of it. The exception was the Hymenoptera, where several species appeared to be more active than for some years.

Hemiptera

Very few shieldbugs were noted, the **Green Shieldbug** *Palomina prasina*, was only recorded from Beatty Avenue in Leicester where six were sunning themselves on Ivy leaves in late December, as usual in hibernation colours. The only other members of this group were a **Sloe Bug** *Dolycoris baccarum* sitting on gorse on 13 November, a single **Dock Bug** *Coreus marginatus* was also recorded at Grace Dieu on 14 November.

Other members of this group were **Birch Catkin Bug** *Keidocerys resedae* at Cropston Reservoir on Birch on 30 October, and several collected from *Deschampsia* at Grace Dieu on 13 November.

The scourge of allotment holders everywhere, several **Cabbage Whitefly** *Aleyrodes proletella*, several were seen on a wall at Grace Dieu on 6 November, presumably still active in these mild conditions.

In closing this group, a mention of aquatic bugs from SFW, a backswimmer *Notonecta glauca* and a number of **Lesser Water Boatmen** *Sigara dorsalis* at the fishing lake at Grace Dieu Manor Farm on 14 October.

Diptera

There were very few records for this group; few Hoverflies were observed, in fact apart from the **Drone-fly** *Eristalis tenax* which was still active in very small numbers to the end of the quarter, only four other species were seen, *Episyrphus balteatus*, two in Beatty Avenue, Leicester on 20 October, *Myathropa florea*, one same place and date, *Syrphus vitripennis*, one in Ethel Road, Leicester on October 5th, and *Sericomyia silentis*, one at Grace Dieu on 28 October, this latter species is described in the recently published 'Atlas of the Hoverflies of Great Britain' as very much a western species, preferring heathland and acid habitats and

mostly absent from most of the English Midlands. SFW has been recording this species from Grace Dieu and elsewhere for the last year or two, so it may be increasing range particularly in the Charnwood Forest area.

A few leaf miners of the family *Agromyzidae* are mentioned here, very small flies, who are host specific, a few which are mentioned here. ***Cerodontha iraeos*** at Loughborough along the river bank, making a leaf mine in *Iris pseudacorus* on 5 October and at Grace Dieu, ***Amauromyza labiatum*** a leaf mine in *Labium album* on 14 October, ***Amauromyza verbasci*** a leaf mine in *Scrophularia* on 7 October and ***Phytomyza tussilaginis*** in a blotch mine on *Petasites* leaf on 20 November. At Birstall Meadow Lane Allotments, GP reported the leaf mine of ***Chromatomyia primulae*** on *Primula veris* on 1 October.

Hymenoptera

At least Bumblebees put in a performance this quarter, FTS managed five species in his garden this period, not far short from the previous quarter.

As usual the **Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*** was most commonly recorded in October, from Pillings Lock, Quorn at both the Baptist Church, Meeting Street and Stafford Orchard, Spinney Hill Park in Leicester where several were foraging Lavender on 20th and at Barlestone, with workers on the first two weeks, a few with pollen and a few more towards the end of the month, with pollen on 20th, 24th, and 28th of the month, all foraging on *Cerinthe*.

Buff-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus terrestris* were again very active at PHG's garden in Quorn, with several queens visiting flowers of *Clematis orientalis* on 14 October and one on the 26th, four workers visited the winter flowering honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, on 21 December with several more workers and one queen on the 31st of the month.

Other records for this species are, two workers foraging on Cotoneaster around the margins of Homebase in Leicester on 11 November and further queens were reported from Barlestone with queens on the 14, 16 and 17 of October, with further records in November on the 2nd, 7th, and 27th.

White-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lucorum*, had single queens at Barlestone on the 1st, 3rd and on the 9th of October, the only other record was of one at Coles Nursery at Thurnby on 26 October.



Red-tailed Bumblebee © Steve Woodward

Red-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius*, in October had single queens at Barlestone on the 1st, 14th, 15th and 24th of the month. The only other record was of one foraging flowers at Humberstone Park on 26 October.

The Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum* was again only reported from Barlestone, with single queens present on the 1st, 2nd, 19th and 20th October with one queen with pollen on the 28th. Further records came in November, single queens carrying pollen on 1st, 13th, and 15th, usually foraging on *Cerinthe*.



Tree Bumblebee © Steve Woodward

Only one record of the **Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*** was submitted from Groby on 17 November.

Vespinae

The Common Wasp *Vespula vulgaris* was fairly common on Ivy locally throughout October and through November; last records were from Beatty Avenue, Leicester where there were two on 30 November and a single on 12 December.

The only **Hornet *Vespa crabro*** received was of a single specimen at Beacon Hill on 9 October.

Coleoptera

Very few records received for this group; a ground beetle ***Leistus rufomarginatus*** at Grace Dieu in a pitfall catch on 21 October. **Devil's Coach-horse *Ocytus olens***, one at Grace Dieu on 6 November and a **Cereal Leaf Beetle *Oulema melanopus*** at Grace Dieu, pooted from *Carex* leaf litter on 13 November.

Other records this quarter, mainly a few ladybirds. **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata***, many were noted at Quorn, flying and at rest in October and at a Loughborough allotment, where JK found about 14 on small brassica plant on 19 November. Very few were observed in my patch, the last record is one in Beatty Avenue on 30 November.

As expected, the only other ladybird noted in any numbers was the **Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis***, this species appears to increase in numbers somewhat later than some, at Quorn 60 were counted on the back of a house on 30 October, they were common all along Stoughton Lane on 21 October and many were on warm walls at Grace Dieu Priory on 28 October. Last seen here on 20 November.

The only other record was a **14-spot Ladybird *Propylea 14-decimpunctata*** in leaf litter at Grace Dieu on 13 November.

Thanks to the six members who sent in records for this quarter.

Howard Bradshaw

FLOWERING PLANTS

This quarter will be combined with January to March 2012 and the report will appear in the next issue.

OTHER GROUPS

We also received records of the following groups:.

Fungi, Algae, Lichens, Mosses, Liverworts, Rotifers, Tardigrades, Copepods, Earthworms, Molluscs, Psocoptera, Mecoptera, Parasitic Hymenoptera, Harvestmen, and Woodlice .

WEATHER

October was yet another warmer and drier month than average. The month was the warmest since 2006 but it ranked 7th warmest in the entire 350 history of the temperature record. Warm Octobers are becoming much more common in the last few years with warm months being recorded in 2001, 2005, 2006 and again this year. The average afternoon temperature was 17°C, which is 3.5°C above normal. Night time temperatures averaged 9°C, 2°C above normal and there was no night frost recorded. Yet again it was a drier month than usual. At Mountsorrel, I have now had 12 consecutive months with below average rainfall. This October I recorded just 37 mm, only just over half of the usual total. So far this year I have had just 15 inches of rain when I should have had 25 inches. Put another way, we are four months short of rainfall that we would expect in an average year and we are on course to have had one of the driest years ever recorded in the Midlands.

The month began on an exceptionally warm and sunny start with temperatures peaking at 29°C at Sutton Bonington on the 1st. This made it the warmest October day ever recorded in our area. The first week remained mild and dry. The 6th did bring some much-needed rain with 10 mm falling at my station but this was only followed by scattered showers for most of the rest of the month. The 27th brought another 10 mm and the 30th, 5 mm as the month ended a little more unsettled but mainly southerly and westerly winds made sure it remained mainly mild and there were very few cool days. Indeed the minimum temperature on the 4th was 18°C: the warmest night ever recorded in October and the lowest temperature at night of 2°C meant we avoided any frost at all. Sunshine totals were above average at 125 hours nearly 20% above the normal. So all in all, a very summery autumn month!

Another warmer and drier month in November has resulted the autumn period (Sept-Nov) being the warmest and driest period locally recorded since 1959. November saw afternoon maximums averaging at 11.7°C: nearly 3°C above normal and night temperatures were logged at 6°C, again 3°C above normal. Only one air frost, on the 29th, was recorded in

Mountsorrel for the entire month. Once again it was very dry as high pressure remained in the vicinity for the majority of the time and this resulted in just 23 mm of rain being recorded in Mountsorrel which is less than half the usual monthly total. Sunshine totals of 63 hours were 10% down due to eight completely sunless days and although winds were calm for the majority of the month, the last week did see a change as low pressure took charge and winds accelerated to 40 mph.

The first week did see some more unsettled conditions with most of the month's rain falling in this first week with 9 mm falling on the 4th. Mild SE winds produced our warmest day of 16.3°C on the 3rd. The middle fortnight saw high pressure re-establish itself and no rain fell between the 9th and 22nd. The position of the high did change during this period and the amount of sunshine was very variable and the cloudy days felt cold with our coolest day being on the 16th with a top temperature of just 8°C. The last week did see some changes as the high pressure drifted away and deep areas of low pressure began to advance. This produced some squally winds on the 29th as an active cold front produced a small tornado in Melton Mowbray with roof tiles being stripped off buildings in a sudden squall at teatime. Winds reached 40 mph wildly but probably topped 70 mph in the areas affected by the funnel cloud. Apart from this dramatic ending it was therefore another very quiet month but the lack of rainfall is now causing major concern. At Mountsorrel I have recorded just 370 mm of rain so far this year which is just 62% of the Jan - Nov average. Rainfall has been below average for 12 months running and it looks like it going to be the driest year in Leicestershire since 1959.

December was a mild and wet month with rainfall close to average levels at 60 mm. Afternoon temperatures of 8°C were about 1°C above normal as were night time temperatures of 3°C. It was a month dominated by westerly winds and there were no settled periods of weather at all. There were no really cold spells and apart from a few snow showers in the third week. There was no really wintry weather and only five slight frosts, a stark contrast to last December. The year itself however was warm and dry. It was the second warmest year ever

recorded with a mean temperature of 11°C. It was also the driest in Leicestershire since 1921 with just 430 mm falling at Mountsorrel. which is a third below the normal figure. The late winter period was mild and spring was exceptionally warm with April being the warmest ever recorded with temperatures up to 25°C! Only 20% normal rainfall fell in these high pressure dominated months. The summer was cooler but still drier than usual with the warmest day being logged on 27 June at 29°C but this was the exception in a rather cool summer. Only the start of August gave us some warmer temperatures but these disappeared after the first week.

The autumn was warm and dry with a remarkable hot spell lasting four days, which gave us temperatures in the 80's on the 29th culminating in 29°C being logged at Sutton Bonington on October 1st, the warmest October day ever recorded. November was mild before the rains arrived in December but too late to make much difference to the reservoir levels. Let's hope for a wet winter to replenish those water levels - or if not we could well face water restrictions next summer.

Phil Morrish

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heritage has been compiled using records received from the following members and friends:

M Billings, H Bradshaw (HB), G Carpenter, N Crossman, G Felstead, A Finch, G L Finch (GLF), D B Forgham, R Frost, P H Gamble, J Graham, S Graham, P M Hardy (PMH), P Hipkin (PH), H B Hope (HBH), H Ikin, J Killingback, J Kramer, S M Lister, L Marsh, M McClellan, A T Onions, G Panter, D A Perry, H Shacklock, F T Smith, J M Stanley, M Vincent, D Webster, E Webster, S F Woodward.

As *Heritage* is very late this time you have, I hope, already sent in your records for the first quarter of 2012.