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Castle Hill and Neighbouring Areas at Mountsorrel

The following article was written by Peter Gamble and published originally in the *Leicestershire Recorder* in 1997. It is a snapshot of Castle Hill and its species at this time but, in the last 15 years, some species have become scarce or have disappeared.

Travelling northwards through Mountsorrel along the old A6 one soon becomes aware of the rocky prominence standing above the buildings on the west side of the road in the centre of the village, just north of The Green. Here, there is a massive grano-diorite ('granite') outcrop, and the summit area, where not bare rock, is covered with varied thicknesses of soil supporting acid grassland and an interesting variety of flowering plants including many local and rare species.

After the First World War, the village war memorial was built up here and from the hill top excellent views can be had across the Soar Valley, to the east, towards Barrow and Sileby.

Formerly, the hill was the site of a castle but this is said to have been destroyed in 1217. It is thought that it was probably built by Hugh Lupus about the end of the Conqueror's reign but nothing now remains to indicate just where it stood.

IN THIS EDITION

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Some smaller rock outcrops occur 200m away to the south-east and between here and Castle Hill lies a flatter area of rough grassland situated on Boulder Clay.

The flora of Castle Hill and its neighbouring rock outcrops is of particular interest as it affords a good example of a type of plant community which must formerly have been well represented in Leicestershire in localities where igneous rock outcrops: as at Mountsorrel, Croft and Enderby but which now, due to extensive quarrying, has been largely lost.

Plants of special note here include the Subterranean Clover *Trifolium subterraneum* known only to occur at two other sites in Leicestershire; The Hoary Cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea*, known from three or four other sites; Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor* now known to occur tenuously at less than ten localities; the Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* present at about a dozen locations in the county, but probably more plentiful here than at its other stations and Crow Garlic *Allium vineale* restricted to less than ten

other sites. The drought of the last two summers which has inhibited the growth of some of the grasses and more vigorous species has favoured the low-growing Subterranean Clover and the Bird's-foot which occupied more ground this summer than during any time during the last 20 years and the vigorous colony of Crow Garlic is probably the largest in the county.



Sand Spurrey © Stephen Woodward

An impressive number of other local wildflowers occur on and around the hill, many species typical of siliceous grassland like the above. These include the Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*, Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense*, Soft Trefoil (=Knotted Clover) *Trifolium striatum*, Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans*, Ploughman's-spikenard *Inula conyzae* and Heath Groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*; also the sedge *Carex spicata* and the grasses Early Hair-grass *Aira praecox*, Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Barren (=Squirreltail) Fescue *Vulpia bromoides*, Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and Smaller Cat's-tail *Phleum bertolonii*. Some six species of *Geranium* and six species of *Trifolium* occur on and around the hill, a tally few, if any, other sites in the county could match.

Common plants of the hill of special importance, as they support the larvae of certain butterflies and moths, include the Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*. The Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium molle*, another common species on the hill, occurs here in two colour

forms: the normal rose-purple type and a handsome pure white variety which is present in several large colonies in some of the rocky areas. Another pretty little cranesbill, the Small-flowered Crane's-bill *Geranium pusillum* also occurs here in some sizable colonies. Two long-established aliens grow on the rocky outcrops, presumably escapes from local gardens, these are the Reflexed Stonecrop *Sedum rupestre*, a native of mainland Europe, and the Dusty Miller (=Snow-in-summer) *Cerastium tomentosum*, a native of south-east Europe and the Caucasus.

During late decades, in the absence of any grazing, much of the steep north and east sides of the hill have become overgrown with Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and other dominant species to the detriment of the smaller, herbaceous species.

The flora of the outcrops to the south-east is much the same as that of the hill, though the Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum* which is abundant in shade here and the Crow Garlic, also plentiful here in the open, are not found on the Castle Hill itself. On the steep embankment adjacent to the quarry to the north, growing in shade under the large thorn bushes, is an extensive colony of Spring Beauty *Montia perfoliata*, a native of Pacific North America and Cuba.

Altogether over 110 vascular plants have been recorded recent years in this relatively small area. Although this site is primarily important for its flora it is also good for its other associated wildlife, especially when one considers its closeness to the centre of Mountsorrel.

Most of the common garden birds can be seen here and in the summer, five species of warbler: Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Willow Warbler, breed and feed hereabouts. Willow Tits and Long-tailed Tits, sometimes accompanied by flown young, occur along the wooded embankments and Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet and Bullfinch breed on and around the hill in small numbers. Swifts, House Martins and Swallows feed over and around the hill during summer months often providing close views as they pass low overhead. The

Yellowhammer with its distinctive song still occurs in small numbers but the Turtle Dove which used to breed here is now rarely seen, and the Sky Lark which also used to breed has now apparently ceased because of increased level of disturbance.

Some 20 species of butterfly can be found here. Large Skipper and Small Skipper fly and breed in the taller grassy areas. The Brimstone, large and butter-yellow in the male, can be readily identified from the early spring onwards when it visits and passes through and the Green-veined White breeds here during the spring and summer whilst the attractive Orange-tip flies here in May and early June, its larvae appearing later on the colonies of Jack-by-the-Hedge.

The three Lycaenid butterflies found here are: Small Copper, associated with the docks and Sheep's Sorrel; the Common Blue, whose larvae feed on the various trefoils; and the Holly Blue with two generations, one requiring Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, the other Ivy *Hedera helix*. Five Nymphalids were present here this year [1997], the migrant Painted Lady, the Red Admiral, the resident Small Tortoiseshell, The Comma and The Peacock. The last three breed locally on the colonies of Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* at the base of the hill. The Satyridae is represented here by the Speckled Wood, which flies in the more shady areas, the Wall Brown which loves sunning itself on the rocks and bare ground, the Gatekeeper often to be found nectaring on the ragwort spp., the Meadow Brown plentiful through the summer in the tall grassy areas and the Small Heath which favours the short grass of the summit area and path sides.

Little appears to have been recorded of Castle Hill's other invertebrates but the area seems to be good for grasshoppers and digger wasps and would obviously repay further study.

Former generations have apparently looked after this precious site but sadly this cannot be said of the present generation for litter gets worse year by year and disfigurement of the rocks by paint, and frequent fires, demonstrate the urgent need for better education into the need for us to take greater care of the environment.

Peter Gamble

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Three **Hedgehog** road casualties were reported from Mountsorrel and others from Cropston and Barrow upon Soar. Live specimens were noted in Anstey – two on the evening of 5 July and one was seen regularly in Long Whatton. Gardens were visited for food throughout the quarter in Swithland and Shepshed.

Molehills were recorded near Baggrave Hall, Newton Harcourt, Swithland, Hathern and Hamilton.

The two shrew records both came from GCP in Birstall - a **Common Shrew** and a **Water Shrew** both found dead. We get very few Water Shrew records and they are probably more common than it appears.

Bats: PH's garden in Shepshed was not visited by bats until mid-August, after which, up to four were seen regularly on warm evenings up to the end of the quarter. JG was fortunate enough to have **Common Pipistrelles** roosting in his house at Cropston – on 24 July, between 9.30 and 10.15 pm, at least 72 emerged from under the eaves and 85 or more were counted on the following evening.

Our only **Brown Hare** sightings were two spotted at Bescaby by JG.

Rabbits, of course, are as common as usual and records came from: Rothley; Swithland – large numbers with some myxomatosis signs; near Bawdon Cottage – two small black rabbits; Cropston Reservoir, and Fosse Way Quarry at Syston – at least 12.

Grey Squirrels were ignoring the fallen apples in DAP's Swithland garden and picking unripe ones from the tree. Others were noted in Birstall Churchyard and around Cropston Reservoir.

GCP watched a **Bank Vole** scurrying for cover at Birstall Meadows one morning in July.

Wood Mice have been visiting DAP's garden feeders as usual this quarter and PHG found a dead one on his lawn in Quorn.

A pair of **Red Foxes** were seen in the City General Hospital grounds on 1 September, on

two occasions in both Swithland and Birstall and a juvenile was coming out of the main entrance to East Midlands Airport on the morning of 11 September. Road casualties were noted in Netherhall and Thurnby.

DAP's neighbour in Swithland had 14 chickens killed by a **Stoat**.

The only **Weasel** reported was one crossing the road near Stoughton Airport on 14 August.

At least five **Badger** road casualties were seen on the A6 between Quorn and Birstall and three more at Long Whatton, Thringstone and East Goscote. No one saw a live Badger!

Another road casualty was seen by HBH at Long Whatton on 9 July, this time it was a **Muntjac**. Muntjac slots were also seen around Brascote Pits.

A doe **Fallow Deer** with a half grown youngster was trotting up the spoil heaps at Clipsham Quarry in July. They sped away over the top.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Mute Swans were at most of the larger waters with successful breeding at nine involving 12 pairs. Post-breeding flocks were slow in building and only Swithland Reservoir and Birstall Meadows managed to record double-figure counts with maxima being 66 and 59 respectively.

Greylag Geese were at four sites with the largest count being just 34 at Cropston Reservoir on 6 August. Counts of **Canada Geese** were reported from four sites with double-figures at three, the largest being 66 at Cossington South Lakes on 1 July. The pair of **Egyptian Geese** reported at Cropston Reservoir during the second quarter, were in the ruins of Bradgate Park with nine freshly hatched young on 1 July and ten days later were in the grounds of Cropston Reservoir with at least seven young still in tow.

Small numbers of **Mandarin Duck** were at Cropston Reservoir and were often seen flying in the direction of Swithland Reservoir confirming the local movement of this species



Wigeon © Jim Graham

between the dominant waters. The first returning **Wigeon** were noted at Cossington Meadows with three there on 25 August rising to 12 ten days later. The usual summering male was recorded on the River Lin at Bradgate Park and on Cropston Reservoir during the quarter. **Gadwall** were reported from five sites with successful breeding only being noted at Cropston Reservoir when a female with three young was noted in August. The largest post-breeding flock occurred at Swithland Reservoir with 26 there on 7 September. The first returning **Teal** were 11 noted at Birstall Meadows on 21 August and two at Kelham Bridge the following day with numbers rising here to 44 by the 28 September, whilst 42 were recorded at Cropston Reservoir on the last day of the quarter. Strangely, the largest numbers of **Mallard** noted were along the River Lin in Bradgate Park peaking at 114 on 29 September. Records came from a further seven sites with breeding confirmed at six of these. Three **Garganey** (considered to be eclipse male, female and a juvenile) first found on 27 August at Cossington Meadows, remained until at least 2 September. Eight **Shoveler** at Cossington Meadows on 25 August were the first autumn arrivals, also being noted at Kelham Bridge and Swithland Reservoir by the end of the quarter. The first **Pochard** record of the quarter was a party of 23 males and two females at Groby Pool on 21 July. Seven were at Cropston Reservoir on 26 August with 17 at Swithland Reservoir South the following day. Records of **Tufted Duck** came from just six widespread sites with four of these having broods of ducklings. Only Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs held any significant numbers with maxima being 71 at the former on 26 August and 307 at the latter the day

before. The only **Goldeneye** were located at Swithland Reservoir with up to four female-type throughout the quarter.

Sightings of **Red-legged Partridge** came from just four well-spread localities. Worryingly, there were no records of **Grey Partridge** and the only records of **Pheasant** were singles at Bescaby and Streethill Farm near Baggrave.

Cormorant records came from just two sites: Cropston Reservoir and Cossington Meadows.

A **Cattle Egret** at Kelham Bridge on 12 and 13 September no doubt had the adrenaline pumping for some county birders. However, all was not as it seemed as the bird turned out to be one that was lost by Twycross Zoo the week previous. Records of what may have been the same **Little Egrets** came from three sites: Up to seven were at Birstall Meadows during July, whilst three were reported from both Cossington Meadows between 25 August and 5 September, and Cropston Reservoir on the 28th and 30th. **Grey Heron** was recorded from only five sites with the highest count being just nine at Cropston Reservoir on 26 August.

Little Grebe were at just three sites with breeding only confirmed at Kelham Bridge, where two pairs bred. Records of **Great Crested Grebe** came from six sites, four of which mentioned successful breeding. The highest counts of adults came from Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs with maxima of 33 and 21 on 26 and 25 August respectively. A single **Black-necked Grebe** was at Swithland Reservoir on 25 August at least.

There were no records of **Red Kite** in Charnwood Forest the only sightings in the quarter being singles at Buckminster and Tur Langton.

Sparrowhawk were poorly recorded, noted from just eight widespread sites including a number of gardens taking various prey species. One, sitting in the middle of the road in Rothley, had a lucky escape by releasing its Blackbird prey to prevent being hit by a passing vehicle. **Buzzard** were much better recorded with 27 widespread sites noted and with juveniles observed at four. Six birds, probably migrating, were seen soaring over Tur Langton with one of the aforementioned Red Kite on 1 September. **Kestrels** were also widely reported with

confirmed breeding from: Barrow upon Soar, Swithland, Saddington Reservoir and Staunton Harold. It looks like it was a poor year for **Hobby** as records came from only three sites. However, two juveniles, seen during the last week of August calling over Cropston whilst trying to catch large butterflies, may have been locally bred. Up to three, feeding on House Martins and dragonflies, at Wanlip Meadows on 9 September were probably local birds. The only **Peregrine** noted was one seen flying through Bradgate Park heading towards Anstey on 29 September.

A juvenile **Spotted Crake** found at Birstall Meadows on 21 August was joined by a second bird on the 25th (and possibly a third) before disappearing. These are just the 12th and 13th birds in the county since 1960 and the first time two have been found at the same location. Records of **Moorhen** came from eight waters with juveniles noted at four. One swimming across a flooded Slash Lane must have been an incongruous sight. The highest count was 24 at Kelham Bridge on 20 September. There were few more records of **Coot** with at least six of the nine sites recording successful breeding. Wintering birds gradually built up at Swithland Reservoir and numbers peaked at 476 on 27 August.

The high water levels seem to have put paid to any **Oystercatcher** breeding success as although pairs were seen at six suitable locations there were no reports of juveniles. There were no records after July suggesting that birds had dispersed after failed breeding. It was not just Oystercatchers that were suffering. No records were received during the quarter for **Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover** or **Lapwing**. It was commented nationally that return migration started early for wading birds underlining the effect the wet weather has had on this season's breeding. The first returning **Snipe** were two at Kelham Bridge on 24 August (15 September in 2011) increasing to 25 by 28 September, whilst up to four were noted at Cossington Meadows during August. The only record of **Woodcock** was two or three roding over Benscliffe Wood on 20 July. Up to four **Common Sandpiper** were at Cropston Reservoir through the quarter, with three noted at both Cossington Meadows and Swithland Reservoir



Common Sandpiper © Jim Graham

during August. After one on 30 July, Kelham Bridge had **Green Sandpiper** regularly through to the end of the quarter: the only site to record this species. The only record of **Redshank** was one at Cossington Meadows on 1 July.

Gull numbers began to increase through the period and the main **Black-headed Gull** counts came from Cropston Reservoir with 686 on 14 August. There were 90 at Kelham Bridge the same day. The only **Common Gull** reported were at Cossington Meadows. Small numbers of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were at Groby, Cropston Reservoir and Bescaby, whilst the only **Herring Gull** noted was at the latter site.

Small numbers of **Common Tern** were reported from four sites and the artificial raft installed last year at Watermead Country Park Birstall proved to be successful again with at least seven pairs producing 16 juveniles. For the second successive year, the colony at Cossington Meadows appears to have been abandoned.

Small numbers of **Stock Dove** came from seven locations, the highest count being just six at both Bradgate Park and Broad Hill, Mountsorrel during August. As they often are, **Woodpigeon** were still breeding with a nest located in a Groby garden on 23 August. There were few records of **Collared Dove** and no count exceeded four.

There were no reports of **Barn Owl** in the quarter. A **Little Owl** was calling in a Cropston garden in August, whilst one was at Hugglescote in July. However, Bradgate Park had regular sightings through the quarter with a family party, including three fledged juveniles, noted in the grounds of the ruins on 25 July, one of the juveniles rather comically walking on the ground.

As usual, **Tawny Owl** were vociferous in the period and heard calling widely. Juveniles food begging, were noted at Benscliffe Wood and Cropston during July.

The lack of flying insects this summer had a detrimental effect on **Swift** numbers with records coming from just four locations. However a pair nesting in Rothley, were successful with eight birds noted around the site. There were no records after 28 August when two passed through Cossington Meadows. **Kingfisher** were only reported from seven sites and no breeding was noted. **Green Woodpecker** were noted at 14 widespread sites and juveniles were confirmed at four of these: three juveniles were feeding in the grounds of the ruins at Bradgate Park on 25 July. Records of **Great Spotted Woodpecker** came from 17 widespread sites but there were just two with juveniles: Booth Wood and a Swithland garden. For the second successive quarter there were no reports of **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**.

Small parties of **Maggpie** were noted, 11 at Cossington Meadows on 1 July the highest count. Likewise, there were just small numbers of **Jay** from seven sites. The *corvids* appear to have been overlooked this quarter with few records received for **Jackdaw** and **Rook** and none at all for **Carrion Crow**. Most sightings of **Raven** were of two or less from seven locations.

Goldcrests records came from just four sites with family parties at Booth Wood and Staunton Harold. The only double-figure count of **Blue Tit** was 12 at Broad Hill on 31 August. Staunton Harold had family parties of both **Great Tit** and **Coal Tit** with further families of the latter at Cropston Reservoir and Booth Wood, Loughborough where a pair of **Marsh Tit** was carrying food. There were no records received for **Willow Tit**.

Records for **Sky Lark** came from just three sites in small numbers. There was little mention of **Sand Martin** and the final record was 20 feeding in Bradgate Park on 29 September. Reports of **Swallow** came from 11 sites with late broods being noted at Birstall, Bradgate Park and Goadby. The highest single count was of at least 250 passing through Welby with 150 at Cropston Reservoir and 100 at Cossington Meadows all on 27 August. At least 250 **House**

Martin were feeding around the ruins at Bradgate Park with the Sand Martins mentioned previously, with a further 30 at Cropston Reservoir.

Long-tailed Tit were widely recorded with double-figure counts at four of the 14 sites, the highest counts being a total of 40 at Broad Hill on 31 August and a party of 38 in a Cropston garden on 30 July.

As usual, **Cetti's Warbler** were noted at Watermead Country Park and the Soar Valley. **Chiffchaff** were common and widespread usually in ones or twos from 19 sites with seven at Booth Wood and six at Cossington Meadows the highest counts. Most birds were still singing. In contrast, there were rather fewer **Willow Warbler** records with just three sites noted although family parties of four were at Booth Wood and Cropston Reservoir in August. **Blackcap** were recorded from nine locations with family parties at just two: Booth Wood and Staunton Harold. Song was not noted after 28 July and there were no records of birds in September. There were no records of **Garden Warbler** or **Lesser Whitethroat**. Seven sites had **Common Whitethroat** but no family parties were noted. There were no reports of **Grasshopper** or **Sedge Warblers**. Only four sites held **Reed Warbler**: In July there were seven singing birds at Cossington Meadows along with two others carrying food, a pair were feeding three fledged juveniles at Groby Pool and one was feeding two fledged juveniles at Saddington Reservoir. A single bird was still in the reeds at Kelham Bridge on 13 September.

Small numbers of **Nuthatch** were found at seven woodlands with four at Booth Wood on 11 August the highest count. An adult and juvenile were at Bradgate Park on the 8th. The only family parties of **Treecreeper** were at Bradgate Park and Staunton Harold. Singles were noted at a further four locations. Counts of **Wren** came from six sites with singing noted at five and a family party seen at one of these. Two counts of 100 **Starling** were received: a mix of noisy adults and young pecking in a field at Goadby on 2 August and a flock by the Anstey gate at Bradgate Park four days later.

There were few notable records received of thrushes and 15 **Blackbird** in a Rothley garden

in July was the highest count. Small numbers of Song Thrush were at five sites, whilst 15 **Mistle Thrush** were feeding in Bradgate Park on 6 August.

Family parties of **Spotted Flycatcher** totalling 11 birds were in Bradgate Park along the River Lin on 8 August and four at Parkhill Golf Club, Seagrave later in the month. The final records were of two at Watermead CP North and one at Wanlip North Lakes both on 9 September.

Small numbers of **Robin** were reported from six locations with fresh juveniles found at four. At least three and probably four **Redstart** were located in a hedgerow near Welby between 12 August and 4 September, whilst at least three were at Parkhill Golf Course, Seagrave between 1 August and 3 September. The only records of passage **Whinchat** was a first-winter bird at Cossington Meadow throughout the quarter and a female found at Cropston Reservoir on 26 August. Two first-winter **Wheatear** were at the latter site the same day. Small numbers of **Dunnock** were widespread.

House Sparrow were under-recorded and double-figure counts came from just two localities: 26 in White Horse Lane, Birstall and at least 20 in a Loughborough garden. No **Tree Sparrow** records were received.

There were no records of **Yellow Wagtail** but a pair of **Grey Wagtail** was with three juveniles on the River Lin in Bradgate Park and a flock of 25 **Pied Wagtails** were in a field in Cropston. One, showing signs of the race of White Wagtail, was found at MacDonald's on the A47 at Hinckley.

The only record of **Tree Pipit** came from Beacon Hill where one was in song on 4 July, whilst **Meadow Pipit** were recorded at Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir with 11 at the latter site on 29 September. There were few finch flocks reported, the only one of note being 100 **Goldfinch** at Welby on 27 August of which about 80% were juveniles.

The locally-bred family party of **Siskin** were still frequenting the Cropston garden through July but were last seen on 1 August. Small flocks began to build and 14 were noted at Bradgate Park Newton Linford entrance on 29 September. The largest number of **Linnet** reported was a flock of 34 in a field in Cropston on 26



Reed Bunting © Jim Graham

September. There were no records of either **Lesser Redpoll** or **Crossbill** in the period. **Bullfinch** came in small numbers from ten well-spread sites whilst records of **Yellowhammer** came from just five sites with the only double-figure count coming from the local strong-hold Bradgate Park when 11 were noted singing on 25 July. Eight **Reed Bunting** at Cossington Meadows on the first day of the quarter was the best count.

Jim Graham

Our thanks once again to Ken Goodrich and LROS who once again, co-ordinated the bird records for this period.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

For this quarter we have few sightings of Reptiles and Amphibians, although in the case of the Reptiles this may be partly a result of reduced activity on their part, caused by the prevailing low temperatures.

Common or Viviparous Lizard *Zootaca vivipara*: we have four sightings of this animal, all courtesy of SFW. He reports finding specimens at Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve on 26 July, 28 August and 22 September. He also records a specimen at Newfield Colliery Nature Reserve on 9 August.

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: it appears that there was quite a community of this species in Barrow Road, Quorn this past summer! PJD reports several sightings of multiple specimens in the gardens along this road, between March and September of this year, with specimens usually being found in compost bins or under compost bags. Pam reports finding a specimen under

compost bags in her own garden on 14 September. In one neighbour's garden two specimens were found in a compost bin on 23 March, while seven or eight specimens were found there on 1 September. Earlier in the year, specimens in ones and twos were sighted in three other neighbouring gardens.

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*: we have two sightings of this reptile during this quarter. The first of these comes from HBH, who reports finding a specimen at New Lount on 24 July, and the second comes from SFW, who reports finding a specimen in the churchyard at Cossington on 5 September.

Common or Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: PJD reports the finding of two specimens in Barrow Road, Quorn in the crevices a neighbour's wall which was being repointed on 3 September. Pam also reports finding a very small specimen on 3 September under compost bags in her own garden. We have a report from HS of the sighting of one Smooth Newt in her garden pond in Chaveney Road, also in Quorn, during this quarter.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: we have only one report of a sighting of this amphibian for this quarter, and this comes from ATO, who disturbed a medium sized specimen, while working in his front garden in Loughborough on 30 September.

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

Brown Trout *Salmo fario*: we have only one report for this quarter, and that is a report of the presence of the Brown Trout in the Black Brook at Oaks in Charnwood before it feeds into Blackbrook Reservoir and PH reports that trout in the 20 to 25 cm size range are present all the year round in the brook where it runs under the bridge on Abbey Road. This suggests that the stream is being used as a "nursery stream" by the trout in the Reservoir. The Brown Trout, like its close relative the Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar*, requires running water to spawn in, and will often travel considerable distances to find suitable sites. Trout which are resident in lochs and lakes will use the feeder streams as spawning sites, always assuming that they have

access to them. They will normally “run” the stream in late autumn, and spawn around the turn of the year. After spawning they will drift back downstream towards the lake, which will normally offer much richer feeding than a small upland stream. The young fish will remain in the stream for several months, or possibly years, enjoying its protection, until they reach an appropriate size, and drop downstream themselves towards the richer - but potentially more dangerous - feeding grounds of the lake.

The fishing rights on Blackbrook Reservoir have always been in the hands of a small syndicate, who have run the Reservoir as a trout fishery, stocked with Brown and Rainbow Trout *Oncorhynchus mykiss*. I am informed that the Reservoir has steep, rocky shores, and is normally fished from a boat – it seems that in character it resembles quite closely the upland lakes of northern England and Scotland, with their steep sides, rocky substrate, and slightly acidic water. There are apparently some “coarse” fish species present – the Roach *Rutilus rutilus*, and Perch *Perca fluviatilis* – but that is as far as my information concerning Blackbrook Reservoir goes!

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

The full report on **Dragonflies and Damselflies** is being held over until the next Heritage.

BUTTERFLIES

The summer saw a steady improvement in the weather though still remaining wet but many species remained at worryingly low levels.

Hesperiidae

The **Small Skipper** *Thymelicus sylvestris*, though reported seen in 17 widespread localities, was mostly present in only small numbers though HB did count around 54 at Aylestone meadows on 6 July and about 20 at Bede Island, Leicester, on the 21st. It was last reported on 10 August at Bardon Hill. The closely related **Essex Skipper** *T. lineola* does not appear to be prospering at the moment and

this summer was reported seen at only four localities with the first at Newfield Colliery NR on 15 July and the last one noted at Humberstone Heights on 24 August. The usually widespread **Large Skipper** *Ochlodes sylvanus* also had a poor season with single figure sightings noted in six localities during July and a late sighting of two at Booth Wood, Loughborough on 11 August.

Pieridae

The new generation of the distinctive **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni* appeared first on 25 July when a fresh female appeared in our Quorn garden to be closely followed by a male on the following day. Altogether it was reported seen at ten widely scattered localities between then and the last reported sighting, at Quorn, on 5 September.

A **Wood White** *Leptidea sinapis* was reported seen near Stonton Wyville, in the south-east of the county on 1 September, a late date for the partial second brood of this species which is not closely related our other white butterfly species. On the face of it this species, not reliably recorded in the county since 1880, would seem most unlikely but the known presence of several colonies in Northamptonshire, not too far distant, might suggest it would be prudent for anyone visiting woodland in this part of Leicestershire in the future to keep a watchful eye, just in case a new colony exists hereabouts.

The **Large White** *Pieris brassicae* was widely reported being noted in gardens and countryside, though numbers remained on the low side throughout the quarter and a few were still active at the end of September. The **Small White** *P. rapae* was similarly widespread but, if anything more plentiful and, as usual, both species were under-recorded. Likewise the **Green-veined White** *P. napi* was widespread in meadows and along woodland rides and small numbers also visited many rural gardens. The last sighting reported was in ATO's Shelthorpe garden on 9 September.

Lycaenidae

The only **Purple Hairstreaks** *Quercusia quercus* reported were singletons at Swithland Reservoir/Buddon Wood on 22 August and 4 September.

No **White Letter Hairstreak *Satyrion w-album*** were reported this summer.

After a poor showing of its first generation butterflies the **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** did better than expected with the second generation during August and September and was reported seen at 19 widely scattered localities, mostly in small numbers but 20 or so were observed visiting Heather blossom by HI and SFW on 28 August at Chamwood Lodge NNR It was last noted in September at Buddon Brook Meadows at Quorn on the 19th and at Chamwood Lodge on the 22nd and these may well have been third generation butterflies. The **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** was only noted at some four localities. During July one visited our Quorn garden on the 5th and two were active in the Buddon Brook Meadows on the 19th. In August a fresh individual was noted at Stoughton Airfield on the 14th and in September one was observed at Wanlip NR on the 3rd.

This has been a dreadful year for the **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** and although normally plentiful at many of its sites no double figure counts were reported this summer, and only ones and twos were seen in the twelve localities for which it was reported. Several were noted in early July, probably late 1st generation butterflies, and most sightings were made during August and September with three noted on 19 September at Buddon Brook Meadows being the last sightings reported.

The new generation of **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** was first recorded at Quorn in July where HS recorded one in her Chaveney Road garden on the 24th and another was seen in our Meeting Street garden on the 26th. The species remained active throughout August and was last reported seen on the 6 September at Groby Pool. Altogether it was noted in 22 well spread localities and egg laying females on Ivy were noted at Kelham Bridge NR on 20 August and at Quorn on 4 September.

Nymphalidae

Small numbers of **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** were reported throughout July and much of August. Towards the end of August and throughout September however a marked increase occurred and eight were present on



Red Admiral © Jim Graham

waste ground at Belgrave on 28 August and during September the same number on buddleias at Asfordby Iron Works on the 3rd, a date when about 16 were observed at Watermead North Country Park at Wanlip. During the quarter this handsome species was recorded at 35 well scattered localities, and towards the end of September was often seen visiting Ivy blossom.

This was a poor year for the migrant **Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*** and only three sightings were reported: HB saw one on waste ground at Belgrave on 28 August and during September one was present for several days during the 2nd week in HBH's Loughborough garden, and later on the 26th, one was noted in PH's Shepshed garden. Numbers of the **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** remain disappointingly low and although it was reported seen at some 22 widely spread localities during August and September most sightings referred to only ones and twos. The only July record of the **Peacock *Inachis io*** was of one seen in the Buddon Brook Meadows on the 23rd and the next sighting was of one seen at Aylestone meadows on 4 August. Several members had up to a dozen in their gardens during August and c.14 were counted along Barkby Holt Lane on the 18th and c.20 were found on Buddleias at Asfordby Iron Works on 3 September. During the quarter it was noted in 34 well scattered localities. Two generations of the **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** were active during the quarter, the first during July and August and the second in September. Most sightings were of ones and twos but four were imbibing the juices of ripe blackberries, in close proximity, at Reedbed NR, at Wanlip, on 13 September and the species was still active at the end of the quarter often visiting Ivy

blossom. Altogether it was observed at 21 widely spread localities.

A **Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*** was seen and photographed by HI at Clipsham Quarry in Rutland on 22 July. Occasional sightings of this fine strong flying fritillary may represent visiting butterflies from neighbouring counties but suitable habitat for this species does still exist in VC55 and it would be good if it could re-establish itself here, but at present the weather isn't helping this to happen.

Satyridae

The **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*** was well reported and noted in some 32 widely distributed localities though its numbers were well down on some recent years. It was found in seven localities in July, 13 in August and 14 in September and some were still active at the end of September. This continuously brooded species is now a welcome resident in and around many of our gardens. The **Wall *Lasiommata megera*** is now a scarce, rarely seen butterfly in VC55 and so it was good to receive a report of one observed on rocks near the summit of Bardon Hill by SFW and HI on 10 August. It has been recorded here on several occasions during recent years pointing to the existence of a small colony still surviving here. Interestingly, away from coastal areas where it is still frequent, the Wall now seems to be largely confined to hilltops and elevated rocky places inland.

An unusual report of a **Marbled White *Melanargia galathea***, observed in a small meadow at Bede Island on 7 August, was submitted by HB who suggested that it may have been a wanderer from the small colony at Wigston Triangle. This constituted a first record for the City. Ten or more were also reported at a regular site at Clipsham Quarry, on 22 July.

The **Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*** was first noted on 18 July when two were seen at Swithland Wood and one nearby at Puddledyke the last sightings were on 1 September when it was observed at Bardon Hill; Shelthorpe and Buddon Brook Meadows.

During the summer it was widely reported from some 30 localities; including many members' gardens and although less plentiful than during some recent years double figures

were noted at several sites.

The **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** which first appeared last quarter on 19 June, had a long season and was last observed on 7 September, at Bede Island. This quarter it was reported seen in 30 grassland sites and some gardens but in numbers well below normal.

The **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** was recorded at only four sites, all during July and therefore, were probably late first generation rather than second generation butterflies. One was seen in Bradgate Park on the 9th, another at Clipsham Quarry on 22nd, ten were noted at Charnwood Lodge NNR on the 24th and two were found at Castle Hill, Mountsorrel, on the 27th.

The **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*** had another good year and was widely reported throughout July and until mid August when it was last seen on the 14th at Little Stretton, and in PH's Shepshed garden on the 18th. It was reported seen in 26 localities and c.24 were present along the Willow Brook at Thurnby Lodge on the 5 July and c.30 at Newfield Colliery on the 15th.

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Butterfly recorders, that do not already know, will be interested to learn that the East Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation hosted the National Butterfly Conservation AGM this autumn on 17 November at the Nottingham Belfry Hotel.

It will also be of interest to members of the LNC to learn that one of our own members, John Tatham of Quorn, who died on the 19 October, 1994, was largely instrumental in the formation of both the National and local East Midlands Branch of the Society (including Leicestershire) and used his own address as the registered office of the National body for a number of years.

He would have been delighted to see what a prestigious and influential organisation of almost 20,000 members Butterfly Conservation has become!

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

This whole quarter has again been very disappointing, cool, wet and windy and it has been hard work to find many suitable nights to spend out with the moth traps. More or less a continuation from the very poor previous quarter, making the whole period one of the worst summers for invertebrates on record. Despite these less than desirable conditions, the weekend of the Rutland Bird Fair produced three micro moth records, which were new for Vice County 55. The first came from Phil Sterling and Richard Lewington who operated a couple of MV traps in an Uppingham garden and took a single specimen of *Parectopa onoidis*. Even nationally it is a very scarce moth, occurring in southern England and the south Midlands. The larvae mine the leaves of Clover and Rest Harrow particularly in chalky areas. Fortunately it is quite a distinctive moth so if it is expanding its range we should be able to recognise it. The second comes from Martin Warren who ran a trap in his garden in Kibworth Harcourt and took a specimen of the scarce migrant *Cydia amplana*. The very first records for this species came from Dorset in 1990, larvae feed on a variety of nuts including Acorn, Hazel, Sweet Chestnut Beech, etc. 2012 has been a good year for this species turning up nationwide, I recorded a singleton in Sandwich Bay, Kent beginning of September. More exciting, Becky Faulkner and Paul Hegginson were trapping in the Outwoods on 18 August as well as recording 19 Black Arches, a high total for anywhere in the county, Becky retained an interesting and strikingly marked micro moth, after alerting Adrian Russell who latter contacted Mark Skevington, the identity was confirmed as *Harpella forcicella*. This record constitutes, quite possibly, the third for the UK. The first was recorded in Berkshire in 2011. All in all, a remarkable weekend, which surely does go to prove that, you really never can tell what may turn up in a light trap.

Members' Sightings

ATO was kept busy monitoring **Cinnabar** *Tyria jacobaeae* in his Loughborough garden throughout July, also finding two **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* nectaring on his Buddleia at dusk on 7 September.

RL reported a **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* nectaring on Red Valerian and Lavender in his Sibley garden on 7 July. He was also lucky enough to see a solitary **Red Underwing** *Catocala nupta* first at rest then in flight at Park Hill Golf Course on 23 September.

HB observed two **Six-belted Clearwing** *Bembecia ichneumoniformis* in the small meadow at Bede Island on 7 July. **Latticed Heath** *Chiasmia clathrata* at Belgrave on 28 August plus three sightings of **Vapourer** *Orgyia antiqua* all in the city at Castle Gardens, Belgrave and Great Central Way.

Two **Red-tipped Clearwing** *Synanthedon formicaeformis* were found by SFW and PHG and photographed during the day by JG at Stonebow Washlands in July.

SFW recorded the Tortricid moth **Pammene aurana** a lovely warm brown moth with two large orange spots on each wing at Rutland Water 7 July. This species feeds on the seeds of Hogweed and is usually found more often than not sitting on the flower heads of the same plant. Several **Treble-bar** *Aplocera plagiata*, were at Asfordby Hill Iron Works during the day in September the food plant being St John's-wort and a **Red Underwing** *Catocala nupta* on the Grand Union Canal on 24 August.

PHG reports **Brown China-mark** *Elophila nymphaeata* active around the margins of Puddledyeke on 18 July. A single **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* attracted to flowers in the graveyard at Quorn Baptist Church on 10 September plus another visiting Lavender flowers in his Quorn garden on 17 September. Peter also recorded 4 **Straw Dot** *Rivula sericealis* at Buddon Brook Meadows on 1 September.

GCP has been busy in Birstall finding a bedraggled **Scalloped Oak** *Crocallis elinguaris* resting on the garage wall in July. A couple of encounters with **Swallow-tailed Moth** *Ourapteryx sambucaria*, both in July. Always a pleasure to see **Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila elpenor*, this one was found inside the greenhouse resting on a Cape Gooseberry, very tropical! A very nice run of *Plusia* sightings with seven individuals of **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* plus three individuals of **Gold Spangle**

all around Birstall Meadows and Allotments and all in August.

HS reported a **Mullein Moth *Shargacucullia verbasci*** larva feeding away on Buddleia in her Quorn garden on 8 July.

Light Trap results

SFW did well to operate an Actinic light trap on nine nights in his Groby garden, despite the adverse weather conditions this quarter, he attracted well over 125 moths of at least 44 species. Just a few of the more interesting species were ***Ypsolopha scabrella***, larval food plants are Hawthorn and Apple. Both are common yet the moth is usually only recorded in low numbers at light. ***Orthopygia glaucinalis*** a member of the *Pyalid* group of “micro” moths, more often associated with haystacks and another *Pyalid*, ***Phlyctaenia coronata*** which has Elder as its food plant. **White Satin *Leucoma salicis*** a Sallow and Poplar feeder is just one of those special moths it is always pleasing to see as is **Scarce Footman *Eilema complana*** mainly a lichen feeder. Just by picking out half a dozen species illustrates the incredible variety, and we probably would not regard any of these as actual “garden” species.

PHG operated a Mercury Vapour light trap in Quorn on 17 September for 17 moths of nine species. They were two **Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana***, two **Mother of Pearl *Pleuroptera ruralis***, one **Common Marbled Carpet *Chloroclysta truncata***, two **Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba***, three **Lesser Yellow Underwing *Noctua comes***, four **Copper Underwing *Amphipyra pyramidea***, one **Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa***, one **Flounced Rustic *Luperina testacea*** and one **Vine’s Rustic *Hoplodrina ambigua***.

Light trap results from around the county

HNB and GM refused to let the weather get the better of them and continued a run of sessions at Ketton Working Quarry. The first on 27 July was mild, overcast with a light breeze and finished the night with about 200 moths of 45 species. A single **White-spotted Pug *Eupethecia tripunctaria*** was the only Pug species recorded. As most of this group can be quite awkward to positively identify, in some ways their absence could be classed as a blessing, but it does leave us again worrying

about how everything will fair next year. Other highlights were **Short-cloaked Moth *Nola cucullatella***, **Brown-line Bright-eye *Mythimna conigera*** and **Beautiful Hook-tip *Laspeyria flexula***.

The second session here was on 10 August - a mild but clear and gusty night, for just about 100 moths of 38 species, with the numbers of moths caught reflecting the drop off in conditions. A few of the highlights were three **Shoulder-striped Wainscot *Mythimna comma***, **Straw Underwing *Thalpophila matura*** and a subtlety but beautifully marked **Dusky Sallow *Eremobia ochroleuca***.

GLF and MAF taking advantage of a mild, but breezy night at Bagworth Heath Woods on 25 July proved a good move with 764 moths of 140 species. This night was also notable as one of the few nights that good numbers (50 species) of micro moths were recorded. **Drinker *Euthrix potatoria*** was out in force with over 30 dive-bombing the sheet and lights. A single **Pine Hawk-moth *Hyloicus pinastri*** was a very pleasant surprise, a species that still seems to be expanding its range. Two **Orange Footman *Eilema sororcula*** three **Dingy Footman *Eilema griseola***, 18 **Scarce Footman *Eilema complana*** and eight **Common Footman *Eilema lurideola*** did this little group proud. Two **Olive *Ipimorpha subtusa*** and three **Blackneck *Lygephila pastinum*** all made for a very pleasant night.

Graham and Anona Finch

OTHER INSECTS 1

Coleoptera

Not surprisingly, very few species have been recorded for this, what would normally be a very busy quarter. Due to excessive wet weather beating and sweeping has proved to be almost a waste of time, no-one enjoys sifting through a soggy sweep net or a soaking beating tray, least of all the beetles themselves. Therefore virtually all reports are from member’s casual observations.

Ground Beetles

The only records of **Green Tiger Beetle *Cicindela campestris*** were of occupied larval holes in bare

ground at Bradgate Park early September. An interesting couple of hours along the low water margins at Blackbrook Reservoir at the end of September produced hundreds of *Paranchus albipes* in aggregations of up to fifty individuals. Other species found here in a few hundred metre stretch included a single *Loricera pilicornis*, 30 plus *Nebria brevicollis*, two *Pterostichus nigra* three Devil's Coach-horse *Ocyopus olens* and, surprisingly, a solitary Kidney-spot Ladybird *Chilocorus renipustulatus*. All found under large stones, various pieces of discarded material, such as old pieces of carpet or pieces of washed up timber.

In mid-August a solitary Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipedus* was found in a near moribund state in Birstall, and several Garden Chafer *Phyllopertha horticola* were rescued from a birdbath in Quorn in July. Two stunning white-spotted metallic-green *Agrius biguttatus* were seen flying and landing on standing dead oak in Swithland Wood end of June. This is a remarkable find for two main reasons first this family of eight species (four are oak feeders) are high canopy dwellers and rarely descend low enough to be observed. Second, up until recently the distribution of *A. biguttatus* was thought to be restricted to southern England. In fact until 1990's it was designated as vulnerable and possibly on the verge of extinction. So it seems we have a population of this dramatic beetle in Swithland Wood, which may or may not be a good thing, as they are reputed to only survive in sickly/dying trees, and once the tree is infested they have been implicated in speeding up the dying process! The only "Click" beetle recorded was a single *Denticollis linearis* at Egleton NR, Rutland Water in June. A similar situation with *Rhagonycha fulva* as the only species of "Soldier" beetle recorded, but with many sightings from a wide range of sites and often abundant when found. Two Common Malachite *Malachius bipustulatus* were found at Hamilton Meadow in early June.

Ladybirds

Ladybirds species were well represented being recorded far and wide with Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* being found at nineteen sites alone although all in single figures, eighteen records of 7-Spot Ladybird *Coccinella 7-punctata* came in a close second.

Other ladybirds recorded were 14-spot Ladybird *Propylea 14-punctata* at seven sites and 22-spot *Psyllobora 22-punctata* at seven sites. Orange Ladybird *Halyzia 16-guttata* at three sites, a single Adonis Ladybird *Hippodamia variegata* in Bradgate Park in July and 2-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata* from Rutland and Birstall. Finally two records of 16-spot Ladybird *Tytthaspis 16-punctata* were both from a Quorn garden in July and one Kidney-spot Ladybird *Chilocorus renipustulatus* from Blackbrook as mentioned above.

The pollen feeding *Lagria hirta* seemed to be doing well with several sightings on the few warm sunny days we had, it was also one of the few species that has been reported in numbers. A species that has been spreading since the mid 1990's, the Swollen-thighed Flower Beetle *Oedemera nobilis* was well recorded too.



Oedemera nobilis © Stephen Woodward

Longhorns

Rutpela maculata has been one of the most abundant species with reports from Rutland, Clipsham and Quorn in June and July plus *Rhagium mordax* from New Lount in mid June. *Grammoptera ruficornis* was found as usual on Hogweed flower heads, with highest counts on a single flower head of forty-seven individuals.

Believe it or not we did actually get one or two hot sunny days when a reasonable assortment of insects were on the move, but as most of the quarter was cool and wet everywhere seemed like an entomological desert.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS 2

This has been one of the wettest and soggiest summers in living memory and many species have suffered so that numbers have been well down compared with previous years, which is to be expected. Despite this, as usual for this quarter, an enormous number of records were submitted from our regular recorders.

Hemiptera

A few records of our more widespread species were noted.

Green Shield Bugs *Palomina prasina* were observed at Birstall Meadows, Grand Union Canal, Grace Dieu, Hamilton, Quorn, Belgrave, City General Hospital grounds, Abbey Meadows and Thurnby Lodge. Early instar nymphs were reported at several sites well in to September. **Hawthorn Shield Bugs, *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*** appeared to be less common, with most records from Birstall Meadows and churchyard during September, other records came from Groby, Hamilton, Victoria Park, City General grounds and Glen Parva. Most records refer to single adults but three adults and nymphs were on Hawthorn at Stoughton Airfield on the 29 September. Only a few **Forest Bugs *Pentatoma rufipes*** were recorded, two adults from Barkby Thorpe Road, one from Humberstone Park and two in a City General hedgerow. This species matures earlier than most; the only other record was one on Ragwort at Bardon Hill in early September.

Gorse Shield Bugs *Piezodorus lituratus* were noted at Brascote Gravel Pits and Charnwood Lodge on 22 September. SFW comments this date was rather late for nymphs and nymphs seemed to be appearing late for many species, I doubt that they would reach maturity.

Sloe Bugs *Dolycoris baccarum* were seen at Newfield Colliery and Humberstone Heights in July, two nymphs at Barkby Thorpe Road and one at City General Grounds in early August.

Birch Shield Bugs *Elasmotethus interstinctus* fared somewhat better, with adults and nymphs at Saffron Brook NR, Wanlip NR and Bede Island in September, all on birch. Others were recorded at Newfield Colliery and Watermead Park.

The only **Parent Bug *Elasmucha grisea*** record I have is of over a dozen or so adults at Saffron Brook NR on 11 September. Just three **Bishops Mitre *Aelia acuminata*** were at Aylestone Meadows, Belgrave and Appleton Park and a single **Pied Shieldbug *Tritomegas bicolor*** at the Shenton Estate on Red Deadnettle on 20 August.

The Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus* is rapidly becoming the most common of the larger Hemipteran bugs in many areas and was recorded from Hamilton, Birstall Meadows, City General grounds, Thurnby Lodge and Barkby Thorpe Road, with adults and nymphs widely from early September, with a maximum of 147 at Birstall Meadows on the 26 September. The only other Coreid bug recorded was the **Spiky Bug *Coreomaris denticulatus***, two nymphs swept from old runway margins at Stoughton Airfield on 14 August and another off Barkby Thorpe Road on 16 August.

A nymph of the Rhopalid bug ***Rhopalus subrufus*** was swept from birch at Saffron Brook NR on 11 September and one on the Shenton Estate on 20 August. The only Damsel Bug recorded was the **Marsh Damsel Bug *Dolichonabis limbatus***, two nymphs in a flowery meadow on Barkby Thorpe Road in August and one adult at Stoughton Airfield in September.

A ground bug ***Meganalotus chiragra*** was swept from low herbage at City General Grounds on 1 September.



Cicadella viridis © Stephen Woodward

Mirid Bugs were very scarce in meadowland this quarter, along with many other species, there was one *Capsis ater* at Egleton NR in early September and two at Ulverscroft NR at the end of the month. *Deraeocoris ruber* was seen at Cossington Meadows, Ethel Road, Bede Island, Barkby Thorpe Road and Aylestone Meadows mostly in hedgerows and low herbage, mostly singles. The Leafhopper *Cicadella viridis* was reported from Bardon Hill, Hamilton and Ulverscroft NR during this quarter.



Gorse Lacebug © Stephen Woodward

The **Gorse Lacebug** *Dictyonota strichnocera* was widely recorded on Gorse, its host plant, in the Charnwood region. The **Spear Thistle Lacebug** *Tingis cardui* was reported from Bardon Hill, Markfield, Brascote Gravel Pits, Charnwood NR and Hicks Lodge, a single **Creeping Thistle Lacebug** *Tingis ampliata* was recorded on the Shenton Estate on 20 August. Froghoppers *Philaenus spumarius* and *Aphrophora alni* were reported from Egleton NR and finally the jumping plant louse *Psyllopsis fraxini* from Ash at Egleton NR and Mountsorrel.

Diptera: Hoverflies

This has not been a very fruitful year for many of our hoverflies, without the usual boost from immigrants in the summer months, they have been absent from most of our gardens, except in a few instances. The usual summer invasion

by the **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* failed to materialize in many areas and no records of some associated species such as *Scaeva pyrastris* and *Metasyrphus corollae* were received.

Odd specimens of *Episyrphus balteatus* were seen here and there but the only sites where they were reported in numbers were PHG's garden in Quorn, Barkby Thorpe Lane on 12 July and Egleton NR, Rutland Water on 7 July. *Syrphus ribesii* fared similarly to last species and was only frequent in Quorn during this quarter. A few *Sphaerophoria scripta* were recorded, mostly singles, at Belgrave, Saffron Brook NR, Spinney Hill Park, Markfield, Clipsham Quarry, Hamilton and Stonebow Washlands.

The only record of *Eupeodes luniger* was one at Rutland Water on 7 July, this species is usually seen in my garden, but not this year. The only record of the bright Syrphid *Xanthogramma pedisequum* was of one on the margins of the Willow Brook, Thurnby Lodge on the rather late date of the 27 September.

On a bright note for this group, another distinctive species, usually quite local *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* was recorded from more sites this year, singles from Clipsham Quarry, Rutland Water, Grace Dieu, Mountsorrel, Pillings Lock, Ulverscroft NR, Newfield Colliery NR (several), Stoughton Airfield and Aylestone Meadows, most records in July and early August. Another species suffering a reversal of fortune was the **Sun Fly** *Helophilus pendulus*. In recent years I have found this species rather scarce, but this summer it appeared in abundance, considering the cold wet summer we had. I wonder what triggers this reversal of fortunes. It was widely recorded in some areas, common in Castle Gardens, Aylestone Meadows, Aylestone Water meadows (very common), Hamilton, Quorn, Asfordby Hill, Bardon Hill, Beacon Hill and Grace Dieu, among others. The same happened with the larger species *Helophilus trivittatus*, this too was recorded from 14 sites, common in some of those at Buddon Brook Meadows, Cossington Meadows, Castle Gardens, Aylestone Meadows, Belgrave, Shenton Estate and Ulverscroft NR. A single specimen of *Helophilus hybridus* sitting on a leaf was recorded at Birstall by GCP 29 July.

Volucella species recorded this quarter include ***Volucella pellucens*** in July at Quorn on 10, 27, and 30 July, Blackbrook Reservoir, Ethel Road, hedgerow (three) on Barkby Thorpe Road and Clipsham Quarry, at Markfield on 7 August and in Castle Gardens and Spinney Hill Park in September. ***Volucella bombylans*** was at Bede Island on 9 July, Thurnby Lodge, Willow Brook (two) on 8 August and Castle Gardens on 22 July. This species usually peaks in June but this year several species are later.

Volucella inanis, a social ectoparasite of wasp larva, continues to progress in our county and was recorded from Birstall, City General grounds, Castle Gardens, Aylestone Meadows, Aylestone Water Meadows and Wanlip NR. All records relate to singles, most records in August. ***Volucella zonaria***. What a magnificent hoverfly this is, I have on occasion mistaken this species for a Hornet, if only momentarily. Just three records; Saffron Brook NR one foraging on ***Arctium lappa*** on 11 August, Grand Union Canal on 24 August and a single on Buddleia in Castle Gardens on 2 September.

The other genus more frequent in this quarter is *Eristalis* dominated by ***Eristalis tenax*** usually with other species such as ***Eristalis arbustorum*** (recorded from 14 sites), ***E. nemorum*** and ***E. pertinax***. This quarter has also been excellent for the bee mimic ***Eristalis intricarius***, recorded from Barrow upon Soar (1) on 1 August, Markfield on 7 August, Belgrave waste ground (several) on 10 August, Aylestone Meadows (1) foraging with other *Eristalis* sp, on 21 August, Quorn (one) on 26 August, Castle Gardens where several were hovering over mint beds on 2 September. Two were at Spinney Hill Park on 5 September, one at Humberstone Park on the same date.

A single specimen of ***Eristalis horticola*** was recorded with other *Eristalis* species at Aylestone Meadows on 21 August, a bright species with a dark wing shade.

A few more records from this group, **Narcissus Flies *Merodon equestris*** were recorded from Quorn, City General Hospital Grounds and Victoria Park in Leicester, ***Xylota segnis*** at Beacon Hill and Woodhouse. ***Rhingia campestris*** was recorded from eight sites but

the much more local ***Rhingia rostrata*** was noted only at Clipsham Quarry.

Other Dipteran records

The Conopid fly ***Conops quadrifasciatus*** was quite widely recorded this quarter with records from Bardon Hill, Barrow upon Soar, Billa Barra, Mountsorrel, Hamilton, Castle Gardens, Victoria Park, Belgrave and Quorn where they were described as numerous in PHG's garden on 23 August with a mating pair on 2 September. Considering the shortage of its hosts, bumblebees and wasps, one wonders why numbers are so buoyant. Less encountered members of this group were ***Sicus ferrugineus*** at Clipsham Quarry and Rutland Water in July and ***Conops flavipes*** at Woodhouse also in July.

Robber flies included; **Kite-tailed Robber-fly *Machimus atricapillus*** at Bradgate Park on 21 July and Ulverscroft NR on 28 August and the **Brown Heath Robberfly *Machimus cingulatus*** at Newtown Linford on 5 September. A specimen of the **Striped-legged Robber-fly, *Dioctria baumhaueri*** was taken at the Groby Rifle Range on 14 July and another was swept from foliage at Bede Island on 7 July. The **Striped Slender Robber-fly *Leptogaster cylindrica*** was common in one meadow at Aylestone and a single was seen at Egleton NR on 7 July. **Common Awl Robber-fly *Neoitamus cyanurus*** was found at Ulverscroft NR on 26 July. Several **Black Snipeflies *Chrysopilus cristatus*** were recorded at the Stonebow Washlands on 4 July together with another **Robber-fly *Dioctria atricapilla***. This is a black species which is confined to dry grasslands, unlike other members of this group who prefer the shelter of bushes.



Common Awl Robber-fly © Stephen Woodward

Soldier Flies

The most interesting and striking member of this group, the **Banded General *Stratiomys potamida***, was recorded on the Grand Union Canal, near the confluence of the River Soar and the River Biam. Other members of this group were the **Broad Centurian *Chloromyia formosa*** at Groby Rifle Range, Blackbrook Reservoir, Brascote Gravel Pits, Stonebow Washlands, Ulverscroft NR, Willow Holt, Great Central Way and Aylestone Meadows in July, mainly singles.



Broad Centurian © Stephen Woodward

Two specimens of the widespread Soldier Fly, commonly found on Hogweed umbels, the **Common Green Colonel *Oplodontha viridula*** was found at Billa Barra. The **Green Gem *Microchrysa flaficornis*** was found at Glen Parva on 1 August and lastly the **Dark-winged Black *Pachygaster atra*** was numerous in young oak at the same site, there was one at Willow Holt on the same date and three beaten from foliage off Barkby Thorpe Road on 2 August. Among the plethora of records for the Diptera, a few more may be noted from the Tabanids. The **Notch-horned Cleg *Haematopota pluvialis*** at Stonebow Washlands in Loughborough, at Groby and Egleton NR in July and the **Twin-lobed Deer-fly *Chrysops relictus*** at Brascote Pits, Willow Holt and Wanlip NR in August.

An interesting fly ***Lophosia fasciata*** with a triangular antennae was found in a café window at Mountsorrel on 27 July. This turned out to be a new county record. **Ragwort Seed Flies *Botanophila seneciella*** were widely recorded in the Charnwood region producing froth on Ragwort flowers. A long-legged fly ***Poecilobothrus nobilitatus*** was seen at

Markfield, Bardon Hill, Rutland Water, Newfield Colliery, Pillings Lock, and Shenton Estate. ***Eriothrix rufomaculata*** was at Asfordby Iron Works where it was common on Tansy on 3 September. I think this species sometimes turns up on Yarrow in my garden. ***Megamerina dolium*** was recorded at Ulverscroft NR on 27 July. ***Tachina fera***, a parasite of moth larvae, is a late summer species and was recorded from Beacon Hill, Cademan, Charnwood Lodge and Quorn in late August and early September. Finally a few leaf miners ***Phytomyza horticola*** agg at Groby and Rutland Water on ***Sonchus oleraceus*** and ***Phytomyza ilicis*** at Markfield, making, as the name would suggest, a leaf mine on Holly.

Hymenoptera

Social Bees and Wasps

There is no doubt this terrible summer we have just witnessed has had a catastrophic effect on our bumblebee fauna, but nature can bounce back and hopefully they will improve their fortunes, given a reasonable chance in 2013.

The **Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*** was, as usual, widely recorded but judging by the records submitted, workers were very much on the low side. PHG reports good numbers in his Quorn garden during September, FTS in his garden at Barlestone records them as only occasional during this quarter with no queens observed. **Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris***, more young queens were observed this quarter, with singles at Castle Gardens, Belgrave, Thurnby Lodge and Aylestone Meadows. There was a single queen at Barlestone on 22 August with a maximum of four queens up to the end of the month all nectaring on Phlox. During September the species was more frequent here but mainly males with single queens on four dates all on Phlox, some nectar robbing.

Very few ***Bombus lucorum/terrestris*** were noted, probably in this instance under recorded.

Red-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius* workers were observed in a few places in my patch, at a flowery site Great Central Way (several), Bede island - two, Clipsham Quarry, Rutland Water, many at Billa Barra, Markfield

on 7 August, few at County Hall on Lavender on 8 August. At Barlestone it was occasional in July, with fewer in August, and scarce in September and no queens reported anywhere this quarter.

White-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lucorum* were not widely recorded, very few workers seen but a couple of males recorded at Barlestone not seen at all in September except a single queen on the 28th.

The **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** fared a little better, frequent at FTSs garden at Barlestone during early July, some workers with pollen and single queens on the 5th, 9th, 12th and 22nd but only three times in August and no records during September. Half a dozen or so were foraging legumes at a flowery site near Great Central Way in Leicester on 7 July and a very late worker with full pollen baskets was in my Leicester garden on September 7th. No records from elsewhere.

Considering the success of the **Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*** in PHGs garden in the last year or so, he only reported a single specimen on 25 August. Another single was recorded in SFWs Groby garden on 12 July. Numbers fared better at Barlestone, with occasional ones during July, single queens with pollen on the 4th & 9th, single queens again on 3 & 4 August and one on September 9th, again a young queen. Other records for this species - several workers and young queen at Thurnby Lodge on 15 July, young queens at Victoria Park on 3 September and on 23 July and 13 August in Castle Gardens - a worker with full pollen baskets.

Very few **Early-nesting Bumblebees *Bombus pratorum*** were recorded this quarter. A few males at Barlestone during August, one at Rutland Water on 7 July, a single worker at Castle Gardens with a full pollen basket on 2 September and another worker at Abbey Meadows on the 9th of the month, possible second broods?

Cuckoo species were also very thin on the ground this quarter, ***Bombus vestalis*** males usually very common this quarter, were recorded from Clipsham Quarry, Spinney Hill Park, six on Globe Thistle in July, singles at Barlestone, Markfield and County Hall in August and a female at Castle Gardens on 9 September.

Only one record of ***Bombus rupestris*** at Beacon Hill on 12 July. The only other cleptoparasite bee noted, was ***Bombus campestris*** at Barlestone, seen twice in August and once in early September, on Verbena.

Honey Bees *Apis mellifera* were widely recorded during July from Quorn, Beacon Hill, Thurnby Lodge foraging Meadow Sweet in Castle Gardens and probably elsewhere. It has been reported that honey from hive bees has been down 70 per cent, reflecting how difficult it has been for pollen gathering species it has been this summer.

Vespidae

In contrast to recent years, only one **Hornet *Vespa crabro*** record was received from Quorn in August, preying on hover flies visiting Golden Rod and Hemp Agrimony.

Common Wasps *Vespula vulgaris* were very scarce, only odd ones seen here and there during September, a queen was noted at Glen Parva on 17 September.

Howard Bradshaw

Hymenoptera: Solitary Bees and Wasps

Solitary Bees

After a really good start to the year with lots of ***Andrena clarkella*** in Bradgate and other places, the solitary bees were hit by the wet, cold weather and their numbers plummeted. A few *A. clarkella* lingered on into April.

We had to work hard to get records this year but ended up with quite a respectable list. A few species have a second generation in the year but numbers are always less than the spring brood and this year, especially so.

One of the highlights was the finding of ***Colletes succinctus*** on the heather near the top of Bardon on 1 September – a Leicester Lit. & Phil. NH Section visit. This is a heather specialist and has not been recorded in the county for 66 years – although it has probably been around all the time. Aggregate Industries are doing a great job of re-establishing the heathy area near the top of Bardon.

The commoner ***Colletes daviesanus*** was seen at Groby Pool, Aylestone Meadows and Abney Street in Leicester on *Hebe*.

Hylaeus communis and *H. brevicornis* were both recorded from several sites.

Andrena bicolor was seen at six sites in the second quarter of the year and *A. carantonica* at ten sites. The easily recognised grey and black *A. cineraria* was at 12 sites and a few carried on into July – HB remarks that he only saw one this year, which is very unusual. Both *A. chrysoceles* and the distinctive *A. fulva* were seen at 12 sites and we were surprised to see an *A. fulva* in the garden at Mount St Bernard's Abbey as late as 1 July - but it has been a strange year.

A. haemorrhoea and *A. nigroaenea* are usually among the commoner species and this was true this year but numbers were considerably reduced.

Other *Andrena* species recorded this summer were *A. angustior*, *A. nitida*, *A. praecox*, *A. tibialis* (found at Croft Pasture NR – a new county record), *A. wilkella*, *A. subopaca*, *A. semilaevis*, *A. labialis*, *A. bucephala* and *A. minutula*.

Seven species of *Andrena* lingered into the third quarter but numbers were very low.

The banded abdomen and lovely golden legs make *Halictus rubicundus* recognisable in the field and we had it at six sites and *H. tumulorum*, which has a slightly longer season, was present at four sites.

From a wide variety of locations we had nine species of *Lasioglossum* bees most of which are not easy to identify – small black bees. Correct identification depends on small features such as the density of punctures on the head and the shape of the teeth on the tibial spurs.

Several of the cleptoparasitic *Sphecodes* species were seen but differentiating them is not easy and is impossible in the field, so, at present, some remain unidentified.

Osmia bicornis (formerly *rufa*) was noted at several sites and is the commonest of the Mason Bees, *Osmia leiana* was found at Shenton and we watched *Osmia bicolor* again at Ketton and also at a new site of Bloody Oaks Quarry in Rutland – both are LRWT reserves. Both *O. bicornis* and *O. leiana* continue into the third quarter.

We were particularly excited to get *Hoplitis claviventris* at Ketton and delighted to see the streamlined *Coelioxys elongata* at another Trust reserve at Ulverscroft – only the third record for the vice-county. This is a cleptoparasite on the leaf-cutting *Megachile* species.

Megachile ligniseca was found at Mountsorrel and *M. centuncularis* from Aylestone Meadows, Abney Street, Ethel Road and Castle Gardens – all in Leicester City. HB only had one *M. willughbiella* in his garden but noted four foraging on *Ononis repens* on Great Central Way. We saw none in Charnwood.

Anthophora plumipes was seen at nine sites – we are getting used to recognising good sites for this bee as we drive through the county. It is always worth stopping in any village and doing a quick tour of the walls and garden banks – churchyards seem particularly good. Shrubs such as *Berberis darwinii* are usually profitable for many species – often planted in pub car-parks and make a useful excuse for a pub lunch.

A total of ten *Nomada* species was recorded; these are much easier to separate – they are the wasp mimics that are cleptoparasites on other bees – mostly *Andrena* species. Some are host-specific and others such as *Nomada flava* victimise several species.

Melecta albifrons, the cleptoparasite of *Anthophora plumipes* was at two sites in Leicester and at Croft and Desford where its host was nesting.

Solitary Wasps

About 35 species were recorded this summer; a few still await confirmation from an expert. We are grateful to Natural England, LRWT and other land-owners for giving us permission to collect both bee and wasp specimens.



Chrysis impressa © Stephen Woodward

There were three Jewel Wasps - *Chrysis impressa* from Mountsorrel, Swithland Wood, Newtown Linford and Ulverscroft NR and *Chrysis angustula* which is a new site record for Ulverscroft NR. The distinctive *Trichrysis cyanea* which is recognisable in the field was noted at four sites.

The only *Mutillid* was *Myrmosa atra* from Bradgate – again the wingless female can be easily identified, once you realise that it is not an ant!

Five *Pompilid* species were recorded - *Priocnemis parvula* from Newtown Linford, *Dipogon subintermedius* also from Newtown Linford, as well as Swithland Wood, Charnwood Lodge and Grace Dieu and one specimen of the less common *Dipogon variegatus* from Newtown Linford. *Dipogon* species specialise in hunting spiders in old and decaying trees and can be watched excavating their holes in the wood and throwing sawdust out. *Arachnospila anceps* was seen at Billa Barra and *Anoplius nigerrimus* from two sites around Newtown Linford.

Eumenid or Potter Wasps - the only *Odynerus melanocephala* record came from Grace Dieu and *O. spinipes* from Clipsham Quarry where we found their “pots” on a vertical face of the quarry. *Ancistrocerus gazella* was seen at Bede Island by HB, at Asfordby Hill and in the garden on the Shenton Estate while *A. trifasciatus* was reported from Stonebow Washlands in Loughborough, Rutland Water and Nature Alive. *Symmorphus gracilis* from Ulverscroft NR and Swithland Wood and *S. bifasciatus* at Rutland Water on the Bioblitz.

Three species of the Crabrionid genus *Trypoxylon* were seen – *T. attenuatum* at Shenton Estate and *T. clavicerum* at Newtown Linford, *T. figulus* at Bagworth Heath and all three species at Ulverscroft NR.

Crossocerus elongatus was seen at Beacon Hill, *C. annulipes* at Newtown Linford, *C. megacephalus* had a good season and was recorded at four sites plus five different compartments at Ulverscroft NR., *C. podagricus* was at two sites and *C. quadrimaculatus* at three sites including Billa Barra.

Ectemnius continuus records came from Bardon, Ketton, Newfield Colliery and

Ulverscroft NR, but Grace Dieu was the only site for *E. cephalotes*. HB had *Ectemnius sexcinctus* in his garden in Abney Street, Leicester.

Lindenius albilabris was widely recorded at several sites on the Forest and *Mimumesa dahlbomi* from just two sites.

The two records of *Stigmus pendulus* await confirmation. *Pemphredon lugubris* was seen on several occasions at Grace Dieu, Cademan and other sites on Charnwood.

We had one record each of the aphid-predating *Passaloecus* species, *P. corniger* at Cademan and *P. gracilis* at Newtown Linford.

The yellow-faced *Mellinus arvensis* appears in August and was at Brascote GP, Asfordby Hill, Ulverscroft NR and Beacon Hill. It stocks its nest with flies.

A specimen of *Gorytes quadrifasciatus* was found along the GU Canal at Aylestone and *Argogorytes mystaceus*, which also predated frog hoppers, at Blackbrook Reservoir. The bee predator, *Cerceris rybyensis*, was in evidence at Newtown Linford, Groby and Castle Hill at Mountsorrel.

Helen Ikin

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

Another three months of erratic weather. 2012 has seen some drastic situations world-wide but as always nature comes up trumps. HB's record for the **Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea** *Lathyrus sylvestris* is worthy of note as, according to *The Flora of Leics. & Rutland*, Jeeves, M, 2011, it was last recorded as a probable native in 1969 in Burley Wood. The record for **Ragweed** *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* is also interesting. I have found small plants which did not persist underneath the bird feeders in the Outwoods so one can expect to see more of this plant in the future. When grown to its full size it is quite impressive and unmissable. The re-appearance of **Bog Pimpernel** *Anagallis tenella* at the Groby Pool Site is also good news. The presence of this plant in this location has always been a bit of a teaser as it seems to disappear for a while and then re-appear.

SOME PLANTS OF INTEREST THIS QUARTER

Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus*: located in St James Churchyard, Birstall. A possibly native plant usually found near habitation. Interesting, as the juice of this plant was the one which swallows anointed their youngsters' eyes with to enable them to see. Originally, people thought that the swallows disappeared for the winter and they spent it immersed in mud.

Musk-mallow *Malva moschata*: was found at two localities in Birstall. A plant which seems to have increased of late, possibly because it has been used as a garden plant.

Field Penny-cress *Thlaspi arvense*: plants in seed were found in Birstall. This is a plant which is much more common south and east of here. A plant disliked by farmers as it taints the milk of cows who eat it and can even taint the actual meat. The seeds were formerly used as a diuretic.

Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*: a patch about 0.4 m across was found at Groby Pool. This is a plant which is rare in the county and is now found only in Charnwood.

Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus sylvestris*: One plant in Salix scrub was found in Barkby Thorpe Lane. This was last recorded in 2009 at Willesley Wood where it was, possibly, an introduction.

Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*: located at Birstall Meadows. An interesting little plant which is not common in the county.

Petty Whin *Genista anglica*: a few shoots of this plant were recorded from in its only known locality in the county Charnwood Lodge NR.



Yellow-wort © Stephen Woodward

Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*: one plant was found at Mountsorrel and many were found at Asfordby Hill Iron Works. This is a plant which

turns up in unexpected places and odd records can occur almost anywhere. It has even been recorded as a lawn weed in Norfolk. Due to the fact that it is self-pollinated it can colonise a suitable habitat very quickly.

Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*: was present at both Charnwood Lodge and Beacon Hill CP.

Orange Mullein *Verbascum phlomoides*: was common on an area of waste ground in Belgrave, Leicester.

Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigrum*: one plant was in a gravelly margin at Hamilton, Leicester.

Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*: records from several places. I believe this is a plant which is becoming more common generally as records for it are becoming much more frequent.



Ploughman's-spikenard © Stephen Woodward

Ploughman's-spikenard *Inula conyzae*: several plants were at Bardon Hill. This is a plant which apparently does not occur anywhere in the county other than in man-made habitats.

Ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*: one large plant was found in a garden in Quorn. First noted in 1976 in Leicestershire, since then it often appears as a bird seed alien. Several seedlings of this plant have been found beneath the bird feeders in the Outwoods.

Greater Duckweed *Spirodela polyrhiza*: found by the River Soar near Pillings Lock.

Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera*: present at Bardon Hill.

Smooth-stalked Sedge *Carex laevigata*: one large clump with some very large shoots was found at Swithland Wood.

Fern Grass *Catapodium rigidum*: present on old brick revetment in Bradgate Park. Also present

at Bardon Hill, and a colony found on a stone wall alongside the dam at Swithland Reservoir.

Lesser Bulrush *Typha angustifolia*: present at Newfield Colliery NR. As well as its smaller size the gap between the male & female flowers is diagnostic.

Violet Helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*: four shoots were showing at Sheet Hedges Wood.

Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*: 50+ plants, some very tall like lupins, were at Stonebow Washlands, Loughborough and ten plants present at Newfield Colliery NR.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records have also been received for the following groups:

Ants, earwigs, caddisflies, woodlice, millipedes, centipedes, slugs and snails, plant galls, liverworts, mosses, fungi and slime moulds.

WEATHER

July, for the most part, continued the cool and wet summer weather that had started at the beginning of June. Average daytime temperatures were 19.8°C, about 1.5°C below normal, with the night time temperatures logging 11.8°C which is the average figure. It was a very wet month with 130 mm of rain falling at Mountsorrel which was nearly three times the usual figure. The period April to July is the wettest ever recorded in our region with over 450 mm of rain - this is more than fell during all of 2011. July was a dull month with 163 hours of sunshine which is 10% down on the expected figure. The first three weeks were cool, wet and dull. The wettest day was the 6th when 27 mm fell on Mountsorrel but the 13th was not far behind, when another 25 mm fell. Temperatures by day were very low with the maximum temperature in the first three weeks just 22°C. The coldest day was the 19th when the temperature only reached 15°C, more than 6°C below normal. The cloudy damp nights did mean night time temperatures stayed up at average levels. Finally after seven weeks of wet weather

the sun finally appeared in the last week of the month. Temperatures climbed up to 28°C on the 24th and 15 hours of sun were recorded on each day between the 23rd and 25th. This first glimpse of summer was due to an area of high pressure that finally established itself after seven weeks of low pressure and rain. Alas this high pressure quickly slipped into Europe and we were once again affected by heavy showers and lower temperatures. It is now six years since we had a warm and summery July and August has been mainly cool and dull for the last nine years. Let's hope the second half of the summer is better than the first!

Summer 2012 was the biggest washout for 100 years. Nearly 350 mm of rain fell in Mountsorrel which was double the usual figure for the three summer months. There has been only one wetter summer that being 1912 in Leicestershire since records began here in 1836. June and the first half of July were very cool and wet. Three times the usual rainfall, 150 mm, fell in June with another 130 mm falling in July which was double the usual figure. There were no drier or warmer spells at all during this seven week period. Flooding was a severe problem at times with the Soar valley in flood during June and July and Rothley had its worst floods for decades when the brook flooded in the village centre. June 28th was a landmark weather day with very severe storms which spawned a tornado near Newtown Linford and nearly 40 mm of rain in a single day which resulted in the most extensive flash floods in 30 years. In addition, huge hail stones the size of golf balls fell in the Birstall area causing thousands of pounds-worth of damage to property and cars. Finally after seven weeks of deluge the sun finally appeared on the 21 July and we had a week of warm and sunny weather with temperatures reaching 28°C on 24 July.

August was a much better month with only average rainfall of 63 mm falling in Mountsorrel. The low pressure areas that had sat over the country during June and July due to the southerly track of the jet stream lay further west in August. This allowed a southerly airflow which was much warmer. Average afternoon temperatures in August were 21°C and nights 12°C, these figures being about 0.5°C above normal. The warmest day was the 19th when

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Our thanks go to them all.

Records for the fourth quarter of 2012 should be sent to:

Helen Ikin, 237 Forest Road, Woodhouse, Loughborough, Leics. LE12 8TZ,

email: helen@canids.freeserve.co.uk, preferably by 15 January.

the temperature reached 26°C. Sunshine totals of 145 hours were still 10% below normal. There were still wet spells however with the 15th producing 17 mm and on the 25th more severe storms produced 12 mm in just 30 minutes in Nanpantan, with a house in Shepshed being badly damaged by a lightning strike! So ended a summer we all want to forget.

September was a month of extreme contrasts. It started off warm and sunny but it became much cooler. Afternoon temperatures averaged 17.5°C which is close to the long term average but night time temperatures logged just 8.4°C nearly 1.5°C below normal thanks to some very cool nights later in the month. The average of 13°C was 0.8°C below normal. Rainfall at Mountsorrel was 51 mm and, at Nanpantan, Jim Lofts logged 70 mm. These figures are close to average for September. Nearly all of this rain, however, fell in a 48 hour period on the 22nd/23rd. This two day period saw 38 mm fall at Mountsorrel and 48 mm fall at Nanpantan. Ex-hurricane Nadine was responsible for this deluge but flooding was kept at a minimum locally as the previous three weeks had been mainly warm and dry. Indeed the first ten days saw weather that was warmer and drier than most of our soggy summer. On the 9th, our maximum temperature of 26°C was recorded and there was more than eleven hours of sunshine on six days in the month. The final sunshine total was 178 hours in Mountsorrel, 30% was above normal. After the 10th it was much cooler but still predominately dry. I recorded only seven days with measurable rainfall at Mountsorrel. Temperatures at night dropped markedly and these were down to 3.4°C on the 21st. Winds averaged 4.6 mph for the month with my maximum gust of 34 mph being recorded on the 25th. So, a mixed month but the now customary warm and dry to September continued this year. As autumn approaches our thoughts turn to the winter ahead and most weather models are expecting another colder than average winter but it is too early to give a detailed forecast yet!

Phil Morrish