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LEICESTERSHIRE and RUTLAND (VC 55) ANTS

Who was it that said "90% of ants are *Lasius niger*"? I think I have to agree but we have found others!

If ants are small and black they are usually *Lasius niger* which must be present in every parish and we have many records of these. If they are small and yellow they may be *Lasius flavus* the **Yellow Meadow Ant** which makes the familiar large ant hills as found in Bradgate Park. To persist, these hills need to be on permanent pasture and remain unshaded. Churchyards can be good. It would be interesting to record where these ant hills occur and we would welcome any records. We have found them at Cranoe, Mountsorrel Castle Hill, on the Langton Caudle, Wymeswold and North Kilworth among other locations.

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Larger black ants are most commonly *Formica fusca* - they often seem to have a shiny patch on the gaster which is actually appressed silvery hairs. This species is fairly common on open ground such as Bradgate Park and Beacon Hill.

Red ants can be more difficult to identify but the two common ones are *Myrmica rubra* and *Myrmica ruginodis* which differ only in subtle ways such as the relative length of the spines on the back of the thorax.

At least 18 species of ants have been recorded in VC55, mainly by Harry Broughton who died a few years ago. All his records are in the files at LRERC and we hope that someone will write them up one day.

There are records of non-native species that have come in to the country with foodstuffs,



Bradgate Park Ant Hills © Stephen Woodward

etc., and established colonies here – often inside buildings where it is warmer. For instance, the Ghost Ant *Tapinoma melanocephalum*, a tiny species from South America with white legs and gaster and *Lasius neglectus*, the ant from Hungary which has an affinity for electrical wiring.

Native Ant (Formicidae) species recorded in Leicestershire

All are under-recorded and some species may be more widespread than the records would suggest.

Formica cunicularia Latreille, 1798, four records
Formica fusca Linnaeus, 1758, common
Formica lemani Bondroit, 1917, scarce
(*Formica rufa* Linnaeus, 1761 extinct)
(*Lasius alienus* Foerster, 1850, possible record)
Lasius flavus (Fabricius, 1782), locally common
Lasius mixtus (Nylander, 1846), two records
Lasius niger agg., very common, recently split
Lasius platythorax Seifert, 1991, distribution unknown, recent split from *L. niger*
(*Lasius sabularum* (Bondroit, 1918), possible record)
Lasius umbratus (Nylander, 1846), seven records
Leptothorax acervorum (Fabricius, 1793), probably widespread, under-recorded
Myrmica lobicornis Nylander, 1846, eight records
Myrmica rubra Linnaeus, 1758, common
Myrmica ruginodis Nylander, 1846, local
Myrmica sabuleti Meinert, 1861, local?
Myrmica scabrinodis Nylander, 1846, local?
Myrmica schencki Viereck, 1903, one record
Myrmica sulcinodis Nylander, 1846, a few records
(*Stenammina westwoodii* agg., possible record, species now split)

Helen Ikin



Formica fusca © Stephen Woodward

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Hedgehogs were seen in Mountsorrel, Loughborough (Moat Road) and regularly after 22 April in HBH's Loughborough garden. The first dropping this year in PJD's Quorn garden were on 24 April and dead ones were noted on roads near Grace Dieu Manor School, Newtown Linford and Botcheston.

Moles were active in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter and molehills were recorded at Wing Hall, Kings Mills, Saddington, Woodhouse, Harby and along the Grantham Canal.

We have no shrew records this quarter.

Bats were seen around the pond in HS's Quorn garden on 6 May and 21 June and HBH had up to 12 regularly in his Loughborough garden in May and June.

Six different **Brown Hares** were seen in the fields around Burrough Hill in April and RGL and PHG saw seven at Park Hill GC in late May, six together and in close contact and one alone near new plantations. Three were seen in grass fields near Newtown Linford in early May.

HBH has had two **Rabbits** in his Loughborough garden and there are 12 or more across the road. DAP has them permanently in his Swithland garden including under the shed. Other sightings came from Mucklin Wood, Dimminsdale NR, Coalville Meadows and County Hall where four young ones were grazing on the lawn outside the Leics. & Rutland Environmental Records Centre. Burrows were noted at Burleigh Wood, Saddington and Beacon Hill.

Grey Squirrels were seen around Cropston Reservoir and in Beacon Hill top car park.

We have no vole records this quarter.

A dead **Wood Mouse** was found at Ketton Quarry NR. The only **Brown Rat** sighting was a dead one at Willoughby Waterleys.

Red Foxes visited Loughborough, Quorn and Groby gardens during the quarter – the Groby one in broad daylight “ambling through the garden as if he owned it”. See the Badger notes for an assertive Fox.

Four lucky members saw **Stoats** this quarter. DAP had one working his garden borders in Swithland at 1pm on 20 April, MF saw one on two occasions in early May along the Buddon Brook at Quorn, JG saw one near the Boathouse at Cropston Reservoir on 5 May and RGL observed one running about and, at one point, being chased by a Moorhen at Park Hill GC on 29 April.

MF spotted an **American Mink** along the Buddon Brook at Quorn in late April.

Badgers visited gardens in Loughborough, Rothley and Swithland which was vandalised on 2 May possibly because of worm shortage due to dry weather. PJD reports a scuffle between a Badger and a large Fox seen by a friend in Loughborough – the Fox won, chasing the Badger away.

There were road casualties in Loughborough, Rothley, Joe Moores Lane and near Beacon Hill and Badger activity was noted near Groby Pool and Burleigh Wood in Loughborough.

DAP was in the right place to have clear view of an **Otter** along the River Soar at Mountsorrel at 7 am on 25 April.

Muntjac slots were noted on the slope of Burrough Hill near the Iron Age fortifications and a live one walked towards SFW and HI as they sat near Lower Beacon after sunset one evening in late May, listening, in vain, for Woodcock.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Pairs of **Mute Swans** were at the usual waters and most had cygnets by the end of the quarter with numbers ranging from one to six.

A **Snow Goose**, said to be “very tame”, was at Groby Pool in April. Surprisingly there were no records of **Greylag Geese** but **Canada Geese** were as usual quite plentiful; at Hicks Lodge in June there were 41 adults and 11 juveniles. Other regular sites had single nests but these tend to lose their young much more readily than where there is group nesting. The numerous sightings of **Egyptian Geese** probably concerned the same pair as all were seen around Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir. The pair had five young on 11 June but by 15th the brood was

down to one and remained so until the end of the quarter. Two **Shelduck** were noted at Wanlip on 15 May.



Female Mandarin with young © Jim Graham

Mandarins were regularly noted at Cropston Reservoir and Bradgate Park with at least 20 young produced by four females on the reservoir and two young on the river in the Park at the end of the quarter. There were still 40 **Wigeon** at Wanlip on 1 April and one was still present at Cropston Reservoir on 6 May. The most **Gadwall** seen was at Cropston Reservoir on 5 May when there were nine pairs and breeding was confirmed. There was a minimum of six pairs at Cossington Meadows in April but no report mentioned breeding. Two **Teal** were still at Hugglescote on 24 April and there were 20 at Cossington Meadows four days later. The maximum number of **Mallard** was surprisingly in Bradgate Park where there were 64 on the River Lin on 29 June. Others were noted at most suitable waters with ducklings seen at many of them. The only **Shovelers** of the quarter were at Cossington Meadows with a maximum of three in late April.

Cropston Reservoir, Hicks Lodge, Cossington Meadows and Kelham Bridge all had double-figure counts of **Tufted Ducks** with a maximum of 13 pairs at the reservoir. Breeding is later with this species and should be mentioned in the next quarter. A lone male **Goldeneye** was observed at Swithland Reservoir on 18 May. In early April, up to nine **Goosander** were reported in the Cossington/Birstall area.

Single **Red-legged Partridges** were seen in just two places, Ashby Parva and Willoughby Waterleys. A pair of **Grey Partridge** was noted at Sileby on 22 April, this being the only observation of the quarter. Single figure

numbers (maximum four) of **Pheasants** were seen in numerous places on Charnwood and beyond.

Cropston Reservoir provided the few **Cormorant** records with one or two present in all three months. It doesn't seem long since Cormorants became a common sight in the Midlands but this quarter they were completely out-numbered by **Little Egrets**! Up to five were seen regularly throughout the quarter at the reserves in the Soar Valley. **Grey Herons**, usually alone, were recorded at suitable sites throughout the area however, there were 14 at Cropston Reservoir on 30 June.

Little Grebes, probably nesting, were at Moira, Hicks Lodge and Cossington Meadows. Breeding was proven at Kelham Bridge where two adults were with two young on 13 June. **Great Crested Grebes** were present on most of the larger stretches of water, with 22 at Cropston Reservoir on 30 June. No young were reported but nests with eggs were noted.

More **Red Kites** are now being seen but still generally on the Rutland side of the county. There were ten observations but only three on Charnwood and two on the west, at Brascote and Kelham Bridge on 22 April. This was followed at the same site on 1 May by an immature male **Marsh Harrier**. There appears to be a reduction of **Sparrowhawk** reports with only ten records, all were of single birds three of which were garden observations. By far the most reported bird of prey was the **Buzzard**; observations were made throughout the area many in suitable breeding locations. Six were noted on two occasions, over Buddon Wood and over Cropston Reservoir. The only proven breeding was from a nest in a Blue Cedar Tree in a Rothley garden! The only passage **Osprey** of the quarter was at Cropston Reservoir on 2 June, it was perched on a dead tree before rising high on a thermal and moving away. **Kestrels** were widespread throughout the area but there were only half the number of sightings as Buzzards. Two **Hobbies** were over Dishley Pool on 24 June and others, all singletons, were noted over Cropston Reservoir, Long Whatton and Kelham Bridge. **Peregrines** were seen at the usual sites of Breedon Hill, Swithland Reservoir, Albert Village and Bradgate Park. All were in April or early May.

Most of the water bodies held **Moorhens** but four birds was the maximum counted. Breeding was only confirmed at one site when a young bird was seen at Brocks Hill, Oadby. **Coots** did not appear to be as widespread but they were reported in greater numbers. Cropston Reservoir held at least 25 in early May and young were noted at various sites by the end of the quarter.

Oystercatchers were found at probable breeding sites at, Cossington Meadows and Hicks Lodge. The only pairs of **Little Ringed Plovers** noted during the quarter were at the same sites but not proven to breed. A **Ringed Plover** was at Birstall Meadows on 23 and 24 April. A late flock of 170 **Golden Plover** was at Stoughton on 21 April. **Lapwings** with young were found at Sileby, with probably ten pairs, Cossington Meadows and Hicks Lodge. Breeding was also possible at Cropston Reservoir where a passage **Sanderling** was noted on 28 May.



Sanderling @ Jim Graham

There were five **Common Snipe** at Stoughton on 1 April but the last of the winter visitors was at Kelham Bridge on 26 April. A **Curlew** was seen "in the usual field" at Black Hill, Ulverscroft on 11 June and four days later two flew over Broombriggs during the Woodhouse "Bioblitz" event. Two **Common Sandpipers** were noted at Swithland Reservoir on 20 April and after that seven individuals were seen at regular intervals through May and June at Cossington Meadows, Cropston Reservoir and Hicks Lodge. An early autumn passage **Green Sandpiper** was at Kelham Bridge on 27 June and there was one at Cropston Reservoir on the 30th. Two **Spotted Redshank**, both in breeding plumage, stayed at Cossington Meadows on 8 and 9 May and a

Wood Sandpiper put in an appearance there on the 8th along with six **Redshank**. Others in ones and twos were noted at Wanlip and Hicks Lodge where there was a report of breeding by the Forestry Commission.

Gulls featured very sparsely in members' notes, the maximum numbers being five **Black-headed** at Hicks Lodge, eight **Lesser Black-backed** at Cropston Reservoir and one **Herring Gull** at the same site.

Two **Black Terns** were at Cropston Reservoir on 6 May together with an **Arctic Tern**. Nine days later there were 11 Arctics at the same site. **Common Terns** bred at Watermead Park and Hicks Lodge and odd ones passed over Cropston Reservoir during May and June.

Stock Doves were present at half a dozen sites with a maximum of four in Bradgate Park in April. **Wood Pigeons** were to be found all over the area but the "Bioblitz" at Woodhouse provided the highest count of 20 in June. Most of the **Collared Dove** records were from gardens but only a few were mentioned.

The first **Cuckoo** of the season was heard in Bradgate Park on 20 April. After that they were widespread with more records this year than last. I certainly heard more in the north west of the county this year.

Apart from one **Barn Owl** in Rutland the only local report was one at Swithland on 5 May. **Little Owls** were noted at Launde Park, Diseworth, Hoby and Bradgate Park. **Tawny Owls** were a little more obvious with sightings or calling birds in six areas including regularly in a garden at Swithland.

The spring migration was unusual this year and **Swifts** were late in arriving. The first ones were seen at Cossington Meadows and Hugglescote on 8 May. By 15 May numbers had built up at Cropston Reservoir to 450. At the end of the quarter there were 150 at the same site.

Kingfishers were in short supply with birds only noted in three places Quorn, Watermead Park and Saltersford Flashes.

Green Woodpeckers appear to have had a good year with observations throughout the area. Four birds were noted in Bradgate Park on a few occasions and others were feeding in some members' gardens. **Great Spotted**

Woodpeckers were reported in almost exactly the same numbers as the previous species. More were seen in gardens occasionally accompanied with young birds. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was checking a nest box in a Swithland garden on 31 May and the only other record was a wonderful one - young birds seen along the Buddon Wood Meadows on 1 June.

Magpies were widespread but under reported. **Jays** were noted in a dozen sites including the occasional garden. **Jackdaws** were seen in a similar number of areas with 52 in Bradgate Park in late June. The most **Rooks** were at Donington Park with 26 on 15 April and 50 at Beaumanor Hall on 15 June. Like Magpies, **Crows** were grossly under recorded. **Ravens** with young birds were seen at Bardon Hill on 7 June. Four birds were at Groby Pool in April and others were noted at Bradgate Park, Charnwood Lodge, Buddon Wood, Seagrave and Beacon Hill.

Goldcrests were found in around 15 different areas with eight at The Brand on 15 June. **Blue** and **Great Tits** were regular in gardens where young birds were noted in June. **Coal Tits** were only found in Charnwood areas like Bradgate Park and Charnwood Lodge. Unfortunately, as usual, the only site for **Willow Tits** was Kelham Bridge where birds used the feeders until at least mid-June. **Marsh Tits** were proved to breed at Beacon Hill and others were found at Burleigh Wood and Piper Wood.

Singing **Sky Larks**, suggesting breeding, were heard in around 15 areas with a dozen birds at Cropston in early May.

The first **Sand Martins** were mentioned in the last edition of Heritage but there were only two observations this quarter, at Watermead Park and Cossington Meadows. A **Swallow** over Woodhouse on 10 April heralded a movement in the following few days and by the end of May, 200 were feeding over Cropston Reservoir. Four **House Martins** were over Watermead Park on 28 May and apart from three at Saddington in mid-May it was a month, 29 May, before the next sighting when 200 were with the previously mentioned Swallows. Young birds in the nest were noted at Harby.

A **Cetti's Warbler** was heard at Watermead Park on 28 and 29 April but was not mentioned after that. **Long-tailed Tits** were seen at a dozen

sites which included gardens. Only one family party was recorded, that was 11 birds together at Beacon Hill on 11 June.

It was interesting to hear of two **Wood Warblers** this quarter. The first was singing at Watermead Park on 28 April and the other at Swithland Wood on 30 May. No other records were received but it would be nice to think that the birds had bred. There were 45 separate reports of **Chiffchaffs** singing in suitable breeding locations, mainly on Charnwood but also further afield. Breeding was confirmed at The Brand and Charnwood Lodge. **Willow Warblers** were almost as well reported as Chiffchaffs and breeding was suspected at many sites and confirmed at Cropston Reservoir. There was almost exactly the same number of records of **Blackcaps** as Chiffchaffs, some feeding in gardens and most in probable breeding locations. The Cropston Reservoir surrounds held at least nine males on 2 June. On the same date there were four **Garden Warblers** there. As is usual there was only half the number of observations as the previous species but mostly in likely breeding locations.

Lesser Whitethroats were heard, and occasionally seen at eight sites usually in tall overgrown hedges. Their cousin the **Common Whitethroat** lived up to its name and was noted in all the expected places. Kelham Bridge was a good place to see them with probably 12 pairs on site.

A **Grasshopper Warbler** was "reeling" at Watermead Park on 29 April and one was ringed at Kelham Bridge in May. **Sedge Warblers** were not found until late April and then only at five sites; two areas of Watermead Park, Cossington Meadows, Cropston Reservoir and Kelham Bridge where young were being fed at the end of the quarter. **Reed Warblers** were even later in arriving and were singing at the same sites as Sedge Warblers plus Groby Pool and the Grantham Canal.

Nuthatches were seen in 15 different locations with eight birds together in the Outwoods on 2 April. Breeding was confirmed at The Brand and Bradgate Park. **Treecreepers** were as usual less obvious with records from eight localities. Two family parties were noted at Beacon Hill on 11 June.

Singing **Wrens** were widespread, 11 were heard around Cropston Reservoir and breeding was confirmed there. Most others were in probable breeding locations.

Starlings are a gradually declining species but not as much as our records would suggest. Very few were reported but there was a flock of 150 at Ullesthorpe on 1 April.

Two female **Ring Ouzels** were at Cossington Meadows on 29 April. **Blackbirds** were very common with double-figure counts at Beacon Hill and Cropston village. The last of the winter **Fieldfares** were at Ullesthorpe on 1 April when 20 were present. There was exactly the same number of **Song Thrush** records as Blackbirds but with a maximum number of five at Beacon Hill on 11 June. Twenty **Redwings** were with the aforementioned Fieldfares at Ullesthorpe and two days later there was one at Cropston and Mountsorrel. **Mistle Thrushes** were seen in a dozen places with breeding confirmed at Charnwood Lodge and Leicester Infirmary, evidently a regular location.

It is good to get any **Spotted Flycatcher** records nowadays so to have them from four locations was a bonus. Five were at Bradgate Park, four in Swithland Wood, three at Cropston Reservoir and one at The Brand, all in possible breeding locations.



Spotted Flycatcher © Jim Graham

Robins and **Dunnocks** were plentiful as ever with regular garden observations. A single female **Redstart** was at Parkhill Golf Club, Seagrave on 26 April.

House Sparrows were probably under-recorded with only two double-figure counts, both in the Shepshed area. Unfortunately four

Tree Sparrows at Sileby was the only record for this species, but at least they did appear to be breeding.

The fields adjacent to Thornton Reservoir held eight **Yellow Wagtails** on 6 May, others early in the quarter were at Cossington Meadows and Cropston Reservoir where one was seen carrying food on 30 June. At the same time there was a juvenile **Grey Wagtail** present. Other adult birds were noted at Groby Pool, Kings Mills and Deans Lane. There was a **White Wagtail** at Thornton Reservoir on 6 May. **Pied Wagtails** were only recorded at half a dozen sites with young birds noted at Cropston Reservoir and Bradgate Park. The usual sites at Bardon Hill, Charnwood Lodge, Ulverscroft and Beacon Hill produced the only **Tree Pipit** observations with breeding assumed at the latter. **Meadow Pipits** were found at five sites, Cropston, Bradgate Park, Charnwood Lodge, Loughborough Big Meadows and Beacon Hill, all probable breeding areas.

Singing **Chaffinches** were well recorded and widespread but there were only half the number of **Greenfinches** noted, amazingly all singletons apart from a two and a three. **Goldfinches** are the new garden bird with many reports in and out of gardens but only in single figures. The exception to this was 25 in a garden at Bushby.

All six of the **Siskin** records were from gardens with JG's 68 on 3 April comfortably the highest number. Most of the **Linnet** observations were in the Woodhouse and Bradgate Park areas. Unfortunately the maximum number was four birds together. Ten **Lesser Redpolls** stayed in the Quorn area throughout April and five **Crossbills** flew over Broombriggs Farm on 15 June.

Most of the 15 **Bullfinch** reports were in members' gardens numbering no more than two but four were seen at Cossington Meadows on 1 April.

Eleven **Yellowhammers** were noted in Bradgate Park on 15 May, there were eight in Piper Wood and six at Charnwood Lodge also during May. Smaller numbers were seen in another dozen locations. **Reed Buntings** were at ten sites with 11 seen at Cropston Reservoir as well as breeding proven there in June.

Bas Forgham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Our readers will be aware that we have not had reports on Reptiles and Amphibians or Fish in "*Heritage*" for several months now, in fact, since the third quarter of last year. (There are various reasons for this, and I see no point in elaborating upon them.) However, in view of this lengthy period without reports, our readers might reasonably expect that this report would be what we might call a "bumper edition"! Sadly, however, that is not the case. I am sure that no one will need to be reminded that the winter of 2012-13 was one of the worst in many years, cold, wet, and miserable – and it seemed to go on for ever. Not surprisingly, sightings of fish were non-existent, and sightings of Reptiles and Amphibians were few and far between until the belated arrival of the warmer weather. Indeed, so far, 2013 seems to have been a year of extremes! Anyway, without further ado, let us begin with the Reptiles.

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*: We have three sightings for this reptile, all three courtesy of SFW and HI. The first one was of a single specimen recorded at Ketton Quarry Nature Reserve on 7 April. At the same site, on 6 May, two specimens were recorded. Finally, on 29 June, on Beacon Hill, SFW and HI found a single specimen in a woodpile.

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: Again, we have three sightings for this reptile, two from Quorn and one from the Outwoods. PJD reports finding six large adults in a compost bin in a neighbouring garden on Barrow Road on 3 May. Some weeks later, on 13 June, another neighbour found a pair of specimens in his garden, near his shed. One specimen was larger than the other, and was biting the neck of the smaller one! PJD wonders whether they were fighting or whether this was part of the mating process? Our third sighting comes from DAP, who found a single specimen, approximately 45 cm long, at the Outwoods, on 21 May.

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*: Our first sighting of this reptile comes from the last quarter of 2012, courtesy of our friend GP from Birstall. GP reports finding a small, dead specimen, approximately 25 cm long, in the parking area at the Meadow Lane Allotments, Birstall on 14 October. Our next sighting of this reptile comes

courtesy of JG who found a dead specimen in the Deer Sanctuary at Bradgate Park on 27 April. We might have expected to have had further sightings of this reptile with the advent of warmer weather, but surprisingly we have had no further sightings since April.

Adder *Vipera berus*: We have three sightings for this reptile one from Ketton Quarry, and two from Bradgate Park. SFW and HI found two specimens at Ketton Quarry on 7 April. At the end of the same month, on 30 April, in Bradgate Park, they found a mating pair, consisting of a blue-grey male and a brown female. Some weeks later, on 6 June, SFW and HI found two dark coloured specimens together in Bradgate Park. One specimen moved off quickly, but the other was seemingly more torpid, and allowed them to approach quite closely.

Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*: Once again, we have three sightings for this, the largest and most spectacular of our newts. All three sightings come from Bradgate Park, courtesy of SFW and HI. The first sighting was of three specimens on 22 May. On 3 June, SFW and HI found five specimens at one pond, after dark, and a further, single specimen at a second pond. A careful search was carried out with torches, but, disappointingly, no further specimens were found.

Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*: We also have three sightings for this amphibian, and given its preference for upland areas, it is not surprising that these sightings come from the Charnwood Forest area. SFW and HI found a single specimen at the Old John Watering Pond at 10 pm on the 22 May. On 3 June, a second specimen was found by torchlight at another pond in Bradgate Park. Some days later, on 15 June, a third specimen, a mature male, was seen at Frank's Pit, on Beacon Hill.

Smooth or Common Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: Our first sighting of this amphibian dates from the last quarter of 2012. On 4 October, at the Meadow Lane Allotments in Birstall, GP found a small male specimen at the northern end of plot 2, under some weed-control fabric. We have no further sightings then, until May of this year. PHG reports that in that month he was informed by CD that one specimen had been seen off Wood Lane and several others had been seen

near a new housing development on the site of the former Police Station on Leicester Road. Towards the end of the month, on 27 May, PHG found several in his garden pond. In Bradgate Park, on 3 May, SFW and HI checked several ponds, using torch and net, but found only one specimen, a female. Later during the same month, however, on 22 May, they found one specimen at one site, and a further ten specimens at the Old John Watering Pond at 10 pm. On 3 June, they found a further three specimens by torchlight at another pond, and a further four specimens at a fourth pond, also by torchlight, together with some young Newts ("efts"), approximately 40 mm long, possibly of the same species. Meanwhile, HS reports that she found one specimen in her garden pond in Chaveney Road in Quorn on 20 April. A week later, on 26 April, she found two specimens in her pond, and a month later, on 26 May, she found three specimens. On the same day she also found tadpoles in the pond. From the evidence above, it would seem that the Common Newt is doing its best to live up to its name!

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*: PHG reports that on 15 April a pair of mating Toads was found at the roadside in Meeting Street in Quorn. For safekeeping, these were carried to and released in the brook in Kaye's Plantation. HI and SFW also report finding a specimen on 15 June, under a stone, at Swithland Court, in Woodhouse Eaves.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: In contrast to our lack of sightings for the Common Toad, we have quite a few sightings for the Common Frog. On the afternoon of 22 January, ATO found two adult specimens in the foundations of a neighbour's old garage, which had just been



Common Frogs © Jim Graham

demolished. He removed the two frogs and relocated them under cover at the bottom of the neighbour's garden, in the hope that they would survive the winter. ATO also reports finding a large adult, probably a gravid female, by the back door, after dark on the evening of 15 March. He suspects that it was probably making its way to a neighbour's pond. ATO also saw a third, smaller specimen, probably a male, on 12 April. PJD, who lives in Quorn, on lower ground, normally expects to have spawn in her garden pond by the end of February. This year, however, the spawning was late. There was activity in the pond on 7 March, and spawn in the pond on the next day. On the following day, there were at least ten frogs in the pond, and more spawn. Four days later, on 13 March, there was even more activity and even more spawn. Sadly, PJD reports that by the end of the month the pond and the top layer of spawn were completely frozen. PHG, who also lives in Quorn, has a similar story of mixed fortunes to relate. He reports that on 10 April there were several croaking frogs around the garden pools at a house in Warwick Avenue, and a clump of spawn in one of them. By 14 April there were twelve clumps of spawn, and on the following day this had increased to 19 clumps of spawn. On the same day, HS recorded a clump of spawn in her garden pond in Chaveney Road. PHG also records that on 18 April there was a clump of spawn in his own garden pool, which disappeared after a brief visit from a Mallard. PHG also found spawn in the old moat in Buddon Brook Meadows, in early April. However, by 29 April, the moat was largely dry, and the frog spawn had been left high and dry and had perished. On a more cheerful note, on 3 June SFW and HI found thousands of tadpoles in two ponds in Bradgate Park and more again at Beacon Hill on 29 June.

And that concludes our sightings for Reptiles and Amphibians for the last three quarters. As ever they are a mixed bag, and quite a few of them are what we might call "chance sightings" - and so, as I have remarked before, it would be unwise to read too much into our records!

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

As our readers might expect, given the length and severity of the winter, we do not have many sightings of fish to report. Nevertheless, we do have one or two items under this heading.

Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri*: SFW and HI report seeing an adult, approximately 15 cm long, swimming upstream in the River Lin, near the churchyard at Newtown Linford, on the 23 April. They were lucky to see one: it really is a matter of being in the right place at the right time! The Brook Lamprey is a fascinating creature – there is some argument as to whether it can actually be called a fish – and one of the most primitive of vertebrates. It spends from three to five years as a larval form (otherwise known colloquially as a "pride", or more technically as an "ammocoete") in the silt of the streambed. At this stage, it is blind and toothless, and lives on micro-organisms which it extracts from the water with its funnel-shaped mouth. During its last winter, it metamorphoses into an adult, the eyes open, the mouth turns into a suction disc, and the digestive tract atrophies. The adult lampreys of most species are parasitic, using their suction discs to attach themselves to other fish and feed on their flesh and body fluids. However, the adult Brook Lamprey does not feed - it lives only for a couple of weeks, just long enough to breed. They are not strong swimmers, and they lay their eggs in fast-flowing water, using their suction discs to attach themselves to the stones on the streambed. They are probably more common than is generally supposed, showing a preference for cool, upland streams like the River Lin.



Brook Lampreys © Stephen Woodward

Brown Trout *Salmo trutta/fario*: On the same day that they spotted a Brook Lamprey in the River Lin, the 23 April, SFW and HI also spotted a Brown Trout in the River Lin, in the car park section. There is very little to add by way of comment: the Brown Trout finds the upland streams of Charnwood Forest very much to its liking, provided, of course, that there are no problems with pollution.

Eurasian or Northern Pike *Esox lucius*: HBH reports finding a specimen dead on the bank at Dishley Pool, on 15 April. Dishley Pool has a reputation for supporting quite a large population of Pike – allegedly. I use the word “allegedly” because, personally, I have never seen any evidence of them at the Pool, nor have I seen anyone fishing for them. However, I should make it clear that I have not visited the Pool during the winter, which is the time when people usually fish for Pike, after the weeds have died back. Of course, the River Soar flows past, only a few yards from the Pool, and likewise has a reputation these days for hosting a large population of this species. (It is thought that the eggs of the Pike, which are adhesive, can be transferred from one water to another by waterfowl.)

Eastern or Turkish or Narrow-Clawed Crayfish *Astacus leptodactylus*: For those of our readers who are not familiar with it, a magazine is produced every year entitled “Leicestershire and Rutland Recorder”, containing articles on Leicestershire wildlife, written by the various County Recorders. The latest edition (Volume No. 9, 2013) contains an article on Crayfish by the recently-appointed Crayfish Recorder, Jools Partridge. Since many of our readers will not have read this very interesting article, I make no apology for repeating some of it here – specifically the news that the above-named species of Crayfish has been found in Leicestershire! I was informed some time ago that the Eastern Crayfish had been found in a stream near Broughton Astley, but because I was not sure that this was an “official” record, I made no mention of it here in “*Heritage*”. However, now that this species has been mentioned in the “Leicestershire and Rutland Recorder”, I feel that it is appropriate to discuss it here! The “Narrow-Clawed” Crayfish is so-called because its pincers are very noticeably longer and slimmer than

those of the native White-Clawed Crayfish, or the non-native Signal Crayfish. The body of the Narrow-Clawed crayfish is, relatively speaking, shorter and narrower than that of the other two species. Originally, it was found in Eastern Europe and Western Russia, but not, according to the distribution map in Muus and Dahlstrom (see footnote), in Turkey! According to Muus and Dahlstrom, it was introduced to farms in Western Europe as a substitute for the native species, when the latter began to succumb to the fungal infection, *Aphanomyces astaci* (the so-called “crayfish plague”) which has decimated our own native crayfish populations. Apparently, it was thought that the Narrow-Clawed was resistant to the infection, but, according to Jools Partridge's article, that is not the case. Thus it appears that the only one of the three species mentioned here that does have immunity to the infection is the American Signal Crayfish. Again, according to Muus and Dahlstrom, although the Narrow-Clawed can grow to larger sizes and produces more eggs than the native White-Clawed, it produces, relatively speaking, less flesh, and the flesh is regarded as being of lower quality than that produced by the native White-Clawed, or the American Signal. How this species found its way to Leicestershire appears to be something of a mystery, and, as far as I know, at present it occurs only in the one location. More than that, I cannot add!

As usual, I would like to appeal to our readers to keep their eyes peeled while out walking anywhere near water!

Tony Onions

Footnote. This information comes from “The Collins Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Britain and Europe”, by Bent J. Muus and Preben Dahlstrom – Collins, (first published in English, 1971).

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

Once again, the weather played a significant part in the appearance of dragonflies with small numbers of just nine species noted in the quarter. Although April was sunny, it was cool and consequently the first damselflies were not noted until the first week of May when several **Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*** were emerging from HS's Quorn garden. The subsequent heavy rain and cool temperatures put a halt to more sightings and it was not until the latter end of the month that further Large Reds were noted, in two Quorn gardens and at Charnwood Lodge. Numbers were much better in June with records from a further six sites including around 20 pairs at Bradgate Park on 25 June with females ovipositing on *Callitriche*.

The first **Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*** were found at Bradgate Park on 6 June and at a further three sites by the end of the month with mating pairs being noted. Small numbers of **Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*** were located at Cossington Meadows, Woodhouse and Hicks Lodge between 12 and 19 June. **Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*** was first recorded on 1 June (4 May in 2012) with mostly single-figure counts coming from six sites. Records of **Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*** came from even fewer sites with four at Cropston Reservoir on 30 June, and singles at Ulverscroft NR and Hicks Lodge on 12th and 19th respectively. **Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum*** was noted at its stronghold site in the county, the Grantham Canal, on 26 June.

The first **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*** was one recorded in HS's Quorn garden on 3 June (a full month later than in 2012) with the only other record being three males at Bradgate Park on the 25th. The latter site also recorded one of two **Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*** with one on 25 June, the first of the year being one at Launde Park Wood on the 1st. The only record of any hawkers was the exuvia of **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** found in a Woodhouse Eaves garden pond on 15 June.

All-in-all a pretty poor start to the season, let's hope the third quarter is a little kinder to our odonata.

Jim Graham

BUTTERFLIES

Compared with most recent springs our butterflies got off to a slow start this year though thankfully an appreciable number were more widely reported than during last year.

Hesperiidae

A **Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*** was reported seen along the Grantham Canal on 26 June and the **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*** was seen towards the end of June at Hamilton Pools, where two were present on the 25th, at Puddledyeke near Cropston Reservoir with three on 26th and at Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve where 15 were noted on the 29th. Five **Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*** were active at Brown's Hill NR, at Holwell, on 19 May and the same day three were noted at Asfordby Hill, at which site LP recorded 28 on 6 June. The same observer also noted two **Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*** at Asfordby Hill on 16 May and four on 6 June. It is regrettable that much of the best habitat at this important botanical and butterfly site was taken some years ago in order to extend the adjacent sports facility.



Dingy Skipper © Stephen Woodward



Grizzled Skipper © Stephen Woodward

Pieridae

The **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was well reported this quarter being noted in 27 widely spread localities and many reported seen in gardens. Once again, DBF reported a female laying eggs on Buckthorn in his Hugglescote garden on 26 May. The over-wintering generation remained active until the end of June. Most sightings reported were of lone males but both sexes were observed in some gardens and six individuals were active at Ketton Quarry NR on 6 May and five at Asfordby Hill on 19 May.

The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was active throughout May and June but numbers remained on the low side and the **Small White *Pieris rapae*** though active from mid-April onwards was far from plentiful though present in varying numbers throughout May and June.

More of our members tend to report the **Green-veined White *Pieris napi*** than the previous two species and it was reported seen in 20 widely scattered localities, including gardens, woodland rides and a variety of grassland sites from late April to mid-June with a maximum of 33 at Sence Valley Forest Park on 19 May.

The attractive **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*** was first reported seen on the 22 April by PJD near East Midlands Airport and along Great Central Way in Leicester by HB on the 26th. By 1 May it was noted in several separate localities. Altogether it was reported being seen in 32 well spread localities, including many of our members gardens. Double-figure counts were made at several meadowland sites and the last sighting reported was on the 12 June at Quorn.

Lycaenidae

During May LP observed three **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*** on the 18th at Asfordby Hill and in June he noted eight there on the 6th and two on the 25th. Others were recorded at Warren Hills on 25 May, where HBH found several settling on a birch tree and at the same nature reserve on 6 June HS saw 12 at Timberwood Hill where Bilberry, a larval food plant, is abundant. My first encounter with the Green Hairstreak was in the Rockingham Forest over 70 years ago, when walking through a

young larch plantation near Apethorpe where I disturbed a cloud of these lovely little butterflies from their resting place amongst the fresh larch foliage where their green colouration made them virtually invisible: a delightful introduction to this local species.

Numbers of **Small Copper *Lycaena phloea*** though still low, showed an improvement on last spring. The first sighting reported was on 26 May when five were found at Bradgate Park and the last sighting on 29 June was also of five at the same locality. Ten, the maximum count reported, was also made at Bradgate Park on 25 June. In total it was reported being seen at seven separate localities, all but one, Asfordby Hill, on Charnwood Forest.

The only **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** reported this quarter was identified at Asfordby Hill on 6 June.

After last year's poor summer it came as little surprise that few **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** were reported. During June it was seen in seven well-spread localities being first noted at Bardon Hill on the 7th and last reported from Kelham Bridge on 27th. The maximum count was 12 at Asfordby Hill on the 25th but most sightings consisted of single individuals.

The garden-frequenting **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** was well reported being noted in 16 localities, as usual often in member's gardens. It was first seen on 23 April at Scraftoft and the last active one was on 21 June at Countesthorpe churchyard. Several were active at one and the same time in a few gardens.

Nymphalidae

As last year, only three sightings of **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** were reported during the spring quarter: one at Harby churchyard on 26 June and two other individuals on 30 June at Cropston Reservoir and at Copt Oak.

Low numbers of the **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** were present in some 20 localities during April and May with a maximum of six noted at both Cossington Meadows and along the Great Central Way in Leicester on 20 April. One noted by JG at Cropston Reservoir on 30 June was, presumably, a new generation butterfly.

MOTHS

The **Peacock *Inachis io*** was widely reported and seen in 40 localities during the quarter and, interestingly, those still active at the end of June, and still in reasonably good condition, could well have been over 11 months old, having spent six months through the winter in hibernation. Double figure counts were reported for several large sites.

The **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was noted in more localities than last spring, being reported seen in 12 localities compared with only five last year. Ten sightings were made in April, two in May and one in June and two were present at three sites and three at one site.

Satyridae

Apart from two sightings of the **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** in April, one on the 3rd in our Quorn garden and another in Spinney Hill Park in Leicester on the 15th, all other sightings reported were made in May and June. Altogether it was reported seen in 23 well spread localities, generally in ones and twos, though about 29 were noted at New Lount NR on 28 June.

An interesting report of a **Wall *Lasiommata megera*** was submitted by PH who found one settled in his garden path in Shepshed on 28 June: nowadays, a rare sighting indeed.

As last year, the **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** was again late appearing with the first sighting reported being on 18 June at Upperton Road in Leicester. By the end of the month it had been reported seen in five other localities.

The **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*** just made it into this quarter; one at Cropston Reservoir on 30 June.

The **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** has been giving concern during recent years and it was good, therefore, to receive reports of sightings for eight widely spread localities during June including Loughborough Big Meadow, Bagworth Heath Woods, Hicks Lodge, Bardon Hill, Asfordby Hill and Clipsham Quarry in addition to the more usual localities. The maximum number reported was around 20 at Bradgate Park on 25 June.

Peter Gamble

April started off with snow showers, and then towards the end of the month we had a tantalising (but very brief) spell of milder weather. Then things soon deteriorated and the whole of May turned out to be the coldest for 20 years. June started out quite promising, but cooled down considerably mid-month. Towards the end of the month conditions began to look encouraging, with numbers of moths and species steadily increasing. So with this quarter being a real “hotchpotch” of weather, how did we do for recording our counties moths?

All the following records are from the results from moth traps, unless otherwise stated. The “cute” little micro moth ***Micropterix calthella*** was well recorded, mainly on the Charnwood Forest feeding on Dandelion, buttercups and sedge pollen. These tiny moths do actually have mouthparts that can chew pollen.

Common Swift *Hepialus lupulinus* was only noted from a Quorn garden in early June and Beacon Hill in mid-June, **Map-winged Swift *Hepialus fusconebulosa*** again at Beacon Hill including several of the form ***gallicus*** during the same period.



Map-winged Swift © Graham Finch

Mines of ***Stigmella aurella*** were noted at Tom Long’s Meadow and Burleigh Wood and the Longhorn moth ***Adela reaumurella*** was only recorded at Beacon Hill. The 26 June brought the only record of **The Forester *Adcita statices*** from the meadow at Puddledyeke in Cropston. ***Luffia ferchaultella*** was noted from Willoughby Waterleys and Bradgate Park and ***Psyche casta*** was seen at Bardon Hill. These both belong to the case-bearing ***Psychidae*** group, where most of the species have larvae that construct portable cases, similar to caddis fly larvae. They are a very under-recorded group, the larvae feed on lichen covered surfaces, natural and

manmade a few of the species are easy to identify and would be worth further study.

There has been just a single record of a solitary individual of **Light Brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana* from Quorn 1 June. Numbers of this species really do seem to have crashed from the totals we were seeing only a few years ago. The only plume moth species recorded was a single *Emmelina monodactyla* at Groby at the end of April. Eight **Spotted Shoot Moth** *Rhyacionia pinivorana* were attracted to MV light at Beacon Hill mid-June. A single larva of the **Drinker** *Euthrix potatoria* was observed feeding on *Carex* at Foxton Locks in mid-May. A single record of **Small Dusty Wave** *Idaea seriata* at Holywell Wood in early June, at the beginning of its long flight period which continues towards the end of August. **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* was frequent in a garden at Groby throughout May and June and also at several sites on the Forest mid-June. By no means restricted to the Charnwood Forest but this area still seems to be one of the most reliable to record **Galium Carpet** *Epirrhoe galiata* where there is certainly no shortage of Bedstraw on which the larvae feed. Although the **Chimney Sweeper** *Odezia atrata* was recorded from a widespread area with singletons from Ulverscroft NR, Woodhouse Eaves and Lea Meadows NR plus four at Clawson and Harby and "few" at the Grantham Canal in Leicester, they were all in quite low numbers.

Only a single record of the Aspen and Poplar feeding, **Seraphim** *Lobophora halterata* was recorded from Beacon Hill mid-June. **Yellow-barred Brindle** *Acasis viretata* was active in Quorn seen flying during the daytime and later settled on a shed on 6 May and also to light on 1 June. From the end of May throughout June **Brimstone** *Opisthograptis luteolata* although widely recorded, was recorded only in single figures except, that is, for 45 individuals on 19 June at Beacon Hill. Amazingly the only **Early Thorn** *Selenia dentaria* was a singleton from a Groby garden on 22 April, I hope the second brood fairs better.

Conditions seemed to be reasonably suitable for our Hawkmoths as a good range of species and numbers were recorded. **Lime Hawk-moth** *Mimas tilae* was at Beacon Hill mid-June, and a freshly emerged **Eyed Hawk-moth** *Smerinthus*

ocellata was at Park Hill Golf Course at the beginning of June. **Poplar Hawk-moth** *Laothoe populi* was noted at several sites on the Forest. The, ever awaited **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* turned up with just a solitary specimen nectaring at Red Valerian in Sileby at the end of June. **Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila elpenor* was in double figures at Beacon Hill in June also **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila porcellus* with a peak of 17 individuals at Beacon Hill.

The last of the **Marbled Brown** *Drymonia dodonea* of the year were seen at Beacon Hill on several nights towards the end of June and the first appearance of **Pale Tussock** *Callitara pudibunda* on the same nights. The first brood of **Iron Prominent** *Notodonta dromedarius* showed in Quorn as did **Pebble Prominent** *Notodonta ziczac* and **Pale Prominent** *Pterostoma palpina* all in June. Searching the lichen covered boundary walls, especially around the main entrance gates at Newtown Linford during the evening in Bradgate Park revealed good numbers of the larvae of **Muslin footman** *Nudaria mundana*. **Orange Footman** *Eilema sorocula* was only noted from Beacon Hill where eight were attracted to MV lights in mid-June. **White Ermine** *Spilosoma lubricipeda* and **Buff Ermine** *Spilosoma luteum* were reported from Beacon Hill, Holywell Wood and Quorn, all in June. Only a single **Ruby Tiger** *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* was reported this quarter, from Quorn at the end of June.

The earliest **Cinnabar** *Tyria jacobaeae* report was from Loughborough and Bradgate Park late May followed by Cossington Meadow NR, plus records from the Charnwood Forest and also from Hose in the Vale of Belvoir all in June. **Heart and Dart** *Agrotis exclamationis* appeared in good numbers throughout the county with the earliest on 19 June. Unlike the previous species, most of the regular Noctuids appeared in very low numbers including **Flame** *Axylia putris* even **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica* all in single figures. The exception was **Flame Shoulder** *Ochropleura plecta* managing a respectable 21 individuals at Beacon Hill mid-June. An early **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* was out and about and attracted to the moth light in a Quorn garden at the end of June. **Early Grey** *Xylocampa areola* were out in force from April

throughout May. The only members of the beautiful *Acronicta* genus were of two **The Miller *Acronicta leporina***, two **Alder Moth *Acronicta alni*** and a single **Knotgrass *Acronicta rumicis*** received from Beacon Hill on the same night 19 June. A couple of records for **Bird's Wing *Dypterygia scabriuscula*** were from Quorn and Beacon Hill in late June, mainly a woodland species. With docks and knotgrass both very common and widespread plants we do not seem to get that many records for the moth.

A very early record for **Pale Mottled Willow *Paradrina clavipalpis*** from a Groby garden, attracted to an Actinic mid-June. The *Plusinae* are another striking family most display some kind of pattern of realistic looking metallic gold or silver. Records of **Burnished Brass *Diachrysia chrysitis*** from Quorn, **Gold Spot *Plusia festucae*** from Beacon Hill with **Silver Y *Autographa gamma*** fairly widespread over the Charnwood Forest including Lea Meadows plus various areas of the city. The Charnwood Forest provided most of the records for **Beautiful Golden Y *Autographa pulchrina*** then last but not least **The Spectacle *Abrostola tripartita*** again from the Charnwood Forest and all in June. **Mother Shipton *Callistege mi*** was only seen at Bradgate Park and Ulverscroft NR, but good numbers of **Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica*** were reported from many areas including Bardon Hill, Puddledyke and several sites in the city. **Straw Dot *Rivula sericeralis*** although records came from many localities all were of singletons except two from Quorn. The only records of **Fan-foot *Zanclognatha tarsipennalis*** were of a singleton from Quorn and of **Small Fan-foot *Herminia grisealis*** of two from Beacon Hill all in late June.

You may have detected that the current Bradley 2000 Checklist order has been adopted for this report. Mainly in an attempt to cut down on space but it also makes the compilation easier for us, I hope this is agreeable to all that read this report.

Many thanks to all members who have sent in records for this quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

BEETLES

Over the last 18 months whilst spending more and more time on beetle recording, I am constantly amazed just how many beetles are out and about and relatively easy to find no matter what the weather conditions are. Turning stones and pieces of wood on the ground and looking behind bark are the most "user friendly" methods and although not every attempt will reveal a prize, persistence will pay dividends. In fact, I had to stop sieving grass tussocks the previous Autumn/Winter to avoid accumulating too many specimens to comfortably deal with (not enough hours in the day..... or night). On the other side of the coin, very few beetles have been evident by sitting out in full view on various flowering plants and my personal findings are that our ladybird species are just about non-existent. This leaves us repeatedly saying "perhaps next year will be better"!

A couple of hours in mid-May with a pond-net and tray at a fairly enclosed pond at Browns Hay revealed singles of ***Gyrinus natator*** plus (and living up to its name) "The Cherry Stone Beetle" ***Hyphidrus ovatus***, very oval and very hard, as well as five ***Ilybius subaenus***.

Green Tiger Beetle *Cicindela campestris* were recorded only from their stronghold on Bradgate Park in April and June. A total of 42 species of Ground beetles were recorded this quarter with 58 ***Paranchus albipes*** having the highest score of individuals and ***Agonum fuliginosum*** being recorded at the most sites. A single ***Carabus problematicus*** was found at Charnwood Lodge in April. During the night of the Woodhouse Bioblitz moth recording session, the beautiful deep electric blue ***Leistus spinibarbis*** was found in reasonable abundance, at least 30 individuals by torchlight on trees, mainly Beech. A few totals of some of the main Carabid groups recorded for this quarter were four species of ***Bembidion***, seven species of ***Pterostichus*** and five species of ***Agonum***. Sieving a couple of hands full of old hay near Upper Greenhill Farm produced three ***Pterostichus strenuus***, and singles of ***Badister bullatus*** and ***Paradromius linearis*** early April. Seven species of ***Carabids*** were found under bark of various dead branches at Lott's Corner

on the Loughborough Big Meadows again early April, including three *Loricera pilicornis*, two *Pterostichus madidus* and four *Pterostichus macer*. Also sieved from grass tussocks at Lea Meadows NR early April 12 *Oxypselaphus obscurus*, one *Batenus livens*, 12 *Agonum fuliginosum* and a single *Agonum micans*, also singles of *Paradromius linearis* and *Philorizus melanocephalus*.

The very small, about 3 mm, water scavenger beetle *Helophorus brevipalpis* turned up in high numbers, at least 50 to MV lights at Beacon Hill on 19 June. We could only count the ones on the white sheets, how many more stopped short and settled in the surrounding vegetation is anyone's guess. *Nicrophorus humator* showed sporadically at MV light throughout the quarter.

Three species of Rove Beetles were identified, singles of *Anthobium unicolor* Newfields Colliery in late April and *Olophrum piceum* at Lea Meadows NR early in the month and the familiar Devil's Coach-horse *Ocypus olens* at Holywell Wood in June.

A single and large *Geotrupes stercorarius* was found wandering along on a path at Bradgate Park in June. At the other end of the scale numbers of the tiny **Varied Carpet Beetle** *Anthrenus verbasci* were attracted to flowers of Goat's-beard in a Quorn garden in June, and hopefully that's where they will stay and not migrate onto the best Axminsters!



Geotrupes stercorarius © Stephen Woodward

Garden Chafer *Phyllopertha horticola* continue to be recorded at Quorn, where they seem to be continually being liberated from the garden birdbath and thus at risk from drowning. May and June brought the first influx of Common Cockchafer *Melolontha melolontha* all to MV light, another usually common and well-known species with very few records.

The Elateridae or Click Beetles are a very familiar and often abundant group, but due to the lack of a useable and accessible field guide not many tend to get identified to species level. Luckily there are a few that, with a little persistence, can be recognised. Three small but perfectly formed *Agriotes pallidulus* were noted on the woodland edge at Browns Hay and not much bigger and similar looking Ten *Dalopius marginatus* were found at Browns Hay at the end of May. The striking dull reddish and black *Ampedus balteatus* was found resting conspicuously out in the open on a long dead fallen oak in Bradgate Park in mid-May.

The ever present Cantharids, the Soldier Beetles, although none put in an appearance until June were fairly well recorded from far and wide with ten species noted. *Cantharis cryptica* at Cloud Wood NR, *Cantharis decipiens* from Kelham Bridge NR, Cloud Wood NR and Beacon Hill. *Cantharis livida* was at Bagworth Heath, *Cantharis nigra* at Ulverscroft NR, *Cantharis nigricans* and *Cantharis pellucida* at Beacon Hill. *Cantharis rufa* again Beacon Hill and also Kelham Bridge NR with *Cantharis rustica* at Bagworth Heath and Woodhouse Eaves. Lastly *Rhagonycha limbata* from Kelham Bridge NR and *Rhagonycha lignosa* at Beacon Hill. Interestingly the last mentioned species was the only one to get into double figures with 11 in total.

Hylecoetus dermestoides, found on Bradgate Park, is very similar in looks to one of the orange/reddish Cantharids, but this species has very short antennae and looks wrong for a Soldier beetle. It has seen a slight expansion in recent years and here in VC55 we seem to be on the extreme south-eastern edge of its distribution. Although featured as a low priority on the Saproxylic Index, (an index of wood decay specialists) it is nevertheless a National Notable B as stated in "A review of the scarce and threatened beetles of Great Britain Part One, Hyman, P.S. revised and updated by M.S. Parsons". So this is another species we have mixed feelings for, it is quite a striking and prized find, but also associated with spreading the fungus *Endomyces hylecoeti*. Causing problems for both hard and softwood trees but particularly Oak and Beech. At present this

species is not common or widespread enough to be of much concern in Britain.

A single specimen of the Nationally Notable B *Ptinus sexpunctatus* was taken off a freshly painted wall (luckily it was dry) at Kirby Muxloe mid-June. It couldn't have picked a worse place to settle and have a breather, within seconds it was incarcerated in a small glass tube, well we all carry glass tubes in our pockets just in case.....don't we? Later that evening getting dispatched, identified entered into Mapmate and carded in less than an hour, and I bet all it wanted was a rest!

The Cantharid-like *Dasytes aerates* was found at two Charnwood Forest sites with five at Holywell Wood and two at Beacon Hill both in mid-June.

Malachius bipustulatus was recorded from the churchyard in Wing in mid-May plus Cloud Wood NR and Woodhouse Eaves in June.

A single specimen of *Cychramus luteus* a member of the *Nitidulidae* or Sap Beetles was found in Holywell Wood in mid-May.

The pretty Carabid-like *Psammoecus bipunctatus* was found at Hugglescote Brook in early April.

There were two sightings of **Thick-legged Flower Beetle** *Oedemera nobilis* the first from Packington churchyard then from the middle of Leicester at the Great Central Railway, both in mid-June. Also a single *Oedemera lurida* was found at Kelham Bridge NR in early June.

Ladybirds are among the first brightly coloured insects appearing from the long haul of winter but not this year. Singletons of the un-ladybird like looking *Coccidula rufa* were sieved from a grass tussock at Lea Meadows NR on 13 April and another using the same method at Newfield Colliery on 28 April. The highest single count, apart from "several" in a Quorn garden at the end of April was the grand total of three **7-spot Ladybird** *Coccinella septempunctata* at Newfield Colliery end of April, a meagre total by any stretch of the imagination. Other records of ladybirds are as follows, a solitary **Kidney-spot Ladybird** *Chilocorus renipustulatus* at Aylestone Meadows, mid-May. A single **14-spot Ladybird** *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* at both



14-spot Ladybird © Stephen Woodward

Holywell Wood and Browns Hay in mid-May plus two at both Cloud Wood and Kelham Bridge in June. The only report of **Cream-spot Ladybird** *Calvia quattuordecimguttata* was of two individuals attracted to MV light in a Quorn garden at the end of June. Similarly the only **Orange Ladybird** *Halzia sedecimguttata* were three attracted to MV at Beacon Hill mid-June. Not surprisingly **7-spot Ladybird** *Coccinella septempunctata* was the most recorded species with sightings from 11 widely scattered sites. Howard remarks he is seeing "nothing like the numbers in recent years" we all agree there, I'm sure. The only **Harlequin Ladybird** *Harmonia axyridis* were of singletons from Shepshed in May and Bede Island in June.

The Longhorn Beetles were well represented with sightings widespread, *Rhagium bifasciatum* at Ulverscroft NR and *Rhagium mordax* from Launde Park Wood NR both sightings in June. *Grammoptera ruficornis* were found at Cranoe churchyard in Market Harborough, Cloud Wood NR and Woodhouse Eaves all end of June. There were four sightings of *Clytus arietus*, two at Humberstone Park and then singles at Woodhouse Eaves and Beacon Hill plus Bede Island in Leicester and the Grantham Canal, all in June. A solitary *Anaglyptus mysticus* was noted visiting Goat's-beard flowers in a Quorn garden. The only record of *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* was from Lea Meadows NR in mid-June.

Larvae of the **Guelder-rose Leaf Beetle** *Pyrrhalta viburni* were collected from Woodhouse Eaves in mid-June. A solitary **Willow Leaf Beetle** *Lochmaea caprea* was found at Browns Hay at the end of May. Good numbers of the stunning shiny metallic green and purple **Willow Flea Beetle** *Crepidodera aurata* were present at Kelham Bridge NR and Cloud Wood

NR early June. The pretty greenish/blue and orange Chrysomelid beetle *Gastrophysa polygoni* was noted in Woodhouse, where it was feeding on docks mid-June.

A total of nine species of weevil was recorded for this quarter beginning with the rosaceous feeding **Apple Fruit Weevil** *Neocoenorrhinus aequatus* found indoors at Groby, although it was quite close to an apple tree. Just a single **Raspberry Weevil** *Otiorhynchus singularis* was at Woodhouse Eaves mid-June. Two very different weevils belonging to the same family a single *Polydrusus cervinus* at Aylestone Meadows and three *Polydrusus tereticollis* at Holywell Wood both in mid-May. *P. cervinus* is a typical metallic green and *P. tereticollis* is various shades of brown with a pattern of creamy chevrons. The **Nut Leaf Weevil** *Strophosoma melanogrammum* was found at three sites all on the Charnwood Forest and all singletons, the sites were Holywell Wood, Browns Hay and Woodhouse Eaves and all in May. My personal find of the year to date was the unusual looking weevil *Cossonus linearis* at Bagworth Heath in mid-June. Approximately 50 of this National Notable A species which is particularly associated with Poplar were found under cut sections of Poplar. Unfortunately the sections of Poplar were removed from the site within a few days of finding the colony! Hopefully other individuals inhabit the site, as there are still several large Poplar trees close by and the colony will survive. Two *Curculio* species were noted from the quarter the first being a single **Acorn Weevil** *C. glandium* at Holywell Wood and the second the **Nut Weevil** *C. nucum* at Woodhouse Eaves, both species in mid-May.

Many thanks for everyone's contributions, which have made for a substantial and interesting report for this quarter.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS

Due to the protracted spring and consequences of last summer's awful weather, much of invertebrate life was slow to put in an appearance. Some normally common species did not put in a showing at all, particularly some species of hoverfly. On the other hand,

bumblebees in general did rather well and despite being incapacitated myself for some of this quarter I managed quite a few records.

Hemiptera

A very poor quarter for this group, reflecting low numbers of many groups in the early part of the season.

Green Shield Bug *Palomena prasina*, only one recorded out of hibernation on 25 May at Quorn.

Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum*, three adults on Great Central Way on 18 May and two present in PHG's garden at Quorn on 25 May.

Two early instar nymphs of the **Bronze Bug** *Eysarcoris fabricii* were noted on low herbage on Great Central Way on 18 May.

Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus*, just two singles noted at Humberstone Park on 12 April and another at Great Central Way on the 20th. Normally there would be several mating pairs along this stretch, but not this year.

Two froghoppers *Cercopis vulnerata* were at Bardon Hill June 7 and another at Beacon Hill on 14 June.



Cercopis vulnerata © Stephen Woodward

A few aquatics were noted: a **Water Boatman** *Notonecta obliqua* at Bradgate Park on June 13th, a **Water Cricket** *Velia* sp at Dimminsdale NR in April and **Pond Skaters** *Gerris* sp, large numbers on a pond at Quorn in May.

Diptera

Hoverflies

A few records of the **Marmalade Fly** *Episyrphus balteatus* were recorded from seven localities but only in single numbers. There were a few of the spring harbinger *Epistrophe eligans*

around hawthorn at Humberstone Park on 25 May, but none recorded elsewhere. ***Eupoedes luniger***, a single specimen was in my garden April-June and another at Great Central Way on 24 June. PHG can boast of the only record received of ***Syrphus ribesii*** at his garden in Quorn in June. Other *Syrphini* worth a mention was ***Chrysotoxum cautum*** at Clipsham Quarry where, on 16 June, SFW and HI record five of this declining and rarely recorded species. A single ***Dasysyrphus venustus*** was at Woodhouse on 15 June and ***Xanthogramma pedisequum*** singles, as always with this species, at Abbey Park backwater on 5 June and another at Great Central Way on the 18th of that month. I cannot remember not recording this species any year over the last decade or more locally.

One normally common species not recorded by any members this quarter was ***Leucozona lucorum*** but it is that sort of year.

Other records; The bee mimic ***Volucella bombylans***, normally a June species, was only recorded at Harby Churchyard where two were seen on the 26th of that month, ***Volucella pellucens*** did not fare much better with just singles from Launde Park Wood, Ulverscroft NR and briefly in a hedgerow off Barkby Thorpe Road in June. The **Sun-fly *Helophilus pendulus*** were reported this quarter from Leicester Botanic Garden, Foxton, Grantham Canal, Quorn, Humberstone Park and Abbey Park and the more impressive ***Helophilus trivitattus*** had just singles at Bede Island and Aylestone Meadows in June. A smaller, orange coloured species ***Parahelophilus fruterum*** were noted from a nature area in Humberstone Park and a few in a hedgebank off Barkby Thorpe Road in late June. ***Myathropa florea*** was recorded at Humberstone Park and Launde Wood in June.

PHG had several ***Rhingia campestris*** in his garden in May visiting Bugle flowers. This species was also reported from Saddington, Beacon Hill, Ulverscroft NR and Woodhouse in May and June.

A more interesting hover-fly ***Portevinia maculata*** at Launde Park Wood was recorded by SFW on 1 June with several seen around Wild Garlic, this species is solely associated with *Allium ursinum* and the larva apparently live in the underground leaf bases so it is probably quite local in mature woodland.



Portevinia maculata © Stephen Woodward

Moving on, the **Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombylius major*** appears to be increasing in recent years, a parasite of various solitary bees, it was seen at Newtown Linford, Hoby Churchyard, Ketton Quarry, Hathern Hill, Dry Pot Lane (lovely name) in Long Whatton, Leicester University Botanic Garden, Saddington, Bradgate Park, Launde Park Wood NR, a Quorn garden, Piper Wood margins, Great Central Way, Beatty Avenue in Leicester, Scraftoft Golf Course and finally Humberstone Park in April and May.



Dark-edged Bee-fly © Stephen Woodward

Downlooker Snipe-flies *Rhagio scolopaceus* were seen at Launde Park Wood, Ulverscroft NR and Brascote Gravel Pits June, a **Small Fleck-winged Snipe-fly *Rhagio lineola*** at Kings Pond Woodhouse on 15 June and the **Black Snipe-fly *Chrysopilus cristatus***, common at the confluence of the River Soar and River Biam at St Mary's Mills on 29 June. **St Marks fly *Biblio longipes*** were in quantity at Stable Pit Quarry in Bradgate Park, Saddington, Beacon Hill and Launde Park Wood NR in April and May.

The only Soldier fly record received was the **Broad Centurian *Chloromyia formosa***, several by the Grantham Canal June 26th. A fruit-fly ***Cacoxenus indagator***, several in bee holes

Laughton churchyard on 25 May and finally several **Holly-leaf miners** *Phytomyza ilicis* were reported at Burleigh Wood, Saddington Churchyard and Beacon Hill in May and June.

Hymenoptera

It may come as no surprise that the bulk of records submitted this quarter consisted mainly of bumblebees. Queens of the **Buff-tailed bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* were widely recorded in April from Barlestone, Abney Street, Spinney Hill Park, Quorn, Castle Donington, Ketton Quarry and Shepshed, several had workers also during April at Meeting Street in Quorn, Beacon and Breedon Hill, some noted carrying pollen, young queens were noted in June from Spinney Hill Park, Castle Gardens, Willoughby Waterleys churchyard and elsewhere.

Red-tailed bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius*, several young queens were noted at Meeting Street, Quorn in late April, also at Barlestone and at Breedon Hill, Hoby and elsewhere during this period. Workers usually build up more slowly and were more plentiful in June at Barlestone, Quorn and commonly about Bede Island, Upperton Road, a sown meadow near Freeman's Lock and St Marys Mills, nectaring on legumes, Meadow Cranesbill and Beaked Hawksbeard. Smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere.

A single queen **Early-nesting bee** *Bombus pratorum* was observed in my Leicester garden on 20 April and one two days later at Scraftoft on the 23rd.

Normally in my very small garden, numbers of workers only reach about four, but substantially more in larger gardens and workers built up in June at PHG's Quorn garden visiting flowers of Cotoneaster, numbers also built up at FTS's Barlestone garden, frequent on the last two weeks of the month, several with pollen. Others were recorded from Freeman's Lock, a queen here on 29 June, and from Aylestone Meadows, Peatling Magna, Cranoe, Slawston, Desford and Long Clawson.

Garden Bumblebees *Bombus hortorum* are generally fewer in numbers, a queen observed in my garden on April 24th, nectaring on winter flowering Honeysuckle, with odd workers

regularly in June. At Barlestone this species was scarce during April, a few in May and frequent last two weeks of June.

Fewer records of **White-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lucorum* were received, just a few seen in April at Barlestone, with none in May and June. Others reported, all singles, at Castle Donington, Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill, Leicester Botanic Garden, Saddington, Bardon Hill and Ratcliffe on the Wreake, presumably all queens.

Common Carder Bees, *Bombus pascuorum* were, as usual, recorded widely this quarter from over twenty sites.

The **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum* had a most successful quarter and apart from my garden, it was widespread and common locally, at Aylestone Meadows, Bede Island etc., reported also at Barlestone, Groby, Ravenstone, Woodhouse, Bagworth Heath, Loughborough, Cranoe and Quorn, where at Meeting Street it was plentiful throughout the three months, with a queen noted entering tit nest box on back of garden shed on 5 May and used by the colony for the rest of May and June. It was last used here in 2010. A handsome species, particularly the queens with their ginger thorax, black abdomen and white tail, a welcome addition to our declining bumblebee fauna.

Few cuckoo bees were noted this quarter, the bulk of those from FTS at Barlestone, with *Bombus vestalis* singles on 19 April and other females recorded on 10 May and 19 May, a single *Bombus rupestris* on 8 June, the only record and *Bombus sylvestris*, males on 16 June with two on the 24th and a further single on the 26th of that month. The only other report was of *Bombus campestris* a single at Bardon Hill on 7 June.

For the **Hive Bee** *Apis mellifera* we have just a single record from Willoughby Waterleys in June, myself, I have only seen odd specimens, the signs are not good for this species, hopefully there will be a few more records next quarter.

The only records received of **Hornets** *Vespa crabro* were of two at Park Hill Golf Course on 31 May and 16 June and a single from Quorn on 3 June. Numbers of this species have dropped considerably in the last two summers; hopefully the improving weather lately will eventually show an increase.

A queen of the **Common Wasp *Vespa vulgaris*** in my garden on the 19 May was the only record received.

Howard Bradshaw

Solitary Bees

Most of the bees were several weeks later than usual in emerging from their pupae and when they did, numbers were smaller than normal but we have managed to find a good range of species including some exciting new ones.

As a result of looking for suitable sites for solitary bees we have become aware of the number of mud walls in the county. These are ideal for mining bees but their burrowing activity can jeopardise the wall if it is not in good condition. Mud walls need to be protected from wet weather and many were originally thatched but most now have tiles or slates to protect them or in some cases corrugated iron sheets! If you are passing the village of Laughton at any time, make a diversion to view the mud wall around the church with its beautiful thatching. There is a recently built mud wall in Long Clawson – with a very good tile roof.



Mud Wall at Saddington © Stephen Woodward

Andreninae

There was just one male ***Andrena bicolor*** at Ketton Quarry on 7 April. The first ***Andrena carantonica*** sighting was on 28 April at Edith Weston. We had just three records of ***Andrena chrysoceles*** at Hoby, Bradgate Park and Leicester University Botanic Gardens in Oadby. ***Andrena cineraria*** was widespread as usual and was recorded at nine sites from 26 April onwards. The large colony at Woodhouse was much depleted. ***Andrena clarkella***, one of the very early species, seems to have suffered more than most and numbers were low in Bradgate



Andrena carantonica © Stephen Woodward



Andrena cineraria © Stephen Woodward

Park and it was not recorded elsewhere. As with several other species males were more in evidence than females. ***Andrena fucata*** has a very local distribution and was only seen in Bradgate Park. ***Andrena fulva*** was in its usual places but numbers were generally lower although FTS had more than 45 mounds on his Barlestone lawn by 30 April. The usually common ***Andrena haemorrhhoa*** was seen at twelve locations but in lesser numbers. ***Andrena humilis*** and ***Andrena labiata***, were both found in Bradgate Park, the former has not been not recorded in the county since 1983 and the latter not since 1945. ***A. labiata*** is associated with ***Veronica spp.*** and was found near ***Veronica chamaedrys***. The only ***Andrena minutula*** recorded was found at Sapcote by GC. Again, the normally abundant ***Andrena nigroaenea*** was much depleted in numbers and the usually large and very active colony at Morley Quarry was non-existent. The find of the summer was ***Andrena ovatula*** which has never been seen in the county until this year when it was found on Bradgate Park. It is similar to ***A. wilkella*** and may have been overlooked in previous years. ***Andrena praecox*** was again only seen in and near Bradgate Park. We have one record of ***Andrena subopaca*** at Ulverscroft NR. The later emerging species seem to have fared better and

Andrena wilkella was seen at Bardon, along Grantham Canal, Laughton, Lea Meadows NR and Saddington.



Nomada fabriciana © Stephen Woodward

Anthophorinae

The *Nomadas* seem to have had a reasonable year often outnumbering their hosts! The distinctive little *Nomada fabriciana* with its bicoloured antennae was recorded at six sites. *Nomada ferruginata* was found only on Beacon Hill. *Nomada flava* has been widespread as usual, probably more abundant than its near relative *Nomada panzeri*. *Nomada flavoguttata* is a cleptoparasite of some of the smaller *Andrenas* and was found at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR and Lawn Park Wood NR. *Nomada goodeniana* has been more common than most of the *Nomadas* and was recorded from ten sites. This is another one that can be readily identified in the field. Another highlight was refinding *Nomada integra* which was found at both Bradgate Park and Lea Meadows NR and was last recorded in 1943 under the name of *Nomada pleurostricta*. It is a parasite of *Andrena humilis*. *Nomada lathburiana* was present at five locations and *Nomada leucophthalma* only at Bradgate Park and *Nomada marshamella* only at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR. *Nomada ruficornis* was at Croft and Ketton Quarry NR. The uncommon *Nomada striata* which is associated with *Andrena wilkella* was found at Bradgate Park and Lea Meadows NR. *Anthophora plumipes* males are easily recognisable by their hairy legs and the species has been recorded from 14 locations this quarter. Its cuckoo, the black and white *Melecta albifrons* was seen at three of these sites.

Halictinae

The beautiful *Halictus rubicundus* was recorded at Bradgate Park and Newbold Verdon.

Lasioglossums are notoriously difficult to identify – “small black jobs” but we have managed *Lasioglossum albipes* at Launde Park Wood and Bradgate Park, *Lasioglossum fratellum* and *Lasioglossum rufitarse* at the Beacon, *Lasioglossum malachurum* and *Lasioglossum morio* at Bloody Oaks NR and *Lasioglossum villosulum* at Lea Meadows NR.

We have number of *Sphecodes* specimens awaiting identification.

Megachilinae

Unusually, we have no records of the distinctive *Anthidium manicatum* this quarter. I have searched the plants that it likes in my garden and have not found it. *Chelostoma florissomne* is a slightly later species usually flying from May to July and we have only one record from Bradgate Park. The leaf-cutting *Megachiles* are also found later in the summer and we have one sighting from Willoughby Waterleys in late June. As we saw only one specimen, we did not take it, so the species remains unknown. *Osmia bicornis* is the revised name for *Osmia rufa* which was widely recorded. On the BWARS website there is a video of this species collecting mud to make its cells. The little “horns” on the face of the female are used in the making of the cells. The males do not do any work! *Osmia bicolor* the Snail Thatcher was in evidence at Ketton Quarry but none was seen at Bloody Oaks NR on 6 May. The soil on Charnwood seems to be too acid for this bee which nests in the shells of snails which are more abundant on calcareous soils. We do have a few solitary wasp records but the majority will be found in the next quarter so they will all be written up together next time.

You will have noticed that Bradgate Park was mentioned frequently in our lists of “bee sites” and it is the premier location for solitary bees in Charnwood. Its proximity to Newtown Linford gives the bees access to garden plants for foraging – the park is rather lacking in nectar plants in the spring. We are lucky to have Bradgate Park so close and to be allowed to record in the Park. We are grateful to Peter Tyldesley for permission to do so and to Michael Jeeves at LRWT for permission to record on their reserves which are also high on the list of prime sites.

Helen Ikin

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

As I forecast in my previous report, this spring has been a bumper one with marvellous displays of blossom and wild flowers. As PHG comments 'This has been an exceptional spring for the abundance of tree and shrub blossom.' Although the early spring was cold and wet the vegetation has made up for it with the vigour of the plant life (especially garden weeds). One interesting thing which I made note of was the fact that despite the spell of very hot dry weather the plants did not wilt as they have done in the recent past.

I am a little concerned that, this quarter, I only have reports from two recorders. I expected that in such a floriferous time of the year there would be rather more. Please let us have more records even mundane ones are of interest in the long run. At this time of the year the street flora is amazing in its diversity, so even if you cannot get out into the countryside your garden and/or road can give some interesting results.

Plants of interest this quarter

Adder's-tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*: Two were present at Ulverscroft NR and two were in a horse field in Woodhouse.

Rusty-back Fern *Asplenium ceterach*: Present on the bridge parapet in the car park at Bradgate Park. Two plants were on a stone wall at Woodhouse Eaves.



Rusty-back Fern © Stephen Woodward

Lemon-scented Fern *Thelypteris limbosperma*: Present in Bradgate Park.

Round-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus omiophyllus*: Found in a small pond at Bradgate Park.



Wood Vetch © Stephen Woodward

Goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*: Present in School Lane, Woodhouse.

Wild Liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*: Still present at Clipsham Quarry.

Wood Vetch *Vicia sylvatica*: Nice to know this lovely plant is still around Clipsham Quarry.

Knotted Clover *Trifolium striatum*: Noted on the drive to the Rifle Range at Groby, and also on an eroded footpath in Bradgate Park.

Lady's Mantle *Achemilla filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*: Present at Coalville Meadows NR.

Sweetbriar *Rosa rubiginosa*: This rose, usually found on calcareous soils common in southeast of England but rare in the Midlands, was present at Clipsham Quarry.

Lesser Swine Cress *Lepidium didymum*: A southern plant occasionally recorded in Leicestershire was present at both Ravenstone and Woodhouse.

Ivy-leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis*: The white variety, a very attractive form of this common weed was noted at Quorn.

Lesser Skull-cap *Scutellaria minor*: Still locally frequent at Beacon Hill, Woodhouse.

Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*: Present at Clipsham Quarry.

WEATHER

Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*: One plant was found at Ulverscroft NR.

Dwarf Elder *Sambucus ebulus*: Was found in a hedge between the road verge and gardens at Hose. It was recorded here in the 1988 Flora.

Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*: 140 flowering spikes with possibly some hybrids were in an area of open scrub at Park Hill Golf Course, Seagrave.

Early Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*: 240 flowering spikes were scrub at Park Hill Golf Course, Seagrave along with *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* so probably some hybrids present. Three plants in flower were at Lea Meadows NR and 30 plants were noted at Bagworth Heath.

Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*: 26 flowering spikes were found at Park Hill Golf Course, Seagrave.

Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*: 33 flowering spikes were located at Park Hill Golf Course, Seagrave.

Prickly Sedge *Carex muricata*: Present at Mucklin Lane, Woodhouse.

Star Sedge *Carex echinata*: Found in the lower end of a wet area at Beacon Hill, Woodhouse Eaves.

Tawny Sedge *Carex hostiana*: After 45 minutes searching at Ulverscroft NR, only three shoots were found.

Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia distans* ssp. *distans*: Located on the roadside at Clawson and Harby.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records have also been received for Scale insects, Psyllids, Earwigs, Stoneflies, Amphipods, Woodlice, Harvestmen, Galls, Centipedes, Millipedes, Springtails, Scorpionflies, Alderflies, Lacewings, Mayflies, Snakeflies, Caddisflies, Gastropods and Enchytraeid worms.

April was a very cool but sunny month. Afternoon temperatures averaged 12.5°C and night time temperatures were logged at 3.4°C both figures were 0.5°C below average, making it the coolest April since 1989. It was an exceptionally dry month as high pressure dominated throughout and both myself at Mountsorrel and Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded just 10 mm of rain: less than 20% of the usual total. The high pressure did however bring us plenty of sunshine with 158 hours logged at Mountsorrel or 20% above the norm. The sunniest day was the 20th with 13.1 hours recorded. The average wind speed was 6 mph which was the highest of the year so far with the maximum gust being 42 mph on the 17th. The first week of the month continued with the bitter Easterly winds that we had throughout March. The coldest day was the first with a maximum of just 4°C by day falling at night to -4.5°C at Nanpantan. The first week continued cold with snow falling on three days but it did not settle. We did not lose the easterly wind until the 12th but then a new area of high pressure coming up from the south bought us much warmer weather with temperatures on the 14th climbing to 19°C and it finally felt like spring. The third week did provide us with a few April showers but amounts of rain were small. The final week saw lower temperatures but with high pressure remaining close by very little rain fell. As the month ended the ground was extremely dry due to lack of rain and a persistent east wind.

May was cool month with rainfall considerably above normal. Afternoon temperatures averaged 15.3°C, about 1°C below normal while night time values registered 6.8°C which is the expected figure for the month. The only night frost was on the 1st when temperatures dropped to -0.5°C. It was a very wet month with 91 mm of rain being recorded at Nanpantan which is 70% above the usual figure at Jim Lofts' site. At Mountsorrel I recorded 75 mm, about 50% higher than the usual total of 50 mm. Sunshine totals for the month were recorded at 188 hours which is the expected monthly figure. The sunniest day recorded was the 26th when 15 hours was logged. Winds averaged at 5 mph with the

maximum gust of 50 mph being recorded at Mountsorrel on the 9th. The weather in May was very varied. Low pressure was frequently in charge but high pressure developed at times. The most surprising statistic was that both bank holidays enjoyed spectacular weather. The May Day holiday saw 34 hours of sun over the three day holiday with temperatures rising to 23°C, the highest of the month on the 7th. The Whit bank holiday enjoyed 40 hours of sunshine and temperatures up to 19°C over the three day holiday period. This is the first time that both bank holidays have enjoyed such excellent weather since the May Day holiday began in 1978!!

Rain did fall quite widely however out of these holiday periods. The 14-17th saw more than 23 mm fall at Mountsorrel but the wettest three day period was the 28-30th when Jim recorded 37 mm in Loughborough while Mountsorrel logged 32 mm. The coldest day of the month was the 24th when temperatures peaked at just 9°C. So all in all a very mixed month but for once the weather behaved itself in the holiday periods!

June this year had temperatures, rainfall and sunshine totals close to normal. Afternoon average maximum temperatures were logged at 18.5°C, a fraction below normal but night time temperatures were a little above at 10.5°C. This gave us an overall mean temperature of 14.5°C close to the expected June total. Rainfall only fell on just ten days in the month in just three short wet spells. The overall total was 57.4 mm at Mountsorrel, 10% below normal while Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded 66.3 mm at his station which was his expected June total. The month was dominated in its first ten days by high pressure to the north of the United Kingdom. This caused the winds to blow in from the NE so despite many sunny days, after the low cloud cleared the temperatures were never very high. Most of the month's sunshine total of 178 hours was recorded in the first half and the sunniest day was the 3rd when 15.7 hours was recorded. The second week of the month saw low pressure arrive with 30 mm of rain falling in just four days. The wettest day at Mountsorrel was the 14th when a band of heavy showers affected us for three hours and produced 15 mm of rain. Winds reached a peak

gust of 36 mph at Mountsorrel on the 13th. After the rain and wind came some warmer days which were much welcomed after the long cold winter and spring. The maximum temperature recorded for the month was 25°C recorded at Nanpantan on the 19th and Jim matched this again on the final day of the month. The second half of the month saw a mix of short, wet spells followed by drier days. The wettest day recorded for Loughborough was the 20th when 16 mm fell. So in the finish June was much quieter than last year with no thunder recorded and no hail. Last year also saw rainfall totals three times higher than this June! So although it wasn't flaming it wasn't too bad!

Phil Morrish

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We are grateful to them all.

Records for the third quarter of 2013 should be sent by 15 October to:

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