



No. 212

1 October - 31 December 2013

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Recording at Beacon Hill, Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood

The Club has responded to requests from the owners of these sites to update wildlife records.

At Beacon Hill, Mick Moffatt was interested in records for the restored grass/heathland. Some members undertook fieldwork there in 2013. SFW and HI made a detailed study of the grassland vegetation, using the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) recording method. A report on these surveys was compiled by SFW in Jan 2014. An electronic copy has been lodged at LRERC and is available to members upon request to SFW or HI.

As he explained at the Recorders' Conference on 22 February, Peter Tyldesley at the Bradgate Park Trust is keen for the Club to be involved in biological surveys. HI and SFW are particularly interested in the bees, wasps and ants in Bradgate Park. They have also begun to investigate the ponds, streams and ditches for aquatic life. GLF has arranged for a moth trap to be run, more-or-less regularly, at the Deer Barn. He is also sampling the beetle fauna of the park. Once again, public events led by LNC

IN THIS EDITION

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

- Mammals Page 2
- Birds Page 3
- Reptiles and Amphibians Page 5
- Fish (including Crayfish) Page 6
- Dragonflies & Damselflies Page 9
- Butterflies Page 10
- Moths Page 11
- Beetles Page 12
- Other Insects Page 14
- Plants and Ferns Page 18
- Other Records Page 19
- Weather Page 19
- Acknowledgements Page 20



Bradgate Park © Sue Graham

members have been scheduled in the BPT programme of walks.

Two additional woods have recently been added to the BPT's holding at Swithland Wood. They are the two adjacent woods to the east (in Swithland parish). They are not yet open the public. We have been asked to report on the wildlife present there, and the first visit was made by SFW and HI on 5 March.

This recording work is usually arranged at short notice by email. Members who are keen to get involved in recording should get in touch with Helen Ikin.

Steve Woodward

Loughborough Naturalists' Club Archive

The Club has accumulated a substantial volume of paper records, surveys and reports over the years. Most of this is securely housed at the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) at County Hall.

As reported in *Heritage* 205, the bulk of the paper records are digitised and available on a disc (DVD). Using the facilities kindly provided by LRERC, SFW and HI have now digitised all editions of *Heritage* and all the *Annual Reports*. They have also scanned the Survey Unit folders:

Bardon Hill
Beacon
Benscliffe
Blackbrook Reservoir
Bradgate Park
Brand
Buddon Wood
Grace Dieu
Groby Pool
High Sharpley
Ives Head
Longcliffe, etc
Maps
Puddledyke
Sheet Hedges Wood
Soar Valley
Swithland Wood
Ulverscroft Valley Lea Wood
Ulverscroft

and the published Survey Reports:

Badger Notes 1963
Beacon 1998
Benscliffe & Blakeshay 1990
Bradgate 1962
Buddon Wood 1975
Grace Dieu Interim c1974
Grace Dieu Preliminary 1976
Groby Pool 1987
Loughborough Canal 1968
Swithland Wood 1970
Ulverscroft 1979

They are all now safely archived on the County Council's computer system and available to members on a disc (DVD).

Steve Woodward

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Hedgehogs were sighted by three members, one was squashed on the road near Groby church, another was dead on Ethel Road in the city and PJD's neighbour in Quorn had a large dead one, with no obvious injuries, in the garden on 8 October and a very small one shivering outside his back door three days later. The mild weather has given us some late records and one Hedgehog triggered the security lights in a garden at Barrow upon Soar on 10 December.

Moles have been active throughout the quarter in the Swithland area and in MH's Woodhouse Eaves garden, throughout December, the molehills increased for the first time since 1960, eventually covering a distance of about 50 yards. SFW and HI noted molehills in churchyards at Nevill Holt, Brooke, Kilby, St Edith's at Orton on the Hill, Prestwold and Blaston. They were also seen in Bradgate Park and by the ruins at Grace Dieu.

Rabbits were common in DAP's Swithland garden and groups were seen, ignoring the traffic, on the roundabouts on the A607 between Cossington and Queniborough. Since October SFW has had regular visits to his Groby garden by a Rabbit – he has a playing field at the back. Rabbit droppings were noted in churchyards at Norton-juxta-Twycross, Prestwold Hall and Blaston.

Grey Squirrels were around in Victoria Park, Humberstone Park and Spinney Hill Park throughout the quarter and fewer than usual were noted in Swithland Wood and a Swithland garden. One was seen on Beacon Hill on 19 December.

Red Foxes have made regular visits to a Woodhouse Eaves garden for food and one was seen in Swithland on two occasions. Another was crossing a road in Twyford one evening and a small one crossed the road near the Bull in the Hollow at 9.15 one night in early November.

We have only a single **Stoat** record, from DAP, who saw one walking along the dam wall at Swithland Reservoir on 29 November.

Badgers also make regular visits to the Woodhouse Eaves garden for food, and DAP has had damage to his Swithland lawn throughout the quarter. PHG reports two dead Badgers from roadsides at Woodhouse Eaves and Rothley. Another dead one was seen on the central reservation of the A6 between Quorn and Loughborough.

An overnight fisherman at Swithland Reservoir reported to PHG that he had seen an **Otter** killing a Goosander on the dam.

Three **Roe Deer** were seen on farmland at Sibley by RGL, a doe with two well-grown young - a male and a female.

It is impossible to estimate the population numbers of **Muntjac** in the area but sightings are frequent. One was seen three times on the afternoon of 4 November in DAP's Swithland garden, one was crossing the road at Swithland triangle at 10 am on 23 November and another was spotted on a roadside verge at Mountsorrel at 6 pm on 6 November.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

The highest **Mute Swan** count was 43 at Swithland Reservoir on New Year's Eve. A single **Pink-footed Goose** was at Cropston Reservoir on 13 October. Amazingly, the largest number of **Canada Geese** from few records was two but Cropston Reservoir had 210 Greylag Geese on 3 October. Two **Egyptian Geese** were on the same water on 27 October.

Ten **Mandarin Duck** were at Swithland Reservoir on 28 October and in the same month up to seven were noted at Cropston Reservoir. Surprisingly, the maximum counts of **Wigeon** (72) and **Gadwall** (43) came from Sence Valley



Mandarin © Stephen Woodward

Forest Park, both on 10 November. Few were seen at the reservoirs. Most **Teal** observations were in double figures with four counts in three figures. There were 107 at Cropston Reservoir in October and 108 at Wanlip Meadows in December. Again there were few **Mallard** reports meaning that the highest number was in Bradgate Park, 93 on 3 October. Watermead Park held 30 Shoveler on 16 October.

Sence Valley provided the most Tufted Duck with 25 again on 10 November. Six Scaup were found at Swithland Reservoir on 13 December and stayed until the year's end. Also on 13 December were 17 **Goldeneye**. The duck species most reported was **Goosander**, mostly at Watermead Park with 15 on 4 December.

There were no **Grey Partridge** noted but there were thirteen **Red-legged Partridge** at Garendon Park and 11 at Cropston Reservoir late in the quarter. A Rothley garden held 14 **Pheasant** on two occasions during the quarter.

A **Black-throated Diver**, the rarest of the migrant divers in the county, arrived at Swithland Reservoir on Christmas Day and was still there at the end of the year.

Cormorants, maximum eight, were seen in all months at Cropston Reservoir, but **Little Egret** records completely outnumbered the previous species. They were regular all around the Charnwood wetlands with a maximum of five in Bradgate Park, roosting near the ruins. One was a regular in a Swithland garden. **Grey Heron**, although widespread, never reached more than three in number.

Little Grebe were still to be found in the quarter probably due to the mild weather. There were still two at Cropston Reservoir and Kelham Bridge in October and one at Sence Valley in November. Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs provided all but one **Great Crested Grebe** records. All were in double figures with 46 at Swithland and 32 at Cropston both in December.

The four singleton **Red Kite** records were all from the Harborough district. Most but not all **Sparrowhawk** observations were of birds hunting in gardens. **Buzzard** are still plentiful with four regularly seen together at Shepshed. Although **Kestrel** are decreasing in numbers - I hope that just the five sites mentioned is more to do with under-reporting. Only one **Peregrine**

was noted, this being at the once regular site at Buddon Wood in October.

Single **Water Rail** were at Watermead Park and Dishley Pool. The most **Moorhen** counted were 20 at Kelham Bridge throughout October and the same site along with Sence Valley was the only place for **Coot** with 28 there and 40 at Sence Valley, both in November. I would imagine that there were more of the last two species around the area than that!

A single **Ringed Plover** was at Cropston Reservoir on 13 October. **Golden Plover** were mainly seen around the Wanlip area but the biggest flock was near the A6/A46 roundabout when 150 were present on 8 December. Wanlip Meadows also supported most of the flocks of Lapwing with a maximum of 300 on 4 December. Three **Dunlin** were at Wanlip Meadows on 9 October and Cropston Reservoir had three individuals at later dates. The same two sites had what could have been the same **Ruff** occasionally during October. There was a single **Jack Snipe** at Kelham Bridge on 20 November and the same reserve also had the highest number of Snipe, 26 on 22 October. A **Wood Sandpiper** stayed at Cropston Reservoir for three days in early October.

The maximum numbers of gulls noted during the quarter were as follows, (all apart from 550 **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Albert Village on 9 Oct) were at Cropston Reservoir; 1,700 **Black-headed Gulls** on 8 Oct, three **Common Gulls** on 13 October and three **Herring Gull** the same day.

Eight **Stock Doves** were in Bradgate Park on 3 October and five at Watermead Park on 30 November. The most **Woodpigeons** noted were 100 in Swithland Wood on 13 December. Most **Collared Dove** observations were in gardens with ten at Shepshed being the highest count.

A **Barn Owl** was in a Swithland garden on 7 November and a **Little Owl** was noted in Bradgate Park occasionally in early October. It was a little surprising to find that, with a membership of lovers of the countryside, all **Tawny Owl** records were from gardens with regular visits at Woodhouse Eaves, Rothley, Cropston and Swithland!

Kingfisher numbers still appear to be low with sightings in five areas, Cropston and

Swithland Reservoirs, Watermead Park, Charnwood Water and Swithland village.

Green Woodpeckers were noted at six sites including gardens at Swithland, Cropston and Groby. **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were much more in evidence with a similar numbers in gardens as the previous species. Unfortunately **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were not mentioned this quarter.



Great Spotted Woodpecker © Stephen Woodward

The only items of note in the corvid section was a flock of 150 **Jackdaw** in Bradgate Park on 15 December and **Ravens**, never more than two, at five sites on Charnwood throughout the quarter.

Goldcrests were seen only at Beacon Hill and Bradgate Park. Almost all the **Great, Blue and Coal Tits** reported were in members' gardens with **Willow Tits** at the now regular sites of Kelham Bridge and my own garden at Hugglescote.

Twenty **Sky Lark** were present at Sibleby on 8 November and there were still 24 **House Martin** at Shepshed on 3 October and 30 at Loughborough on 25th.

Watermead Park again produced the only **Cetti's Warbler** record with birds either seen or heard in October and December.

The largest **Long-tailed Tit** flock noted was 17 in Bradgate Park on 8 October.

A single **Chiffchaff** was still in Bradgate Park in the first week of October and over-wintering **Blackcap** were present in gardens at Quorn and Cropston in December.

There were numerous reports of **Nuthatch** from woods and gardens, all in the Charnwood area. Whilst there were not so many

Treecreeper records they were all from similar sites with four in Bradgate Park on 3 October.

It has been a poor quarter for Fieldfare and Redwing. No flock reached a hundred birds with **Fieldfares** reaching 30 at Groby Pool in November and 70 at Hugglescote in late December. **Redwings** were even scarcer and although there were more sightings the highest numbers were 25 at Watermead Park in November and 30 at Beacon Hill in October. Only two single **Song Thrush** records were received and only four **Mistle Thrush** although there were four at Loughborough in early December and five in Bradgate Park at the same time.

Robin and **Dunnock** were widespread, again with garden sightings, and the only local **House Sparrow** record was of one bird which was at least one more than Tree Sparrow!



Dunnock © Stephen Woodward

There were two garden observations of **Grey Wagtail**, at Cropston and Loughborough. Others were seen at the more regular places at Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs. There were 12 **Pied Wagtail** at the latter reservoir on 3 October Bradgate Park had six and Cropston Reservoir had seven **Meadow Pipit**, both in October.

No large finch flocks were noted with six **Chaffinch**, the maximum seen. There were a few **Brambling** around but the only numbers of note were at Beacon Hill where there were 50 on 26 November. I think that **Greenfinch** are gradually recovering from the *trichomonosis* disease and a flock of 50 was at Seagrave on 10 November. **Goldfinches** were probably under-recorded with a maximum of five but checking my garden records I had 16 on 27 October One species not usually in my garden is **Siskin** but others have

had odd ones this year but most were seen in Leicester with 25 on 8 December and Cloud Wood with 26 on 27 December. Few **Linnets** were mentioned but there was good news of a flock of 170 at Seagrave on 23 November. **Lesser Redpoll** were about as common as the previous species but there were 14 at Parkhill Golf Club in early December and 21 at Garendon Park on the 17th. Five **Crossbills** were in Dale Wood, Bradgate Park on 3 December and four in Cloud Wood on 27 December. Odd numbers of **Bullfinches** were widespread but there were five together in Garendon Park on 17 December.

Apart from one **Yellowhammer** in Bradgate Park 8 October, the only other observation was a flock of 40 at Sibley on 8 November. **Reed Bunting** in ones and twos were noted at Cropston Reservoir, Watermead Park, Beacon Hill and Shepshed.

Bas Forgham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Under this heading, we have only a couple of sightings for the last quarter of the year; however, one of them is of particular interest, as it concerns a reptile which is judged to be rather rare these days!

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: PJD reports that, on 1 October, two large specimens of this reptile were found in compost bins in a neighbour's garden on Barrow Road in Quorn. According to the neighbour, she had had regular sightings of this comparatively scarce species throughout the summer.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: DAP, from Swithland, reports finding three small specimens on 19 November while raking up leaves in the garden. (To be honest, I am surprised that we have not had more reports of sightings of frogs and toads for this quarter from our keen gardeners!)

On the 5 February, the writer received the latest LARN (Leicestershire Amphibians and Reptiles Network) newsletter from Andrew Heaton, the County Recorder. In the newsletter, there were two items which the writer judged to be of particular interest. The first of these concerns the **Adder *Vipera berus***. It appears that a company called RSK were commissioned

to carry out an ecological assessment of an area of rough grassland near Oadby, and during their survey found three Adders. What makes these sightings particularly interesting is that Adders have not been historically recorded from this site.

The second item was the discovery of an **Alpine Newt *Icthyosaura alpestris*** in a garden pond in the Shanklin Drive area of Leicester. Apparently this is the third sighting of this species in the Leicester area. My understanding is that this species may be available through the pet and aquatics trade, but, in any case, it was introduced into England as long ago as the 1930s. The original range of this amphibian was central Europe and the mountainous areas of southern Europe, where there are a number of sub-species. As its name implies, it prefers cool conditions and is normally found in upland forested areas, although it can also be found in parkland and natural gardens. Males normally grow to about 9 cm, whereas the larger females can reach 12 cm. The females are a camouflaged blotchy brown colour, but the males become very colourful during the breeding season, with bluish backs and orange on the belly. The writer was particularly interested to read about this sighting, having not heard of this species before!

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

Once again, we have few sightings to report for this quarter. However, we do have one or two very interesting, and perhaps rather unexpected, sightings to report. In the past, I have chosen to list the various species in order, and then provide a list of sightings under each heading. However, given that on this occasion we have only two sites to deal with, I have chosen to adopt a slightly different format, and place the details of the species under each of the two sites.

Spinney Hill Park (the Willow Brook):

For those not familiar with the geography of the centre of Leicester, Spinney Hill Park is a comparatively small park situated in the heart of the City: to be more precise, it is a rectangular open space situated between Mere Road and

East Park Road, not that far from the London Road Railway Station in the Highfields District of the City. It happens to be HB's local park, and he has kindly sent us a short report on the effects of the improvements for wildlife which have been made there: specifically the short length of stream which flows through the Park. HB notes that the **Minnow *Phoxinus phoxinus***, and the **Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*** have been present for several years. However, HB has been informed by one of the Park Rangers that more recently they have also found specimens of the **Stone Loach *Noemacheilus barbatulus*** and the **Bullhead *Cottus gobio*** in the stream. (The ranger also added that previously she had only ever seen the latter species in the River Lin, at Bradgate Park.) HB adds that, this winter, Kingfishers have been sighted in Spinney Hill Park, having not been recorded there previously – which in itself can be taken as a testament to the improvement in fish populations in the Willow Brook within the Park. HB suggests that the Kingfishers probably breed upstream towards Thurnby Lodge, where the banks are more suitable for nesting.

It seems to the writer that the fascination in these sightings lies in the fact that they provide further proof - as if further proof were needed - of the readiness with which wildlife, given half an opportunity, will recolonise urban areas!

Swithland Brook and Swithland Reservoir:

To avoid any confusion, the stream which I am referring to here as Swithland Brook is the stream which flows eastwards from the direction of Roecliffe Manor and the Brand, and through the village of Swithland. It flows through the gardens, paralleling Main Street, until it reaches the church, where it turns to the north-east, crosses the fields, and drains into the south-western corner of Swithland Reservoir. DAP reports that there were two specimens of **Brown Trout *Salmo fario*** present in the stream throughout the quarter, until the stream flooded. These were quite large specimens, approximately 20 cm long. (The fact that there were two of them suggests that perhaps they were a mated pair, and probably took advantage of the high water to move upstream in search of a suitable spawning site.) DAP also reports that

while clearing debris from the stream on various occasions during the quarter he came across specimens of the **Stone Loach *Noemacheilus barbatulus*** and the **Bullhead *Cottus gobio***.

DAP also reports that he has been informed that on the morning of the 9 November a Mr S McManus found a dead specimen of the **Common (Bronze) Bream *Abramis brama*** on the dam wall of Swithland Reservoir. This fish was a large specimen, weighing 16 lb. 2 oz. (approximately 7.314 kg), and apparently had large wounds around the gill area: suggesting that it had fallen victim to an Otter. Mr McManus reports that he has seen an Otter previously at the site, while fishing by night. Apparently, a large Pike, bearing similar injuries, had been found a few days previously at the same site. DAP adds that the Bream was removed, with the intention of having it mounted (i.e. preserved in a glass case).

In the past, a Common Bream of over 3.75 kg would have been regarded as a very large specimen, but in recent years a number of much larger specimens have been recorded. Some years ago Swithland Reservoir produced a specimen of over 7.25 kg which became for some time the UK rod-caught record for this species. However, the current record goes to a specimen of 22 lb. 11 oz. (approximately 10.3 kg), caught by Scot Crook in 2012, at Ferry Lagoon, in Cambridgeshire.

More on the **Pike *Esox lucius*** and the **Brown Trout *Salmo fario***...

In recent weeks there have been a number of reports in the angling press on the subject of large specimens of Pike which have turned up in various parts of the country. The first of these fish was one which turned up here in Leicestershire. According to a recent report in the "Angling Times" (14/01/2014), the Canal and Rivers Trust have employed a specialist company called MEM Fisheries to carry out fish surveys on canals in various parts of the country, including the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Canal. During the survey on the Ashby Canal they netted a Pike of 32 lbs (14.5 kg). (No date is given for this survey.) The reason why this fish was so newsworthy is not so much because of its weight – fish of this weight are not particularly uncommon – but because the Ashby Canal is a

comparatively narrow and shallow waterway and Pike of this size are more commonly associated with large gravel pit fisheries or water supply reservoirs. Apparently, the survey also turned up seven other individual Pike which weighed over 20 lbs (approximately 9 kg).

The editions of the "Angling Times" and the "Angler's Mail" of 4 February both contained lengthy reports of the capture of a Pike of 46 lb. 11 oz. (approximately 21.1 kg) - a new record for England, and very nearly a new UK record. (It seems that initially it was thought that the fish might actually be a new record, but subsequent examination of the weighing scales showed that they were slightly inaccurate.) This fish was a product of Wykeham Lake, a 7.5 acre gravel pit fishery near Scarborough, and was caught by angler Wyndon Coole, who had previously caught the same fish, in 2011, at a weight of 45 lb. 14 oz. (approximately 20.8 kg). The current UK record is held by a fish of 46 lb. 13 oz., just two ounces heavier than the Wykeham fish! This current record fish was caught in 1992, by angler Roy Lewis, from Llandegfedd Reservoir, in South Wales. A week or so ago, following the capture of the Wykeham fish, another Pike of 44 lb. 6 oz. (approximately 20.1 kg) was taken at Chew Valley Reservoir in Somerset, leading to speculation in the angling press that a new UK record may be set in the very near future ("Angler's Mail" 11/02/2014).

The reason that Pike anglers in pursuit of specimen fish tend to concentrate their efforts at this time of the year is simply because large pike are invariably females, and at this time of the year are heavy with spawn. Pike eggs measure between 2.5 and 3.0 mm, and a large female Pike can produce a lot of them; to be more specific, roughly 15 – 20,000 eggs per kg of bodyweight. So, for example, a Pike of 5 kg may produce roughly 90,000 eggs, which in terms of volume amounts to roughly one litre. And so, a really large female may produce up to half a million eggs! Pike spawn in the early spring, on water-plants or debris, in shallow water. The males move into shallow water first, followed by the gravid females, who usually attract the attentions of several suitors! During the spawning period they cease feeding. The fertilized eggs are laid in batches over several weeks on to the water-plants to which they

adhere. The newly hatched fry remain attached to the plants until the yolk-sac has been absorbed, after which they become free-swimming, feeding on tiny organisms. At 4-5 cm they start to feed on recently hatched coarse fish fry as well as insects and crustaceans, and by the time they reach 12 cm they resemble the adult fish, except in one small detail: juvenile fish are greenish with yellowish vertical bars, which provide excellent camouflage for the young fish among the weedbeds. In the adults, the vertical bars turn into yellowish blotches, which provide excellent camouflage in more open water. (Older specimens may turn brownish.)

Historically, the Pike has been the subject of a lot of folklore and mythology, with stories of fish allegedly living to be hundreds of years old! The truth is actually far more prosaic; most fish probably have a lifespan of about ten years, with some individuals reaching twenty years. Growth depends on latitude, climate and food supply, but given reasonable conditions Pike grow rapidly, reaching a weight of 1 kg in 4-6 years, or sometimes in 2-3 years. The males, which grow more slowly than the females, mature at two to three years, with the females maturing a year or two later. The maximum size for males would appear to be between 5 and 8 kg at 10-14 years. Females, as we have seen, can grow to very much larger sizes. In terms of feeding, Pike are both catholic and cannibalistic. They usually operate as an ambush predator and will take smaller fish of any species, as well as small waterfowl: in short, anything which they can fit into their mouths, including their own smaller brethren. In fact, Pike have sometimes been found choked to death, with another Pike, only slightly smaller than themselves, wedged immovably in their jaws!

To return to our specimen Pike of recent days: why should these three fisheries in different parts of the country produce these specimen fish? The answer is very simple. All three fisheries are managed as “put-and-take” trout fisheries. What that actually means is that anglers pay to fish for the trout: some of which at least they are allowed to remove from the fishery. Since trout are not able, usually, to spawn successfully in still waters, the trout have to be replaced with farmed fish which have been brought in. These fish will usually be about two

years old, and 30 to 35 cm in length. For the first few days after their release into the wild, these fish are truly “innocents abroad”, although they will soon learn how to eat, and not be eaten. In the meantime, some of their number will fall victim to predators, including, of course, the Pike. However, not all of them will fall victim to predators, be they *Esox lucius* or *Homo sapiens*: some of the Trout will actually survive to live to a ripe old age.

A case in point was a Brown Trout, caught from Rutland Water, on the 11 July 2013. This fish, the largest Brown ever taken at Rutland Water, weighed 17 lb. 6 oz. (approximately 7.9 kg). It is a little known fact – at least outside fisheries circles – that the scales of fish like Trout and Carp - and also the Operculum (gill plate) - can be read in the same way as the rings in the trunk of a tree, revealing the age of the fish, and its feeding patterns over the years. A scale reading of Cooper's Brown revealed that it was nine or more years old. It had grown rapidly for the first two years of its life at the farm, and had continued to grow steadily after its release into Rutland Water. Brown Trout of this size are every bit as piscivorous as Pike, and are also capable of reaching an age and a size nearly double that of the Rutland fish. However, where the Brown Trout is concerned there are two Record Lists: one for “cultivated trout” like the Rutland fish, and a separate list for “wild fish”. Currently, the record for cultivated fish is held by a fish of 28 lb. 1 oz. (approximately 12.7 kg), caught at Dever Springs Trout Fishery in Hampshire in 1995. The UK record for the wild Brown Trout is held by a fish of 31 lb. 12 oz. (approximately 14.4 kg), caught from Loch Awe in Argyll, in 2002, by an angler coincidentally named Brian Rutland!

Finally, I hope that these brief notes on what I personally consider to be two of our more fascinating predatory fish species will be of some interest to our readers!

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

3rd Quarter: July - September

Records of **Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*** came from six sites mainly in small numbers, most identified as males, and there were no comments on mating or ovipositing during the period.

Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* were found at just five widespread sites, the highest count being ten at Old John Watering in Bradgate Park on 29 July, but there were no records of **White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes***.

The only **Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*** were at Lax Hill, Rutland Water and Bradgate Park in July.

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* were widespread and recorded in small numbers from nine sites in August and September but again, there were no comments on mating or ovipositing during the period. **Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*** was much more abundant and widespread with records from 17 sites the highest count being a minimum of 50 at Cropston Reservoir on 7 July. By contrast, **Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*** was seen at just four sites in small numbers.

Strangely, there were no records for either **Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*** or **Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum***. Maybe we just weren't looking hard enough.

Found in all three months of the quarter, **Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*** was observed in 17 diverse habitats in small numbers with the highest count being five at Puddledyke on 7 August, some of which were ovipositing as were three at Bradgate Park the same day. **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** was also noted throughout the quarter from ten sites in small numbers. One was ovipositing in PHG's Quorn garden on the 16 August. The first **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** did not appear until 9 August when a female was noted in PHG's Quorn garden. By the end of the period records came from 12 sites, mainly single-figures but 20 were around Swithland Reservoir on 14 August.

The only records of **Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*** were singletons from the Cropston Reservoir/Bradgate Park area.

Three **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*** at Cropston Reservoir on 7 July was the best count. Apart from one at Great Bowden Borrow Pit NR on 2 July, all other records of **Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*** were received from Bradgate Park all in July.

Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* came from four sites in July and August in single figures, the last of the season was at Bradgate Park on the 7th August.

After the first in Quorn on 28 July, small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** were noted at 15 widespread sites throughout the quarter. **Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*** emerged somewhat later with the first noted on 18 August at Newfield Colliery NR. However, there were no more records after the 28th.

4th Quarter: October - December

The weather in October was rather wet and although November was much better, put paid to most of our dragonflies. It was not surprising therefore, that few records were received during the quarter and none after 12 October.

The only **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** was a male at New Lount NR on the 1st October, whilst one or two **Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** was noted at four sites: Bradgate Park (a pair in the grounds of the Ruins), PHG's Quorn garden, Watermead CP North and Swithland Reservoir.

Small numbers of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** were found at three sites, four males in the grounds of the Ruins at Bradgate Park and two at Old John Watering in the Park plus two at Watermead CP Reedbed Nature Reserve.

Jim Graham



Migrant Hawker © Jim Graham

BUTTERFLIES

A few individuals of some nine species remained active during the relatively mild weather of October and single specimens of four species into November.

Pieridae

Late male **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni* were observed in our Quorn garden and at Ulverscroft NR on 6 October.

Several active **Large White** *Pieris brassicae* were noted in PH's Shepshed garden between 1 and 10 October and a singleton at Castle Gardens, Leicester on the 6th.

The **Small White** *Pieris rapae* was likewise present in small numbers in PH's Shepshed garden between 1 and 10 October and, on 6th, two were present at the Castle Gardens and on 10th one was noted visiting Ivy blossom at the Reedbed NR at Wanlip.

Lycaenidae

A still active **Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas* was found at Bradgate Park by MH on 1 October.

Nymphalidae

During October the **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* was reported seen in nine well-spread localities, often nectaring on Ivy blossom and two late sightings were of one in FTS's Barlestone garden and another in PH's Shepshed garden, both on 12 November.

Three **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* were still active in Bradgate Park on 1 October and between then and 24th the species was noted in in a further six localities. A particularly late individual was in FTS's garden on 7 November.

The **Peacock** *Inachis io* was observed at Shepshed, Quorn and Cademan Moor during October and on 4 November one was seen



Peacock © Stephen Woodward

briefly, sunning itself on a stone trough in our Quorn garden. On 18 December HB found one on his carpet, indoors at Abney Street, Leicester where he suspected that it had been brought in by his cat. It was returned outside to the shed.



Comma © Stephen Woodward

Numbers of the **Comma** *Polygonia c-album* remained active throughout much of October and four were present at Castle Gardens on the 6th and eight on Ivy blossom at the Reedbed NR on the 9th. It was still active near the summit of Beacon Hill on the 30th and altogether was reported seen at 14 widely scattered localities. A late one was still active in our Quorn garden on 4 November.

Satyridae

The only **Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria* reported during October were in a Barlestone garden on 2nd, at Abbey Park in Leicester on 5th, at Ulverscroft NR on 6th and on Beatty Avenue in Leicester on 26th.



Speckled Wood © Stephen Woodward

Finally, many thanks to all those who made the effort to submit butterfly records during the year.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

Although the conditions were not that bad for this quarter, we seemed to struggle to get any half decent results, surely this is a “knock on” effect from the poor summers of the last few years. Consequently we have a very brief report.

Members' Sightings

The distinctive leaf mines of *Cameraria ohridella* were noted at Rothley and Medbourne in numbers. *Anthophila fabriciana* was in abundance at New Lount NR in October. A single **Twenty-plume Moth** *Alucita hexadactyla* was found at rest inside SFW's Groby house on 6 November, plus another at Rothley in December. **November Moth** *Epirrita dilutata* and **Winter Moth** *Operophtera brumata* were attracted to a lighted window in Rothley. A solitary **Grey Shoulder-knot** *Lithophane ornitopus* was found on a tree trunk in Bradgate Park in October.



Grey Shoulder-knot © Stephen Woodward

Light Trap Results

Only three members operated light traps this quarter, SFW at Groby, LP at Rothley and PHG at Quorn. Just one **Light Brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana* was present in an Actinic light trap in Groby and four at an MV light trap in Quorn, both sightings in October. Just a single **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* at Quorn, these are very smart looking moths when fresh it is a shame they tend to get taken for granted. Another stunning looking moth is **Red Green Carpet** *Chloroclysta siterata* which was only recorded from Quorn. The first half of October seemed to suit **Common Marbled Carpet** *Chloroclysta truncata* they were recorded at both Groby and Quorn. The only record of **Juniper Carpet** *Thera juniperata* were of five

individuals attracted to SFW's Actinic in Groby, however all were quite content to sit on the outside and not enter the inside of the trap, like they are supposed to! You can tell when so few moths are about, when even **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* and **Lesser Yellow Underwing** *Noctua comes* become welcome visitors and were recorded at all three sites and all in October. The only record of **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum* came from the Actinic at Rothley. PHG is still recording **Black Rustic** *Aporophyla nigra* in his Quorn garden with the last record on 6 October. Due to the larval foodplant being an assortment of Cypress trees, **Blair's Shoulder-knot** *Lithophane leautieri* continues to be very much a garden moth with just a singleton at Quorn early October. **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii* was recorded at Quorn and Rothley with **Beaded Chestnut** *Agrochola lychnidis* and **Barred Sallow** *Xanthia aurago* only at Rothley. Singletons of **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa* were noted from Quorn and **Pale Mottled Willow** *Paradrina clavipalpis* at Rothley. The only **Snout** *Hypena proboscidalis* reported this quarter was from Quorn. Even though they will be slightly "out of sync" I will just keep this next batch together. Migration was exceptionally busy, especially in the coastal areas well into December obviously taking advantage of the amazing summer and autumn we had. There was a glimmer of evidence here in VC55 with the likes of **Rush Veneer** *Nomophila noctuella*, **Vestal Rhodometra** *sacraria*, **Gem** *Orthonama obstipata*, **Four-spotted Footman** *Lithosia quadra*, **Dark Swordgrass** *Agrotis ipsolon* and **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* scattered around the county. Pride of place must go to **Four-spotted Footman** *Lithosia quadra* recorded from Horninghold early October and only the second record of this species the first was a male from PHG's Quorn garden in 1964.

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

Graham and Anona Finch

BEETLES

For most of the other orders, this quarter can be a very lean one, and also for the beetles no doubt numbers of species and individuals are dramatically reduced. Fortunately there are still more than enough about to keep us occupied, you just have to try a little harder to find them, that's all, and by all accounts that's exactly what we did. Between us we found an impressive 66 species with just short of 500 individuals.

The species with the highest number was *Euophryum confine* with a total of 52 individuals at two sites, Lount Wood and Beacon Hill, where a single dead and well rotting Beech at Beacon Hill produced a staggering 50 of them, plus many more that did not get counted. This is yet another "foreigner" originating from New Zealand and first recorded in Britain in the late 1930s. The species recorded at the most sites goes to **Harlequin Ladybird** *Harmonia axyridis* being found at ten sites involving over 42 individuals, this is still a relatively low total for this species.

Quite an outstanding couple of hours were had, sieving flood debris from the roadside verge along Slash Lane on 27 December where 14 species were identified, a few more still to do. At least 400 individual beetles were counted, with hundreds more everywhere flood debris had gathered, all Slash Lane records refer to this day. The rest of the quarter was as follows, 15 *Carabus granulatus* were found sheltering together under the bark of a partly submerged log in a field along Slash Lane late December. A single *Nebria brevicollis* was found at Martinshaw Wood late November, *Notiophilus biguttatus* was at Market Bosworth Park in December and Launde Abbey in December, both as singletons. The only record of *Loricera pilicornis* was a singleton at Launde Abbey mid-October. Bembidions are generally quite small, black or at least darkish with a few having yellowish golden spots on the elytra. It is a large genus belonging to the family Carabidae or ground beetles and are usually associated with wetter conditions, there are 54 British species and 30 have been recorded in VC55, ten of which were recorded this quarter. *Bembidion aeneum* was found at two sites, four from Slash Lane, plus five from inside a dead wood pile at

Tilton Cutting late December. A total of 20 *Bembidion biguttatum* were from Slash Lane and one from Lott's Corner on Loughborough Big Meadows mid-December. A total of 17 *Bembidion guttula* were found at five sites, three *Bembidion lunulatum* were amongst the catch at Slash Lane. A single *Bembidion lampros* was found in a rotting woodpile in a Market Bosworth garden, singles of *Bembidion dentellum* and *Bembidion gilvipes* were at Slash Lane and a solitary *Bembidion deletum* was under dead wood at Charnwood Lodge. The aptly named *Bembidion quadrimaculatum* was found at two sites Market Bosworth Park and a garden close by, and finally singles of *Bembidion obtusum* were found at the side of Ashby Canal at Shenton and a Market Bosworth garden. *Ocys harpaloides* was found at three sites late October either by beating aerial dead oak branches or beating bracket fungi. The genus *Pterostichus*, must be everyone's idea of a typical ground beetle, most are black with long legs and are more often than not found running for cover if disturbed. We do well for this group out of the 19 British species we have recorded 14 in the county and five were reported this quarter. One of the commonest and definitely the largest at 16-21 mm *Pterostichus niger* was at Slash Lane and Market Bosworth Park, slightly smaller just one *Pterostichus melanarius* was from Beacon Hill mid-October. At the other end of the scale ranging from 5-7.5 mm were *Pterostichus vernalis* at the same sites as previous species, *Pterostichus diligens* from Bradgate Park and 34 *Pterostichus strenuous* all from Slash Lane. *Oxypselaphus obscurus* and *Agonum marginatus* were found at Slash Lane plus the latter also at Bradgate Park and Market Bosworth Park, interestingly this was the only *Agonum* species recorded this quarter. *Platynus assimilis* is usually among the most abundant species recorded, but only a single turned up at Market Bosworth Park mid-December. Finishing off the Carabids with a few non-typical looking members were *Demetrias atricapillus* from Ashby Canal at Shenton, *Paradromius linearis* from the same site plus Slash Lane and *Dromius quadrimaculatus* from Launde Big Wood and Beacon Hill. All as singles except for ten *P. linearis* found by beating dead Typha reed debris onto a tray on the canal at Shenton. A dead and well rotting branch at Market



Silpha atrata © Stephen Woodward

Bosworth Park provided shelter for 40 *Silpha atrata* early December, this species was also found at Tilton Cutting, again inside rotting wood.

The Royal Entomological Society keys on Staphylinidae by Derek Lott have opened up a whole new world for us although they are still generally considered a difficult family as a whole but some of the subfamilies are quite do-able. All four of the Lordithon species have been recorded in the county and three were recorded this quarter, *Lordithon exoletus* and *Lordithon thoracicus* were found at Beacon Hill mid-October and *Lordithon trinotatus* at Altar Stones early October. Tachyporinae are one of the difficult subfamilies but again there are a couple that are quite straightforward *Tachyporus obtusus* is probably one of the safest to identify, they were at Charnwood Lodge mid-November and Tilton Cutting late October. Two *Autalia impressa/longicollis* were beaten out of bracket fungi at Beacon Hill and *Bolitochara oblique* was inside a fungi covered dead branch at Charnwood Lodge. Fairly small, with large bulging eyes makes the Stenus an easily recognized group, also a large group with over 70 species in Britain and most look very similar. It is quite handy that only six of them have a reddish spot on each elytra, only four of them are recorded in VC55 and only two can be said to be fairly common. *Stenus bimaculatus* is without doubt the most abundant and the easiest to identify with bicoloured legs and the only one with a central keel on the upper side of the abdomen. Two of these were found by beating dead Typha reed debris along the Ashby Canal at Shenton. *Stenus juno* is one of the completely black ones and keys out to a choice of two species and a dissection is necessary to clinch the ID. This is not as daunting as it sounds

and often a little thumb pressure towards the tip of the abdomen is all that is needed and the required bits are exposed and as *S. juno*'s bits are very distinctive so it can be confidently named. *Lathrobium brunnipes* is one of the commonest Staphs and as such soon becomes quite familiar, recorded at Slash Lane and Bradgate Park, as is *Atrechus affinis* recorded at Martinshaw Wood. One of our more spectacular beetles is **Rhinoceros Beetle** *Sinodendron cylindricum* a solitary male was found inside a fallen dead oak at Martinshaw Wood. Probably even more spectacular is **Minotaur Beetle** *Typhaeus typhoeus* a single was found at Beacon Hill late October.



Rhinoceros Beetle © Stephen Woodward

The Elatridae or Click beetles for some reason have been unfairly neglected regarding an up to date usable key, consequently very few get named down to species level, fortunately *Agriotes lineatus* is one of the few that we can confidently name, an aggregation of eight were found under bark on a cut stump in Market Bosworth Park in mid-December. There are very few records of *Anthocomus rufus* so a singleton in the reeds at Kelham Bridge in mid-December was a nice find. A single *Rhizophagus bipustulatus* was found on dead Birch at Lount early December and six more were in a fungi covered Oak stump at Heather mid-November. The plainer looking *Rhizophagus dispar* was from a fungi covered Birch branch at Charnwood Lodge mid-November. Another species found from beating dead Typha reed debris on Ashby Canal at Shenton was a single *Dacne bipustulatus* this species was also found on the Oak stump at Heather. The small but distinctive *Psammoecus bipunctatus* again from the reed debris at Ashby Canal at Shenton as were several of the ladybird *Coccidula rufa*. A total of six species of ladybird were reported with **22-spot**

OTHER INSECTS

Editorial apologies to Howard Bradshaw for omitting a page of his report in Heritage 211, (3rd quarter 2013). Here it is:

Red-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius* appeared to do quite well with workers still active during the early part of this quarter. Less a garden species than some, nevertheless it was recorded from 37 sites over a wide area, frequent in some sites, Barlestone July-August, Aylestone Meadows, 26 July, Humberstone Heights workers common on Goats Rue on 20 July, at Church Gresley Wood, numerous on *Lotus tenuifolius* and Bardon Hill in July. The last record is of a male at Barlestone on 5 September, no young queens appear to have been seen this quarter.

Early-nesting bumblebees ***Bombus pratorum*** were, as expected, fewer in numbers than some species this quarter. At Barlestone recorded as occasional, during the first week of July and only seen twice in August two on the 6th, with a single on the 11th. The only other records for July were singletons at Lubenham on the 2nd and Langham on the 7th. A young queen was nectaring on Blue Spiraea in my garden on 21 September.

In the last year or so I am seeing and receiving fewer records of the **White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum***, considered a widespread and common species, it is significant that SFW and HI who record bees from a wide area of the county do not appear to have seen any, the only records submitted are from Barlestone, where FTS records, single queens in July on the 5th and 26th, with a few males till the end of the month and queens in August on the 14th and 17th, males more frequent for a week from 19th to 26th, with a solitary queen on 1 September. The only other records are of a single queen and male in Humberstone Park on 20 July on Creeping Thistle and four queens and two males on 6 August in Victoria Park, also on Creeping Thistle.

Records for the **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** were as follows, always more local and fewer workers than other species, the bulk of reports coming from FTS at his garden at Barlestone, he lists them as frequent during July

Ladybird *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata* at Kelham Bridge, **Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*** reported widespread, single **10-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata*** from Ashby Canal at Shenton and Beacon Hill. Just a few of sightings of **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*** from Orton on the Hill Church plus Beacon Hill, Ethel Road and Spinney Hill Park Leicester. **Water Ladybird *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata*** at Kelham Bridge and the Ashby Canal at Shenton. What is it with the scientific names of our Ladybirds do they have to be so awkward? Four strange and knobbly looking ***Aridius nodifer*** were found on a fungi covered Birch branch at Charnwood Lodge mid-November. The next three species were all from a fungi covered oak stump on the roadside at Heather on 15 November, three ***Litargus connexus***, one ***Myctophagus multipunctatus*** and eight ***Mycetophagus quadripustulatus***. Getting to be a regular now, ***Tetratoma fungorum*** was found to be fairly widespread, plus singles of ***Orchesia micans*** from Lount Wood, ***Orchesia undulata*** from Beacon Hill and The Altar Stones.

A single bright and very shiny bronze ***Scaphidema metallicum*** was found in the Typha debris along Ashby Canal. Singles of two closely related species ***Vincenzellus ruficollis*** and ***Salpingus planirostris*** were at Heather roadside and Grace Dieu Wood respectively. Another bright and shiny species but slightly larger was ***Chrysolina staphalaea*** sieved out of a grass tussock from a flooded field near Measham end of December. A total of 45 electric blue ***Altica lythri*** were found by beating reed debris into a tray at Ashby Canal at Shenton. A colony of the **Potato Flea Beetle *Psylliodes affinis*** were found grazing on one of its food plants, Bittersweet, at Tilton Cutting in late October. Two individuals of **Nut Leaf Weevil *Strophosoma melanogrammum*** were beaten off an aerial dead Oak branch at Altar Stones early October. ***Euophryum confine*** was found at two sites with two specimens beaten off an aerial dead oak branch at Lount and 50 plus specimens in rotten wood at Beacon Hill.

Many thanks to every one who have sent in records this quarter.

Graham Finch

with queens on the 1st, 6th and 26th, not seen at all during August and September, the only other record I have is a worker in my garden on 19 July and a young queen briefly searching for a nest site on 15 September.

Cuckoo Bees

As usual *Bombus vestalis* was the most widely recorded cuckoo bee, this quarter with records from Barlestone up to a maximum of nine males in July, a few males in August, with single females in August on the 7th, 18th and 22nd, the last one being seen on 22 September. Other records were from Mountsorrel village and Twycross churchyard in July and Puddledyke, Abbey Park several, and Ulverscroft NR in August. On Spinney Hill Park on 3 July I counted ten females on the flower beds similar to 2012, a further 20 or more females with an odd male were on Creeping Thistle on the margins of Willow Brook, Humberstone Park on the 30th of the month, a few more females and one male were at Victoria Park on 6 August. Why there was such a preponderance of females - I have no idea.

Records of *Bombus sylvestris*, a cleptoparasite of the common *Bombus lucorum*, are always fewer in number than the former and was recorded from Barlestone as two males on 25 July and single males on 1 and 16 August, the only other records are from singles at Egleton NR Rutland Water, and Bardon Hill both in July.

The only records of *Bombus campestris* was of single males from City General grounds, Victoria Park pond side, foraging Water Mint both on 27 August and one picked up dead in a garden at Thurnby Lodge on 29 August.

Bombus rupestris, a very variable species, black specimens are not uncommon and a cleptoparasite of the common *Bombus pascuorum*, has increased its range in recent years and is now recorded in parts of the county most years. Reported from Barlestone, two males on 25 July, two on 6 August and one on the 7th and others from Bardon Hill on 13 July and Shenton Estate on 26 July. A female was seen on Stoughton Airfield on 19 August.

A very drowsy female specimen of *Bombus barbutellus* was taken on Victoria Park on a

thistle bed on the 6th August, a female, the specimen was retained. Only the second specimen I have found in recent years, probably quite local as its host is *Bombus hortorum*, which is less common than some species and produces far fewer workers.

Howard Bradshaw

Other Insects 4th Quarter 2013

Of the few Heteropteran records received, two **Green Shield Bugs** *Palomena prasina* were seen at Beatty Avenue, Leicester, on Ivy on 29 October and five on Ethel Road on 30 October, with two still present on 4 November, none of which were in hibernation colours. The last one observed was at Groby on 12 November.

Just one record of the **Hawthorn Shield Bug** *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*, sitting on a dogwood leaf in Spinney Hill Park on 17 October. Dogwood berries appear much favoured by this species, particularly in the city confines.

The **Parent Bug** *Elasmucha grisea*, again just a single specimen on low vegetation Abbey Park on 25 October.

Despite much of the weather in the last quarter being benign, particularly in October, very little invertebrate life was recorded, most species having completed their life cycles, or hibernated for the winter. So this section is shorter than usual.

The only other member of this group recorded was the **Dock Bug** *Coreus marginatus*, five on low vegetation Great Central Way on 8 October, with two at Thurnby Lodge on the 30th of that month.

Hymenoptera

Just two species of bumble bees were recorded this quarter, **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* and the **Common Carder Bee** *Bombus pascuorum*. Most, if not all, of the records of the former appertaining to queens. One was seen briefly on Abbey Park on 5 October, one feeding on Cyclamen on an outside windowsill in MH's Loughborough garden 21 and 25 October; with queens also in FTS's garden at Barlestone, also sitting on windowsills

on 24 and 30 October, with further records in November on the 12th and 13th. ***Bombus pascuorum*** is normally the most active in this quarter, particularly in October, was also low in numbers for this species, odd ones on the Great Central Way on 8 October, one with full pollen baskets, with singles at Castle Gardens on 6 October and at Barlestone on 2 October through to 23rd and one with pollen baskets on the 2nd.

Hornets *Vespa crabro* had few records, as usual from the Charnwood Forest region; one at Bradgate drinking at a pond, a single at Rothley Golf Course on 15 October feeding on Ivy. The only other records were from Quorn, one attracted to MV light on 6 October and three noted around Ivy blossom on 17th of the month.

Common Wasps *Vespula vulgaris* were more in evidence with numbers building on Ivy towards the end of October on Ivy blossom; recorded in October from Rothley, Glenfield, Castle Gardens, Spinney Hill Park, Beatty Avenue, and November from Medbourne, Braunston and Ethel Road, young queens were noted at Beatty Avenue and Ethel Road in late October.

German Wasps *Vespula germanica* were recorded from Sibleby on 30 October and at Braunston on 10 November feeding on Ivy blossom.

Diptera

This has been a very poor year for hoverflies, particularly so in the case of Syrphids, very few records locally this quarter, all associated with Ivy blossom.

Two ***Syrphus ribesii*** in Spinney Hill Park on 17 October and several in Abbey Park on 25 October.

There were two ***Syrphus vitripennis*** at Beatty Avenue on 26 October and one on Ethel Road on 4 November.

A single ***Episyrphus balteatus*** was found on Beatty Avenue on 29 October and one ***Eupeodes luniger*** at Abney Street on 7 October and another in Abbey Park on 25 October.

The other species recorded from this group were ***Myathropa florea*** - one at Rothley on 15

October and a very few drone flies - ***Eristalis tenax*** recorded from Braunston, Thurnby Lodge, Abbey Park, Beatty Avenue and Ethel Road and just a single record of ***Eristalis pertinax*** in Abbey Park on 25 October.

A single ***Rhingia campestris*** was seen on Abbey Park on 5 October.

Of the few other Diptera records sent in, mention might be made of the **Soldier Fly *Sargus flavipes***, an excellent view was had of one sitting on low vegetation on Great Central Way on 8 October. I always find this species close to tree cover, sometimes with ***Sargus bipunctatus*** in good years locally.

A **Long-legged Fly *Liancalus virens*** at Staunton Harold Hall on 1 October and ***Mesembrina meridiana*** recorded at Ulverscroft, Braunston, Quorn and Beacon Hill during October.

Howard Bradshaw

Solitary Wasps 2013

Probably due to the weather, 2013 has not been a very good year for solitary wasps and numbers of records are fewer than in previous years.

Chrysididae

A number of Ruby-tailed Wasps ***Chrysis*** specimens have been taken and have gone to the national expert, Michael Archer, to be identified. ***Trichrysis cyanea*** is smaller but completely metallic green, allowing it to be easily identified in the field. It has been seen in several parts of Bradgate and at the Beacon.

Sapygidae

Just one species from this family was recorded – again in Bradgate – ***Monosapyga clavicornis***.



Trichrysis cyanea © Stephen Woodward

This Nationally Notable (Nb) species is thinly scattered in southern Britain. We found this wasp investigating a tree stump, where it was hoping to find the nests of certain bee species to parasitise.

Pompilidae

These are the spider-hunting wasps, which we generally recognise by their behaviour. When hunting, they scurry on the ground, making only low, short flights. Some have red on the abdomen, others are completely black.

Anoplius nigerrimus was recorded from several sites – Bradgate, Croft Pasture NR, Moira and Woodhouse. *Arachnospila anceps* had only one record from Bradgate.

Dipogon is a genus of small black wasps with dark markings near the wing-tip. The only site to have two species of Dipogon was Bradgate Park with both *Dipogon subintermedius* and *D. variegatus*. The other site for *D. subintermedius* was North Farm on the Shenton Estate. *D. variegatus* was also seen at Beacon Hill and in Wardley and Nether Broughton churchyards.

Priocnemis pusilla, *P. pertubator* and *P. parvula* were all found in Bradgate. We are grateful to Graham Collins, the author of the latest key to Pompilids, for confirming some of our identifications.

Vespidae

Ancistrocerus gazella was the only one of this genus found this year – at both Bradgate and Spinney Hill Park in Leicester.

Sphecidae

Four species of Crossocerus were found – *C. ovalis* and *C. Podagricus* – only in Bradgate Park, *C. quadrimaculatus* in Bradgate, Croft Pasture NR and North Farm at Shenton and a female of



Ectemnius cavifrons © Stephen Woodward

C. elongatulus/distinguendus at Twyford. The females of these two species are indistinguishable.

Ectemnius cavifrons was found by HB in both Bede Island and Spinney Hill Park and by SFW at North Farm, Shenton.

The bug-hunting *Lindenius albilabris* has been found only in Bradgate where it seems to like the bare earth of the eroded paths.

Records of *Mimumesa dahlbomi* came from Bradgate and two places on the Shenton Estate.

We were particularly pleased to find *Stigmus pendulus* in Greenhill Covert on the Shenton Estate. This wasp seems to be replacing *Stigmus solskyi* as the commonest member of this genus.

Passaloecus corniger was found in dead, standing trees on Bradgate and the Shenton Estate.

The Diptera hunting *Mellinus arvensis* seems to like churchyards and was found at St. Helens in Ashby de la Zouch, St. Nicholas in Leicester, St. Marys in Lutterworth and All Saints at Hoby as well as at Bradgate.

We were lucky enough to get a new county record at Croft Pasture NR on 11 July – *Nysson dimidiatus* at the base of a rocky cliff face. This small red and black wasp parasitises other wasp species and is Nationally Notable (Nb).



Nysson dimidiatus © Stephen Woodward

Only one specimen of *Cerceris rybyensis* was seen this year, at Bradgate. This black and yellow wasp, which hunts bees to provision its underground nest, has been locally common in recent years yet apparently not recorded for the county before 2011.

Some of these species are awaiting confirmation, by a national expert, of our provisional identifications.

Helen Ikin and Steve Woodward

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

Not many records this quarter as usual. The most interesting one is the presence of **Grass-leaved Orache** *Atriplex littoralis* recorded from Swithland Reservoir. This plant joins an increasing list of coastal plants found on roadsides throughout the country. Another interesting record is **Beggarticks** *Bidens frondosa* recorded from Leicester. This is an introduction from North America where it is considered a weed due to the fact that the seeds stick to the coats of animals and to clothing. The record for the **Lesser Yellow Sorrel** is interesting. I must admit that I did not know of its existence until this record so it will be one I shall be looking for in the future.

Plants of Interest

Least Yellow Sorrel *Oxalis exilis*: found at St. Andrews Churchyard, Kegworth. Often considered to be a small form of *Oxalis corniculata* but differs in the foliage always being green and the inflorescence is always single flowered. A native of Australia and is mainly, as yet, found in the Midlands.

Grass leaved Orache *Atriplex littoralis*: A small group of several plants located SE of the road bridge at Swithland Reservoir. A native plant of sandy coastal places, it is rarely found inland. This is the second county record, the first one being in 1998 at Houghton on the Hill. Once again a plant encouraged by the use of salt on roads replicating coastal conditions and possibly carried by birds or car tyres.

Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*: noted at Evington Park, Leicester. Locally common on spoil heaps. A plant found occasionally in the county, mainly but not exclusively, in calcareous ground.

Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*: specimens at Great Central Railway, Rothley. A plant not normally found on Charnwood but mainly in the NW of the County.

Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*: One plant was found on a garden wall in Kegworth Village. An uncommon plant found only in a small number of places in the county.



Marjoram © Stephen Woodward

Beggarticks *Bidens frondosa*: Common, flowering on edge of tennis court at Humberstone Park, Leicester. An introduced species found occasionally on damp ground near canals and rivers. Apparently more common near Birmingham and London. Originates in the United States. Not recorded in the 1988 *Flora*.

Reflexed Salt Marsh Grass *Puccinellia distans* ssp. *distans*: Present at the roadside in Braunston. Another coastal plant common on the coast but, of late occasional inland although nine localities were recorded by Horwood in the 1933 flora. Possibly under-recorded throughout the county.

Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*: Located on a wall Medbourne village. A species which differs slightly from the common form but is more rare. Most records are from walls, probably because it prefers calcareous ground which mortar provides.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records have also been received for:

Fungi, lichens, mosses and liverworts, woodlice, harvestmen, millipedes, psyllids, barklice, ants, galls, caddisflies and snails.

WEATHER

October, as we all know, was incredibly wet. It was the wettest October in Loughborough since 1967 when 136 mm was recorded at the Sutton Bonington Agricultural College. This was the same year that Jim Lofts began his Loughborough weather records and the year before I was born!!

This year, rain fell on 24 days in the month. Jim amassed 130 mm in Nanpantan more than twice the usual figure while I recorded 111 mm in Mountsorrel. There were some spectacular downpours included in this including 12 mm in just 30 minutes at Mountsorrel on the 19th during a thunderstorm while Jim got a similar figure just three days later in another flash storm. October was not surprisingly was a very dull month with just 90 hours of sunshine recorded as low pressure dominated most of the time. The low pressure centre of the St Jude's storm passed over Loughborough in the early hours of the 28th. Luckily for us, winds in the centre of the low were very light with the exceptionally strong winds blowing around this centre about 70 miles further south of us and so we escaped the gales but the previous day, the 27th, did see winds peaking at 42 mph at East Midlands Airport. It was also a very mild month. Afternoon temperatures averaged 15°C, about 1°C above normal, while the mild and cloudy nights meant that night time temperatures averaged 9°C, more than 2°C above normal. This gave us a mean of 12°C, just 1.5°C above normal.

The entire month was unsettled with just one week's exception between the 3rd and the 10th. The highest temperature of the month was recorded by Jim on the 8th at 21°C while the sunniest day logged 10 hours on the 6th. The lowest day temperature was recorded on the 4th in Mountsorrel at just 14.5°C after early morning fog failed to clear. We avoided a frost for the entire month with the coldest night

being the 30th with a temperature of 3.7°C. As we enter November the rain continues to pour down but at least it looks like staying mild for the time being!

November was the sunniest recorded since 2006. 96 hours of sunshine were recorded way above the usual 75 hours for this month. Indeed this total is 35% higher than normal. In the last 100 years only ten Novembers were sunnier than this one! It was also a colder month than average. In the last 100 years 27 Novembers were colder than this one but 72 were milder! Afternoon temperatures were logged at 9.3°C, a fraction below normal but the night time temperatures of 3°C were nearly 1°C below the norm. There were four air frosts recorded for the month. The overall mean was therefore 6.2°C, nearly 0.5°C below the long term average. It was a drier month than usual with just 47 mm falling at Nanpantan at Jim Lofts' site and 49 mm falling at Mountsorrel. Both of these figures are about 20% below normal. Virtually all of this rain fell in the unsettled first half of the month which was dominated by low pressure. The second half was the polar opposite being dominated by one of the most intense areas of high pressure ever recorded. Air pressure on the 25th reached 1040 mbs, going to the right hand end of your barometer! The first 12 days of the month were very wet and mild. The warmest day was the 11th when 13°C was recorded by Jim at Nanpantan. The wettest day, on the 6th, saw 14 mm fall at Mountsorrel. Winds were frequently strong reaching 42 mph on the 2nd at East Midlands Airport. The second half was much colder with the lowest day temperature of 5°C being recorded at Mountsorrel on the 19th. The coldest night was -2.3°C recorded on the 26th. So, a mixed month but one which did not see any extreme weather. We have now arrived at winter and there have been predictions off all sorts for the coming season. The MET office remain the best forecasting organisation in this country and they are not predicting anything too extreme. Beware of wild national newspaper headlines regarding the weather they have usually not come from a reliable source! That being said this weekend will be cold with a few flakes of snow possible but there is no need for the sledges yet!!

December was the mildest since 2006 and the sunniest since 2001. The most remarkable fact about the month is that there was no air frost recorded at either Jim's station in Nanpantan or mine at Mountsorrel. The lowest air temperature was 0.3°C . Neither myself or Jim could ever remember this happening before in December. I then consulted our longest standing local weather record at the agricultural college at Sutton Bonington and found that since 1959 when records first began there December had never been air-frost free until this month a period of 64 years! Only 32 Decembers have been milder since the record began 355 years ago!

Afternoon maximum temperatures averaged 9°C , 2.5°C above normal. Every single day gave us afternoon temperatures higher than usual with the mildest day being on the 16th when 13°C was recorded which is nearly double the usual value. Night-time temperatures averaging 3.2°C , 1.5°C above the usual figure. The overall mean of 6°C was therefore 2°C above norm. Rainfall totals were recorded at 50 mm in Mountsorrel while Jim recorded 72 mm which were close to the expected figures.

After a relatively quiet start to the month our first major gale occurred on the 5th when winds at East Midlands airport reached 65 mph the strongest of the year. These gales quickly blew up and as it was market day the decision to close the market early was taken because of flying debris. Many trees and fence panels were blown over in what was to become a regular battering during the month. The reason for this month being one of the stormiest on record was deep areas of Atlantic low pressure that frequently anchored themselves off NW Scotland. These in turn were brought to us by a very active jet stream caused partially by very cold weather in the USA! The second week was a bit milder and drier but the second half of the month brought us a succession of Atlantic low pressure areas which gave us almost daily wind and rain. The wettest day of the month was the 23rd with 22 mm of rain falling at Nanpantan. Winds frequently exceeded 45 mph and it was the windiest spell we have had for five years!! One surprising fact was that it was a sunny month. 80 hours were recorded 25% above normal. This was because there were no grey and still days

during the month as low pressure dominated but between the showers and rain bands many days did manage up to five hours of sunshine with nearly seven hours recorded on Christmas Day. So a mild and wet month and as we enter into January there is no sign of things changing.

Phil Morrish

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

H M Beardsworth, H Bradshaw, P J Darby, G L Finch, M A Finch, D B Forgham, P H Gamble, J Graham, M Hall, P Hipkin, H B Hope, H Ikin, R G Lockwood, S McManus, A T Onions, D A Perry, L Purnell, A C Rose, F T Smith, E Webster, S F Woodward.

We are grateful to them all.

Records for the first quarter of 2014 should be sent by 15 April 2014 to:

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