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CITIZEN SCIENTIST - The New, Old-fashioned Naturalists

How many of us think of ourselves as scientists? No, me neither, but that is what we are being told more and more these days. Citizen Science is the new 'buzz' expression and along with 'Citizen Scientist' entered the Oxford English dictionary in June of this year. It is defined as 'scientific work undertaken by members of the general public' – you and I. But this is not a new phenomenon. For many years amateur naturalists have been collecting data and recording wildlife. More recently the RSPB and BTO have been encouraging people to get involved in their Garden Birdwatch projects.

Now other groups are also asking Joe Public to record a wide range of wildlife. The British Dragonfly Society, Butterfly Conservation and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust are amongst those getting in on the act. Everyone is looking for our records and almost every aspect of natural history is covered. There is even a Flying Ant Survey and the number of BioBlitz events seem to be increasing at an exponential rate throughout the country.

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A quick look at the Natural History Museum's website reveals about two dozen current surveys. This shows just how important our records are and how desperate organisations are to get them. Some may say that they are just amusing activities to encourage membership or is a publicity stunt by the organisation. But the data collected is essential. It would be impossible to set up an army of professional scientists to survey the UK's natural history on the same scale as amateurs.

When multiplied by the number of recorders, the information tells us about the quality of our environment and the changes happening to it. Without our data everything would be presumption and hypothesis.

So, if you thought that your records didn't make a difference just remember the combined power of numbers. No matter how insignificant they may seem, your records are a part of the larger picture so please send them in. The method for collecting data may be changing, with computers, iphones, ipads and apps but we still accept paper and pen.

And my latest project? Recording the songs of Yellowhammers. Did you know that there are four main dialects for Yellowhammers?

Jim Graham

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

The original records from which *Heritage* is compiled are archived at the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre, County Hall. They are freely available to members wishing to view record details. Non-members should apply to the Club Secretary for permission to consult them. See *Heritage* **199 & 205** for a full explanation.

MAMMALS

Hedgehog reports came from SFW's Groby garden; Desford, squashed on the road, and Glenfield, crossing the road and not yet squashed. DAP has had a large one visiting his Swithland garden regularly through the quarter and noted one squashed on Farley Road in Quorn. There were two more road casualties on Scraftoft Lane in Leicester and near Copt Oak. PJD reports Hedgehog droppings regularly in her Quorn garden but has never seen the perpetrator.

Moles have been active throughout the quarter in DAP's Swithland garden and molehills were noted in Bradgate Park and in the churchyards of Waltham on the Wolds, Lowesby, Harston, Exton, Welham, Tinwell, Rotherby, Bagworth and Croxton Kerrial.

Two shrew records came from Swithland, both **Common Shrews**, one on a roadside verge and one in DAP's garden.

Bats were seen in Swithland (pipistrelles), Abney Street in Leicester (probably pipistrelle) and Quorn where one was circling around the pond at dusk in HS's garden in late May. In June, JG recorded **Common** and **Soprano Pipistrelles** in his Cropston garden plus **Noctule**. Common Pipistrelles were also recorded at Blakeshay and Benscliffe Woods and Croston Reservoir.

There were three **Brown Hares** on the Shenton Estate on 13 April and although SFW managed to miss a Hare running along the road near Paudy Crossroads, the following car squashed it. RGL counted five Hares in a field near Park Hill Golf Course near Sileby; three were on the golf course on 3 May and several on 14 June. In mid-May, HB saw one on Stoughton Airfield and one was crossing the road on Sharpley Hill, Newtown Linford opposite

some newly felled woodland at the end of April. JG noted six next to Launde Big Wood on 26 May.

We have plenty of **Rabbit** records this quarter - up to six were present in a Swithland garden and paddock throughout the quarter. Single Rabbits were seen in Bradgate, Stonesby Quarry, Stoughton Airfield and Stoughton Lane and in churchyards at Upper Hambleton, Coleorton and Croxton Kerrial. There were burrows in the graves in East Norton churchyard and droppings were noted in churchyards at Edmondthorpe, Brooksby and Claybrooke Parva. PHG noted activity at Buddon Wood, Nunckley Hill Quarry, Mountsorrel Common, Broad Hill at Mountsorrel, New Lount NR and Beacon Hill. There was no shortage of Rabbits at Billa Barra on 27 June.

Grey Squirrels were seen in Kirby Bellars churchyard, Beacon Hill, Brocks Hill, Charnwood Lodge NR, New Lount NR, Launde Big Wood, Launde Park Wood and Bradgate Park. MH has a squirrel-proof feeder in her Woodhouse Eaves garden but they can get at the window feeder by climbing up the stuccoed wall of the house. HB remarks that they are too common in Spinney Hill Park in Leicester.

A dead **Bank Vole** was seen in Greetham Churchyard by SFW & HI on 24 June and there was a **Field Vole** ambling through short grass in Bradgate Park near Old John on 19 June.

PJD's neighbour in Quorn has a young cat which keeps catching **Wood Mice** - some are still alive and can be released, others are not. HS saw a Wood Mouse twice on her peanut feeder and DAP has had several under his feeders in Swithland throughout the quarter. I quote PHG "Noticing that my much-treasured colony of yellow-flowered *Anemone ranunculoides* was shrinking fast, I suspected that some small mammal was probably responsible (having experienced similar problems before). I decided to set two small mammal traps close to the remainder of the colony and after two attempts caught four Wood Mice. All were released some distance away in Tom Long's Meadow." Dead Wood Mice were found in Stocking Wood (one) and in Shackerstone Churchyard - two together. Two **Harvest Mouse** nests were found in Lea Meadows NR, both loose and detached from the surrounding grasses.

As usual, our **House Mouse** record comes from HB, whose cat caught three in his Abney Street garden in Leicester; no doubt attracted by the bird seed fallen from the feeders.

A **Red Fox** was seen crossing Barrow Road in Quorn at about 11 pm one night in early June. MH had droppings in her Woodhouse Eaves garden in early April and HS saw a fox in the field next to her house in Quorn in mid-June.

DAP reports a **Stoat** crossing Joe Moore's Lane near Longcliffe Golf Course at 11 am in early April whilst JG had one cross the road near Launde Big Wood on the 12th. DAP spotted a **Mink** along the Rothley Brook while he was standing on Fowke Street Bridge in Rothley.

A small **Badger** was dead on the side of the A47 in Thurnby on 4 April, one near Nanpantan on 9 April and one in Swithland on 26 June. PJD moved a dead adult from the road on to the verge near Ulverscroft Grange in early May. Latrine pits were found by SFW & HI in Upper Hambleton churchyard – the first time we have had them in a churchyard and we have visited over 200. MH has regular visits from a Badger in her Woodhouse Eaves garden – she has to cover the broad beans with wire netting when they come up but it does not bother with flower bulbs or garlic although it does eat scraps put out for it. DAP saw one crossing Halstead Road, Mountsorrel at 10 pm and one has regular run through his Swithland garden where it has dug out a bumblebee nest. JG & SCG came across an active sett at Orton-on-the-Hill on 18 May.

An **Otter** was seen on the brook in Quorn at 11 pm on 10 June by JH and Otter spraint was found on a flattened clump of Remote Sedge at the side of the brook. Shoals of Chubb are often present here.

A **Muntjac** was seen crossing the road between Puddlyke and the Cropston Water Works at noon on 15 April, whilst another was found one morning in May in a field of corn between Thurcaston and Cropston Top. In Stoneywell Wood one was heard barking frequently and loudly for some time. At Parkhill Golf Course a male and a female were caught on the trail camera and probably the same pair was seen briefly on 6 June.

Friends of PJD reported a **Roe Deer** walking along a path through the trees in the Outwoods at the end of May.

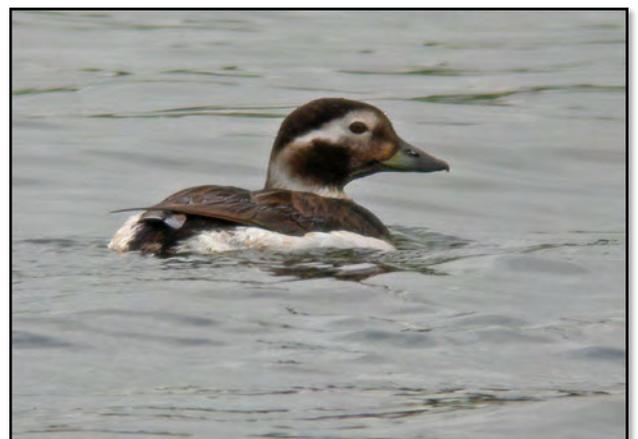
Thanks to members for their interesting reports this quarter.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Breeding **Mute Swans** were to be found at most of the larger waters with a maximum number of adults being 22 at Swithland Reservoir on 10 June. **Canada Geese** were not so obvious this spring with only two records of breeding pairs. There were no records of **Greylags** breeding and only eight birds in total from three locations mentioned. A pair of **Egyptian Geese** reared four young at Cropston Reservoir and well-grown young were seen at Launde Park.

Mandarin Ducks were noted regularly at Cropston Reservoir and a pair raised eight young which were later reduced to two. Other single birds were at Bradgate Park and a garden at Swithland. A pair of **Wigeon** was at Cossington Meadows on 9 April and there was still one at Cropston Reservoir on 11 May. **Gadwall** were reported at seven different locations but no breeding was confirmed; 16 were found on a very small lake at Withcote Hall on 12 April. The highest number of **Teal** and also the latest record was 28 at Cossington Meadows on 9 April. Young **Mallard** were plentiful around most of the local waters with up to eight ducklings noted. The maximum number of adults seen was 30 at Cropston Reservoir in May. Up to three **Shoveler** were at Cossington Meadows until 16 May. **Tufted Ducks** tend to breed quite late so it is no



Long-tailed Duck © Jim Graham

surprise that the only young seen were on 27 June when there were two broods of four and six at Thornton Reservoir. Seventy-three adults were counted that day but on 19 April 119 were seen at Swithland Reservoir. Others were widespread. A female **Long-tailed Duck** was present at Swithland Reservoir from 21 to 27 April and another or the same was at Thornton Reservoir on 27 June. On 19 April there were four **Goldeneye** at Swithland Reservoir.

Unfortunately there were no mention of **Grey Partridges** and no more than two **Red-legged Partridges** together at five different sites. **Pheasants** were, I imagine, under recorded but there were 18 together at Launde Park on 10 April.

Surprisingly, **Cormorants** were only noted at Cropston Reservoir with two on 11 May and Cossington Meadows where there were nine on 9 April. It is perhaps another sign of the times that there were four times as many records of **Little Egrets** as **Grey Herons**. Admittedly, most were from Cropston Reservoir where up to three were noted throughout the quarter. Others were seen in Leicester, Bradgate Park, and gardens at Cropston and Swithland. Two young **Grey Herons** were at Raynsway Lake, Syston. All others, no more than three, were in the Cropston/Cossington areas. A **Glossy Ibis** overflew Mountsorrel Marshes on 1 May. This or another of the same species was around the county for some time during the summer.

Little Grebe were present at four sites, Launde Park, Withcote Hall, Thornton Reservoir (where there were three juveniles on 25 June) and Kelham Bridge where there were two grown juveniles on 6 June. **Great Crested Grebes** bred at Cropston Reservoir, Thornton Reservoir, Cossington Meadows and Raynsway Lake.

Red Kites are becoming much more in evidence with 13 different sightings. Most of these were of single birds but there were two over Burton Lazars and Lowesby whilst seven were noted over Twyford on 30 June. **Sparrowhawk** sightings seem to be slightly fewer than usual but they were widespread and were to be found hunting through members' gardens. **Buzzards** continue to be widespread with regular sightings from all over the area.



Red Kite © Jim Graham

Although no definite breeding was confirmed most observations were from suitable locations with display, etc., noted. The maximum number together was six over Swithland Reservoir in mid-April. All **Osprey** records came from Cropston Reservoir with at least three different birds identified. Birds were seen on 6, 12, 13, 15 April and 6 June; some successfully fishing and some less fortunate. One male was known to the Rutland Water Osprey Project and a male and female were not known to the project. This quarter there were more **Kestrel** reports than **Sparrowhawks** but this may be coincidence rather than a change in status. They were noted throughout the area - usually single birds hunting. There were six sightings of **Hobby** all in different locations: Swithland, Loughborough Big Meadow, Cropston, Bradgate Park, Coleorton and Orton-on-the-Hill where a pair was displaying on 18 May. **Peregrines** nested and reared two young on a building in Leicester city centre. One was seen at Bottesford and another at the usual site at Albert Village.

Moorhen were found to be breeding on most of the suitable smaller waters and **Coot** in greater numbers on all stretches of water although under recorded as 11 was the highest number mentioned.

The only **Oystercatchers** to be noted were two at Cossington Meadows in April and one at Albert Village in mid-May. Two pairs of **Little Ringed Plover** were found at Fosse Way Quarry, Syston and at least one was incubating eggs. Seven pairs of **Lapwing** were displaying at Cossington Meadows in April and three pairs produced young at Fosse Way Quarry. Other pairs were seen at Raynsway Lake and Launde Abbey. The only **Snipe** of the Quarter were at

Kelham Bridge where there were seven on 3 April and four on the 7th. Single **Woodcock** were observed roding at Swithland Wood and Lea Wood. A pair of **Curlew** was seen in all three months in the Bawdon Hill/Beacon Hill area but unfortunately no breeding was confirmed. What could have been the same **Common Sandpiper** was on the dam at Cropston Reservoir from mid-April to mid-May. In April there were two **Redshank** at Wanlip Meadows and four at Cossington Meadows.

Gull records were at a minimum with only one **Black-headed Gull** reported and a maximum of 16 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Cropston Reservoir on 11 May.

All **Common Tern** reports were from Cropston Reservoir (max 12 on 28 June) apart from odd ones on one date at Birstall Meadows and Raynsway Lake. On 20 April, 45 **Arctic Terns** passed through Cropston Reservoir.

Stock Doves would appear to be on the increase in built up areas as more observations are coming from gardens. **Woodpigeons** were, as usual, numerous but 45 was the highest number noted. **Collared Doves** were not important enough to be mentioned; the total records amounted to nine birds!

From this year's records it would appear that **Cuckoos** were not too much reduced. Of the numerous records all, apart from two birds at Albert Village, were from Charnwood. The last one seen was at Ulverscroft on 23 June.

Little Owls were only noted at four sites, Bradgate Park, Launde Park, Hugglescote and twice in a Cropston garden. **Tawny Owls** were even less in evidence with only three locations, Swithland Woods, Launde Big Wood and the same Cropston garden. No other Owls were mentioned.

In a year when **Swifts** were generally late in arriving, four birds at Swithland Reservoir on 26 April was exceptional as the next record was twelve days later; the majority did not arrive until mid-May and I think were reduced in numbers this year.

It would appear that **Kingfishers** have not yet recovered from the winter of two years ago as there were only three observations, Cropston Reservoir, Bradgate Park and a

Swithland garden. **Green Woodpeckers** were found in a dozen different locations. There were far more **Great Spotted Woodpecker** records with garden visits regular. One predated a Blue Tit box in a Swithland garden and the same garden was also visited by young birds. We have reliable second-hand reports of two **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** on the Loughborough University campus and two in the Buddon Brook Meadows, both in April.

We don't usually include Rutland records but a male **Red-backed Shrike** at Merry's Meadows on 17 June is worth a mention.

All the local members of the crow family were well represented with highlights being **Jays** feeding on peanut feeders in members' gardens; 300 **Rooks** near Launde Big Wood on 26 May and **Ravens** being seen in a dozen different locations mostly around Charnwood but also over Leicester city centre.

Singing **Goldcrests** were heard in half a dozen areas usually in suitable breeding habitat.

Blue, Great and **Coal Tits** were regularly seen in woods and gardens and young birds were well in evidence. Launde Big Wood appears to be the right habitat for all three species as the maximum numbers all came from there with 22, 12 and seven respectively. All **Marsh Tit** records, apart from one bird at New Lount, also came from there with a maximum of eight on 4 April. Kelham Bridge again produced the only **Willow Tit** record with one on 7 April.



Great Tit © Jim Graham

Skylarks were singing in ten areas where breeding was probable. There were 12 singing at Orton-on-the-Hill on 18 May.

The first **Sand Martin** of spring was noted, a little later than usual, on 6 April over Cropston Reservoir. There were few records after that but

at least 15 holes were being used in the artificial wall at Kelham Bridge in late June. The first **Swallows** were at Cropston and Cossington on 9 April. By mid-May groups of 50/70 could be seen over the reservoirs. The first **House Martin** was also seen at Cropston Reservoir on 9 April. Multiple nests were found at Quorn and Rothley but numbers were thought to be down this year.

A **Cetti's Warbler** was heard at Watermead Park on 10 June in a probable breeding situation.

Long-tailed Tits were found in numerous places with young birds also noted. Fourteen at Cropston Reservoir on 11 May was the highest number seen.

Chiffchaffs were singing all around Charnwood and further afield, Launde Park Wood again had most birds with 20 heard on 10 April. **Willow Warblers** were outnumbered by about two to one by Chiffchaffs. The first was heard at Beacon Hill on 2 April after that they were reported from around 15 locations. **Blackcaps** were heard in more places than Willow Warblers and once again Launde Park Wood provided more than any other site with 16 singing on 23 May. As usual **Garden Warblers** were less in evidence with singing birds at only six sites. **Lesser Whitethroats** were heard in only five locations but the more common **Whitethroat's** scratchy song could be heard in far more places with probably six pairs at Kelham Bridge. **Grasshopper Warblers** were "reeling" at Quorn and Loughborough Big Meadow and I'm told at Kelham Bridge but the call is now out of my hearing range. The bird is probably more common than reported but cannot be heard by the older generation! **Sedge Warblers** were at the usual wet areas along the Soar Valley but **Reed Warblers** only at Watermead Park, Mountsorrel Marshes and Raynsway Lake where seven were singing on 31 May.

Nuthatches and **Treecreepers** were present in around half a dozen woods usually both species in the same wood. There were numerous reports of singing **Wrens** from different habitats throughout the area from gardens to moorlands and woods to marshes. **Blackbirds** were widespread but there was only one record of **Fieldfares**, this being a late flock

of 63 at Withcote on 11 April. **Song Thrushes** were as well reported as Blackbirds but with a maximum number of six. On 1 April there were still 100 **Redwings** around Cropston Reservoir. **Mistle Thrushes** were less in evidence with the only sightings coming from Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill, New Lount, Cropston and Launde Big Wood where there were ten on 26 June.

Launde Big Wood was the only site where **Spotted Flycatchers** were found with six seen on 23 May and two three days later.

Robins were numerous and we have good news about the Redstart species. Firstly a **Black Redstart** bred near Loughborough Big Meadows, and secondly a **Redstart** was seen with three young at Charnwood Lodge NR. Passage **Wheatears** were present at four sites and two birds at Bradgate Park on 16 May could have been "Greenlands".

Surprisingly only two **Dunnock** records were from gardens and the maximum **House Sparrow** count was 22 in a Cropston garden.

Unfortunately, the only **Yellow Wagtails** seen were three at Orton-on-the-Hill on 18 May. Most of the **Grey Wagtail** observations were around the Cropston Reservoir/Bradgate Park area but there was one by the Woodbrook in Loughborough and one regularly in a Quorn garden. The much more common **Pied Wagtail** was only noted in six locations! **Tree Pipits** were found in the expected sites at Ulverscroft, Beacon Hill, Bradgate Park and Charnwood Lodge NR. There was the same number of **Meadow Pipit** sightings but only from Beacon Hill, Launde Park and Syston.

Chaffinches were widespread, mostly in small numbers, in their breeding territories. Three late **Bramblings** were at the Cropston water treatment works on 1 April. Few **Greenfinches** were seen with no count more than eight, these in a Cropston garden. I didn't realise that the group that is daily in my garden was a significant record. It was a similar story for **Goldfinches** with the maximum of 12 being in the same Cropston garden. All **Siskin** records but two, Bradgate Park and Cropston water treatment works, were from the same Cropston garden where juveniles were also feeding from mid-May, but never more than four birds. **Linnets** were to be found in ten places but nine

birds at Bawdon Hill in mid-April was the maximum count. **Lesser Redpolls** were only around for the first three days of April at two sites with a maximum of eight birds.

Surprisingly, more **Bullfinches** were mentioned than any of the other finches, they were seen in 15 areas but never more than four birds.

Yellowhammers were only noted at eight sites with five at Orton-on-the-Hill the most seen. There were about twice as many **Reed Buntings** observed but again only five birds together as a maximum, these at Cropston Reservoir on 11 May.

Bas Forgham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

This report covers the first half of 2014, from January to June.

While our sightings these days tend to be few in number, we nevertheless continue to record sightings of considerable interest! We begin as usual with the Reptiles:

Common or Viviparous Lizard *Zootaca vivipara*: We have only one record for this reptile during this period and this is of a single specimen observed at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR on 14 May by SFW and JED.



Common Lizard © Stephen Woodward

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: PJD has provided us with a number of sightings of this legless lizard during this period – all of them from the Barrow Road area of Quorn. Her first sighting was on 30 March – a single large specimen which turned up in a neighbour's compost bin. Further sightings occurred at regular intervals during April, May and June. On 18 April four large specimens were found in a neighbour's

compost bin, and on 3 May three specimens – presumably three of the same ones – were observed in the same bin. A single specimen was sighted on 29 April in *another* neighbour's garden farther along the road. On 14 May PJD found a single large specimen in her greenhouse. A week later, on 21 May, a small specimen was rescued from next door's cat and placed out of harm's way! On 2 June another neighbour showed PJD the discarded tail of a Slow Worm: PJD comments that she hopes that the rest of the reptile escaped unharmed! Although some of these sightings will presumably be sightings of the same specimen or specimens, it does appear that for whatever reasons this reptile finds this area of Quorn very much to its liking!



Grass Snake © Jim Graham

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*: We have just two sightings of this reptile for this period; single specimens in the Stonesby Quarry Nature Reserve, observed by HI & SFW on 21 April and another by JG close to Raynsway Lake, Syston on 31 May.

Adder *Vipera berus*: For this period we have only two sightings of this reptile, both of them from Bradgate Park. However, the first of these sightings is of particular interest! On 11 April SFW & HI spent approximately half an hour observing a pair of adders on the other side of a wooden fence. It seems that the smaller, blue-grey male was less timid than the larger, brown female and would come through the fence, virtually to their feet. A month later, on 15 May, SFW found a large, brown specimen –

presumably female – near the north wall of the Park. This specimen was basking at the time and disappeared beneath the wall.

Common or Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: Our first sighting of the year comes from PHG who reports finding several specimens in a garden pond in Quorn on 6 April. There was a quantity of frog spawn in the pond, and PHG wonders if the newts were feeding on this? Our second sighting comes from HS, also in Quorn, who found two specimens in her garden pond on 11 April. PJD reports finding a specimen in her garden, also in Quorn, while moving rubble on 15 April. Finally, SFW & HI report finding a single specimen in a ditch in Bradgate Park on 28 April.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*: We have only one sighting for this amphibian for this period, and it comes from HI & SFW who found a single specimen under a stone in the Holy Trinity churchyard at Teigh, Rutland on 24 June.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: Our first sightings for this amphibian begin in early March and continue through until more or less the end of June. PHG reports that, in Quorn, BH & JH had numbers of frogs around their two garden ponds on 8 and 9 March. Four clumps of spawn were present on 14 March and there were six clumps present on the following day. By 20 March these masses of spawn had increased to over 13 in number, and by the end of the month, there were over 20 clumps of spawn present. At the same time, on 10 March, also in Quorn, HS found two frogs, presumably a mated pair, and a clump of spawn in her garden pond. On the same day, HI & SFW found ten clumps of spawn at a site in Bradgate Park. A week later, on 17 March, SFW & HI found a further seven clumps at another site in Bradgate Park. On the same day, JG found two frogs and at least eleven clumps of spawn in his garden pond in Cropston. On 24 March, SFW & HI found a large quantity of spawn at Beacon Hill. Two days later, on 26 March, they found ten clumps of spawn and 40 clumps of spawn in two ponds near Old John in Bradgate Park. PHG reports that on 15 March he found one clump of spawn in the old moat in Buddon Brook Meadows, near Quorn, and a further ten clumps in a flooded area of marsh a little to the east. Later in the month, on 20 March, he found a mated pair on the garden

lawn which he carried to the garden pond. However, they later disappeared and no spawn appeared in the pool until early in April. PHG returned to Buddon Brook Meadow, near Quorn, on 12 April, but could find no frogs, spawn or tadpoles. However, during the following month, on 14 May, PHG did find tadpoles in a drainage pool at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel, and some days later, on 25 May, he found numerous froglets in the margins and round the edges of Wileman's Pond, on Beacon Hill.

During May and June, HI & SFW continued to find individual specimens in various localities: on 2 May they found a specimen near a wet ditch on Beacon Hill, and on 16 and 17 June they found specimens at the Ulverscroft Nature Reserve and Mill House Farm at Newtown Linford.

Finally, although it appears that the Common Frog is widely distributed, with perhaps a reasonably large population here in Leicestershire, not all of the news is good news! LH & MH report that very few frogs visited their garden pond in Woodhouse Eaves this spring – certainly nothing like the numbers they have had in the past, when, on occasions, they have had as many as 50 specimens in their garden pond.

And that completes our records for the first two quarters of 2014. Please keep your sightings coming in!

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

This report covers the first half of 2014, from January to June.

We have only two sightings to report for this period, and they both come from the River Lin at Bradgate Park, courtesy of SFW & HI. On 2 April HI & SFW, while carrying out a “kick sampling” exercise on the bed of the stream, disturbed four specimens of the **Bullhead** or **Miller's Thumb *Cottus gobio***. A month later, on 3 May, they observed several **Brown Trout *Salmo fario*** in the stream, some of which appear to have been suffering from some sort of fungal infection in the form of white spots.

That is the sum total of our sightings for this period; however, it is not quite the end of the story. As our readers will be aware, I like to include in these reports occasional “news updates” which refer to the broader picture of events – and more particularly if the news happens to be good news. As it happens, we do have some good news to relate this spring, with regard to the **European Eel *Anguilla anguilla***. Most of our readers will be familiar, at least in general terms, with the life history of this extraordinary creature: after spending perhaps a dozen or so years in freshwater, the adults undergo physical changes – the digestive tract atrophies and they cease feeding – and they undertake a 4000 mile migration across the Atlantic Ocean to the Sargasso Sea area east of Bermuda, where they spawn and almost certainly die. The young eels – known technically as “leptocephali” – resemble a transparent blade of grass or willow leaf and they spend three years drifting with the Gulf Stream Current, feeding on tiny organisms, until they reach the coasts of Europe. It is estimated that as little as *one per cent* of these “glass eels”, as they are known, will actually survive the journey, nevertheless, in the past they have numbered many millions. Once they reach the river estuaries of Europe a metamorphosis takes place: the “glass eels” develop pigment and change shape into elvers as they start to ascend the rivers. In this regard, they show a remarkable sense of purpose: they will either surmount obstacles or, if necessary, by-pass them by crawling out on to dry land. (Their willingness to do this explains how eels come to be found in farm ponds with no inlet or outlet, some distance from the nearest river.)

However, beginning in the 1980s the numbers of elvers entering European rivers began to plummet. The precise reasons for this remain something of a mystery, although it seems likely that overfishing on the Continent may have played a part in this. (Eels have considerable commercial value: they are very nutritious and, either jellied or smoked, are regarded as a delicacy in some parts of the World!) Another likely cause is habitat degradation, especially the construction of impassable weirs and sluices. Of course, it is also possible that there are problems in the Atlantic Ocean: climate change may have affected the

food supply upon which the young “glass eels” rely, or perhaps even affected the speed and direction of the ocean currents themselves.

The edition of the weekly newspaper the “Angler’s Mail” published on 27 May contained a double-page article on the Eel, and this was followed some days later, on 9 June, by a piece in the “Springwatch” programme on BBC Television. Both reports gave details of the measures which have been taken - both here and on the Continent – to try to remedy the situation. These measures have centred upon trying to facilitate the upstream passage of the elvers by such means as installing fish passes on weirs. It appears that the River Severn in the West Midlands has traditionally provided an internationally important commercial fishery for glass eels and elvers; and the rules and regulations governing this fishery are particularly strict – with the result that it seems that no more than perhaps *five per cent* of the annual “crop” of elvers is actually “harvested”! In recent years a large percentage of this harvest has been used to re-stock rivers and lakes both here and on the Continent. In 2013, for example, three-quarters of the catch of elvers from the Severn was used for this purpose, and it does appear that these efforts are beginning to produce beneficial results. In 2009, the Severn produced a catch of only around one million elvers for the commercial fishermen – an all-time low; but this year has seen a bumper harvest of over thirty million elvers being taken. In the “Angler’s Mail” article, one of the people involved in the restoration project is quoted as saying that the figures for this year are “incredibly encouraging, although it will be several years before we can talk about a definite recovery”. Nevertheless, these figures do give us some grounds for a guarded optimism for the future of a species which people feared was seriously threatened, and it is rather reassuring and very pleasing to be able to end this report on such an optimistic note!

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

Despite April being a relatively warm month this year, the first dragonfly did not put in an appearance until the 28th when a **Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*** was noted at Bradgate Park. There were no other records until 15 May when another was found at a second location within the Park and five were seen in JG's garden pond the same day. Counts came from ten sites the final one being a male at Barnsdale gardens on 24 June.

The exceptionally wet weather in May played a significant part in the emergence of dragonflies with most activity occurring during June which was a much drier, warmer and sunnier month.

The first **Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*** were found at Charity Fields, Bradgate Park and Hugglescote Marsh in mid-June and were all singletons.

Small numbers of **Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*** were located at four sites between 23 May and the end of the quarter. **Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*** was first recorded on 20 May at Griffydam cemetery with single-figure counts coming from Bradgate Park and Launde Park Wood. All records of **Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*** came in the last two weeks of the quarter from six locations. There were no records of **Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum***.

An excellent total of 27 **Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*** were observed by RGL at a pond containing ornamental water-lilies at Park Hill GC on 6 June.

Several **White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*** were found by HI & SFW at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 26 June.

Just one **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*** was recorded, an adult female found by HI & SFW in Griffydam cemetery on 20 May. There were no records of **Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*** during the period.

The only records in the quarter of **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*** and **Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** came from Launde Park Wood on 26 June when two were located.

Jim Graham

BUTTERFLIES

As reported in the last quarter's Heritage it was good to see that many of our hibernating butterflies had survived the wet and windy winter but sadly it appears that some of those species that over-winter in the caterpillar stage were less fortunate and numbers of first generation Small Copper and Brown Argus were particularly low while the Common Blue, although present in good numbers at a few sites, were scarce or absent at other known sites. Maybe better drained sites offer better chances of survival for larvae living at or near ground level than ill-drained localities during such wet winters. Numbers of the Holly Blue were also well down this spring, probably due to predation by grubs of the parasite ichneumon wasp *Listrodomus nycthemeras* which some years are known to kill large numbers of developing Holly Blue caterpillars.

Hesperiidae

The **Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*** was noted at only three localities this quarter: singletons at Asfordby Hill on 26 June, Croft Hill on 29th and Bradgate Park on the 30th. The earlier appearing **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*** was first observed on 2 June when two were present at Humberstone Heights and on the 6th LWP reported three at Asfordby Hill and seven in his Rothley garden. Altogether it was reported seen in 22 widely spread localities and 18 were noted by HB along the Willow Brook at Thurnby Lodge on the 21st and about 11 at the City General Hospital Grounds on the 23rd.

On 30 April LWP saw two **Dingy Skippers *Erannis tages*** at the well-known Asfordby Hill site and on 19 May he counted 33 active at the same site; by 6 June numbers had fallen to four.



Grizzled Skippers © Stephen Woodward

Four were also noted by HI & SFW at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR on 14 May and three were present at Brown's Hill Quarry NR on 19 May.

The only **Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*** reported were two (a mating pair) at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR on 14 May and one at Asfordby Hill on 30 April and four at the same locality on 19 May.

Pieridae

Adult **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** overwintered well and during the quarter were reported seen in 38 well scattered localities, including many of our gardens. Fortunately the butter-coloured males can be identified at a distance unlike the white butterflies which usually require a close view. On 15 May a female was observed laying eggs on the Alder Buckthorn in our Quorn garden and on 1 June DBF saw one laying eggs on Purging Buckthorn in his garden at Hugglescote. These had developed into large larvae by the last week in June.

The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was not reported until 14 April when it was noted in gardens in Loughborough and Rothley. Small numbers continued to be seen during May and early June but no double-figure counts were reported.

The **Small White *Pieris rapae*** remained active throughout the quarter and 12 were noted at Cossington Meadows NR on 29 April but although widespread generally, numbers were on the low side. However both these species tend to be under-recorded.

More people tend to make an effort to record the **Green-veined White *Pieris napi*** and although rarely abundant in any one locality, is usually present in flowery grass banks and gardens with nectar rich flowers or crucifers such as Honesty or Dame's Violet on which to lay their eggs. This spring quarter it was noted in over 20 localities with double-figures present at a few large sites.

The **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*** was well reported and seen in some 40 widely spread localities with first sightings on 9 April at Kelham Bridge, Thurnby Lodge and Birstall Gravel Pits and a late sighting at Quorn on 8 June. Over 20 were flying in one section of Lea

Meadows NR on 26 April and a similar number at Sence Valley Forest Park on 6 May. HB also reports seven active in Abbey Park, Leicester on 15 April. It is always a joy to see this species flying along our country lanes in April and May.

Lycaenidae

This turned out to be a good spring for the **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*** at Charnwood Lodge NR. On 26 April four, including a mating pair, were found on Warren Hills and on 29th, a better day weatherwise, 50 or more, including several mating pairs were noted at the same locality. Twenty-three were seen at Timberwood Hill on 3 May.

A lone **Small Copper *Lycaena phloea*** was active at New Lount pit yard on 5 May and three singletons at Bradgate Park on 15, 17 & 21 May and two individuals at the same site on 17 June. Two were also noted at Lount Tip on 13 June. All other reports referred to singletons and altogether the species was observed at 12 well spread localities.

The only **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** reported were singletons at Asfordby Hill on 19 May, Loughborough Big Meadows on 11 June and in our Quorn garden on the 12th.

The first **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** sightings were on 19 May when 21 were counted at Asfordby Hill and 25 at Brown's Hill Quarry NR. On 2 June around 50 were seen at Humberstone Heights, on the 6th 25 were at Asfordby Hill, on the 8th about 34 at Freemans' Lock and on 13th about 50 at Lount Tip. This attractive species was reported from some 14 widely scattered localities, several of which produced only ones and twos and at some usual sites none could be found.

Numbers of **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** this spring were much lower than usual and I cannot remember a year with fewer in my district of Quorn. The first sighting reported was on 11 April when one was present in a garden in Warwick Avenue in Quorn and between then and early June it was reported from only five localities.

Nymphalidae

In May a **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** was seen at Asfordby Hill in 19th and another in a Loughborough garden on the 25th. During June

single specimens of this lovely butterfly were noted at an additional nine scattered localities.

The only **Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui* reported this quarter was one noted by JG at Loughborough Big Meadow on 11 June and one found by HB along a bridle path at Barkby Thorpe Lane on the 17th.

Following its welcome increase last summer the **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urtica* continued to be widely reported from 50 well spread localities. Some impressive counts in April were 22 at Kelham Bridge and 32 along the Willow Brook at Thurnby Lodge on 9th, 50 at Cossington Meadows NR and 23 in a Rothley garden on 14th and 20 or more around the edge of a cereal field at Quorn on 15th. Many members were pleased to have regular visits of this colourful species in their gardens. Larval nests of the Small Tortoiseshell were found at Griffydam on 20 May and the new generation started to appear during the second week in June.



Small Tortoiseshell © Jim Graham

Like the previous species, the **Peacock** *Inachis io* showed a welcome increase in numbers last summer and must have overwintered well. During April and May it was reported from some 50 localities spread across VC55 and numbers were observed nectaring on Blackthorn blossom and double-figure counts came from several large sites during April and LWP reported 19 in his Rothley garden on 24th. Towards the end of June some large colonies of well-grown larvae were observed.

Unlike the previous two species, the **Comma** *Polygonia c-album* was thinly spread this spring and only reported from five localities being noted in April at Quorn - in Tom Long's Meadow on 11th and two in our Quorn garden between

11th & 16th and at Cossington Meadows NR on 14th. In June, new generation butterflies were noted at Thurnby Lodge on 21st and in HS's Chaveney Road, Quorn garden on 26th.

Satyridae

The **Speckled Wood** *Parage aegeria* was first noted on 11 April with two along a Quorn hedgerow and on the 16th two were seen at Cossington Meadows NR. Altogether, during the spring quarter, this frequenter of dappled shade was reported from 33 widely scattered localities, mostly in ones and twos but in April five were seen in woodland near Nunckley Hill Quarry at Rothley on 24th and 12 at Cossington Meadows NR on 25th. In June seven were observed at Sence Valley Forest Park on 10th and along Buddon Brook Meadows at Quorn on 13th and 16 at Launde Park Wood on the 26th.

The only **Wall Butterfly** *Lasiommata megera* reported this quarter was one seen by HI & SFW near Old John on Bradgate Park on 21 May. An early **Marbled White** *Melanargia galathea* was seen by the same two observers at Ketton Quarry NR on 12 June and an early **Gatekeeper** *Pyronia tithonas* at Croft Hill on 29 June.

The first sighting of the **Meadow Brown** *Maniola jartina* was one seen at Sence Valley FP on 10 June and on 12th ten or more were seen at City General Hospital. Altogether the species was noted at 28 widely spread localities with double-figure counts at several large grassland sites.

The first **Ringlets** *Aphantopus hyperantus* were reported on 13 June when eight were seen at Sence Valley FP, two at Park Hill GC and two at Buddon Brook Meadows. Between then and the end of the month it was reported widely from 22 localities and in double-figures at some sites. Several members remarked on its good numbers.

Apart from one seen at Bradgate Park all reports of the **Small Heath** *Coenonympha pamphilus* were for June when it was reported from eight localities but only at Lount Tip did numbers exceed three individuals. Here on 13 June HI & SFW saw a total of 45.

Again, thanks to all those who made the effort to submit records for this quarter.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

Well, just what we hoped for, the trend did continue and the tendency for warmer than average months carried on throughout the whole quarter. One minute we are moaning there is hardly a night worth making the effort to go out and then we are spoilt for choice with opportunities and it is difficult to keep up. The scattered thunderstorms and the few periods of heavy rain did at least give us the odd break. The actual total number of moths recorded by members was about 3758 individuals of 284 species compared to 627 individuals of 35 species compared to last quarter, we also managed to get a fairly equal coverage over all three months and also proved that the little ones really do like the heat as between us we noted over 100 species of micro moths. I will just mention here that the National Trust are now the new owners of Stoneywell Cottage and the grounds attached and during the initial period of planning we were not allowed to continue our survey. I am very pleased to say we now have permission to carry on and we are extremely grateful to the National Trust for allowing us six visits per year to this important site.

A series of interesting opportunities developed this quarter the first was being able to rekindle the survey at Stoneywell, another was a request to hold a mothing evening at Loughborough University then there was the Leicester City Council arranged BioBlitz at Western Park, the latter two were both mid-June. Plus we started, what we hope will be an on-going survey in Swithland Wood, it has been a while since this site has been regularly worked until now, and our thanks must go to the present management situation for allowing this to happen. All four were successful ventures plus we have been asked to do a return visit to Loughborough University sometime, in the autumn. Late April saw the last of the *Orthosia* species and with the overall conditions favourable this was emphasised with a very different set of species to deal with over the coming months. It was a slow changeover up until 16 May and then the change really started with a whole suite of Geometers, the first Hawk-moths, Prominents and Footman species

and then June saw the arrival of the Underwings, Rustics, etc.

Obviously I will only be able to “cherry pick” a few of the highlights out of such a long list, so here goes. Out of a total of 24 **Map-winged Swift *Hepialus fusconebulosa*** all were recorded from the Charnwood Forest and 15 were of the plainer form *gallicus*. Surprisingly, there were no reports of swarming flocks of ***Nemophora degeerella*** in fact only two reports, one of a singleton from Swithland Wood and 14 at Stoneywell.



The Forester © Stephen Woodward

The **Forester *Adscita statices*** was found only in singletons from Poultney Farm, Bradgate Park and Bagworth, they were the only reports of this species. A solitary **Currant Clearwing *Synanthedon tipuliformes*** from a Quorn garden led a few of us a dance as it was first thought to be Sallow Clearwing *Synanthedon flaviventris* this would have constituted a massive move from its stronghold in southern Britain. Fortunately the specimen was kept and after severe scrutiny by multiple observers it was eventually agreed it was the former species, albeit quite a worn one, but the identification was not at all straightforward. The only other clearwing species reported was one **Six-belted Clearwing *Bembecia ichneumoniformes*** from Lowesby churchyard in June. Four individuals of the Heather specialist ***Neofaculta ericetella*** were recorded from light traps placed among the Heather and Bilberry in the gardens at Stoneywell Cottage in mid-June. With the larvae feeding on the leaves of Rosebay Willowherb you would think the attractive double-brooded ***Mompha raschkiella*** would be abundant everywhere, but one report of a single moth from Stoneywell was the only record received.

Green Oak Tortrix *Tortrix viridana* had a little flurry from mid-June, but apart from about 150 individuals from Swithland Wood all other reports were in single figures. Again from Swithland Wood another beautiful micro moth ***Eucosma compoliliana*** where two individuals were taken at light. This lovely little moth is dependent on Ragwort where the larvae feed on the seeds and the stems. Thankfully, there is plenty of its food plant around despite just about every landowner/reserve manager doing their best to get rid of it. The only records of **Mint Moth *Pyrausta aurata*** came from Quorn and Rothley gardens. The second most widely reported moth was the **Bee Moth *Aphomia sociella*** with 21 sightings throughout the county including gardens and woodlands and also the Loughborough University campus.



Clay Triple-lines © Graham Finch

The Beech feeding **Clay Triple-lines *Cyclophora linearia*** was recorded in Swithland Wood in mid-June, still not many records of this species and mostly restricted to the Forest. A pleasing total of 68 **Northern Spinach *Eulithis populata*** were recorded at Stoneywell where the species food plant, Bilberry here is superb.

The only site to report **May Highflier *Hydriomena impluviata*** was Coleorton Wood where 15 individuals were attracted to light. Twelve species of Pug were recorded, not just from the Forest but also from gardens in Quorn, Rothley and even in the city at the Eco House (Western Park). Seven sites yielded **Chimney Sweeper *Odezia atrata*** including some very fine areas of meadows in the city's Western Park. A very nice reward for our recorder in Rothley was a single **Lilac Beauty *Apeira syringaria***, this is another species we do not get many records for. On the first visit to Swithland Wood a single **Pale Oak Beauty *Hypomecis punctinalis*** was

recorded 16 May. Then over a month later, 20 June, produced another four, so I think we can say we have a nice healthy colony of this moth, which prefers mature woodland.

The only record of the large spectacular **Privet Hawk-moth *Sphinx ligustre*** was from a Rothley garden and similarly the only record of **Pine Hawk-moth *Hylocicus pinestri*** but this from a Quorn garden. Both are extremely nice species to find when opening a trap in the morning. The only "regular" Hawk-moth not recorded by members this time was **Eyed Hawk-moth *Smerinthus ocellata***, quite a surprise as there is no shortage of Sallow and Apple in the county.

All the Prominents were there, including **Marbled Brown *Drymonia dodonaea*** and **Lunar Marbled Brown *Drymonia ruficornis*** plus two records for **Chocolate-tip *Clostera curtula***. A single record of **Red-necked Footman *Atolmis rubricollis*** was from well down in the wood at Stoneywell and it was nice to get numerous records of **Orange Footman *Eilema sororcula*** from several sites. Just a single record of two **Ruby Tiger *Phragmatobia fuliginosa*** during daytime survey in Bradgate Park, but **Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae*** was reported to be widespread and in good numbers. The delicate little **Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis*** was only recorded twice, three individuals in Swithland Wood and a singleton in Quorn, amazingly both on 16 May. There were 26 records of **Heart and Dart *Agrotis exclamtionis*** making it the most recorded species with nearly 200 individuals from eight sites. Stoneywell Wood produced the only report of **True Lover's Knot *Lycophotia porphyria*** with just a single specimen early June, the same site gave the highest total of 11 **Ingrailed Clay *Darsia mendica*** which although in single figures was reported from a wide variety of sites. The only record of **Green Arches *Anaplectoides prasina*** was of a single moth in Swithland Wood 20 June, only two records of the **Shears *Hada plebeja*** both in Quorn and can you believe we only had two records of **Cabbage Moth *Mamestra brassicae*** and both from gardens, in Groby and Quorn. Larvae of the **Mullein *Shargacucullia verbasci*** were happily feeding away on Mullein in a garden in Chaveney Road Quorn. The adults are on the wing in April and May so I guess we will have to

wait until next year for a sighting of this spectacular moth.

Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha* were reported widespread but very small numbers with four the highest count from a Rothley garden late June. The only **Light Arches *Apamea lithoxyloea*** was a single at Groby, at the beginning of its flight period in late June. **Rustic-shoulder Knot *Apamea sordens*** did exactly the same as Dark Arches, widespread but low numbers. Probably the greatest surprise of the quarter (and maybe the year!) was of a solitary **Rosy Marbled *Elaphria venustula*** which plonked itself down on the moth sheet in Swithland Wood on 20 June. This species has a definite south-east distribution and a liking for open woodland, apart from some selective clearing of a small area near the central meadow most of the wood has a quite closed canopy. It was certainly attracted to light placed within this clearing so it begs the question, has it always been there and previously overlooked? Remember, there has been very little light trapping here for many years or was it an incredibly lucky find of a migrant which incredibly managed to locate the exact type of habitat that the textbooks say that it should be found in? Needless to say we will be hoping for a series of suitable nights next May and June. Its possible foodplant (not known for certain for this country) is Tormentil, which is certainly present and the habitat conditions seem to be favourable, so here's hoping.



Rosy Marbled © Graham Finch

Back down to earth with just a single sighting of one **Mother Shipton *Callistege mi*** from Bloody Oaks Quarry mid-June but records for

Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica* were far and wide with 26 the highest count at Humberstone Heights early June. Coleorton Wood in early June turned up the only record of **Herald *Scoliopteryx libatrix*** while **Beautiful Hooktip *Laspeyria flexula*** started its year off well with records from as early as mid-May.

The permanent moth trap in Bradgate Park was operated fairly regularly (a very respectable 49 nights) throughout the quarter and recorded just under 800 moths of 82 species. The glistening gold oak feeding ***Eriocrania subpurpurella*** was last recorded at the end of April and although disturbed by the hundreds during the daytime, ***Chrysoteuchia culmella*** was only recorded on two occasions with just a total 11 individuals. **Brindled Pug *Eupethecia abbreviata*** were regulars at the trap as were **Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria*** plus **Oak Beauty *Biston strataria***. The Privet and Lilac feeding **Waved Umber *Menophra abruptaria*** was a nice find at the end of June.



Small Elephant Hawk-moth © Graham Finch

Hawk-moth species did okay with **Eyed Hawk-moth *Smerinthus ocellata***, **Poplar Hawk-moth *Laothoe populi*** and **Small Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila porcellus*** recorded on several occasions. The Sallows from the edge of the reservoir must have been the origin of a single **Chocolate-tip *Clostera curtula*** as the closest Poplars and Aspen must be some distance from the trap site. Last but not least, a single and immaculate **Gold Spot *Plusia festuca*** put in an appearance at the beginning of June.

Many thanks go to all recorders.

Graham and Anona Finch

BEETLES

All three months were stated as warmer than average and we managed to find 1119 individuals of 140 species. This at first may not seem a great deal more than the previous quarter (1002 individuals and 103 species) between us we visited 102 sites and made 278 records (124 of these were from the Charnwood Forest alone) but all this was achieved by an industrious five recorders. Predictably, the Carabidae lead with the highest number of species recorded at 32 including a total of about 150 individuals of *Paranchus albipes* found at five sites. Interestingly last quarter produced a staggering 31 species of Staphylinidae but this quarter only five species were recorded. I wonder if this is because we tend to put a little extra time in through the winter months when overall the beetle fauna is a little more restricted. The most frequently encountered species was **7-spot Ladybird** *Coccinella septempunctata* with a total of 23 sightings followed by **Swollen-thighed Beetle** *Oedemera nobilis* with 14 sightings, both species being very evident on various flowering plants.

A selection of records received, are as follows in checklist order starting with 20 species of water beetles. The taxonomists split water beetles into two groups, 1) Hydradephaga covering: Gyrinidae, Haliplidae, Paelobiidae, Noteridae and Dytiscidae and 2) Polyphaga, which cover: Hydrophiloidea that include Helophoridae, Georissidae, Hydrochidae, Spercheidae and Hydrophilidae. So we can blame them for slotting the Carabidae in-between these two groups upsetting the flow. Taxonomists..... who would be one? *Gyrinus substriatus* from Bradgate Park in April, *Haliphus lineolatus* Thornton Reservoir in April, *Noterus clavicornis* from four sites - Thornton, Saltersford, Charnwood Lodge NR and a small roadside pond at Bardon. *Laccophilus minutus* were netted from Thornton Reservoir and two sites within Charnwood Lodge NR held *Hyphydrus ovatus* all in April. *Hygrotus impressopunctatus* was found along the River Soar floodplain at Mountsorrell in May, a single *Hydroporus pubescens* was at Muston Meadows NR in June, a single *Platambus maculatus* was netted from the River Lin in Bradgate Park again in June. In the Dytiscidae,

Agabus bipustulatus was recorded from a roadside pond at Bardon, *A. guttatus* from Charnwood Lodge NR, *A. nebulosus* from Western Park, Leicester and Muston Meadows, plus *A. sturmi* from the Ashby Canal at Saltersford. Two members from the closely related genus *Ilybius* were *I. fuliginosus* and *I. quadriguttatus* from Croft Pasture NR and Muston Meadows NR respectively.

As stated above the Carabids fared better with most of the usual species for example *Nebria brevicollis*, *Notiophilus biguttatus*, an assortment of *Bembidion*, *Pterostichus* and *Agonum* species plus a few of the less readily found species such as a single *Poecilus cupreus* at Croft Pasture, *Trichocellus placidus* was found at Bradgate Park and Cossington Meadows NR. *Badister sodalis* was sieved from leaf litter at Cloud Wood NR in May, *Chlaenius nigricornis* found by grubbing in pond edge vegetation at Cossington Meadows NR May and last but not least *Calodromius spilotus* was found during the BioBlitz at Western Park in June. Back to the water beetles, *Helophorus grandis* from Croft Pasture, *H. brevipalpis* Western Park, *H. minutus* Thornton Reservoir and *Hydrobius fuscipes* from Bradgate Park. All three *Sphaeridium* species were recorded and the first burying beetles started appearing with *Nicrophorus humator* and *N. vespilloides* both in May and June, the first in pitfall traps set at Ulverscroft NR and the later at moth traps. The five species of *Staphylinidae* were *Olophrum piceum* from ground litter at Charnwood Lodge NR and Bradgate Park, both in April. Just a solitary brightly coloured *Deleaster dichrous* was attracted to MV light at the Western Park BioBlitz in June. *Stenus bimaculatus* was found under a stone at the edge of the River Lin in Bradgate Park May, finally *S. pubescens* and *Philonthus varians* were both found in bankside vegetation at Thornton Reservoir in April.

A long dead standing Sweet Chestnut tree at Croft harboured three males and two females of our spectacular **Rhinoceros Beetle** *Sinodendron cylindricum* at the end of May and the only **Lesser Stag Beetle** *Dorcus parallelipedus* was a singleton at Glaston churchyard in Rutland in mid-June.

The Scarabaeidae is quite a varied family including 42 species of *Aphodius* and we have

34 species on our VC55 list however only three species were recorded this quarter and they were ***Aphodius prodromus*** - two records from Bradgate Park plus ***A. sphacelatus*** from the same site, ***A. fossor*** is a moth trap regular and they were recorded from such at Swithland Wood and Stoneywell Wood in June. Another species whose records seem almost restricted to moth traps is the **Common Cockchafer *Melolontha melolontha*** the first of these began to put in an appearance from 16 May onwards and from widely scattered sites. The only records of the closely related **Garden Chafer *Phyllopertha horticola*** came from a Quorn garden where, if they are not feeding on the flowers of *Aruncus*, they are constantly being rescued from the bird bath. The latter two species also belong to the Scarabaeidae family.



Common Cockchafer © Stephen Woodward

Because of the paucity of readily accessible identification guides, the Elateridae (Click beetles) tend to get few records unless they are of the few distinctive species we have. ***Ctenecira cuprea*** and ***Ctenicera pectinicornis*** certainly belong in this group. Several individuals of the former species were observed flying around the summit of Beacon Hill on 21 May, with a single specimen of the latter found and photographed during a botanical survey in a species rich meadow at Mill House Farm, Ulverscroft also in May. Other species of "Click" beetles were ***Athous haemorrhoidalis*** from the Western Park BioBlitz, ***Agriotes pallidulus*** from Piper Wood and Stoneywell Wood, ***Dalopius marginatus*** also from Piper Wood.

Ten male **Glow-worm *Lampyris noctiluca*** were attracted to several MV lights at Stoneywell Wood at the beginning of June and were the only records received for this species.

It was not until the second week of May that any Soldier Beetles were reported, numbers then built steadily throughout, six species were identified. The damaging but very pretty ***Anthrenus verbasci*** was observed in hundreds visiting the flowers of *Aruncus* in a garden in June. Resembling a small all black Soldier Beetle, and usually found occupying similar habitat, three ***Dasytes plumbeus*** were found on flower heads in Cloud Wood at the end of June.

Very much in evidence was the **Malachite Beetle *Malachius bipustulatus*** being recorded at eight different locations usually in ones and twos. In the same family is ***Axinotarsus marginalis*** which was found in good numbers by sweeping tall grass and sedge vegetation in Bradgate Park at the end of June; this constitutes a first record for the county. Not called **Common Pollen Beetle** for nothing, ***Meligethes aeneus*** was swept from a variety of sites off Oil Seed Rape flowers during a search for weevil species during April. Each sweep of the net held 30 to 50 individuals, multiply that by the hundreds of acres given over to this crop and we must have uncountable numbers of this species throughout the county, which must make it a high contender for the most abundant species overall, whatever feeds on it, must also be doing well! A small sap run on an old oak in Bradgate Park had about six individuals of ***Cryptarcha strigata*** feeding away on it. A very small, oval, blackish beetle with short faint orange wavy marks on the elytra turned out to be a Notable B, first found by F. Bates from Sheet Hedges Wood in the mid to late 1800s, the last record from Buddon Wood in 1975 by an unknown recorder, this takes the records to eight in total. Almost at the edge of its southern range another tiny beetle, six ***Psammoecus bipunctatus*** were found in reed litter on the ground along the River Soar floodplain at Mountsorrel in mid-May.

The ladybirds usually get decent coverage and this quarter and they did OK, with 13 species being identified. ***Coccidula rufa*** is a small orange/red species that is easily found by searching or beating reed debris over a white tray or sheet; Croft Pastures and areas along the River Soar produced records of this species. Singletons of **Pine Ladybird *Exochomus quadripustulatus*** were only found at two sites

Burley Wood in April and Evington Park in June. The only records of **Orange Ladybird *Halyzia sedecimguttata*** came from moth traps all in June. Just a singleton of **22-spot Ladybird *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata*** was reported from Willow Brook Park in Leicester in mid-June. Similarly, the only **Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quattuordecimguttata*** was from the meadow in Swithland Wood in mid-April. Not surprisingly **14-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*** was reported from ten different sites throughout the county, but all in low numbers. The only record of **Cream-streaked Ladybird *Harmonia quadripunctata*** was from Ethel Road in Leicester towards the end of June. **Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis***, although reported from 13 scattered sites throughout, they too only managed low numbers. Only two reports of **2-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata*** were received from Croft Pasture and the River Soar floodplain at Mountsorrel and both beaten off Hawthorn blossom mid to late May. Typically, **7-spot ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*** was the most widespread with records from 23 sites, all in low numbers with 12 at Leire Cutting in early April the highest count. Just singletons of the next three species: **Adonis Ladybird *Hippodamia variegata*** from Upperton Road, **Larch Ladybird *Aphidecta oblitterata*** in Ethel Road and **16-spot Ladybird *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata*** from Hugglescote churchyard, all around mid-June.

Another National Notable B in the form of ***Melandrya caraboides*** was found under dead willow bark along the River Soar floodplain at Mountsorrel in mid-May. Stated as Vulnerable, a single ***Hypulus quercinus*** was found running around on the top of a dead standing tree stump in Cloud Wood in early May. This beetle is similar to a small, dark click beetle, but with shorter antennae and quite bold orange marking on the elytra.

Continuing along the scarcity route, single specimens of ***Pseudocistella ceramboides*** were found at Bradgate Park in early June and Park Wood in Rutland towards the end of June. These represent the first records of this species for VC55 and are remarkable for being found within such a short time space of each other at almost either end of the county.

Swollen-thighed Beetle *Oedemera nobilis* as stated above, was found at 14 sites all in low numbers and close relative ***Oedemera lurida***, just a singleton was found in St. Mary's churchyard in Queniborough.

Just one report, six **Common Cardinal Beetle *Pyrochroa serraticornis*** were found at Cloud Wood NR in early May. ***Omonadus floralis*** is one of the Anthicidae ant-like flower beetles and they really do look like ants; a singleton of this species was swept off low vegetation along Shenton Cutting in early April. Four species of ***Anaspis*** were identified beginning with ***Anaspis frontalis*** at Cloud Wood NR in early May, ***A. fasciata*** in Bradgate Park in late June, ***A. maculata*** at Cloud Wood NR and ***A. regimbarti*** from two sites at Ibstock, where one was found in our kitchen and Piper Wood.



Rutpela maculata © Graham Finch

Our Longhorn Beetles usually figure reasonably well but up to now we only have records for five species. ***Grammoptera ruficornis*** and ***Rutpela maculata*** are probably our most widespread and abundant species and this shows with the amount of records as they were recorded at 13 different sites throughout. Others in this family recorded were: a single ***Anaglyptus mysticus*** beaten from Field Maple at Cossington Meadows NR in mid-May, a solitary ***Leiopus nebulosus*** found on an old oak in Bradgate Park at the beginning of June, and two ***Agapanthia villosoviridescens*** swept from low vegetation at Asfordby Hill Iron Works at the end of June.

Probably just as well that only a single specimen of the well-known pest of beans ***Bruchus rufimanus*** of the family Chrysomelidae was found at Shenton Cutting in early April. I suspect it was moving from over-wintering and on the lookout for flowering bean crops. The Tortoise Beetles ***Cassida rubiginosa*** were found,

two at Fosse Meadows and five in Piper Wood both in mid-May and two *Cassida vibex* at Shenton Cutting in early April. The Nationally Notable B *Chrysolina oricalcia* was found at Quorn Park House in mid-June. Other Chrysomelidae were the bright green and orange *Gastrophysa polygoni* regularly found on docks, knotweeds and knotgrasses, and the green and bronzy golden **Green Dock Beetle** *Gastrophysa viridula* was quite widespread mainly on docks, but several swept off Figwort along the edge of Piper Wood, all records of the latter species were throughout May. The **Hawthorn Leaf Beetle** *Lochmaea crataegi* was beaten from Hawthorn blossom at Fosse Meadows and Piper Wood and numbers of *Phyllotreta atra* were swept from Oil Seed Rape from fields along the roadside at Belcher's Bar, also the small, beautifully coloured metallic *Crepidodera aurata* was beaten from various blossom throughout May.



Green Dock Beetle © Graham Finch

We finished the quarter with seven species of weevil starting with the **Gorse Weevil** *Exapion ulicis* from Charnwood Lodge NR, several **Nut Leaf Weevil** *Strophosoma melanogrammum* were found on tree trunks at night at Beacon Hill early April. Hundreds of *Sitona lineatus* were ravaging the leaves of Broad Bean plants on the Sutton in the Elms allotments at the end of April, two *Hypera rumicis* were found on dock along the River Soar in Mountsorrel and **Figwort Weevil** *Cionus scrophulariae* were swept off Figwort at Piper Wood in mid-May. A single *Parethelcus pollinarius* was swept off low vegetation along Shenton Cutting in early April and the final species the **Cabbage Gall Weevil** *Ceutorhynchus*

assimilis was swept off Oil Seed Rape from various roadside fields all in April.

Many thanks must go to our discerning dedicated recorders.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS

As usual, a busy quarter.

Heteroptera

Green Shield Bugs *Palomina prasina* were widely recorded, mostly adults and mainly in April and early May from Quorn, Evington Park, Gaulby Lane, St Mary's Mills, Thurnby Lodge, New Lount NR, Sproxton churchyard and Knessington churchyard.

Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum* (a misnomer if ever there was one) records came from Ketton Quarry NR in April, several, mostly on *Verbascum*. Most were reported in May from: Broad Hill, again three on *Verbascum*; Great Central Way, five, two pairs mating on the 16th; St Marys Mills; Upperton Road, six in a small meadow, and two at Belgrave at the end of May.

Gorse Shieldbugs, *Piezodorus lituratus* were recorded from Hill Hole at Markfield on Gorse, Croft Pasture NR – four, including a mating pair, on 14 April and one at Upperton Road on Broom at the end of May.

Two records were submitted for the **Forest Bug** *Pentatoma rufipes*, a very early instar nymph at Queniborough churchyard on 23 April with a final instar nymph at Bede Island on 26 June.

Only one **Parent Bug**, *Elasmucha grisea* was reported, an adult swept from long grass at Ulverscroft NR in mid-June.

In April **Pied Shield bugs** *Tritomegas bicolor* were noted near their food plant, White Deadnettle, at Ratcliffe Culey churchyard and on Great Central Way in Leicester.

Another interesting record was the finding of the **Forget-me-not Bug** *Sehirus luctuosus* swept from short grass at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 26 June, probably quite local, but it is quite difficult to assess the populations of these small bugs as they are not easy to find.

Bishop's Mitre *Aelia acuminata* were seen at Asfordby Iron Works and Croft Pasture in June and 30 or more in a small meadow off Upperton Road Leicester and several on waste ground at Belgrave in May.

Only one record of the **Bronze Bug *Eysarcoris fabricii*** was submitted, three adults on Black Horehound off Goodwood Road on 12 June.

The **Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus*** was reported from Swithland Wood, Western Park, Goodwood Road, Stoughton Airfield and Humberstone Park where several pairs were mating and a maximum of 20 along Great Central Way on 23 April.

The only other member of this group was an adult **Spiky Bug *Coriomeris denticulatus*** off Upperton Road on 30 May.

A *Rhopalid* bug ***Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*** was recorded at Belgrave on 31 May and ***Corizus hyoscyami***, a distinctive red and black species, was found at Newtown Linford on 6 June. It is a coastal species that has been moving inland in recent years.

A small selection of the large family of Mirid bugs is included here.

HI & SFW have been doing a lot of work at Bradgate Park this year, a few species associated with oak recorded were: ***Deraeocoris lutescens***, ***Harpocera thoracica***, ***Cyllecoris histrionius*** and ***Rhabdomiris striatellus***. A few others were recorded elsewhere: ***Heterotoma planicornis*** at Asfordby Iron Works, ***Grypocoris stysi*** at Desford and Ulverscroft NR, ***Deraeocoris ruber*** at Barkby Thorpe on Blackthorn and several on Sycamore in Ethel Road; it feeds on aphids. ***Capsus ater*** from grassland at Ulverscroft NR, Newtown Linford, Asfordby Hill, Croft Pasture, Evington Park, and Barkby Thorpe.

A few froghopper sightings were submitted by HI & SFW, ***Cercopis vulnerata*** at Griffydam cemetery and Swithland Wood, many in May and ***Aphrophora alni*** at Swithland Wood, Newtown Linford and Asfordby Hill in June.

Diptera

Hoverflies

Melanostoma scalare was common on Humberstone Park Rally Bank NR on 10 April and in Ethel Road hedgerow margins on 14 April.

This species appears more frequent in early spring.

Platycheirus scutatus was seen in Abney Street on various dates this quarter. ***Platycheirus peltatus*** one on Hogweed in Ethel Road on 12 June.

Syrphus ribesii was seen in an Abbey Park hedgebank and at Evington Park in mid-April, beside a pond in Victoria Park at the end of April and frequent throughout quarter at Quorn. There were odd specimens of ***Syrphus vitripennis*** at Abbey Park on 15 April and a few along the brook margins in Spinney Hill Park on 14 June.

Epistrophe eligans numbers were rather low for this spring harbinger. Humberstone Park Rally Bank had several on 18 April, Great Central Way - a few 23 April, Aylestone Holt - one on 23 April and the only other record received was for a single at Claybrooke Magna churchyard on 5 May.

Eupeodes luniger a few records - at Abney Street on 3 May and singles on various dates, Abbey Park - a single on 14 April, and Humberstone Park, Rally Bank - three on 18 April.

Episyrphus balteatus was widespread but numbers very low, generally – records were mainly of singles; sites include Abney Street, Western Park, Hugglescote, Lubcloud Farm at Oaks in Charnwood, Barnsdale Gardens, Greetham churchyard, Thrussington, Croft Hill and Quorn where PHG reports numbers gradually building at the end of June.

A single ***Meliscaeva auricollis*** was found in the tree layer in Victoria Park on 30 April.

Leucozona lucorum – just two records for this usually fairly common spring species. One on Stoughton Airfield on 14 May and another at Beacon Hill on Hogweed on 25 June, this last one may have been part of a second brood.

Chrysotoxum bicinctum, one noted at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 26 June and a single ***Chrysotoxum festivum*** at Croft Hill by SFW & HI on 29 June.

Dasysyrphus albostrigatus, a male on Humberstone Park, Rally Bank on 18 April, and a single ***Dasysyrphus tricinctus*** noted by Abbey Park canal margin on 15 April. The last time I saw

this wood edge species was at Burrough on the Hill on August 2003.



Xanthogramma pedissequum © Stephen Woodward

A remarkable number of the attractive *Xanthogramma pedissequum* were recorded in my patch this spring, all in June, with one at Victoria Park on 9th, a single at Aylestone Meadow on 11th, one in a friend's garden at Goodwood on the 12th, one at Spinney Hill Park on 14th, Humberstone Park had two on the 16th, Thurnby Lodge a single on the 21st, Ethel Road and Bede Island later in the month and two at Croft Hill on the 29th.

Cheilisia albitartis was common on buttercups at Stoughton Lodge Farm 14 May, in Evington Park there were odd specimens on the embankment on 19 May. A male *Cheilisia pagana* was seen at Leicester Arboretum on 4 May.

Rhingia campestris was widely recorded, generally in small numbers, from: Shenton Estate, Croft, Swithland Wood, Sproxton churchyard, Whites Wood, Lowesby churchyard, Ulverscroft NR, Quorn, Aylestone Meadows, Barkby Lane, Scraptoft Gorse, and Gaulby Lane.

There were two *Melanogaster hirtella* St Mary's Mills on 16 April and one on Barkby Lane on 28 April.

Helophilus pendulus was widely recorded this quarter from: Quorn, Witherley, Griffydam cemetery, Lount, Western Park, Ulverscroft, Newtown Linford, Humberstone Park and St Mary's Mills and was common in some areas. *Helophilus hybridus* at a pond in Aylestone Meadows, a male foraging among Great Yellow Cress on 19 May.

Anasimyia lineata which is closely associated with *Typha latifolia* at St Mary's Mills, where it

has been known for several years, a few on 25 June.

Merodon equestris has been quite common, usually in ones or twos from: Newbold Verdon, Barnsdale Gardens, Humberstone Park, Thurnby Lodge and Bede Island.

Volucella pellucens singles from Western Park on 14 June, Ulverscroft on 23 June, Puddledyke on 11 June, Quorn on 19 June and Barkby Thorpe on 17 June on Hogweed.

Syritta pipiens one at Mill House Farm, Newtown Linford on 17 June, several in Spinney Hill Park on 18 June and two in my Abney Street garden, the first here for several years.

Xylota segnis Swithland Wood 23 May, Mill House Farm on 17 June and Spinney Hill Park – an adult near wood chippings on the 18th.

Cheilisia illustrata at Barkby Thorpe three on Hogweed on 17 June, at City General grounds two on Hogweed, at Aylestone Meadows - one in a hedgerow on 20 June, and one at St Mary's Mills.

Robberflies

At Charity Fields Desford many **Slender Robberflies** *Leptogaster cylindrica* were swept from long grass on 15 June, there were singles at Mill House Farm, Asfordby Hill and Croft Pastures NR. Again at Charity Fields was a single **Violet Black-legged Robber-fly** *Dioctria atricapilla* on 29 June.

One **Common Red-legged Robberfly** *Dioctria rufipes* was swept from long grass at Croft Pasture on 29 June and a first County Record of the **Fan-bristled Robberfly** *Dysmachus trigonus* from a rock in Croft Pasture NR on 29 June was determined by Darwyn Sumner – the joint County Recorder for flies.

Snipeflies

The **Black Snipefly** *Chrysopilus cristatus* was abundant in long grass at Ulverscroft NR on 16 June, many were seen in Bradgate Park in early June and it was also seen at Newtown Linford and Hugglescote later in the month.

Singles of the **Downlooker Snipefly** *Rhagio scolopaceus* were seen at Bradgate Park and Sutton Cheney churchyard in May and at Mill House Farm in June.

One **Small Fleck-winged Snipefly *Rhagio lineola*** was on a tree trunk in Bradgate Park, on 19 June.

The large group of Tabanid Horseflies are a very elusive group, surprising when you see the size of the beasts, I remember two years ago seeing a large species on a telegraph pole about 20 feet up, never seen one there before, but they must be about. SFW & HI could not believe their luck seeing one at Barnsdale Gardens in a greenhouse, which they managed to identify as a female **Large Marsh Horsefly *Tabanus autumnalis*** on 24 June.



Large Marsh Horsefly © Stephen Woodward

A few **Notched-horn Cleg *Haematopota pluvialis*** were reported from Newtown Linford, Lount Tip and City General grounds in June.

The **Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombylius major*** was seen at Quorn in April, frequent in a garden first half of the month, also in April from Humberstone Park, Great Central Way, Ethel Road, Evington Park, Ketton Churchyard and Ketton Quarry and Great Casterton churchyard in May.

Soldier Flies



Broad Centurion © Stephen Woodward

It was nice to see more records this year of our most widespread species the **Broad Centurion *Chloromia formosa*** recorded from

Western Park, Desford Field, City General grounds, Goodwood, bridle path, with many swept from long grass at Ulverscroft NR, Newtown Linford, Asfordby Iron Works and Croft Hill. At the Willow Brook, Thurnby Lodge several were observed intermittently hovering under trees before dropping down again to vegetation. All records were in June. The only other Soldier-fly reported was a single member of ***Beris chalybata*** swept from pine on Ethel Road Leicester on 21 May.

St Marks Fly *Bibio marci* was recorded as common in grassland by Barkby Lane on 28 April and in Bradgate Park on 3 May.

A single ***Tachina fera*** was seen at Humberstone Park, Rally Bank on 17 May, this is a predatory species on moths and the larva is much more common in late summer, usually in damp habitats.

An interesting grass-fly ***Chlorops hypostigma*** was recorded at Bradgate Park - many in a flush - by DS and SFW.

Finally, our intrepid naturalists SFW & HI must have visited almost every churchyard in the county and have managed to record the **Holly leaf miner *Phytomyza ilicis*** in no less than 22 of them!

The leaf miner ***Phytomyza lonicerae*** was recorded in Honeysuckle at Stocking Wood, Whites Wood and Heyday Hays Woodland during this quarter.

Hymenoptera

There is always a great number of records received on bumblebees and it is always difficult to know where to start, I hope you will appreciate that any comments I make are entirely my own, so will begin.

Buff-tailed bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris* is always the most widely reported and is obviously still doing well. Adult queens were still being reported in April from 15 sites, workers from early May at Barlestone, odd workers on bramble at Stoughton Airfield, dozens in Barrow Road, Quorn and in PHG's garden where they were recorded as frequent, with a nest deep underground in his rockery - dug out by Badgers in late June.

Almost as frequently recorded is the **Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum***, slightly more records than the Buff-tailed Bumblebee and reported from over 30 sites and shows how readily this species has adopted, particularly to urban habitats, it is certainly the most commonly visited bee to my city garden in recent years and most welcome. It would appear to be more adaptable in its habitat sites.

PHG again submitted extensive notes from his Quorn garden, where they have once again used his bird nest box. SFW & HI record other sites being used for nesting purposes, at Thorpe Langton churchyard they were nesting in a church wall, at Glaston churchyard several nesting in a porch roof and another queen was noticed going into stone wall at Swithland Wood meadow. Watching workers foraging willow, I was struck by how small these workers were. Fresh queens were in my garden by early June, a success story.

Red-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius* always emerge that bit later than the Buff-tailed Bumblebees but again queens were widely observed from 1 April and over 40 records of queens were reported, with the worker numbers building in to June. Despite this, the number of workers were extremely patchy, PHG recorded numbers building up during June in his garden at Quorn, 20 or so at Lount Tip June, but only a few in FTS's garden at Barlestone. In my patch, worker numbers were very low, odd workers near Freemans Lock in May and very few workers observed elsewhere in June. Worker numbers do not reflect on the number of queens observed, as I say this is a personal opinion, numbers of workers would be better observed in future years.

Queens of the **White-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*** were widely recorded from 10 April, several at Humberstone Rally Bank and Wartnaby on the same date. Further records came from: Ratcliffe Culey, Witherley, Shepshed, Desford, Brascote Gravel Pits, Stocking Wood, Sproxton, Beacon Hill, Burley Wood, Heyday Hays, Frolesworth, Humberstone, Muston, Thorpe Langton, Western Park, Warren Hills, several visiting Bilberry on 29 April. The first male was recorded at Croft Pasture on 29 June. At FTS's garden at Barlestone, none were recorded this quarter.

Workers of this species are difficult to assess in general and are usually recorded as *Bombus terrestris/lucorum*, owing to some difficulty in separation, although I expect many of the early workers would probably turn out to be *B terrestris*.

Early-nesting bumblebees *Bombus pratorum* workers were noted in small numbers from Humberstone, Groby, Newbold Verdon, Tur Langton, Burton Lazars, Swithland Wood meadow, Rotherby and Kirby Bellars, with a maximum of just four at Newtown Linford on 26 May. At the Botanic Gardens several were observed foraging Rosemary on 7 May, with similar numbers at Humberstone Park foraging Bramble blossom on the 17th of the month. FTS's garden at Barlestone was more buoyant, with numbers described as frequent during April and May, up to the first two weeks in June, frequent also at PHG's Quorn garden during April/May and being fond of *Cotoneaster horizontalis*. Normally I can count on about five workers in my garden but this spring only saw one. A male was in Spinney Hill Park on 29 May.

The **Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*** as usual for this very common bumble was widely recorded, queens were in evidence from 4 April from Skeffington, with more later in the month from Holwell, Wartnaby, Morley Quarry and Swannington. Queens were also common at Humberstone Park on 10 April and numerous at Great Central Way on the 11th and at Warren Hill several were foraging on Bilberry flowers on the 29th.

Very few records were received this quarter for the **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum***. Emerging queens were observed at Humberstone Park, Rally Bank in April and two at Evington Park, one was also recorded at Hungarton village on 4 May. The only record of any numbers came from FTS's garden at Barlestone, with a few queens in April but not seen at all in May until the end of the month and then it was frequent for the first two weeks in June. No workers were seen by me this quarter.

Bombus vestalis, the bumblebee parasite of *Bombus terrestris* was, as usual, widely observed with females recorded from Scalford churchyard, a Newbold garden, Sutton Cheney, Bradgate Park, Frisby on the Wreake,

Hungarton, Lowesby, Coleorton, Sutton Cheney, Swithland Wood, Barlestone, Great Central Way, Evington Park, Barkby Lane, Scraftoft Gorse and Stoughton Airfield in April and May. In June it was noted at Thurnby Lodge on the 6th, Western Park on the 14th and Barnsdale on the 24th - probably fresh females. The numbers can only indicate the healthy state of its host.

In contrast *Bombus sylvestris*, the cleptoparasite of *Bombus pratorum* was only recorded from Barlestone where up to two males were seen from June 1st to the 13th of the month. There were just two records of *Bombus rupestris*, from Scaford churchyard on 10 April and Newbold Verdon on 17 May.

Hive bees *Apis mellifera*, were generally seen locally in small numbers, foraging Dandelion at Monks Rest, Sallow at Willow Brook Park in April and elsewhere. HI & SFW recorded some from churchyards, with a feral colony nesting in a church roof at Claybrooke Parva, a small swarm on a church wall at Ryhall on 19 May and at Scaford churchyard with dozens of dead bees on the ground. Another large swarm was found at Scraftoft Gorse on 5 May.

Sawflies

Numbers of **Solomon's Seal Sawfly *Phymatocera aterimma*** were flying around larval foodplant on 27 April. A dead **Birch Sawfly *Cimbex femoratus*** was found in HBH's Loughborough garden on 24 June.

The Sawfly *Tenthredo acuata* was common on the embankment at Evington Park on 12 June. The larva feeds on various clovers. A single specimen of the mostly predatory species *Rhogaster viridis* was seen on waste ground at Belgrave 31 May.

Vespid Wasps

Hornets *Vespa crabro* were reported from Ketton and Sutton Cheney churchyards, one in HS's porch in Quorn and one at Lubcloud Farm, Oaks in Charnwood.

A **German Wasp *Vespula germanica*** was seen in a pile of logs at Western Park on the day of the BioBlitz and a **Common Wasp *Vespula vulgaris*** on the BSBI visit to Burley Wood at the end of April.

Howard Bradshaw

The Solitary Wasp and Bee reports will be in the next *Heritage*.

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

There has been some very hot weather this quarter but after the wet spring nothing seemed to suffer. In fact, most plants, shrubs and trees did very well with masses of blossom followed by a good set of fruit. I did read a small article in the newspaper that hazelnuts had not set very well but I cannot remember if it said why.

There have been plenty of records this quarter but only four recorders. Please submit any records you make, they do not have to be anything special or rare. All records are sent to the Records Centre as a permanent record.

Two records worth noticing this month are Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea* at Bloody Oaks Quarry, probably the last remaining site for this plant in the vice-county. The other plant is Grass Vetchling *Vicia nissolia* which is rare in the county and is possibly under-recorded as it is very much like a grass when not in flower.

Plants of Interest This Quarter

Goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*: was found to be very common at Aylestone Holt, whilst just one plant was noted on a small bridle path on Goodwood Road, Leicester.

Thread-leaved Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus*: was found in flower at Willow Bridge and Spinney Hill Park.

Meadow Rue *Thalictrum flavum*: several plants noted at St. Mary's Mills in confluence with River Soar and a fine stand on the meadow by the pack horse bridge at Aylestone Meadows. Nice to know, as the occurrence of this plant has been much reduced of late.



Bird's-foot © Stephen Woodward

Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*: An uncommon plant in Leicestershire found mainly on railway verges, it was noted at Asfordby Iron Works.

Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*: found at Old John, Bradgate Park.

Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*: noted at Bloody Oaks Quarry N.R

Grass Vetchling *Vicia nissolia*: Locally frequent, was plentiful in one area 20 metres square at Lount Tip.

Zigzag Clover *Trifolium medium*: a large patch was located in one area of Swithland Wood, it was also present at Hugglescote Marsh.

Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea*: was present at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR. First seen here in 1917.



Chalk Milkwort © Stephen Woodward

Cinquefoil Hybrid *Potentilla x mixta*: was frequent at Lount Tip. A very confusing plant whose parentage is difficult to determine.

Sherard's Downy Rose *Rosa sherardii*: several plants that 'key out' correctly were noted at Lount Tip.



Sherard's Downy Rose © Stephen Woodward

Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*: one plant was on marginal mounds in Evington Park. HB says: "Many years since I last saw this rapidly declining arable species."

Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*: present near a wet ditch at Beacon Hill, Woodhouse.

Upright Chickweed *Moerichia erecta*: an interesting little plant very restricted in its range in Leicestershire, it was present on The Knoll at Croft Pasture NR.

Annual Knawel *Scleranthus annua*: one of those plants that are very easily overlooked, it was present on The Knoll at Croft Pasture N.R .

Blinks *Montia fontaria ssp chondrosperma*: present on The Knoll at Croft Pasture NR and at Bradgate Park.

Hounds-tongue *Cynoglossum officinalis*: an interesting plant whose leaves smell of mouse urine, it was located at Bloody Oak Quarry NR.

Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*: possibly the first VC record, one plant was self-sown into a wall at Glaston Churchyard.

Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae*: present at Asfordby Hill Iron Works, Croft Hill & Quarry, one plant was located on top of the footpath above the quarry.

Lambs Lettuce *Valerianella locusta*: a large colony was found in woodland west of Wood Lane, Rothley Common.

Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculate ssp ericetorum*: thousands present at Swithland Wood Meadow.

Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*: ten were counted in

compartments 21 & 23 at Beacon Hill. A further ten plants were at Hugglescote Marsh whilst a few were on the roadside verge by the A511/A42 roundabout at Ashby de la Zouch.



Southern Marsh Orchid © Stephen Woodward

Bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*: two plants were at Lount Tip South. One plant was on Buddon Wood South Mound, but had gone several days later; probably eaten off by rabbits.

Few-flowered Garlic *Allium paradoxum*: was abundant in a horse pasture and adjacent hedge at Ketton. Also at St Mary's Churchyard, Humberstone, where it has naturalised and is evidently spreading in the SW corner.

Narrow Buckler Fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*: present at Whites Wood.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Other groups recorded included:

Fungi, Liverworts, Mosses, Woodlice, Mites, Spiders, Harvestmen, Millipedes, Centipedes, Springtails, Mayflies, Stoneflies, Galls, Barkflies, Ants, Lacewings, Scorpionflies, Alderflies, Snakeflies, Caddisflies, Slugs and Snails.

WEATHER

April was another mild and dry month and was the third April in the last seven years after 2011 and 2007 to have a mean temperature above 11°C. Afternoon temperatures registered at 15°C more than 2°C above normal. Night time temperatures were even higher with a mean of 7°C nearly 4°C above the norm. A lot of cloudy but very muggy nights were responsible for this. Rainfall was below average with 31 mm falling at Mountsorrel and 30 mm at Nanpantan at Jim Lofts' station. These figures are only about half of the usual total. Winds averaged just 4 mph with the maximum gust of 29 mph being recorded on the 6th. There was 128 hours of sunshine recorded which was close to the monthly average.

The month started on an unsettled note and at Mountsorrel, I recorded 7 mm of rain on the 7th. The weather changed on the 9th when high pressure and much more settled and warmer conditions took over. There then followed ten dry days some of these were sunny too with 13 hours being recorded on the 16th. The next days saw a return of unsettled conditions with rain at times with Jim recording 7 mm at his station on the 25th. The coolest night of the month was logged on the 19th when Jim recorded -0.5°C; the only frost of the month. The warmest day of the month, at 19°C, was on the 21st in Mountsorrel. The month ended on a dry and fine note and Jim recorded his highest temperature of the month at 20°C on the final day. So a fine spring month but it was the very warm nights rather than sunny days that brought the average temperature up. So, after a very wet start to the year, both March and April have been drier than normal.

It was the wettest **May** recorded in Loughborough since 1932, a period of 84 years! 124 mm of rain fell at Nanpantan with 121 mm falling at Mountsorrel. Most of the rain fell in just seven days between 22 May and the 29th. Indeed over 90 mm fell in this period to be precise and this made it the wettest week I have ever personally recorded. It was also a very mild month with temperatures above average both night and day. Afternoon temperatures averaged 16.8°C, 0.6°C above normal while night time temperatures averaged 9°C, 3.1°C above

normal, so the warm muggy nights were responsible for the above average temperatures during the month. Sunshine figures totalled 159 hours which was 12% below average. Winds for the month were mainly light and averaged just 3.7 miles per hour with the top gust of 33 mph being recorded on the 9th. There was very different weather in each of the four weeks of May. The first few days were cool with a max of just 12.8°C on the 2nd with Jim recording the only frost of the month that night with temperatures dropping to -1.5°C. The next ten days brought some showers but rainfall totals at this stage were fairly modest. The weather changed suddenly on the 14th when a strong ridge from the Azores settled over the UK. The period 14-21st saw 85 hours of sunshine and on the 18th it shone for 14.2 hours our sunniest day so far this year. Temperatures at Nanpantan touched 25°C on the 17th and the 19th and it was a gloriously sunny week. However the high moved away and low pressure from the continent gave us a week-long deluge and just 14 hours of sun. Such a marked contrast between these two May weeks has rarely been witnessed before. Flooding did become a problem at the end of the week but an initially low water table meant that most of the rain soaked into the ground until the later part of the week. Had all of this 90 mm gone straight into the river the flooding would have been catastrophic. So once again this month gave us plenty to talk about alternating between blazing sunshine then pouring rain but then that's the British weather for you!

June this year was a warmer and sunnier month than usual. The number of rain days was below average while the air pressure was higher than normal. Afternoon temperatures averaged 20.8°C at Mountsorrel with night time temperatures logging at 11.2°C. The overall mean temp of 16°C was 2°C above usual. It was the warmest June since 2006 and in the last 100 years it ranked as the 10th warmest recorded. So although not outstanding it was a substantial improvement on recent Junes! Rainfall was broadly average with Jim at Nanpantan recording 65 mm while at Mountsorrel, I logged 55 mm. Having said this, most of the rain fell on just four days in the month and there were actually 19 days that were completely dry. The sun shone for 188 hours in the month which was

5% above normal. Winds were mainly light and averaged just 3 mph and the maximum gust was just 28 mph. After a couple of fine days the weather turned showery for the next week. The 9th brought a heavy thunderstorm to Mountsorrel which saw 12 mm of rain fall in just 20 minutes. There were some cool nights too, with Jim recording the lowest night time temperature of 4.5°C on the 6th. The weather changed on the 10th and for the next two weeks high pressure took control. This high was based for the most part just to the NW of the UK putting us in a NE flow. This meant that temperatures were somewhat subdued on some days as persistent cloud from the North Sea prevented sunshine often until mid-afternoon but when it did arrive many afternoons did turn out warm. The warmest day was the 23rd when I recorded 25°C at Mountsorrel with Jim squeezing a 26°C making it the warmest day of the year so far. Night time temperatures were also high for the time of year as the warm muggy air meant that it was able to retain its heat throughout the night. The warmest recorded evening was the 14th when temperatures stayed above 15°C. The weather changed in the final week with some heavy showers again. Loughborough saw the brunt of these with 18 mm being recorded at Nanpantan on the 27th.

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We are grateful to them all.

Records for the third quarter of 2014 should be sent by 15 October 2014 to:

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