



WINGED INVASION

One late July evening my village of Scraftoft suffered an invasion.

They came out of the air in their thousands and despite strong local opposition and many casualties most of the invaders, apparently from neighbouring Humberstone, penetrated our defences and immediately went to ground. The following morning little evidence remained of their coming, apart from a scattering of torn-off wings on lawns and garden paths but underground preparations were already underway for an attempted take-over of the territory.

The above event to which I was a fascinated eye-witness concerned not human invading forms but the mating flight of countless Black Garden Ants – future queens and their princely suitors – from nests over a wide area, simultaneously triggered by the warm sultry weather.

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The first hint of their coming had been given by the local Spotted Flycatchers which started making purposeful, upward sorties from high trees to bring luscious beak-fulls of food to their clamorous young. Then over the distant spire of Humberstone church, a gathering flock of gulls could be seen wheeling and dipping and clumsily darting – an unmistakeable sign that ants were on the wing.

Gradually the gulls drifted closer until, through binoculars, the cause of their activity could clearly be seen. The air was full of flying insects, some tiny, others the size of small wasps. The gulls may have lacked the grace and dexterity of Swallows but, with such easy pickings, even the clumsiest was having a feast.

At a higher altitude Swifts, like a fighter escort, picked off those ants that got through. Sensing the excitement, a group of Starlings left the neighbour's chimney to join in and a cock House Sparrow with a brood of nestlings over my eaves, struggled with a large queen on the garage roof, bringing her brief honeymoon to an abrupt end.

The binoculars began to reveal more of the intimate goings-on in the air above me. Many of the larger ants had the appearance of helicopters as they began to make a steep descent earthwards,

weighted down no doubt by the tiny males who had seized them, and wings whirring, had their moment of fulfilment prior to death.

One such couple I tracked to a landing site on the lawn, just in time to see the bridegroom desert his bride and flee between the grass stems. She, with an apparent urgent need to leave the landing zone, made her way across the turf. Fat-bellied and resplendent in her shimmering wings she seemed to find the going difficult as, after a few yards, she paused and with repeated deliberate sweeps of her legs prised off each of her four wings and, less encumbered, swiftly resumed her march.

Such landings were taking place all around me - even on me - and soon there were winged and wingless queens everywhere, searching the cracks and crevices for places to hide and, later, to create a nest and future colony.

My garden, thanks to the long spell of dry weather, was a haven for the Yellow Meadow Ant which does not take kindly to disturbers of its peace (as the red itchy spots on my sandaled feet showed) and I could feel for the immigrant, by now pregnant queens as they ran the gauntlet of the increasing army of yellow workers whose nests lined my paths and borders. One unfortunate black queen which decided to Investigate a crack in the concrete was immediately engulfed by a host of vicious, biting yellow guardians less than half her size, striving to locate a vulnerable chink in her armour whilst avoiding her lethal jaws. This battle was still raging when I ceased my observations at dusk.

Most of the queens had by now found cover, some beneath stones, others beneath plants or in safe holes. A few diminutive males, now wingless and their sole life's function completed were still frantically and aimlessly running about, homeless. The first drops of rain began to fall, ending the drought of the past weeks and bringing the curtain down on the evening's drama.

Gerald Felstead

ARCHIVE of LNC PUBLICATIONS

With the support of LRERC at County Hall, we have electronically scanned all editions of Heritage (1961 onwards) and all the Annual

Reports (1962 onwards). The Index to Heritage 1-100 is also available (if any volunteers are keen to index Heritage 101 onwards, we would be delighted to hear from them!). We have also scanned many of the survey reports: Badger Notes 1963, Beacon Hill 1998, Benscliffe and Blakeshay 1990, Bradgate 1962, Groby Pool 1987, Loughborough Canal 1968, Swithland Wood 1970, Ulverscroft 1979. The files are in portable document format (pdf) and are securely stored on the County Council's computer system. A copy of the entire archive can be made available to members on a DVD, on request to HI or SFW. A charge of £10 (payable to Loughborough Naturalists' Club) will be made to non-members, who should apply to the Honorary Secretary, Sue Graham.

Helen Ikin and Steve Woodward

BRADGATE SURVEY TURNS UP NATIONAL RARITIES

Now that invertebrate recording is officially sanctioned in Bradgate Park, a few members have been trying various techniques for



Graham Finch setting spider traps© Steve Woodward

capturing elusive creatures: light trapping for moths, artificial nests up trees for spiders, pitfall traps for beetles, pond dipping, sweep netting and so on. But two of our most startling finds were made very simply, by staring at tree trunks!

A cluster of small (2.5 to 3 mm diameter), brown stripy snails on an old pollard (SK53731075) caught my eye on 5 August. When I looked with the hand lens, I realised they were not snails at all. They were perfectly round and smooth and solidly fixed to the trunk. Galls perhaps or Fungi? I had an inkling what they might be, so I flicked through the pages of *An introduction to the native and naturalised Scale Insects and Whiteflies (Hemiptera: Coccoidea and Aleyrodoidea) of Britain* by Chris Malumphy. Sure enough, I found a matching description and photo so I sent my own photo to Chris, who confirmed that they were scale insects: Striped Kermes *K. quercus*. Scale insects belong to the order Hemiptera, but they are very strange and do not look like animals at all. Males are rarely seen. Adult females do not move, once they have inserted their sap-feeding proboscis into the host plant, in this case an oak tree. The female's body becomes a hard shell, which continues to protect her eggs after she dies.



Kermes quercus © Steve Woodward

Chris, who is a professional entomologist with a special interest in scale insects, tells me "I have examined thousands of oaks in Britain but only seen *K. quercus* once or twice." This species and others are more common on the continent and were formerly collected to make crimson or *Kermes* dye, a practice which goes back to Neolithic times. A species of oak that is particularly susceptible is known as the Kermes Oak, *Quercus coccifera*.

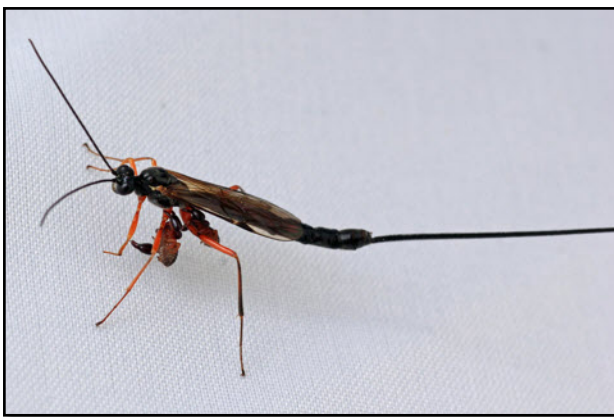
The second find was made on 13 August while searching for bees and wasps, again on



Dead pollard oak - Bradgate Park © Steve Woodward

one of the old pollards (SK52411006). This time the pollard was dead and exposed to full sunlight. A large parasitic wasp was struggling to take off, so I assumed it was stuck in a web. But a closer look revealed the true reason – there were two stow-aways clinging onto the legs of the wasp, hoping to get a free ride, but overloading the wasp. They were pseudoscorpions, as large as I have ever seen them.

The wasp turned out to be *Ephialtes manifestator* (Ichneumonidae: Pimplinae) det. Gavin Broad, Natural History Museum. The head and body measures 18 mm, but to that we must add 33 mm for the ovipositor. I made a stab at identifying the pseudoscorpion myself, thinking that such a large species might be easier than the tiny ones that we have found in leaf litter. I used *Pseudoscorpions* by Legg and Jones (1988). It seems there are only two that get as large as my specimen (3.7 mm body length), and only one that closely resembles it. To be sure, I ran the specimen through the key and arrived at the same conclusion – *Dendrochernes cyrneus* – according to Legg and Jones "one of our rarest and most spectacular species". Gerald Legg, who looks after the national recording scheme for



Ephialtes manifestator with *Dendrochernes cyrneus* attached to the legs © Steve Woodward



Dendrochernes cyrneus © Steve Woodward

Pseudoscorpions, kindly confirmed the identity of my specimen and remarked that he had not seen this species since the 1990s. It is certainly a national rarity, with only 15 spots (10 km squares) on the UK map (NBN). It is associated with decaying old trees, particularly dry ones that warm up in the sun. The most recent previous record seems to be from Donington Park, Leicestershire, in 2010, but we have no details. It is a UK Red Data List species.

Steve Woodward

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.

MAMMALS

HB remarks that **Hedgehogs** may be increasing a little in his part of the city and he noted two road casualties in Ethel Road and Chesterfield Road and an active one crossing the road at Evington. One evening about 9:30 in September PJD narrowly missed flattening one running across a road in open country near Lowesby and SFW saw one that was not so lucky, squashed on Ratby Road in Groby. PH saw one in his Shepshed garden at the end of August and there were signs of regular visits over the next month. Live Hedgehogs were seen in Trueway Drive in Shepshed and one was dead on the road.

Churchyards seem to be favoured by **Moles** and molehills were seen at Chadwell - St Mary's, Cotesbach, Shawell, Swepstone - St. Peter's, Misterton, Kimcote and Scraftoft - All Saints as well as on the meadow behind the cricket pitch at Newtown Linford and in parkland behind Donington le Heath Manor House.

DAP disturbed a **Common Shrew** near his compost bins at Swithland, PHG found dead ones at Cossington Meadows, in the War Memorial Gardens at Quorn and in his own Quorn garden shortly after a neighbour's cat had visited. Cats usually do not eat shrews as they are said to taste unpleasant.

Only two records of **Bats** this quarter - in Swithland several pipistrelles were feeding around the trees on a warm evening in July and in PH was seeing two sizes of bat regularly over his Shepshed garden from mid-August onwards.

A **Brown Hare** met its death on a road near the county boundary at Stanford on Soar. Live ones were seen at Sileby and surrounding fields and around Shepshed.

There is a flourishing community of **Rabbits** on Bishop Meadow Road in Loughborough and in DAP's Swithland garden. Several were noted at Mountsorrel Meadows, two or three were seen in Jones's Spinney near Stoughton and a young one in Aylestone Meadows.

In the absence of a good crop of acorns, **Grey Squirrels** were burying conkers, sometimes complete with spiny case, in PHG's Quorn lawn fetching them a considerable distance, so Peter's lawn must have some special attraction for squirrels as well as Badgers! At Swithland DAP

reports that they were eating hazelnuts and then moved on to his apples but at Woodhouse they were folding themselves up and getting right inside the bird feeders on MH's window.

MH has had **Wood Mice** in her home at Woodhouse Eaves – seen in all downstairs rooms and nesting material found in a cupboard. Humane traps have caught quite a few. Two Wood Mice were seen in one of the cages at Desford Bird Garden – I imagine there are a lot more.

Just the front half of a **Brown Rat** was found in St Lawrence's churchyard at Measham in early August.

A **Red Fox** was seen in a Woodhouse Eaves garden 14 July, a half-grown cub was noted at Wanlip Meadows in early July, one was crossing the road near the Outwoods at Nanpantan about 10 pm in mid-September and a cub was squashed on the road near the entrance to Charnwood Lodge NR.

Three **Weasel** records this quarter, one survived crossing the road near Groby Pool on 10 September, another was crossing the footpath near Belgrave Lock on 7 July and yet another was seen on the margins of Melbourne Pool – just over the border in Derbyshire.

A dead **Stoat** was found along the road between Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves and a live one was crossing the road near Cossington Meadows NR at 3 am on 23 July.

Quorn residents are still having trouble with **Badgers** digging up lawns – probably not helped by the dry weather making worms stay well down in the damper soil. In Woodhouse Eaves they are better behaved but still doing a bit of lawn excavation and even using one lawn for latrine pits. In Swithland lawns are being damaged extensively. Two youngsters were dead beside the road on the Mountsorrel by-pass and single dead ones were reported from Snell's Nook, Tickow Lane (Shepshed), two places in Swithland and Meeting Street in Quorn. Signs of Badger activity were seen in Bradgate Park.

A good view of a male **Muntjac** was had by SFW and HI in Swithland Wood. He stood confidently for about five minutes, posing for photographs and shaking his head periodically. He even moved towards us at one point but



Muntjac © Steve Woodward

eventually turned away and disappeared. Muntjac are also found in the city and one was seen crossing Aylestone Road near Rawdykes in mid-August. Eight **Fallow Deer** does were seen in woodland behind Staunton Harold Hall in mid-September and a buck was in woodland outside Bradgate Park in late September.

The LRWT Exmoor ponies are a delight to see and HBH noted a foal on the Wanlip Reserve.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Mute Swans were at the larger waters with successful breeding at most. Post-breeding flocks were slow in building and only the double-figure count was 12 at Sence Valley FP on 24 September.

The roaming **Snow Goose** was at Cropston Reservoir in August with a small party of **Canada Goose**. There were 279 at this site on the final day of the month. The only other count of note was 158 at Abbey Park on 14 July. The best count of **Greylag Goose** was 68 at Cropston Reservoir on 1 August and four **Egyptian Geese** was also here during July with two remaining through September.

Two **Shelduck** were on Wanlip Meadows NR on 27 August. Good numbers of **Mandarin Duck** were at Cropston Reservoir throughout the quarter with a maximum of 21 there on 21 August with smaller numbers at Swithland Reservoir. The usual summering male **Wigeon** was in Bradgate Park or on Cropston Reservoir throughout the period but the first returning birds were noted at Cossington Meadows NR on 3 September with four there, whilst Sence Valley FP held 16 on the 24th. **Gadwall** was reported from four sites with successful breeding being

noted at both Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs. Post-breeding flocks began to build in September with the highest count being 30 at the later on the 6th. A pair of **Teal** with at least one juvenile at Cropston Reservoir in July may have bred at the site. The first returning **Teal** was one at Kelham Bridge on 6 August with numbers building to 30 by the end of the period. Good numbers were also noted at Wanlip Meadows NR with a minimum of 50 there on 24 September. Double-figure counts of **Mallard** came from four sites where maxima were all in September: 75 at Sence Valley FP on the 24th, 68 at Kelham Bridge on the 18th, 61 at Cropston Reservoir on the 7th and 32 at Cossington Meadows NR on the 3rd. Young were still being seen at most sites. An eclipse male **Garganey** was on the south side of Swithland Reservoir between 4 and 6 September at least. The first autumn arrival of **Shoveler** was five at Wanlip Meadows NR on 27 August with eight noted at Sence Valley FP on 24 September. The only **Pochard** in the quarter was a female at Hicks Lodge on 2 August. Records of **Tufted Duck** came from just five widespread sites with ducklings noted at all locations but the only significant count was 27 at Sence Valley FP on 24 September.



Garganey in eclipse © Jim Graham

The only records of **Red-legged Partridge** was two at Blakeshay Wood on 7 September. You may have noticed that much of this site has been clear-felled of conifers recently and it will be interesting to see what turns up here in the coming years. **Grey Partridge** records were notable by their absence.

Cormorants were under-recorded with records only received from Cropston Reservoir and Cossington Meadows NR with a maximum



Great White Egret © Jim Graham

of 18 at the former on 28 July and seven at the latter on 3 September. Records of **Little Egrets** came from six sites, most notably Cropston Reservoir where there was a presence throughout the quarter with a maximum of 17 on 13 July. Seven were at Swithland Reservoir on the 6 September and eight were at Cossington Meadows NR on the 3rd. The latter site also had a **Great White Egret** on 14 August which appeared to roam the Soar Valley area until the end of the month. The highest count of **Grey Heron** was 13 at Cropston Reservoir on 20 July. The wandering **Glossy Ibis** that has been seen in the Soar Valley complex sporadically since April was again located in the area from mid-July until 8 August favouring Wanlip and Cossington Meadows NR.

Little Grebe were at six sites with breeding confirmed at two. The only double-figure counts of **Great Crested Grebe** were at Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of 46 on 16 September. Three pairs were on nests at this site but unfortunately none were successful.

There were no records of **Red Kite** in the Charnwood Forest area this quarter, the closest was two at Launde Park Wood in September. **Sparrowhawk** were recorded from 12 widespread sites six of which were members' gardens. A male was clutching what appeared to be a Bank Vole in JG's Cropston garden.

Records of **Buzzard** were widespread and included four confirmed breeding sites. Ten in flight following a combine harvester in Tugby were presumably looking to take advantage of the rodents that would be disturbed during the process. **Kestrels** were reported from eight locations, with a hunting male being mobbed by

Swallows at Mountsorrel Marshes on 2 July. A juvenile at Bradgate Park in September was probably locally bred. **Hobby** were reported from just three sites: one carrying prey at Watermead CP, one at Swithland Reservoir, whilst another at Cropston Reservoir was being harassed by the Common Terns feeding there before landing in a tree for respite. Surprisingly, **Peregrine** were only noted from four sites, including Leicester city centre, but worryingly no records came from the 'usual tree' around Swithland Reservoir.

Records of **Moorhen** came from six waters with juveniles noted at four. The highest count was 38 at Kelham Bridge on 11 September. There were few records of **Coot** but four sites had double-figure counts with maxima of: 93 at Cossington Meadows NR on 3 September, 76 at Sence Valley FP on the 29th, 38 at Kelham Bridge the 11th and 31 at Cropston Reservoir on 13 July.

The only record of **Little Ringed Plover** was two at Wanlip Meadows NR on 20 July whilst no **Ringed Plover** were noted. Post-breeding flocks of **Lapwing** started to build during August but the best count was 180 at Wanlip Meadows NR on 24 September. Up to three **Ruff** were present at the same site between 21 and 24 September. The first returning **Snipe** was one at Kelham Bridge on 14 July and the best count being 15 at Wanlip Meadows NR on 24 September. A single **Black-tailed Godwit** was also here on 3 August with this or another at Cossington Meadows NR on the 14th. Up to four **Common Sandpiper** were at Cropston Reservoir during August and September with three at Cossington Meadows NR on 14 August, and one or two at three other sites. **Green Sandpiper** were found at six sites with three at Wanlip Meadows NR in July and Watermead CP in August the best count. A single **Greenshank** was at Cropston Reservoir between 13 and 20 July with another at Kelham Bridge on 27 August. There were no **Redshank** records during the period.

Gull numbers began to increase through the period and the main **Black-headed Gull** counts came from Cropston Reservoir with 496 on 7 September. Other counts of note were 45 at Hicks Lodge on 2 August and 52 on the boating lake in Abbey Park on 14 July. A large number over ATO's house in September were



Black-headed Gull © Jim Graham

presumably feeding on flying ants that had just hatched. There were few other gulls reported.

A juvenile **Black Tern** first located at Cropston Reservoir on 19 August remained until at least the 26th. The artificial rafts for **Common Tern** at Watermead CP Birstall once again supported about 30 young most of which have been colour-ringed this year to try and determine site faithfulness and dispersal trends. Up to five of these were noted at Cropston Reservoir during the quarter. At least 21 adults were seen feeding at this site throughout the summer and heading towards Watermead CP with their catch.

Small numbers of **Stock Dove** came from just four locations, whilst **Wood Pigeon** and **Collared Dove** were recorded at even fewer.

Reports of **Barn Owl** came from Branston and Rothley Park Golf Course whilst **Little Owl** were only noted at Bradgate Park and Cropston during the quarter. As usual **Tawny Owl** were very vociferous and widespread and noted particularly from member's gardens.

Swift were recorded from ten locations with screaming parties noted at Bottesford and Groby. However, PHG comments that this is the first summer in his knowledge that screaming parties have not occurred in the Quorn area. The last birds of the season were seen heading west over Cropston on 29 August. **Kingfisher** were reported from eight sites with a small family group noted at Groby Pool. **Green Woodpecker** were noted at 15 widespread sites and juveniles were confirmed at three of these. Records of **Great Spotted Woodpecker** came from 14 sites with juveniles noted at four.

Other than 20 in Bradgate Park on 6 September, only small numbers of **Magpie** were

noted. Likewise, there were few **Jay** reported including a pair with juveniles visiting DAP's garden through most of the quarter. At least 120 **Jackdaw** were reported in the Cropston Reservoir/Bradgate Park area on 31 August and 13 September. Both **Carriion Crow** and **Rook** were over-looked but a number of members noted **Raven** over their houses showing how commonplace this species has become; most sightings of one or two but a group of five was around Bradgate Park during September.

Small numbers of **Goldcrest** records came from just six sites with a family party noted at Cropston Reservoir in August. The only double-figure counts of **Blue Tit** were 18 at Launde Park Wood on 28 July and 12 at Altar Stones on 7 September. **Great Tit** numbers were of five or fewer and five **Coal Tit** at Launde Park Wood included three young. Considering their continual decline, **Marsh Tit** were reported from a respectable six sites but the only record of **Willow Tit** was one seen calling at Leighfield on 4 September.

Skylark were still singing at both Barkestone in July and Hicks Lodge in August. At least one pair of **Sand Martin** was still using a nest in the artificial wall at Kelham Bridge on the 29 August whilst good numbers of returning birds were passing through Cropston Reservoir with at least 250 there on the 10th. Likewise there were significant numbers of **Swallow** feeding up at the same site with a minimum of 250 on the 19th including plenty of juveniles. Unfortunately, **House Martin** numbers were much lower with 80 at this site on the 6 September being the highest count. This seems to confirm the concerns over this rapidly declining species. Indeed, PHG comments "A long-used nest site in Quorn, previously used throughout my lifetime, was vacant this summer for the first time and no flocks whatsoever were feeding over Kaye's Plantation where previously I could rely on seeing them".

Small flocks or family parties of **Long-tailed Tit** were widely recorded, the highest counts being 30 at Cropston Reservoir on 20 September and 12 at both Leighfield on the 4th and Mountsorrel Marshes on 2 July.

Chiffchaff were common, widespread and still singing, with 11 at both Cropston Reservoir

and Launde Park Wood the best count, the latter including a number of juveniles. By contrast, there were rather fewer **Willow Warbler** records with just three sites noted, all singles. **Blackcap** were recorded from 12 locations with juveniles noted at Cropston Reservoir. Song was not recorded after 20 July but a pair was noted in a Bushby garden mid-September.

The only records of **Garden Warbler** were singles at Mountsorrel Marshes on 2 July and Launde Park Wood on the 28th. Strangely, the same two sites both held single **Lesser Whitethroat** on corresponding dates with another at Bradgate Park on 5 September. Seven sites had **Common Whitethroat** with family parties at Bradgate Park and Watermead CP in July. **Sedge Warbler** were located at Barkestone, Cropston Reservoir and Kelham Bridge where a pair was feeding young on 8 July. There were only two records of **Reed Warbler**, five along the Grantham Canal at Barkestone in July and two at Cossington Meadows NR in August.

Small numbers of **Nuthatch** were found at just five locations with an adult with two juveniles at Cropston Reservoir the only family party noted. Two family parties of **Treecreeper** were located at Launde Park Wood in July with a minimum total of nine birds and another group at Bradgate Park in September. The former site also had fledged juvenile **Wren** and a total of 21 birds were recorded. There were no large counts of **Starling** received, the highest being just ten at Hicks Lodge on 2 August. Hopefully this is just under-recording rather than a significant drop in their already depleting numbers.

There were few notable records received of thrushes and seven **Blackbird** at Launde Park Wood in July was the highest count. There was just one report of **Song Thrush**; a family group in MV's garden in July, and a group of seven **Mistle Thrush** at Launde Abbey the same month was also considered to be a family.

Spotted Flycatcher were noted at seven sites, a considerable improvement on recent years, with juveniles seen at Swithland Reservoir and Launde Park Wood with a total of 12 birds at the latter site on 28 July.

Small numbers of **Robin** were reported and surprisingly only included two gardens. Parkhill Golf Club, Seagrave seems to be the place to find



Spotted Flycatcher © Jim Graham

migrating **Redstart** with four there; an adult male, first-winter male and two females, during the last week in August. We must not dismiss the possibility that they are breeding in the area as the habitat looks perfect. A male and female were in Bradgate Park during the same period remaining until 5 September and a male was at Groby Pool on 18 August.

The only records of passage **Whinchat** was one at Cossington Meadows NR on 3 September and another at Bradgate Park on 4 September. A single **Wheatear** was also in Bradgate Park on 20 August. A few singing **Dunnock** were noted with juveniles at Cropston Reservoir, Launde Park Wood and ATO's Loughborough garden. Most **House Sparrow** records were small numbers but 50 in ACR's Loughborough garden through the quarter was by far the best count. The only **Tree Sparrow** record received was 30 in a hedgerow at Marefield on 4 September.

Juvenile **Grey Wagtail** suggested successful breeding at Bradgate Park, Groby Pool, and Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs. At least 20 **Pied Wagtail** were feeding on a football pitch in Moira on 26 August whilst 16 in Bradgate Park and 12 at the inflow of Cropston Reservoir were probably the same mobile feeding flock.

Counts of **Meadow Pipit** only came from Bradgate Park with at least 30 on 25 September.

There were few finches reported and included just two **Greenfinch** records. **Goldfinch** were better represented with three sites having double-figure counts the largest being 40 at Cossington Meadows NR on 3 September.

All counts of **Linnet** were of five or fewer and there were no records of either **Lesser Redpoll** or **Crossbill** in the period. **Bullfinch** were mainly

seen in small numbers from eight well-spread locations; ten around Leighfield on 4 September included a family party of four. Juveniles were noted at three other sites and a male singing near Launde Park on 28 July was a surprise as they normally only sing for a short period during early spring.

The best count of **Yellowhammer** came from Bradgate Park with 12 including several juveniles in September. Small numbers **Reed Bunting**, mainly males still in song, came from Cropston Reservoir and Mountsorrel Marshes.

Jim Graham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Our sightings for this quarter are once again relatively few in number and seem to consist of the usual species turning up in those places where we would expect to find them!

Common or Viviparous Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*: we have two sightings for this reptile, both courtesy of HI and SFW. The first was of a single specimen, basking on a cowpat, at the Ulverscroft NR on the 31 August. The second sighting was also of a single specimen at Beacon Hill, near Woodhouse, also on the 31 August.

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: PJD reports finding two specimens in a neighbour's compost bin on Barrow Road in Quorn, on the 26 July.

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*: again we have only one sighting for this reptile. SFW and HI found a single specimen at Bradgate Park on the 28 August. This specimen was unusually coloured: black with a yellow collar, and was found on a bank where Adders were sighted in the spring.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*: CW and HI report finding a female Toad at Willesley Wood, between Ashby de la Zouch and Measham, on the 6 August. SFW and HI found a single specimen in a churchyard at Misterton near Lutterworth, on the 24 August. They also found a young specimen at Cossington Meadows NR on the 3 September. On the following day, they found another at Charnwood Lodge NR.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: our first sighting comes from ATO, who reports disturbing a specimen in the front garden of his house in Loughborough on the 16 July. This was

a medium-sized specimen, approximately 6 cm long from the snout to the end of the body. SFW and HI found a specimen in Willesley Wood, near Ashby de la Zouch, on the 6 August, and another specimen in the churchyard at Misterton, near Lutterworth, on the 24 August. They also found a specimen at Ratby Burroughs, near Ratby Village, on the 7 September. On the 28 September, HS sighted two small specimens, about half the size of a typical adult, in her garden on Chaveney Road in Quorn.

That concludes our sightings for this quarter.

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

We have no sightings of fish as such for this quarter. However, we do have an interesting postscript to the news item in the last bulletin, concerning the **European Eel *Anguilla anguilla***. Fishing competitions are held quite regularly locally, on various stretches of the River Soar and the Grand Union Canal. As it happens, during a competition held on the River Soar at Sutton Bonington in August, a number of Eels were caught, including a specimen of 2.6 kg (or 5 pounds and 11 ounces in anglers' measurements!). This specimen, caught by angler Brian Rigby, is thought to be the largest ever recorded from the River Soar, although this is not especially large as Eels go: the maximum weight would appear to be 3.5 or 4 kg. Eels actually spend about eight to 15 years (normally 12) in freshwater before migrating back to the Sargasso Sea in order to spawn. In the weeks before migration the Eel's body undergoes a number of changes. Eels in freshwater normally have a brownish back and yellowish sides – they are known as "Yellow Eels". In the days before migration the digestive system atrophies – they almost certainly do not feed during migration – and the reproductive organs start to develop. The back darkens to almost black and the sides turn silvery – at this stage they are known as "silver eels". Migration begins in the autumn, usually by night, and usually after rain has raised the level of the streams and rivers and filled the ditches with water.

The capture of these Eels from the Soar was reported in the editions of the *Angler's Mail* and the *Angling Times* published on the 19 August.

Tony Beech, the organiser of the competition, is quoted in the *Angling Times* as saying: "We have never seen Eels like this on this stretch. It was incredible – they all seemed to be turning silver, which I think means they are heading back to the Sargasso Sea across the Atlantic to breed". Incidentally, for those who may be wondering what happened to the fish, it is customary for all fish to be returned to the water at the end of the competition after being weighed. (The weighing is carried out by the competition organisers so that there is no opportunity for anglers to exaggerate the size or weight of the fish!)

Finally, as a general point, the presence of these fish in the River Soar is another indication of the relatively healthy state of the Soar currently, and bodes well for the future of this and other species locally.

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

The report for Q3 will appear in Heritage 216

GRASSHOPPERS and BUSHCRICKETS

The report for 2014 will appear in Heritage 216

BUTTERFLIES

As far as our local butterfly fauna is concerned this has proved to be an historical year: after more than 70 years the Silver-washed Fritillary returned to one of its old haunts, Launde Great Wood in east Leicestershire where it was formerly resident along with the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and in early July a fine male Purple Emperor was seen and photographed in the Egleton car park at Rutland Water, the first positive sighting of the species for VC55 for well over a century. In addition I understand that several Chalk Hill Blues were present during the summer at the new site at Bloody Oaks Quarry.

Hesperiidae

This turned out to be a good year for the **Small Skipper *Thymelica sylvestris***. First recorded at Asfordby Hill on 26 June, last quarter, it went on to be recorded at 16 widely spread localities during July and early August with some large counts of 25 at Cossington

Meadows NR on 12 July, 39 at Sence Valley FP on the 16th and 26 at Buddon Brook Meadows on the 21st. It was last noted on 9 August at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel. The closely related **Essex Skipper *T. lineola*** was however only specifically identified in July at Tixover on 23rd, in LWP's Rothley garden on the 26th and at Cossington Meadows NR on 29 July and 16 August. The **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus***, widely recorded last quarter, was only noted in ten localities during July and no double-figure counts were reported.

Pieridae

The only the **Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*** was one at Kelham Bridge by DBF on 8 August.

The widely ranging **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was only reported from 11 localities and was observed in seven sites in August and two in September compared with being seen in 38 localities last quarter.

The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** and **Small White *Pieris rapae*** though widely reported and noted regularly in many of our gardens were much less common than last summer and noted in fewer localities. The **Green-veined White *P. napi*** was reported seen in 23 widely spread localities compared with 30 last summer with small numbers visiting some of our gardens as usual. Some high counts were 33 at Sence Valley on 16 July, 15 at Cossington Meadows NR on the 29th and 30 at Cloud Wood NR on 4 August. All three species were still active in late September.

Lycaenidae

The **Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus*** was reported seen in only three localities this summer, though I understand it was also present in Buddon Wood, a regular site. All sightings were made in July. On the 6th a male was observed on an oak at Park Hill Golf Club near Seagrave by RGL, a new locality for this species and on the 16th HBH and myself watched about 20 flying out from an oak on Rothley Common from where they were being repeatedly disturbed by a flock of Long-tailed Tits. Finally one was spotted on an oak tree in the deer sanctuary at Bradgate Park by HI and SFW on the 27th.

Only a single **White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrion w-album*** was reported this summer

and this was observed by LWP in Cloud Wood NR on 4 August.

Low numbers of **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** – a maximum of four at any one site – were noted at 15 widely spread localities during the quarter with six sightings in July, six in August and four in September visiting Michaelmas Daisy flowers at the Reedbed NR at Watermead CP. It is likely that some of the September sightings represented third generation butterflies. Second generation **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** were observed in eight localities during July and August, all singletons except for two noted at Bede Island, Leicester by HB on 7 August.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* second generation butterflies were active from late July to early September and were reported seen in 21 widely scattered localities. Numbers on the whole were low and the only double-figure count was ten at Humberstone Heights and 15 at Freeman's Lock on 7 August. This attractive species was last noted on 9 September at Cossington Meadows NR.

I was pleased to learn that some **Chalk Hill Blues *Lysandra coridon*** were present again during the summer at Bloody Oaks Quarry following last summer's colonisation indicating successful breeding. However the long term survival of the colony will partly depend on whether or not there is sufficient quantity of the larval food plant, the Horseshoe Vetch, to support a viable population at this site. This is a scarce and local plant in Rutland and even more so in Leicestershire. I have long thought that more could be done to increase populations of rare plant species especially where they are vital to the survival of other organisms, for by the time such species have declined to a few individual plants they have ceased to play a role in the ecological scheme of things for associated dependent organisms require healthy colonies for their long term survival.

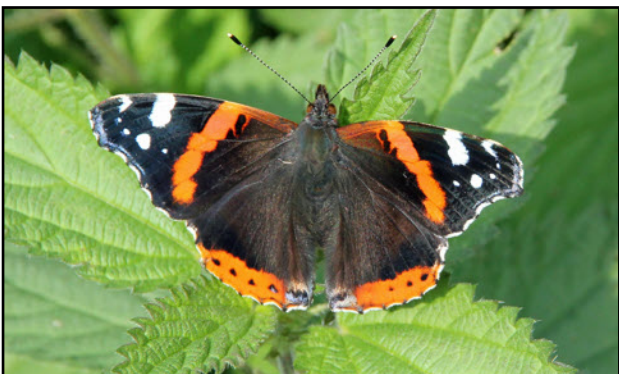
This was a poor year for both first and second generations of the garden frequenting **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** following on last year's drop in numbers and sightings were reported for only ten localities between 20 July and 30 August.

Nymphalidae

The fact that no **White Admiral** *Ladoga camilla* were reported this summer was probably because none of us visited the few sites such as Barkestone Wood on the Belvoir escarpment or Owston Wood in east Leicestershire where they have been seen in recent years, at the right time of year to see them. A pleasant job for someone next year!

I was thrilled to learn from Adrian Russell, the County Lepidoptera Recorder, that a **Purple Emperor** *Apatura iris* had been seen and photographed at the Egleton car park at Rutland Water early in July and that according to Tim Appleton, the Reserve Manager, a butterfly seen at about the same time last year by one of the volunteers working by the car park, from its description was almost certainly also this species.

Small numbers of **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* were reported seen throughout the quarter from some 30 widely spaced localities, mostly in ones and twos with a few slightly larger gatherings at Ivy blossom towards the end of September. This was a poor year for the **Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui* with only seven sightings reported: three for gardens in Loughborough, Shepshed and Rothley, for Spinney Hill Park in Leicester, Sence Valley FP and Broad Hill at Mountsorrel. The attraction at this last site being the masses of Buddleja which have colonised the site.



Red Admiral © Steve Woodward

After its improved showing last year, the **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* had another good summer being reported from 44 scattered localities, mostly during July and September and with a few during early and late August. Some good counts in July were 18 seen at Asfordby Hill on the 11th, 14 in LWP's Rothley garden and

28 at Cossington Meadows NR on the 12th and ten on thistle flowers near the River Lin in the deer sanctuary in Bradgate Park on the 18th.

The **Peacock** *Inachis io*, another species which showed a marked improvement in numbers last year, also did well again when the new generation appeared following the first sightings on 12 July at Castle Gardens in Leicester and in our Quorn garden on the 15th. Some good gatherings in July were 30 or more in HBH's Loughborough garden on the 22nd, around 50 in PJD's garden in Quorn, about 20 in Quorn War Memorial Garden and a similar number in our Quorn garden all on the 23rd. Away from gardens double-figure counts were made for five more localities. Although one or two were still active at the end of September, most had gone into hibernation by the middle of August and altogether this colourful species was reported seen in 30 widely spread localities.



Comma © Steve Woodward

After the rather poor showing of the overwintering population of the **Comma** *Polygonia c-album* in the spring, its numbers improved when the new generation appeared in late June/July and in the later generation in September, although its numbers were still down compared with those of some recent years. Sightings of this colourful species came from 23 widely spread localities with as many as three individuals nectaring together on Ivy blossom in several places in September and a maximum of seven being noted at Watermead CP in September.

A **Dark Green Fritillary** *Argynnis aglaja* was observed in LWP's Rothley garden on 27 July; interestingly one was seen in the same garden on 25 July last year, suggesting that a small local population might occur somewhere in the neighbourhood.



Dark Green Fritillary © Leslie Purnell

On the 27th a **Silver-washed Fritillary** *Argynnis paphia* was found flying around the lounge of a house in Hugglescote after the householder had been looking at the butterflies on his garden Buddleja. During August one was noted in Cloud Wood NR on the 4th where, I understand, a mating pair had also been noted. We now know that last summer, this fine woodland species was also widely recorded in VC55 during July and August and it would therefore seem likely that several of our local woodlands may have been colonised.

Satyridae

The **Speckled Wood** *Parage aegeria* was widely reported seen in some 29 locations, including five members' gardens and was noted throughout the quarter. Three were visiting Ivy blossom at the Reedbed NR at Watermead CP on 24 September, eight were at Swannington Gorse Field on 25 July and ten were noted at both Cossington Meadows NR on 9 September and at Rough Hill, Newtown Linford on the 11th but most sightings were of five or less.



Wall © Steve Woodward

August was a good month for sightings of the now local **Wall** *Lasiommata megera*. On 4th HI and SFW saw four flying together at Beacon Hill and another one in a nearby area and on the same day HS saw two at Collier Hill on

Charnwood Lodge NR. On the 12th PH had one in his Shepshed garden and on the 17th MH saw three on Broombriggs at Woodhouse Eaves.

Away from Ketton, the only sightings of the **Marbled White** *Melanargia galathea* were of eight at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR on 10 July.

The **Gatekeeper** *Pyronia tithonus* was well reported and found in 40 widespread localities during July with the first sighting on the 7th on waste ground at Belgrave and in ATO's Willow Road garden in Loughborough and at Puddledyke on the 9th. Some large counts were 26 at Cossington Meadows NR on the 12th, 36 at Sence Valley FP on the 13th, 50 or more at Puddledyke on the 23rd and 25 at Swannington Gorse Field on the 25th. The last sightings reported were on 11 August at Quorn and on the 12th at Rothey.

The **Meadow Brown** *Maniola jurtina*, well reported from 28 localities last quarter, was noted in a similar number of places during July and early August and during July, 33 were counted at Cossington Meadows NR on the 12th, about 20 at Puddledyke on the 23rd and 30 at Buddon Brook, Quorn on the 25th. Some late sightings during August were at Broad Hill on the 9th and Aylestone Meadows on the 15th.

The only **Small Heath** *Coenonympha pamphilus* reported was one at Bradgate Park on 27 August.

This was another good summer for the **Ringlet** *Aphantopus hyperantus* which appeared early this year on 13 June and was last noted on 26 July at Buddon Wood South Mound and on 4 August at Cloud Wood NR. During July it was reported seen at some 24 scattered localities and several sites produced double-figures with the best counts at Sence Valley FP where DBF recorded 62 on 13 July and 51 three days later. It is difficult to believe now that prior to the 1980s it was an uncommon and very local species in VC55.

Once again on behalf of the LNC, thanks to those members and friend we have come to rely on for contributing so many valuable records.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

Favourable weather conditions continued throughout the quarter and we certainly did not waste this opportunity. A grand total of 7,991 individuals were listed, made up of 358 species, which in turn was made up with 123 micro moth species plus 235 macro moth species. Swithland Wood produced a couple of very productive sessions with several scarcely-seen species including a single *Ectodemia decentella* which, despite being a Sycamore feeder, is not at all frequent in the county.



Angle-striped Sallow © Graham Finch

Other noteworthy species here were the micro moths *Ypsolopha alpella*, *Epigoge grotiana*, and *Strophedra nitidana*, whilst the macro moths included Clay Triple-lines *Cyclophora linearia*, Lilac Beauty *Apeira syringella*, and Satin Beauty *Deileptenia ribeata*. All the above moths are either rare in the county or seem to be becoming so as the years go on. Further "good" species were Pine Hawk-moth *Hyloicus pinastri*, Angle-striped Sallow *Enargia paleacea* and Blackneck *Lygephila pastinum*. Just over 200 species were recorded on only two visits, hopefully many more interesting species will be found, as more work will be carried out here. At Stoneywell Wood over 100 species were recorded from a single visit, the Bilberry feeding Tortrix *Apotomis sauciana* is well established with over 30 individuals counted at the lights but with a total of 105, Holly Tortrix *Rhopobota naevana* stole the show, numbers wise. Additional species were Common Lutestring *Ochropacha duplaris*, White Satin *Leucoma salicis* and, now

becoming quite a regular, Black Arches *Lymantria monarcha*. The record of two Common Lutestring *Ochropacha duplaris* were, curiously, the only record received for this species.

On to the checklist, but with so many records this quarter, it is only possible to mention just a few of the highlights starting with some interesting species from the heathland site Newfields Colliery *Swammerdamia caesiella* a Birch feeder, *Roeslerstammia erxlebelli* also on birch but also found on lime, the colourful *Carcina quercana* with a distinctive flight with antennae held upright, and last but not least, a true heathland specialist *Aristotelia ericinella*, 15 of this last species indicates a well-established colony here. Remarkably there were only two records of a moth that, in the past, has been incredibly abundant Green Oak Tortrix *Tortrix viridana*, both records from the two Swithland Wood visits. A species usually associated with upland moorland sites *Apotomis sauciana*, outside of Scotland is restricted to Bilberry, so the lush areas of its food plant at Stoneywell Wood are obviously suiting it when over 30 individuals were attracted to light towards the end of July. It has been pleasing to see the Crambinae or 'Grass moths' in better numbers than previous years. *Chrysotuechia culmella* was the most frequently and widespread reported species, *Agriphila straminella* was next with counts of over 100 at several sites. For sheer numbers Water Veneer *Acentria ephemerella* put everything in the shade with a total of over 415 counted from Swithland Wood and 400 in Bradgate Park. It was also recorded from many other sites, just not in such high numbers. Again Mint Moth *Pyrausta aurata* was frequently recorded although mainly from the vicinity of Quorn and Rothley. The only records of Rusty-dot Pearl *Udea ferrugalis* came from a Rothley garden at the end of July, Gold Triangle *Hypsopygia costalis* from Newfield Colliery and Large Tabby *Aglossa pinguinalis* from a Quorn garden. The Bee Moth *Aphomia sociella* was only recorded from two sites, Swithland Wood and Quorn with the only Plume Moth *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* noted from Swithland Wood.

On to the macro moths with Drinker *Euthrix potatoria* widespread with double-figure counts

from Fosse Meadows and Bradgate Park, both in July. A single record of the Traveller's Joy-feeding **Small Emerald** *Hemistola chrysoprasaria* was a very nice find for the recorders at Fosse Meadows. **Small Blood-vein** *Scopula imitaria* was only reported from Swithland Wood and **Dwarf Cream Wave** *Idaea fuscovenosa* only from a Quorn garden. The only record of **Silver Ground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata* was of a singleton mid-July from Quorn, probably just about at the end of its flight period. The intricately patterned **Phoenix** *Eulithis prunata* was reported from Swithland



Northern Spinach © Graham Finch

Wood and Fosse Meadows and **Northern Spinach** *Eulithis populata* was in good numbers with 35 at Stoneywell Wood. This really is a superb and very important site and although the areas of Bilberry are not huge they are certainly lush, together with large areas of various types of Heather plus the excellent woodland – let's hope it remains in this condition. Newfield Colliery turned up a single **Tissue** *Triphosa dubitata* in July, the larvae feed on Buckthorns, so there must be some close by, hopefully other Buckthorn specialists will show up at future sessions here. **Brimstone** *Opisthograptis luteolata* reached double-figures at several widespread sites and a solitary **Bordered Beauty** *Epione rependaria*, not recorded often outside of Rutland, was recorded at Fosse Meadows. Two pine-feeding species **Bordered White** *Bupalus pinaria* at Fosse Meadows and **Barred Red** *Hylaea fasciaria* at Swithland Wood were the only records of these.

Hawk-moths did quite well with singletons of **Privet Hawk-moth** *Hyloicus pinastri* from five



Privet Hawk-moth © Graham Finch

sites and **Pine Hawk-moth** from three sites. **Poplar Hawk-moth** *Laothoe populi* was the most frequently recorded plus daytime observations at six different sites of **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum*. **Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila elpenor* was widely reported but **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila porcellus* was only at Bradgate Park.



Elephant Hawk-moth © Steve Woodward

The lovely **Alder Kitten** *Furcula bicuspis* was only at Fosse Meadows but **Sallow Kitten** *Furcula furcula* was at Stoneywell Wood, Newfield Colliery and Browns Wood at Thornton. All our regular members of the Prominent family did well plus **Vapourer** *Orgyia antiqua* and **Yellow-tail** *Euproctis similis* numbers were up. Bradgate Park, Stoneywell Wood and a Quorn garden produced the only records of **White Satin** *Leucoma salicis* and, interestingly, **Black Arches** *Lymantria monarcha* was recorded from Fosse Meadows, well away from its recent colonies on the Charnwood Forest, where will it turn up next? Most of the **Eilema** Footman species fared very well, particularly **Dingy Footman** *Eilema griseola*,

Buff Footman *Eilema depressa* and **Common Footman** *Eilema lurideola* reaching totals of high 30s regularly.

The most frequently recorded macro was **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* with the highest single night's count of 76 at Rothley. Not a true moorland/heathland species but often found in this habitat **Autumnal Rustic** *Eugnorisma glareosa* though **True Lovers Knot** *Lycophotia porphyria* and **Heath Rustic** *Xestia agathina* are heathland specialities and all three species were attracted to light at the Newfield Colliery site, plus **Beautiful Yellow Underwing** *Anarta myrtilli* being found on a couple of visits here, really proving this is another jewel of a site we have.

A Rothley garden produced the only record of **Brindled Green** *Dryobotodes eremita* and **Flounced Rustic** *Luperina testacea* at just two members' gardens. Among other Autumnal species beginning to put in an appearance from mid-September were **Red-lined Quaker** *Agrochola lota*, **Brown-spot Pinion** *Agrochola litura*, **Lunar Underwing** *Omphaloscelis lunosa*, **Pink-barred Sallow** *Xanthia togata* all again



Pink-barred Sallow © Graham Finch

mainly recorded from members' gardens. **Old Lady** *Mormo maura*, **Bird's Wing** *Dypterygia scabriuscula*, **Brown Rustic** *Rusina ferruginea* and **Angle-striped Sallow** *Enargia paleacea* were all recorded, albeit sparsely at Swithland Wood.

Bradgate Park would not figure foremost as a site for damp habitat species but with

Cropston Reservoir next door and the marshy areas provided by the riverside vegetation, ponds and wet flushes are obviously enough to sustain several associated species including **Small Wainscot** *Chortodes pygminia* from the various sedges and **Ear** *Amphipoea oculatea* favouring grasses in such areas were recorded here in September. The huge **Bulrush Wainscot** *Nonagria typhae* and at the opposite end of the size scale **Pale Mottled Willow** *Paradrina clavipalpis* were at Newfields Colliery with **Marbled White-spot** *Protodeltote pygarga* from Swithland Wood and Fosse Meadows and **Gold Spot** *Plusia festucae* at Newfield Colliery.

The permanent Actinic trap at Bradgate Park was operated on 13 occasions, mainly in July and despite attracting 189 moths of 52 species, no species made it into double-figures. **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* came in with the highest totals of seven each on two nights, both in July. As with everywhere else the **Drinker** *Orgyia antiqua* was well represented, similarly for **Oak Hooktip** *Watsonalla binaria* and **Large Emerald** *Geometra papilionaria*, I still believe the latter species, when just emerged, is one of our most spectacular looking moths. **Pine Hawk-moth** *Hyloicus pinastri* was a nice find at the beginning of July, quite an impressive species. **Scalloped Oak** *Crocallis elinguaris* was recorded mid-July with not many records for this species from anywhere else. Most of the Footman species were in evidence, but only one record of **Ruby Tiger** *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* when three individuals were in recorded late July. Singletons of **Broom** *Ceramica pisi*, **Antler** *Cerapteryx graminis* and **Hedge Rustic** *Tholera cespitis*, the last two species feed on various grasses, the first species is not restricted to Broom but on an assortment of trees and low plants and also on Bracken. Singles of **Marbled Beauty** *Crypha domestica*, **Bird's Wing** *Dypterygia scabriuscula* and two **Straw Underwing** *Thalpophila matura* were recorded on solo nights but **Ear** *Amphipoea oculatea* was recorded on seven nights throughout July.

Many thanks to all who submitted records.

Graham and Anona Finch

BEETLES

All in all, not too dissimilar to the last quarter seven of us (five last quarter) managed significantly more individuals at 1,791 (1,002 last quarter) but quite a few less species at 109 (140 for last quarter) we visited 51 sites (102 last quarter) and made 257 records (278 last quarter). Carabids were predictably down, most being in a diapause state from late July through August with adults emerging from September onwards, although the 17 species of Ladybirds was a slight improvement plus an ongoing concentrated effort on dung beetles turned up ten species of *Aphodius*. The most frequently recorded species was **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*** recorded at ten widespread sites. I am sure someone could do something quite interesting with the statistics, I am also sure it would probably prove to be quite meaningless! Anyway, it just keeps us in touch with how we are doing.

We start the list off with just three species of water beetles, five *Gyrinus substriatus* from Bradgate Park, two *Illybius fuliginosus* attracted to MV light at Swithland Wood, and *Hydrobius fuscipes* from three different sites. *Carabus problematicus* and *C. violaceus* were found at three sites each and all sites on the Charnwood Forest. *Notiophilus palustris* was sieved from *Phragmites* debris at Narborough Bog and the only record of *Cicindela campestris* came from Bradgate Park. *Calathus rotundicollis* was at Bradgate Park and *Calathus fuscipes* was at Ketton Quarry, both mid-July, making a change from the usual *Pterostichus* species. A single and scarce *Platyderus depressus* was found at Narborough Bog late August and during a moth trapping session in Swithland Wood over 30 *Platynus assimilis* were found, although most of these were climbing trees. Two species attracted to MV light traps were *Amara apricaria* at Bradgate Park and *Bradycellus harpalinus* at Stoneywell Wood. *Calodromius spilotus* was found on an Alder trunk in Bradgate Park and *Philorizus melanocephalus* was found by sieving a pile of *Phragmites* reed cuttings at Narborough Bog. Singletons of *Sphaeridium scaraboides* and *Cercyon obsoletus* were collected from cow dung in fields adjacent to Misterton Marsh in late September. The only burying beetle reported was six *Nicrophorus*

vespilloides attracted to MV light at Bradgate Park late July. Very few members of the Staphylinidae were recorded this quarter but a few to mention were a solitary colourful shiny black and bright orange *Lordithon lunulatus* found under stones at Stoneywell Wood. A very productive session of sieving reed cuttings at Narborough Bog late in August turned up a single 'red-spotted' *Stenus bimaculatus*, one *Rugilus angustatus*, two *Lathrobium brunipes* and one *Quedius fumatus*. The only other staphs recorded were both from a garden in Ibstock, one *Quedius umbrinus* and one *Xantholinus linearis*. Sieving reed cuttings and grass cuttings plus compost heaps in various stages of decay, will usually produce plenty of Staphylinidae of all shapes and sizes, some are even quite colourful.



Graham Finch checks some good beetle habitat
© Steve Woodward

A solitary **Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipipedus*** was found by searching tree trunks at night in Swithland Wood. A little extra effort to record dung beetles was made in an effort to increase the few species that regularly turn up at MV light traps, usually in very small numbers. Apart from visitors to light, another method used was collecting dung in a bucket and flooding with water forcing just about everything living to float to the surface. This was fun and extremely productive and often produced quite impressive numbers. Most records of *Aphodius rufipes* were from light and cow dung, *Aphodius ater* was found in deer dung in Bradgate Park. Interestingly, the only records of *Aphodius rufus* were from sheep dung from Misterton Marsh and a field, off the

A47 near Tixover. The rather smart shiny black and red ***Aphodius fimetarius*** was only found at Misterton Marsh in cow dung. ***Aphodius prodromus*** and ***Aphodius contaminatus*** however, seemed to have no preference and was found widespread in the dung of horse, cow and sheep. ***Aphodius obliteratus*** was found at two sites both in sheep dung. Not in dung, ***Aphodius fossor*** is a huge species and probably the most common *Aphodius* to visit MV light. Another shiny black and red species and almost identical to ***A. fimetarius*** is ***Aphodius foetens*** but shows the last few segments underneath to be orange; the only record of this was at light in Swithland Wood. In the same Superfamily the *Scarabaeoidea* is the small **Brown Chafer *Serica brunnea*** recorded on two occasions in Swithland Wood, both at light.

The jewel beetle ***Agrilus biguttatus*** was recorded from Bradgate Park. The continuation of records for this species certainly suggests it has a strong foothold in the county; especially on the Charnwood Forest, the trick now is to find it elsewhere. Cantharidae were thin on the ground with only two species recorded. Approximately 40 ***Cantharis rustica*** were swept off low vegetation in Bradgate Park and was the only site for this species but ***Rhagonycha fulva*** was in lower numbers but much more widespread. A formidable predator of bark beetles, a single ***Thanasimus formicarius*** was found on an old stump at Bradgate Park. Three specimens of the infrequently found ***Anthocomus rufus***, a soft winged flower beetle belonging to the Malachiidae, were found in the reeds at Misterton Marsh. In the same family ***Axinotarsus marginalis*** were found in different areas of Bradgate Park from where it was added to the county list last quarter. Three specimens of the sap beetle ***Cychramus luteus*** were swept off low vegetation at Ellistown spoil banks in early July; there are only 19 previous records for this species.

Rhyzobius litura starts off the Ladybird list recorded at Misterton Marsh and Hick's Lodge whilst the similar but slightly larger ***Coccidula rufa*** was also found at Misterton Marsh. Singletons of **Pine Ladybird *Exochomus quadripustulatus*** were found at Leicester Arboretum and along Gartree Road in the city and the only record of **Orange Ladybird *Halzia***

sedecimguttata was again from the city at Jones Spinney. **22-spot Ladybird *Psyllbora vigintiduopunctata*** fared better, recorded from six widespread sites. Just two records of **Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quattuordecimguttata*** both again from the city, whereas **22-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*** was widely reported. The **Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*** was widely recorded but mainly in single-figures except for a count of 17 from a Quorn garden. Singles of **2-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata*** were at Abbey Park and Narborough Bog with **10-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata*** from Barkby Thorpe Lane. **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata***, although widely spread, were all in low numbers. Just two **Adonis Ladybird *Hyppodamia variegata*** were found in Evington Park whilst **16-spot Ladybird *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata*** were found at Stoughton Airfield and Misterton Marsh. We do not get that many records of **24-spot Ladybird *Subcoccinella vigintiquatuorpunktata*** so a singleton at Willowbrook Park was a nice find. Apart from the mentioned 7-spot Ladybird all other species were in single figures, five individuals being the next highest count!

Added new to the county in June this year, a quick search produced three specimens of the Nationally Notable B ***Variimorda villosa*** from Ketton Quarry, its only known site at present. Another species that seems to be more frequently recorded from light traps is ***Lagria hirta*** but a single specimen was found during the daytime in Swithland Wood and eight individuals were attracted to MV light at Stoneywell Wood. A single ***Omonadus floralis***, a member of the Anthicidae, Ant-like Flower Beetles was found on the washing line in an Ibstock garden.



Omonadus floralis © Graham Finch



Rutpela maculata comparison © Graham Finch

The Longhorn beetles were very thinly recorded, just three species in fact: ***Grammoptera ruficornis***, four individuals from Bradgate Park; ***Rutpela maculata***, a singleton from a Quorn garden, and a singleton of ***Pogonocherus hispidus*** from Lubcloud Farm. The Chrysomelidae did a little better with nine species recorded. Two similar species found on Aspen were ***Phratora laticollis*** and ***Phratora vitellinae*** both of these were at Hick's Lodge in August. Stripey, like a tiny humbug, a single ***Phyllotreta undulata*** was swept off low vegetation at Fosse Meadows in July. Good numbers of ***Crepidodera aurea*** were found at Leicester's Attenborough Arboretum in mid-September; all specimens were found on Aspen and Poplar.



Platystomos albinus © Graham Finch

Not quite matching the Ladybirds for species, 16 weevils were recorded. **Crampball Weevil** ***Platyrhinus resinosus*** was only recorded from Ketton Quarry as was its close relative the Nationally Notable B ***Platystomos albinus***, this being the only site for the last species. A species that needs to be looked for wherever Purple Loosestrife, its food plant, grows is ***Nanophyes marmoratus***, 25 individuals were found inhabiting a small patch of the food plant at Narborough Bog at the end of August. There are only three previous reliable records for this distinctive weevil in the database, F. Bouskell

Bardon Hill 1894, K.J.B. Clark Hallaton 1931 and C.W. Henderson Swithland Reservoir 1922-1972 (no specific date available). So a concentrated effort would prove very interesting and I am sure we could add many more records of this species. Tapping flower heads over a white tray or sheet is all that is needed or even into a white net, the weevils are dark with an orange band across the centre of the elytra, so very distinctive.

The dark and shiny metallic blue-black, ***Diplapion confluens*** was found by sweeping and searching Scentless Mayweed at Fosse Meadows and Newfield Colliery in July and August respectively. A great help with identifying many of the weevils is recognising the plants they are found on, many are restricted to a single species of plant or a particular plant family; Mallow is a good plant to begin with especially for finding members of the Apionidae. Most are small dark and have the characteristic downward curved rostrum or snout, but there are a lot of them - over 100 species in 25 subgenera so knowing the host plant relationship is vital. Three species were found on Mallow ***Aspidapion radiolus*** overall a dark but shiny blue/black with dark legs, ***Pseudapion rufirostre*** distinguished from previous species by having yellow legs and ***Malvapion malvae*** very distinctive being reddish brown with black or dark shoulders; all three species noted from a patch of roadside Mallow at Ratcliffe on the Wreake. ***Protapion nigritarse*** was found on *Trifolium* sp. at Newfield Colliery and the bright red ***Apion frumentarium*** was swept off docks at Fosse Meadow. Two searches of Meadow Vetchling at Hick's Lodge and Fosse Meadows produced ten and eight respectively of ***Oxystoma subulatum***. Looking like a large *Apion*, and a species associated with wet/damp habitat, a single ***Notaris acridulus*** was found at Misterton Marshes. Always a reliable candidate to be found on Figwort is ***Cionus scrophulariae*** these were easily found at Huncote Embankment but care needs to be taken as there are several other similar looking species on this plant. With just nine previous records, most recently in 1999 from Ketton Quarry, ***Zacladus geranii*** was found at Narborough Bog on Meadow Cranesbill. One to look for wherever Viper's Bugloss is found is ***Mogulones geographicus*** a Nationally Notable

B species, up to now its only site is Ketton Quarry. Only known from two previous records, the first by J P Bartlett pre-1848, this record states Leics., but no precise location and in 2004 Derek Lott recorded it at Ketton Quarry where it was found to be still present in July. If anyone knows of any easy accessible areas of Vipers Bugloss I would be very keen for the details, a focused effort could just turn up extra sites for it. Several *Curculio glandium* visited moth traps in Swithland Wood in September.



Isochnus sequensi leaf mine © Graham Finch

Added new to the county list, in early August the leaf mines of *Isochnus sequensi* were found in abundance - 'several thousand' on long-leaved willows at Misterton Marsh. Several mines were taken and the adults emerged about a month later, the same day mines were found at Ratby Burroughs, so I guess this is another species that we could put more dots on the map for. Last, but not least, a single **Ash Bark Beetle** *Hylesinus varius* was mysteriously found in an Ibstock garden. All in all, a superb effort by everyone with some very noteworthy species found, several of which will, I am sure, provide us with additional rewards from further searching next year now we have our eye in.

Many thanks to members for their records.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS

Hemiptera

The widespread and common **Green Shield-bug** *Palomina prasina* was recorded from Quorn, Beacon Hill, Ratby Burroughs, Ulverscroft NR, Measham, and Abbey Park, mostly singles. Several early instar nymphs were recorded from Barkby Thorpe Road and Hamilton in July and August.

Forest Bugs *Pentatoma rufipes* were less in evidence, mostly single adults from Bradgate Park, Goadby, Ethel Road, Jones Spinney, Stoughton Lane and Abbey Park, usually on Sycamore.

Hawthorn Shieldbugs *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* are usually later to reach maturity than some. A few early instar nymphs were recorded from a hedgerow at Barkby Thorpe Lane and Victoria Park where they were common on Dogwood in August. Dogwood is a much preferred food plant in urban areas.

Single **Birch Shieldbugs** *Elasmotethus interstinctus* were reported from Sweptstone and Groby. Nymphs were recorded from birch at Bede Island and at Evington Park in July, where there was dozens not only on birch but adjacent trees as well. Further adults in August were two at Hamilton Pools and four at Jones Spinney along Stoughton Lane.

The only **Gorse Shieldbug** *Piezodorus lituratus* records were from Ulverscroft NR where 30 adults and nymphs were clustering on birch leaves on 10 September.



Gorse Shieldbug © Steve Woodward

Fewer records of **Sloe Bug** *Dolycoris baccarum* were submitted this quarter, with a single swept from a meadow at Swithland and Stoughton Airfield, and four adults and two nymphs from Humberstone Heights in August.

Parent Bug *Elasmucha grisea* records are several adults on Birch at Evington Park on 25 July, a single at Hamilton Pools, with a final instar nymph at Aylestone Meadows in July.

Juniper Shieldbug *Cyphostethus tristriatus* records came from Scraftoft Lane, where nymphs were common on Lawson's Cypress in early September and Abbey Park where nymphs and adults were found on Lawson's Cypress, also in early September.

A single **Spiked Shieldbug** *Picromerus bidens* was found on rocks among grassland at Bradgate Park on 14 August. My impression is that this is probably a rather local species in our county.



Spiked shieldbug © Steve Woodward

Troilus luridus a final instar nymph on birch on 13 August at Hamilton Pools was the only record received for this species.

Bishops Mitre Aelia acuminata, two adults were noted on waste ground at Belgrave on 30 August.

The **Bronze Bug Eysarcoris venustissimus** was common on Hedge Woundwort in Spinney Hill Park on 14 August and two adults on Black Horehound in Abbey Park on 9 September.

The **Dock Bug Coreus marginatus** is now well established across the county and was reported this quarter from several compartments in Swithland Wood, Ratby Burroughs, Grace Dieu, Freeman's Lock, Aylestone Meadows, Willowbrook Park, and Leicester General Hospital grounds.

I have received an interesting report from Dave Budworth of the **Box Bug Gonocerus acutangulatus** being found in the county in the car park of County Hall where it is breeding and also a mile or so away at Beaumont Leys. As he says, quite a leap from Surrey but yet further evidence of some species moving further north; one to keep our eyes open for.

Of the Rhopalid bugs, a single specimen of **Chorosoma schillingi** was found at Bradgate Park - another coastal species that has spread north in recent years. It is still present at Stoughton Airfield. Another member of this group, the rather pretty **Corizus hyoscyami** has been spreading in the county the last year or so and was recorded from Swithland Wood on thistle on 14 August and at Quorn on the same date. One was swept from grassland at Humberstone Heights on 4 August and two were on a flowery embankment at Evington Park later in August. The only other Rhopalid

recorded was a single **Stictopleurus punctatonervosus** at Belgrave, on waste ground on 30 August.

An interesting stiltbug **Metatropis rufescens**, was on Enchanter's Nightshade at Swithland Wood by the northern car park. The larva feed on the developing flower buds.

Among the damsel bugs recorded were the **Marsh Damsel Bug Nabis limbatus**, several at Scraftoft Gorse, four at Stoughton Airfield in rough grassland in July, and **Broad Damsel Bug Nabis flavomarginatus**, many swept from grassland on Barkby Road, two nymphs in scrub, and two at Bede Island in the tree layer, all records in July.

Only one **Tree Damsel Bug Himacerus apterus** was recorded at Leicester Arboretum in August. Single nymphs of the **Ant Damsel Bug Himacerus mirimicoides** were recorded at Belgrave waste ground and Stoughton Airfield both in July; so named because the nymphs are very ant like, if only superficially.

The **European Chinchbug Ischnodemus sabuleti** was found to be common at Mountsorrel Marshes on 2 July.

Mirid Bugs

Among this vast group a few are noted here. **Liocoris tripustulatus** was found at Bradgate Park; **Lopus decolor** one swept from old quarry, an inhabitant of undisturbed grassland and **Stenodema calcarata** many in grassland and **Deraeocoris ruber**, one at Swithland Wood on 14 August.

Froghoppers include **Aphrophora alni** many at Swithland Wood and at Jones Spinney, Stoughton Lane, also at St. Peter's churchyard Sweptstone. Leafhoppers include **Ledra aurita** a denizen of old oak woodland and unique in having ear-like lobes on the pronotum, one was found in the deer sanctuary at Bradgate Park in a moth trap on 25 July. A single specimen of **lassus lanio** was recorded at Ulverscroft NR on 31 August.

Many **Cicadella viridis** were recorded from Bradgate Park, several from Hamilton Ponds, many in a marshy field at Aylestone Meadows and at Willowbrook Park five were by the pond. Lacebugs include **Dictyla convergens** - one was at Swithland Wood and **Spear Thistle Lacebugs**

Tingis cardui was at several sites in Bradgate Park and at Shawell churchyard. Many *Nabis flavomarginatus* were swept from grassland in Swithland Wood.

Diptera

As usual we will start with hoverflies but generally this has been a very disappointing season, as many of the Syrphids that grace our gardens have been very low in numbers or in some cases absent altogether. Despite having a long and warm September, they failed to show any significant improvement in numbers.

Platycheirus albimanus one was in a Newbold Verdon garden on 19 July; this species used to turn up regularly in my small city garden, but has not been present in recent years. *Platycheirus granditarsus* was noted at Swithland Wood and Bradgate Park where a female was prey of a robberfly.

The **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* was widely reported but generally in very small numbers. Most records refer to July: from Castle Gardens, Spinney Hill Park, Evington Park and also from Swithland Wood, Coombs Meadow - the LRWT's new nature reserve at Stathern, Chadwell, Eaton, Bradgate Park, Tixover and Ketton Quarry. The only spot where they were described as common was in a garden at Newbold Verdon on 19 July.

Singles of *Eupeodes luniger* were recorded from Bradgate Park, Ulverscroft NR, and Evington Park. There were very few records of *Syrphus ribesii*, singles at Victoria Park, Welford Road cemetery, Bradgate Park and Bardon Hill, with a few scattered singles elsewhere. A single *Syrphus rectus* female was identified by SFW at Bradgate Park on 20 August. Only one record of the common species *Syrphus vitripennis* was received, from Newbold Verdon on 17 July.

Specimens of *Sphaerophoria scripta* were reported from Mountsorrel, Swithland Wood meadow, Newbold Verdon, Castle Gardens, Humberstone Heights and Spinney Hill Park.

Only one record was received of the migrant species *Scaeva pyrastris* at Acresford Sandpit on 25 August. Just two records of *Xanthogramma pedissequum* this quarter from a backwater in Abbey Park on 1 July and Cotesbach on 17 August.

Single *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* were seen in scrub on Barkby Thorpe Road, a hedgebank in Victoria Park and waste ground at Belgrave.

Single specimens of *Sericomyia silentis* were again recorded from the Charnwood region at Ulverscroft NR and Charnwood Lodge NR both on 10 September.

Single *Cheilosia illustrata* were recorded at Ulverscroft Mill Farm and Donington le Heath in July.

Many *Rhingia campestris* were recorded from Ulverscroft NR, at Newbold Verdon, on Buddleja and at Ratby Burroughs in early September.

A single specimen of *Neoascia tenax* was noted at Hamilton Pools and several specimens of *Chrysogaster solstitialis* were observed foraging Wild Carrot on the margins of a meadow at Scraftoft Gorse.

Eristalis tenax was widely recorded but in smaller numbers than usual this quarter. *Eristalis pertinax* was also widely recorded this quarter but generally only singles from: Swithland Wood, Willesley Wood, Beacon Hill, Ulverscroft NR, Cropston, Aylestone Meadows and Quorn, where numbers were visiting Ivy blossom on 16 September.

Another common species *Eristalis arbustorum*, was reported from Donington le Heath, Swithland Wood meadow and Acresford Sandpit. A single male *Eristalis interruptus* was recorded at Swithland Wood meadow.

Myathropa florea were well in evidence this quarter, with several from Bradgate Park deer sanctuary, Swithland Wood, Cropston, common at Bede Island and one in Evington Park in late September.

Helophilus pendulus was widely recorded from 12 localities. The one in Abney Street back garden on Marjoram was a very small specimen. A male *Helophilus hybridus* was noted at Swithland Wood meadow.

Despite being recorded fairly frequently in the Soar valley and elsewhere usually, not a single specimen of *Helophilus trivittatus* was recorded anywhere, this quarter.

Single *Merodon equestris* were at Abbey Park, and my Abney Street garden in July.

Just one record of *Volucella bombylans* this quarter, from Abbey Park. *Volucella pellucens* was lower in numbers than most years and all records were of single specimens from Newtown Linford, Eaton, Quorn and Scraptoft Gorse in July, Victoria Park in August and the last record from Evington Park on 9 September. Records of single *Volucella inanis*, came from Swithland Wood and Ketton Quarry in July, Welford Road Cemetery and Castle Gardens in August, scarcer in urban areas than recent years. A better year for the impressive *Volucella zonaria*, with records from Ratby Burroughs, Charnwood Lodge NR, Loughborough, Castle Gardens and Spinney Hill Park, mostly on Buddleja, in contrast to *Volucella inanis* which prefers garden borders and mint beds for foraging.

Syritta pipiens records came from Eaton, Swithland Wood, Spinney Hill Park and several in my Leicester garden in August on Marjoram.

Xylota segnis was noted at Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood.

Other Diptera

Horse flies include the **Notch-horned Cleg** *Haematopota pluvialis*, a few were at Ulverscroft NR; **Twin-lobed Deerfly** *Chrysops relictus*, several were noted at Puddledyke on 23 July and perhaps of more interest was the finding of a specimen of the **Large Marsh Horsefly** *Tabanus autumnalis* perched on root plates in Bradgate Park by SFW and HI on 27 July.

Several robber flies were also recorded by SFW and HI mostly from the current ongoing survey in Bradgate Park. **Kite-tailed Robberflies** *Machimus atricapillus* were recorded as follows; Bradgate Park, one in mid-July, a mating pair on bench near Old John Wood and a single near Coppice Plantation. The only other record away from this site was a male at Ketton Quarry in July. The **Brown Heath Robberfly** *Machimus cingulatus* was also recorded from Bradgate Park, one on a rock on 16 July and another near Coppice Plantation in August. A single **Striped Slender Robberfly** *Leptogaster cylindrica* was recorded off Gaulby Lane Stoughton in late July. A single **Fleck-winged Snipefly** *Rhagio lineola* was recorded at Bradgate Park on 5 August.

Conopids

These are flies that, in the larval stage, are parasites of adult bees and wasps. *Physocephala rufipes* is a wood edge species and in appearance is not dissimilar to a sand wasp, one was seen in the rockery at Castle Gardens on 2 July and was still present on 12 July, another was seen Swithland Wood Meadow on 12 July and yet a third was seen briefly in the Leicester General Hospital grounds on thistle. A single *Conops quadrifasciata* was also seen on this thistle bed, on the same date; this species is usually the most common of the species generally encountered, but seemed particularly scarce this year. *Conops flavipes*, a similar species to the last, one was recorded at Shenton House in late July.

Only one soldier fly was recorded this quarter, the **Broad Centurian**, *Chloromyia formosa* at Welby Churchyard, with two in a Newbold Verdon garden on 19 July.

Tachina fera, a moth parasite, was reported from Swithland Wood and was common in PHG's Quorn garden in August. A single *Eriothrix rufomaculata* was on pond margins in Victoria Park and at Shenton – both in late August.

Chirosia betuleti, a small fly whose larva lives on ferns, was seen at Swithland Wood Meadow in July.

Finally, a few **Ragwort Seed Fly** *Botanophila seneciella* were making their “marsh mallows” on Ragwort discs at Bradgate Park on 22 July and at Tixover churchyard the next day.

Hymenoptera

Social Bees and Wasps

Not always easy to assess this group as a whole, as a few species range far and wide over the whole county and I am sure some of our less mobile members would be rewarded if they sent in a few records from their own gardens; records of particularly early nesting bees and the garden bumblebees would be more than welcome.

Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* is still the most common and widespread bumblebee, in this quarter they would be

mostly males and a few queens. FTS always sends in extensive records from his garden in Barlestone and reports them as frequent during July, with queens seen on a few days towards the end of the month. Less frequent during August, a single worker with pollen on the 7th, with single queens on the 12th, 15th and 18th. Only seen on a few days in September, a fresh worker on the 4th, single queens on the 22nd, 27th, 29th and 30th - quite exceptional numbers. Other records for this species, a young queen at Abbey Park canal searching for a nest site in a hedgebank on 5 September, dozens of males in Evington Park on 27 July foraging Lavender and Sedum. Other records came from Chadwell and Beacon Hill and males continued to be seen until mid-September.

Red-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius* were widely recorded. Numbers of workers tend to peak in July, but in my patch they were very low, with workers as follows: Belgrave waste ground, three foraging Mellilot; Aylestone Meadows, eight foraging Goat's-rue with one male; Barkby Thorpe Road, two in scrub, and Stoughton Airfield, five foraging Welled Thistle in July. Other workers were reported from Ulverscroft NR and near Welby. At Barlestone there were occasional sightings during July and August with queens on 18 and 24 July, 14 August, and two records for September, a male on the 4th, with a single queen on the 22nd. Other records submitted were from Coombs Meadows, Newbold Verdon, Nature Alive NR, Tixover, Swithland Wood, Wymeswold, Beacon Hill, Kimcote and Charnwood Lodge NR.

Tree Bumblebees *Bombus hypnorum* were less widely recorded this quarter from Newbold Verdon, Bradgate Park, young queens were observed from various quarters, others noted were at Barlestone with queens on 4 and 23 July, one on 31 August and a final one on 16 September. A young queen with full pollen baskets was observed at Spinney Hill Park on 18 July and a final one foraging Sedum in Evington Park on 9 September.

The **Early-nesting Bumblebee *Bombus pratorum***, as the name would suggest, has completed its breeding season by this quarter, however there may be evidence of a partial second brood on occasion; a very few singles

were reported in July from Glenfield Hospital gardens, a young queen was at Aylestone Meadows foraging Goat's-rue, and a worker was in MF's garden in Knighton. In August a male was in Victoria Park and a single queen was at Barlestone on 3 September.

The **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** appears to be going through a bad patch, the records, all in July, are as follows: Castle Gardens, two with full pollen baskets on 2nd; Spinney Hill Park, flower borders two on 3rd; Abney Street, one with full pollen basket on the 8th, and a few foraging Goat's-rue at Aylestone Meadows on the 9th. FTS reports from his garden at Barlestone that it was only found on three days during July, two on the 1st, three on the 11th and four on the 31st, and just two in August on the 7th. Our most intrepid recorders SFW and HI only managed one record, one in a Newbold Verdon garden on 19 July. Another of our common bees, the **White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*** is, I feel, not so common these days as we may suspect. The difficulty with this species is identifying the workers due to the similarity with *B. terrestris*, so workers are generally recorded as *B. terrestris/lucorum*, however queens and males are quite distinctive and it is interesting to make a comparison in contrast to the plethora of records at Barlestone for *B. terrestris*, the only July records for *B. lucorum* in this garden, were two males on 20th and just a few males until the end of the month. In August just two males were seen on 7th and one male on 14th. None was seen here in September. At Evington Park on 28 July at least two dozen *B. terrestris* were foraging Lavender and Sedum; in contrast just two males of *B. lucorum* were present. SFW and HI have decided that records of *Bombus terrestris/lucorum* are of limited value, so have not been recording them.

Common Carder Bumblebees *Bombus pascuorum*, were as usual widely recorded over the county this quarter, with odd ones still about to the end of September.

Cuckoo Bumblebees

Bombus vestalis, a cleptoparasite of *Bombus terrestris*, was the mostly widely recorded member of this group. One was seen in Chadwell churchyard in July, two in Spinney Hill Park foraging a flower border (it is much lower

in numbers at this site than in recent years), a female was in Victoria Park on 9 August, and at Barlestone it was frequent in July and occasional in August with a single female in September.

The only records of *Bombus rupestris* were two males at Barlestone on the 20 July with singles on the 21st, 23rd and 28th and a single at Beacon Hill on the last day of August. The only record of *Bombus sylvestris* was one foraging water mint in Victoria Park on 9 August. Two male *Bombus campestris* were seen in Spinney Hill Park on 2 August.

Hive bees *Apis mellifera* were recorded from Donington le Heath Manor House, Coombs Meadow, Chadwell churchyard, Newbold Verdon and Tixover churchyard. At Evington Park they were still foraging Ivy, many with full pollen baskets, on 22 September.

Social Wasps

The **Common Wasp** *Vespula vulgaris*, was widely recorded this quarter, with numbers gradually increasing during September when Ivy blossom came it to flower. At Bradgate Park two were noted scraping wood from a gatepost on 12 July, presumably for nesting purposes. Nests were still active to the end of the quarter.

German Wasp *Vespula germanica* records came from the Charnwood Forest region, Bradgate Park, Woodhouse and Beacon Hill, where two were noted on Heather with prey on 31 August. September records came from Cropston and Grace Dieu.

The **Norwegian Wasp** *Dolichovespula norvegica* was recorded at Swithland Wood on 30 July and a queen **Median Wasp** *Dolichovespula media* was at Hamilton Park was attempting to remove paper from a notice board on 4 August.



Tree Wasp © Steve Woodward

A queen of **The Tree Wasp** *Dolichovespula sylvestris* was observed with five males in a (mating?) scrummage at Beacon Hill summit rocks on 14 August.

Hornet *Vespa crabro* was recorded at: Asfordby Hill, six in a moth trap at Bradgate Park, Ulverscroft NR, two hunting insects over Heather on Beacon Hill, Ulverscroft NR, Ratby Burroughs, Cropston and Quorn. Away from the forest region, a male was observed swooping on hive bees foraging Sedum in Evington Park and taking one to a nearby tree to devour.

Howard Bradshaw

Solitary Bees and Wasps

The report for 2014 will appear in Heritage 216

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

There are one or two interesting records this quarter. The record for Monkshood *Aconitum napellus* is interesting and also topical as there was a newspaper report recently of a man being killed by this plant. The whole plant is very poisonous and the victim apparently had a cut in his hand and had handled the Monkshood with his bare hands. This is a plant which is commonly grown in gardens for its beautiful flowers but it is recommended that it should not be grown where there are children.

The Corn Marigold was once quite common but is not seen so much these days. In the past it was a serious weed causing laws to be passed to destroy it whenever it appeared. In the 13th century in Scotland, if a farmer allowed even a single plant to seed in his crops he was fined a sheep! It is decreasing throughout Europe and is described as vulnerable.

Plants of Interest This Quarter

Monkshood *Aconitum napellus*: a species native to southwest England but cultivated as an ornamental throughout the country and very rare in Leicestershire, a specimen was located on a roadside verge, St. Catherine's, Charley.

Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta*: about ten plants were still in flower at Spinney Drive, Quorn, the remnants of a larger patch which has been here for 50 years. This is a plant which is much less common than it used to be.

Corncockle *Agrostemma githago*: Found at Beacon Hill, near Woodhouse, this plant is a very rare native but is increasingly being found as a result of the use of birdseed. However, in this case, the plants which I have seen appear to differ very slightly from the wild plants. In particular, the sepals are shorter.

Soapwort *Saponaria officinalis* fl.pl: a large colony was noted on the roadside embankment at Wanlip Lane, Wanlip. This is a plant which is found quite often at the side of country roads. It is an archaeophyte, which means it was introduced before 1492. The double form is commonly known as a 'Bouncing Bet'. The common name for Soapwort is derived from its use as a soap which is produced when the leaves are soaked in water.

Small Balsam *Impatiens parviflora*: first recorded in the 1933 *Flora*, this is another introduction which, although it is not common, occurs occasionally in wet shady places. Found at Misterton on the roadside verge near a lake,

Bucks-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*: several plants were present on the A50 roundabout at Glenfield. A British native that is common at the coast and often found inland on sandy and gravelly soils.

Henbit Dead-nettle *Lamium amplexicaule*: an interesting little plant which is not very common. It is quite often found together with the Cut-leaved Dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum*. Noted at Kirby Muxloe Castle where it is frequent at this location.



Henbit Dead Nettle © Steve Woodward

Basil Thyme *Clinopodium acinos*: Another uncommon little plant, often found at the sides of railway lines. Found at the Edge of track near Ketton Quarry NR.



Clustered Bellflower © Steve Woodward

Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*: a plant normally found only in the northeast of the county on limestone and often cultivated, was seen in St. Luke's Churchyard, Tixover.

Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia*: Another plant confined to alkaline soils and usually in woodland, one fruiting stem was found in Willesley Churchyard, near Ashby de la Zouch and only one plant seen at Grace Dieu Wood, but difficult to find among nettles.

Corn Marigold *Glebionis segetum*: A few plants were present on the roadside verge near the canal bridge at Harby. This is a weed of arable land which is now much less common than it was.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records were also received for:

Fungi, lichens, mosses, liverworts, woodlice, spiders and harvestmen, mites and ticks, centipedes, millipedes, barkflies, aphids, psyllids, springtails, ants, galls, lacewings, caddisflies, slugs and snails.

WEATHER

July was a warm and sunny month once again. Afternoon temperatures were logged at 24°C with night time temperatures being recorded at 13.5°C. The mean temperature was recorded as 18.7°C. This July ranks the eighth warmest in the last 100 years, while last year we were third. The warmest ever July was 2006 when we had a mean temperature of 20.5°C. It was also a dry month with much of the rain

falling in showers and thunderstorms. Jim Lofts at Nanpantan recorded 57 mm of rain for the month which was 5% down while my total of 43 mm was 25% below my normal total. Rain only fell on just 12 days in the month. It was a sunnier month than usual with 232 hours being recorded at Mountsorrel. This is 25% higher than normal. It was a breezy month at times with the maximum gust being recorded on the 19th at 31 mph but the average overall speed was just 3.2 mph for the month.

The month began dry but between the 4th and the 10th there were some heavy showers around. The coolest nights of the month were registered on the 1st and 2nd at just 8°C. After the 10th it began to get much warmer and drier and by mid-month it was getting hot. The sunniest day was recorded on the 15th when 14 hours of sun were logged. The heat first peaked on the 18th when the temperature reached 30°C in Loughborough but inevitably the heat and growing humidity sparked off thunderstorms. These were most intense on the 18th and 19th when they produced 21 mm in Mountsorrel and Jim reported 13 mm in a violent rain squall on the 19th at 5pm. He estimated winds to have reached 30 mph and my automatic equipment was in agreement with him. After a couple of cooler days the heat built again when temps reached 30°C once again on the 26th. The remainder of the month remained mostly fine. The good weather of July was down to the jet stream running north of the British Isles putting us in the warm side of the jet. High pressure was mostly in control but not as intense as last year. So, a good summer so far with June also being in the top ten.

After the warmth of June and July, August brought us some very different weather. August was the coolest in Leicestershire since 1993. Afternoon temperatures averaged just 19.7°C, nearly 2 °C below normal, while night time temperatures were logged at 11.3°C, 0.5°C below the norm. The average of 15.5°C was nearly 1.5°C below what you would expect for the final month of summer. Rainfall was above average with 71 mm being recorded at Mountsorrel which was 10% above normal. Jim Lofts at Nanpantan logged 98 mm at his site which catches most of the showers being to the east of Beacon Hill. The sunshine total of 169

hours was close to average. Air pressure was generally low for the month. Winds were predominately westerly and were quite strong at times. They averaged 5 mph which was the highest figure since March with a maximum gust of 34 mph on the 10th.

Ex-hurricane Bertha was the key reason why the weather suddenly changed in August. The first week of the month actually continued the warm and sunny weather we had mostly experienced in June and July. On the 6th I recorded 24°C while Jim logged 25°C. Nights were mild too and on the second I recorded my warmest night of the month at 15°C. Bertha arrived on Sunday 10th and although its winds had moderated across the Atlantic it still had some very active weather fronts. During the Sunday morning 25 mm fell at Mountsorrel with 31 mm being recorded at Loughborough for the day. This represents half the usual rainfall total for the month. As Bertha moved away to Scandinavia a cold north wind developed and as high pressure developed to the west a very cold arctic air stream spread south. After the 11th 21°C was only reached on three days and most days had temperatures of 18°C more than 3°C below normal. The coldest day was the 25th when just 15°C was the maximum and, you guessed it, this was bank holiday Monday. Another 25 mm fell on this day too and these two rain events contributed to more than half the month's rainfall. Nights were cool too with my lowest temp of 6.4°C being recorded on the 20th with Jim recording a similar temperature on the 25th.

So, in the end a disappointing end to what was a fine summer. Despite the cool August average temperatures for the whole season June - August were more than 1°C above normal. Indeed temperatures exceeded 21°C on 50 days out of the 90 which is quite impressive and looking at the whole season there was a great deal of fine warm weather that without Bertha's intervention could have carried through August too!

September was the driest month since 1959 recorded in Leicestershire and at Nanpantan at Jim Loft's station it was the driest month he has ever logged since he started his Nanpantan recordings in 1967! Only 4.8 mm fell at his station all month and only a fraction more was

observed at Mountsorrel - 5.2 mm. Both of these figures are less than 10% of average. Rain only fell on five days in the month with 25 days being dry. It was also a warm month. Afternoon temperatures were logged at 20°C nearly 2°C above normal with the warmest day being recorded on the 18th at 23°C at both sites. Night time temperatures averaged 10.6°C more than 1°C above normal. The warmest nights I recorded were on the 5th and 29th when temperatures only fell to 13.8°C while the coldest night was the 21st/22nd when temperatures dropped to 4°C. The mean of 15.3°C made it the warmest September since 2006. Surprisingly, sunshine figures of 130 hours were a fraction below normal due to large amounts of cloud sometimes trapped in the high pressure systems. The entire month was dominated by high pressure with rain-bearing Atlantic fronts diverted to the north and south of the British Isles. Sometimes warmer and drier air came from the south and it was on one of these days on the 8th that we recorded 11.8 hours of sunshine. Other days a very cloudy and misty air mass dominated, leaving us mild but humid. Another result of the high pressure was the very light winds that affected us throughout the month. The average wind speed on my automatic station registered just 2 mph for September making it the calmest month I have ever recorded. By the month's end the lawns resembled the Sahara desert and we were desperate for a bit of rain. The high pressure has given way as October has begun and welcome rain has finally fallen but that is next month's story!

Phil Morrish

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We are grateful to them all.

Records for the fourth quarter of 2014 should be sent by 15 January 2015 to:

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