



LOUGHBOROUGH IN BLOOM

The civic gardeners and park keepers do a great job in Loughborough (Queen's Park looked fantastic this summer) but this article is about the effort to record the 'wild' plants in our town. Local botanists are working hard to update the distribution of plants for a new national atlas – a project promoted by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). The emphasis is on wild plants, but all species that have found their way into 'wild' places are within the scope of the survey. Three LNC members have been particularly active in the Loughborough area: Steve Woodward, Helen Ikin and Hazel Graves.

The recording unit is the tetrad, a grid square measuring 2x2 km, and the objective is to make a complete list of vascular plants (flowers, trees, grasses, ferns, etc.) for each one. The town is spread across nine tetrads, centred on SK51J. Steve and Helen have made a point of visiting all of them (see map), though none has been covered thoroughly. Hazel, accompanied by Sara Botterell, has concentrated on a couple of adjacent squares (SK52L Stanford and SK52R Hoton). Of course, any unusual plants are recorded with better precision, typically a 100 m grid square. Details of all records go the BSBI via the Vice-county Recorder.

Included in the nine tetrads are well-known sites of botanical importance: Loughborough Big Meadow, the River Soar, Burleigh and Holywell Woods, The Outwoods and Tom Long's Nature Reserve (formerly known as "Meadow") in Quorn. In this article, however, I will draw attention to plants at other sites, or ordinary places like roadside verges that barely qualify as 'sites'.

Town centre streets support a community of weeds, many of which are predictable: including Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Petty Spurge *Euphorbia peplus*, Black Medick *Medicago lupulina* and Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens* in the pavement cracks. Less familiar plants that are common (or increasing) in Loughborough are Shaggy Soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata*, Canadian Fleabane *Conyza canadensis* and Eastern Rocket *Sisymbrium orientale*. In disturbed, weedy places

IN THIS EDITION

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

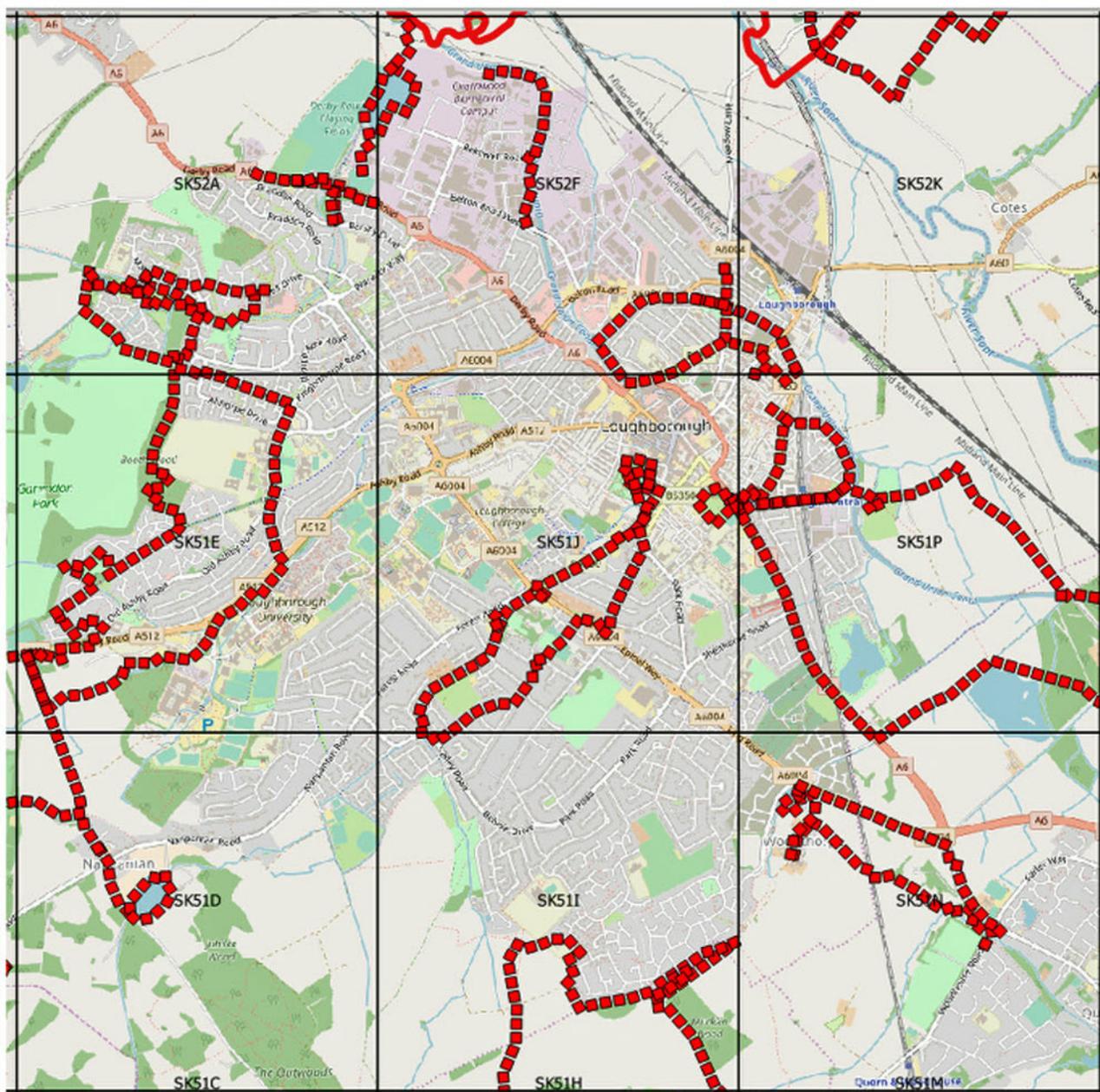
- Mammals Page 3
- Birds Page 4
- Reptiles and Amphibians Page 9
- Fish (including Crayfish) Page 10
- Dragonflies and Damselflies Page 11
- Butterflies Page 11
- Moths Page 13
- Beetles Page 16
- Other Insects Page 20
- Plants and Ferns Page 23
- Other Records Page 25
- Weather Page 25
- Acknowledgements Page 27

we have encountered Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna*, Borage *Borago officinalis*, Henbit Deadnettle *Lamium amplexicaule* and, in March 2017, one rosette of Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*.

The influence of winter salting of roads has been mentioned before in *Heritage* – these ‘seaside’ plants are not uncommon on kerbs: Buck’s-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*, Danish Scurvy-grass *Cochlearia danica* and Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia distans*. We have noted other kerbside plants (not related to salt) including Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis*, Marsh Cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum* and Narrow-leaved Pepperwort *Lepidium ruderales*.

Colonisation of local walls usually involves several ferns in the genus *Asplenium* (Quorn seems particularly good for them), Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica* and Ivy-leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis*. Less frequent plants that we have seen on walls include Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites*. Odd plants of the latter species have also turned up on pavements in Nicholson Road, King Street and in some abundance on the concrete banks of the Black Brook near Derby Road.

Closely-mown grass is a good place to look for Speedwells - Thyme-leaved, Wall, Germander and Slender *Veronica serpyllifolia*, *arvensis*, *chamaedrys* and *filiformis*. I am not sure that the keepers of the bowling green in



Routes taken by Steve and Helen for BSBI Atlas 2020 recording, 2016-2017. Each square is a tetrad, 2 x 2 km of the national grid. Map produced in QGIS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA.



Field Madder © Steve Woodward

Queens Park appreciate the following, noted in August 2017: Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* and Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*. A small lawn (complete with a picnic table) at the petrol station on the A512 at Snell's Nook Lane has attracted us twice and produced interesting plants! Grassland in 'amenity' areas is usually very dull, but among the plants we found here were Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, Spreading Meadow-grass *Poa humilis* and Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*. On a second visit we noticed the large dog lichen *Peltigera hymenina* around a flower bed.

Our list of wetland and aquatic plants is short – probably because we have been elsewhere in late summer. Like most canals these days, the Grand Union appears to have a poor flora. We hoped that a walk around Nanpantan Reservoir (28 Sept 2017) would add some, but we were disappointed. On the other hand, the recently-disturbed grassy banks yielded a fairly long list of common and not-so-common weeds – Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare* was a surprise. Not far from the reservoir, in the hedge by a footpath connecting Nanpantan to the Outwoods (near the football ground) Hazel found Dwarf Elder *Sambucus ebulus*. The fruits are held erect, unlike the common Elder.

There are plenty of common and easy species missing from our tetrad lists. As these nine squares are where most LNC members live, they really ought to be well-recorded! I encourage all members to have look around their neighbourhood and send in records to boost the totals.

Steve Woodward

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

Records submitted for *Heritage* have been checked as far as possible by the writers of the various sections. They have not all been formally validated by County Recorders (as this is not practical on a quarterly basis). Full details of the records are submitted to Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre LRERC, County Hall, Glenfield, Leics. LE3 8RA, either as spreadsheets or as scans of paper records. Once validated, selected records will be added to the LRERC database and made accessible to the public.

The original records are archived. All of the older paper records have been deposited at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leics. LE18 2AH, accession number DE9392. Most pre-2011 paper records are also available on a disc (see *Heritage* 205). Recent paper records will reside with Helen Ikin, until a batch is ready to go to the Record Office.

MAMMALS

A **Hedgehog** was seen on the verge of a busy road in Rothley village just a few feet from the traffic on 28 April. A large one was crossing Belton Street in Shepshed at 7 am in mid-May. Another large adult was spotted in Mountsorrel at the end of May at 9 pm. One, crossing a road in Groby, ran when a car approached which seems a better strategy than rolling into a ball and getting flattened! Four more not-so-lucky hedgehogs were squashed on roads in Woodhouse, Newtown Linford and on Park Road and Derby Road in Loughborough. PJD saw one or two every night throughout the quarter at her garden feeding station in Quorn and the camera trap recorded three adults Hedgehogs together on two nights at the end of April.

Moles were active in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter but mainly near the stream – worms may have moved towards the damp soil of the stream in the dry weather. Molehills were recorded at Morcott cemetery, Loughborough, Syston playing field, Stonesby, The Drift, Netherseal, Hambleton, Oakham, Owston, Castle Hill Park at Anstey, Walton Thorns, Barton in the Beans Baptist churchyard,

Belvoir, Barkestone Wood, Tilton, Brooksby, Roundabout Spinney near Leicester Forest West where there were 12 mole traps set and Vowe's Gorse near East Norton.

A small **Bat**, probably one of the three Pipistrelle species, was flying around PJD's house on Barrow Road, Quorn in late June and the uncommon Leisler's Bats have been identified in Woodhouse Eaves.

Brown Hares were seen at Coston, Shenton, Swinford Corner and four in Saxelbye Park. At the Allerton Project farm at Loddington there was a hare in a very nice species-rich meadow and another on the Belton road nearby. Live **Rabbits** were noted at Bradgate Park, Woodhouse Eaves, near Cropston Reservoir, Swithland, Muston, Netherseal, Measham Brick Factory, Shawell, Shenton, Belvoir Castle, Tilton Cutting NR, Brooksby, Morcott, Wing, Roundabout Spinney, Thurlaston Lodge Farm, Lutterworth, Swinford Corner, Wymeswold Lodge and signs – burrows or droppings - were seen at Vowe's Gorse, Wymondham, Oakham Canal, Catthorpe, M1 Junction 23a services and on land around Gipsy Lane Claypit in Leicester.

We have only two records of **Grey Squirrel** – one at Grimston and SFW saw another swimming in the River Lin holding its head high above the water unlike a Water Vole. They are, of course, so common that we do not record them very often.

A **Wood Mouse** was caught on PJD's garden camera trap at Quorn and another may have been dinner for a Grey Heron by the brook at Quorn but it was too far away to be sure that it was not a young rat. There was a dead **Brown Rat** on the road at Shellbrook near Ashby de la Zouch on 26 April.

A male **Red Fox** visited DAP's Swithland garden most mornings through the quarter and he noted foxes crossing roads in Long Whatton and Cropston. PJD's camera trap recorded foxes in her Quorn garden on several occasions in all months of the quarter and she saw one crossing Wood Lane at mid-day on 26 June.

A **Stoat** was working the borders in DAP's garden on 22 and 28 April and a Stoat was seen crossing the Rothley to Cropston road on 10 May and another near the Grey Lady restaurant at Newtown Linford on the afternoon of 11 May

and yet another on a road verge in Swithland on 24 April.

A live **Badger** was crossing the road near Cropston Leys one evening in late April and road kills are reported from Frisby, Freeby, Rocliffe, Swithland, Shepshed, Allextan, Twycross, Swinford, Ab Kettleby, Sinope, Sharples Hill and Groby (the last two both cubs). Dung pits and diggings were seen at Loughborough Moors, Swithland Wood, Newtown Linford, Morcott, Newbold, Belvoir, Tilton and Launde.

There was a dead **Muntjac** on Warren Hill in early April – this was a young male which had not yet grown antlers and the long canine teeth were still quite small. Live ones were noted at Mountsorrel Common and Groby Pool and the characteristic tiny slots were seen in damp ground at Loughborough Moors and in Chestnut Wood near Moira. A live one was crossing Brand Lane one morning in mid-May. DAP disturbed three **Fallow Deer** does crossing a road near Oakley Wood at 9 am on 1 May. SFW saw a **Roe Deer** in the Bradgate car park at Newtown Linford at 8 am one morning in early June – it moved on to the lawn in front of the Bradgate Park café. A female Roe with a well grown youngster popped out of Rushey Fields Lane at Woodhouse one night in early April at about 10 pm, then retreated back up the lane. There are probably more Roe Deer about than we realise. They are very shy and are often solitary unless they have young.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Mute Swan nests were noted at the usual waters but not many cygnets were reported. At Kelham Bridge no eggs hatched and this could have been the case at other sites. The maximum number of swans together was 32 at Syston on 17 April. A **Whooper Swan** was found along the dam wall at Stanford Reservoir on 6 May.

There were surprisingly few reports of **Canada Geese** with not many breeding records although there were many young birds at Hicks Lodge in May. **Greylag Geese** goslings were found at Cropston Reservoir and Groby Pool, 28 adults were seen at Cropston on 11 April and 45 at Charnwood Water the previous week.

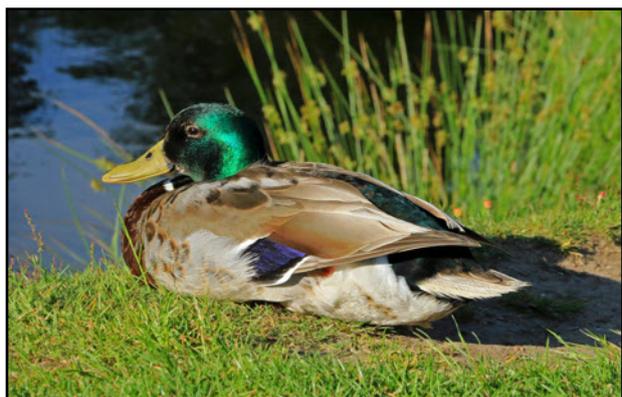


Mute Swan © Steve Woodward

Between one and three **Egyptian Geese** were around the area and all records could refer to the same birds. Two flew over Thornton Reservoir on 2 April and two were at Charnwood Water two days later. Three were at Barrow upon Soar in late April and two at Pillings Lock the following week.

Two **Shelduck** were at Wanlip Meadows on 5 April. A **South African Shelduck** put in an appearance at Cropston Reservoir on 28 and 29 April.

Up to ten **Mandarin** were around Cropston Reservoir throughout the quarter; the only others seen were at Swithland Reservoir where there were four on 28 April and five the following day. In spite of all the sightings only one young bird was seen. A **Wood Duck** was at Wanlip Meadows on 27 April. A single **Wigeon**, was in Bradgate Park grounds in early April and early May. On 6 May one was at Wanlip Meadows. **Gadwall** were noted at the Charnwood waters with youngsters found at Cropston Reservoir. Eight **Teal** were still at Swithland Reservoir on 8 April and two still at Thornton Reservoir on 23 April. Eighteen **Mallard** was surprisingly the highest number recorded, at Cropston Reservoir on 7 May, but young were generally widespread. A drake



Mallard © Steve Woodward

Pintail was at Cossington Meadows on 5 April and a pair put in an appearance at the Hermitage Lake, Whitwick on 1 May but was gone the following day. **Shoveler** were observed at Groby Pool, Longmoor Lake and Swithland Reservoir where there were four pairs on 8 April.

The only **Pochard** seen during the quarter were two males at Groby Pool on 3 May and a male at Swithland Reservoir three days later. **Tufted Duck** breed later in the year but adult birds were seen at all the suitable waters with 28 a maximum number at Groby Pool on 1 April. A drake **Scaup** was at Swithland Reservoir on 4, 5 and 6 May and a pair of **Goldeneye** was at the same site on 12 April.

Red-legged Partridges were only found at three sites with only two birds at each. There were at least two **Grey Partridge** records, two in Bradgate Park on 5 April and two at Quorn on 6 May. **Pheasants** were seen at half a dozen locations but no more than two birds.

All **Cormorant** records apart from fly-overs were from Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of four on 30 June. **Little Egret** observations out-numbered Cormorants but again the majority came from Cropston Reservoir with a maximum of five on 25 June. Others were seen at Quorn, Anstey and Knighton Park, Leicester. There was a regular visit by a **Heron** to gardens at Cropston and Loughborough in April and a maximum number of 11 birds was at Cropston Reservoir on 25 June. A **Glossy Ibis** was at Cossington Meadows on 21 April.

Pairs of **Little Grebe** were noted at seven different sites but young were only seen at Kelham Bridge where one pair raised four young. Up to 20 **Great Crested Grebes** were at Cropston Reservoir and two displaying pairs were at Groby Pool. No young were reported.

Red Kites were seen in around 15 different widespread areas usually, single birds, but five were together at Barkestone on 5 April. There were fewer reports of **Sparrowhawks** than Red Kites; these were mainly rapid fly-bys past the observer with the occasional garden visit. **Buzzards** seem to continually increase in numbers with around 50 observations from all around the area. Ten were seen over Saltby Airfield, 13 over Swithland Reservoir and 20 over

Barkestone, all in the first week of April. A lone **Osprey** flew east over Kelham Bridge on 6 April.

There were more **Kestrel** reports than of late with observations from all around the area. Breeding was suspected at Cropston Reservoir. Two **Hobby** were flying over Swithland Reservoir on 24 April and single birds were seen in the same area early in the quarter. Others were seen over Bradgate Park and over a Loughborough garden. Most of the many **Peregrine** reports were from Leicester Cathedral where the first clutch on the artificial nest site failed but a second clutch was laid. All other records were of hunting birds, usually around the Charnwood reservoirs.

Moorhen and **Coot** were, as usual, under-recorded; the maximum number for Moorhen was four and 21 for Coot. **Water Rail** was only noted twice at Groby Pool in April and Cossington Meadows once in May.

Oystercatchers with a maximum of three were to be found at Wanlip, Cossington, Cropston, Swithland and Longmoor but no breeding pairs were mentioned. Three **Black-winged Stilts** were found at Stanford Reservoir on 20 April. The same site held ten **Little Ringed Plovers** on the same day. A juvenile at Cropston Reservoir on 25 June could have fledged on site. All other records came from Swithland Reservoir where at least one pair appeared to be nesting. During late April and May up to three **Ringed Plover** were intermittently at Swithland Reservoir. What was probably the same **Grey Plover** was seen at Swithland Reservoir and Cossington Meadows on 5 and 6 May. The only suggestion of breeding **Lapwing** was near Ashby where a pair seemed to be displaying and near Staunton Harold where a bird appeared to be sitting on a nest on 12 June. Post breeding flocks of 22 birds at Cropston Reservoir and 90 at Cossington Meadows were seen at the end of June.

A **Sanderling** was at Stanford Reservoir on 6 May. **Dunlin**, some in summer plumage, were at Swithland Reservoir and Cossington Meadows in early May with a maximum count of eight at the former site.

The only **Snipe** of the quarter were ten at Wanlip Meadows on 21 April. A **Woodcock** was roding at Blakeshay Wood early morning on 6

May and at dusk on 16 June there were at least six passes at South Wood, Staunton Harold.

A single **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Stanford Reservoir on 20 April. More unusually a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was seen at Swithland Reservoir for two days from 30 April. On the same dates up to four **Whimbrel** were noted at Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs. The only **Curlew** of the quarter was one flying over Swithland Reservoir on 9 April.

There was a good passage of **Common Sandpiper** with birds reported at most of the reservoirs and wetlands. There were five at Cropston Reservoir on 28 April. A **Greenshank** was at Stanford Reservoir together with a **Green Sandpiper** on 6 May and a **Wood Sandpiper** at Cossington Meadows five days later. Wanlip and Cossington Meadows had one or two **Redshank** on a few days but there was no suggestion of breeding. A summer plumaged **Turnstone** was at Swithland Reservoir on 8 May.



Lesser Black-backed Gulls © Jim Graham

The only gulls of any note were 37 **Black-headed Gull** at Swithland Reservoir on 8 April and 39 **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Cropston Reservoir on 7 May.

Up to three **Black Tern** were at either Swithland or Cropston Reservoirs between 30 April and 11 May. **Common Tern** were probably breeding at Longmoor Lake and Hicks Lodge. The most birds seen together were 22 at the Cropston Reservoir on 29 June. Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs had the occasional, nine maximum, **Arctic Tern** during the same period.

The most **Stock Dove** seen together was five at Cropston on 18 April along with 300 **Woodpigeon**. All **Collared Dove** records were from gardens with two being the maximum

count. A flock of 100 **Feral Pigeon** was noted in Leicester on 19 April.

Cuckoo were very thin on the ground with birds only reported from eight locations, all singletons.

Barn Owl were at Cropston, Cossington and Grace Dieu. **Little Owl**, apart from a garden bird at Cropston, were only noted in Bradgate Park. The same Cropston garden had two **Tawny Owl** on 26 May and others were only heard at Swithland Reservoir and Tilton Cutting. An excellent record of **Long-eared Owl** came from an undisclosed site where one adult and at least one young were heard on 6 May.

The first **Swift** of the year was over Sence Valley Forest Park on 15 April. By mid-May numbers had increased and 100 were seen over Groby Pool on the 13th and 120 over Cropston Reservoir on 19th.

Two **Kingfisher** were present throughout April at Quorn Brook and Buddon Brook. Two were seen together at Diseworth and others observed at half a dozen different sites.



Green Woodpecker © Jim Graham

Green Woodpecker were found in around 20 different sites with seven seen in Bradgate Park, including two at a nest hole on 11 April. There is one report of a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, unfortunately a little further away at Morcott, Rutland. Surprisingly there were only half as many **Great Spotted Woodpecker** records as Greens, only two away from Charnwood and only two feeding in gardens.

The most **Magpie** seen together was nine at Knighton Park, Leicester and Bradgate Park had three **Jays** on 22 April. The maximum number of **Jackdaws** mentioned was 22 but I think there have been around 80 roosting on Hugglescote Church throughout the quarter. The area around

Melton provided all the **Rook** records with five rookeries with from 13 to 70 nests. Twelve was the maximum number of **Crow** seen together. **Raven** reports appear to be fewer this quarter with only ten very widespread sightings with no more than three birds at any site.

Goldcrest were found in around ten sites with never more than four together. The most **Blue Tit** amongst many seen was eight in Knighton Park, Leicester which also held the most **Great Tit**, six on 13 May. Only one **Marsh Tit** was seen, at Groby Pool on 1 April and no **Willow Tit** was mentioned. **Coal Tit** were seen nesting at Cropston Reservoir and young birds were seen in a Loughborough garden; most others were noted in the Bradgate Park area.

Singing **Skylark** were heard and seen in around 15 different areas, the majority of which were in good breeding habitat. Most numbers were in low single figures but 13 were located at Queen Elizabeth II Wood, Normanton-le-Heath.

Sand Martin were noted over the reservoirs at Cropston and at Thornton where there were around 150 on 13 April. The artificial wall at Kelham Bridge was again successful but the one at Sence Valley less so. **Swallow** were widespread but with little breeding confirmation. In late April up to 200 were regularly over Cropston Reservoir. The first **House Martin** reported was from Groby Pool on 7 April. Areas of Cropston had a number of nests and it was good to find nests on a new estate housing in Coalville.



House Martins © Jim Graham

The ever more common **Cetti's Warbler** was heard regularly throughout the quarter at Groby Pool, Watermead Park, Wanlip and Cossington Meadows and Kelham Bridge where a young

bird was ringed. The most **Long-tailed Tit** seen together was ten in a Loughborough garden.

There were around 30 different sites where **Chiffchaff** could be heard with a maximum of ten at Queen Elizabeth II Wood, Normanton-le-Heath. This species outnumbered **Willow Warbler** by three to two the highest number of which heard together was five at Ulverscroft Nature Reserve. **Blackcap**, as usual, were heard in all the suitable places but **Garden Warbler** were much scarcer, only being noted at six sites although five birds were heard at Ulverscroft and Cropston. Single **Lesser Whitethroats** were heard at a dozen well spread sites and probably twice as many **Common Whitethroat** observations; ten birds were singing at Normanton-le-Heath on 10 May.

Grasshopper Warbler were heard "reeling" at Wanlip and Cossington Meadows, Charnwood Lodge, Swithland Reservoir and Kelham Bridge. **Sedge Warbler** were only noted at three sites and **Reed Warbler** at four but this included 24 singing birds along the Grantham Canal near Stathern Bridge. On 6 May a **Great Reed Warbler** was singing at Albert Village Lake but only stayed for a day or so. This was the first county record since 1963.

Apart from **Nuthatch** at bird feeders in a Loughborough garden all other reports were from an area between Bradgate Park and Charnwood Lodge and all **Tree Creeper** in a similar area apart from one in Knighton Park, Leicester.

Wren were heard all around the area with 25 at Queen Elizabeth Wood, Normanton-le-Heath on 10 May. The most **Starling** seen together were 24 in Knighton Park.

Warren Hills had a **Ring Ouzel** on 2 April and one was still present at Queen Elizabeth II Wood, Normanton-le-Heath on 6 May. **Blackbird** were ubiquitous with a few counts in double-figures. **Song Thrush** were noted in a dozen places but none in gardens. A late **Redwing** was still at Charnwood Lodge on 6 May. The majority of **Mistle Thrush** records were from Bradgate Park but three pairs were noted in Knighton Park and four birds fed on cherries in my garden during June.

The only **Spotted Flycatcher** of the quarter was at Swithland Reservoir on 21 May.

Robin were well represented with double-figure counts in places. Three **Whinchat** were at Longmoor Lake on 27 April and one at Eyebrook Reservoir on 6 May. On the same day there was a **Wheatear** at Quorn and two had been seen in Bradgate Park on 29 April.

Dunnoek were ubiquitous and **House Sparrow**, although widespread in gardens were only in small numbers.

Yellow Wagtails were found at six sites but only one, at Cropston, was breeding thought to be probable. It is a sign of the times that **Grey Wagtail** records far outnumbered Yellows. They were noted at all the reservoirs, mostly around Cropston but others were seen in Leicester and Loughborough town centres. **Pied Wagtail** were not mentioned often but 12 together were at Swithland Reservoir on 25 June. Four **White Wagtail** were at Swithland Reservoir on 16 April and one at Wanlip Meadows on 27 April. A few **Tree Pipit** were at the usual sites at Charnwood Lodge and Bradgate Park where there were four on 25 May. The Bradgate, Cropston area also had **Meadow Pipit** and there were six at Black Hill, Ulverscroft on 8 April.

There were very few of any of the finches reported although widespread the only **Chaffinch** number in double-figures was 12 at Normanton-le-Heath on 10 May. Amazingly, **Greenfinch** were only mentioned twice, from Stathern Bridge and a Cropston garden although my own garden at Hugglescote attracted two or three daily throughout the quarter. My garden also had up to ten **Goldfinch** regularly which is equal to the maximum of the other records which were also from a wide-ranging area including gardens. Nearly all of the **Siskin** sightings were in gardens with no more than three birds and none after 7 May. Most of the **Linnet** records were from around the Bradgate Park area with a maximum of seven birds on 7 May with only odd ones elsewhere. Virtually all the **Bullfinch** sightings were from gardens and only in ones or twos.

A small number of **Yellowhammer** were to be found with ten at Snibston Discovery Park until the end of April and 12 in Bradgate Park during May. **Reed Buntings** were noted in and around a dozen places but with a maximum of four at Cropston Reservoir in early May. One



Yellowhammer © Jim Graham

piece of good news was a **Corn Bunting**, albeit a single bird, singing at Measham in early May.

Baz Forgham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix helvetica* or *Natrix helvetica*: It has recently been decided that our subspecies of *Natrix natrix* is a full species – *Natrix helvetica*. There has been some confusion in the press about this split.

Our first report comes from SFW who found a single specimen on 19 April on the bank of the River Eye near Coston. On 1 May SFW and HI found another specimen, much closer to civilisation, at Groby where the A50 passes through a rocky cutting. On 3 June SFW reports two further sightings of Grass Snakes at Stathern Wood in the Terrace Hills SSSI. In this instance there were two individual specimens, one of which was particularly dark in colour. Once again it is interesting and reassuring to see that our sightings are coming from different parts of the county.

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*: Our first report comes from PJD who records finding five specimens on top of her Quorn neighbour's compost heap on 8 April. Three weeks later SFW and HI record finding three specimens under stones at Bradgate Park. They report that these were torpid in the cool weather. PJD reports that during May she continued to find specimens in the neighbour's compost bin. The garden is in a low lying part of Quorn near the River Soar and it really is quite remarkable how much difference a few hundred feet of altitude can make to the climate. It is noticeable that plants often come into bloom two or three weeks later on the top of the Forest than they

do in the Soar Valley and for that reason it seems to me that it is reasonable to expect that reptiles and amphibians will likewise emerge later on the top of Charnwood Forest than they do in the Soar Valley.

Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: PJD reports that several were seen in a Quorn neighbour's garden pond during May and there was a report of a sighting at a Market Bosworth garden pond from MP at the beginning of June. Once again it is reassuring to receive reports, although few in number, that tend to show that these creatures are widespread within the county.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: Our sightings of the Common Frog begin on 4 April when SFW and HI found two clumps of spawn at a site in the Loughborough Moors area which lies to the north of the GU Canal where it swings eastward away from the town towards the marina and Pilling's Lock. On 26 April SFW and HI found two froglets at the Chestnut Wood area near Ashby de la Zouch and on 2 May they found tadpoles at Castle Hill Park near Anstey and in the following week tadpoles in the aptly named Frog Hollow near Belvoir Castle. SFW reports another sighting on the bank of the River Lin in Bradgate Park on 2 June and SFW and HI noted thousands of tadpoles in a brook in Walcote village which is on the A427 a couple of miles east of Lutterworth. Closer to home, a resident of Woodhouse noted baby frogs in their garden. Once again these sightings have come from a variety of sites all over the county.

I would urge members to pass on their sightings, however mundane they may seem, to the Club, please. The more sightings we have on record, the more complete the picture becomes of what is happening to the County's wildlife.

Tony Onions



Frog Tadpoles © Steve Woodward

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

We have only one sighting for this group.

Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*: On 14 May HI and SFW found a shoal of 25 specimens in the mill pond at Shepshed Water Mill which lies on the Black Brook to the north-east of the village.

The Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* has a smaller relative The Nine-spined Stickleback which is one of our smaller fish and rather more scarce than the Three-spined. The Nine-spined is one of Europe's smallest fish, rarely growing to more than 5 cm. It is sometimes referred to as the Ten-spined Stickleback because the number of spines can vary between eight and ten, in different populations. While both species are scaleless, some populations of Three-spines Stickleback have a row of bony plates (scutes) along the flanks. Both species are usually found in low-lying coastal habitats, small streams, ditches, weed choked ponds and brackish creeks. The Ten-spined is able to survive in oxygen depleted ponds where life would be untenable for most species. One major difference between the Three-spined and the Nine-spined is that the range of the Three-spined extends from the Arctic to the waters of the Mediterranean whereas the Nine-spined is found only as far south as the UK and northern France. The Nine-spined matures at a year old and has a life span of about three years. Its spawning habits are very much like those of the Three-spined: the male builds an arched nest into which he lures several females and after spawning he guards the eggs and the fry. The male Three-spined develops a red breast and blue eyes during the spawning period whereas the Nine-spined develops a black abdomen and the two pelvic spines turn blue. The nest of the Three-spined is built on the substrate whereas the nest of the Nine-spined is built among fronds of water plants, usually about ten centimetres above the substrate. The Nine-spined is widely but patchily distributed in the East Midlands. We have received one or two reports in the past of populations in small ponds in Leicestershire but the Nine-spined does appear to be a very rare fish. Once again I would urge our members to check out any small streams and ponds to which they have access

so that we can construct a clearer picture of the status and distribution of this rare species in the county.

As the River Trent forms the border between Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire and the Soar is one of its major lowland tributaries I feel justified in including reports from there and as reported in the "Angler's Mail" of 25 July beneath the heading "Biggest UK Ide", another unusual species has turned up. The fish in question was an **Orfe** or **Ide *Leuciscus idus*** and was caught from an undisclosed section of the Trent by Nottingham angler, Ian Green. This fish weighed 7lb 6oz and is thus the largest naturally-coloured Ide to have been caught in this country.

So what exactly is this fish? Very simply it is a Cyprinid fish, closely related and similar to the Chub *Leuciscus cephalus*. The main differences are that the Ide is deeper bodied with almost a hump at the back of the head and a more deeply forked tail. Its original distribution was from Germany eastwards in Europe and all the way across to the river of eastern Siberia. It was not originally native to France, the UK or the Iberian Peninsula. The naturally-coloured fish is generally referred to as an "Ide" but an orange coloured ornamental version was developed many years ago for garden ponds and this ornamental version is usually referred to as the "Orfe" or "Golden Orfe". The official record for the ornamental version is a fish of 8lb 5oz caught by Michael Wilkinson from a venue at Lymm Vale in Cheshire. The Orfe or Ide is typically found in the slower lower reaches of rivers or lakes in the flood plain. Younger fish feed on invertebrates but larger older specimens will eat small fish. The main unseen difference between the Ide and the Chub lies in their culinary qualities. It is generally accepted that it is virtually impossible to make a Chub eatable. One angling writer described the flesh of the Chub as "cotton wool stuffed with needles". In contrast it appears that the Ide is quite good eating and has been farm-reared in the past in inland Eastern Europe for the table. This might explain why this species in both its natural and ornamental colours has been readily available in local aquarium shops and garden centres for many years. In fact it comes as a surprise that more of these fish do not find their way into our local lakes and watercourses. Certainly, the

Trent appears to be providing a home for a variety of exotic species these days. I will leave the last word on this subject to Tim Aplin, a Nottingham fishing tackle dealer who is quoted in the "Angler's Mail" article as follows: "This fish does not really surprise me – I do seem to be coming out at the moment... a three pounder was caught in an evening match at Clifton... All kinds of species are turning up in the Trent, such as Sturgeon and Catfish, so who knows what is next?"

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

The report for Q2 will appear in Heritage 227.

BUTTERFLIES

This spring does not appear to be one which is going to help some of those species such as the Small Copper and Common Blue to improve their low population levels. Changeable weather from day to day meant that no sustained periods of sunny days occurred during their flight period; not helpful for successful breeding!

However, some species such as the Orange-tip and Ringlet seem to be doing well and the Red Admiral seems to have been more widespread than for several years.

Hesperiidae

The **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*** was noted first on 4 June at Hicks Lodge and thereafter at a further 11 localities, mostly in small numbers with a maximum of 12 at Willowbrook Park in Leicester on 26 June. The only **Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*** reported were three at Sence Valley FP on 26th and the only **Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola***



Large Skipper © Jim Graham

were two also identified on 26th by HB at Willowbrook Park.

Pieridae

The **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** which appeared first in March was reported seen widely in some 19 localities which was less than half of the 46 localities during the same quarter last year. Good numbers were reported seen in gardens and DBF again had a female laying eggs in his Purging Buckthorn at Hugglescote on 10 May. A good reason for more of us to plant this local shrub in our own gardens! It was last noted around the middle of June.

The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was only reported once in April but became more frequent in May and June often visiting gardens but seldom getting reported and the **Small White *Pieris rapae***, though more frequent throughout the quarter, was likewise not well reported. Most members seemed to make an effort to report the **Green-veined White *Pieris napi*** which was reported seen throughout the quarter in small numbers, often visiting gardens.

Editor's note: The Green-veined White is easy to identify but the other two have to sit still for a while so that we can distinguish which species it is! My theory is that the Small White is more inclined to remain still while the Large White is more active! Therefore it is under-recorded. We need to make more of an effort.

The attractive **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*** usually gets well reported and almost any meadow with plenty of Lady's Smock or country roadside with plenty of Jack-by-the-Hedge usually holds a population. Smaller numbers are also welcome visitors to our gardens and can be induced to breed by introducing any of several favoured crucifers. This year it was reported seen in some 40 widely scattered localities compared with 49 last year. It was active throughout April and most of May and last reported seen on 28 May at South Luffenham.

Lycaenidae

Few **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*** were reported this quarter. HS saw four at Charnwood Lodge on 10 May. Two at the summit area on Timberwood Hill and two more on the lower ground but the weather was very

changeable around this time with few really good days for observing this species. It would be interesting to learn whether it is still present at High Sharpley where a strong colony used to be present but it is now a good many years since it was reported from here.

This was a dreadful spring for the **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** and the only one reported was seen at the Buddon Brook Meadows on 15 June. No **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** were reported.

The **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** was reported seen at a dozen widely spaced localities but only at one site were they present in more than single figures. HI and SFW found about 100 nectaring on abundant Bird's-foot Trefoil at Gypsy Lane claypit in Leicester on 1 June. The species was late appearing with the first sighting not until 25 May when one was seen at Kelham Bridge and was last reported on 17 June at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel. Hopefully, the second generation will be present in larger numbers.

The garden-frequenting **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus***, first noted in Quorn at the end of the last quarter, continued to be seen until 27 May and was a frequent visitor to some gardens around the middle of May. It was reported seen at some 20 well scattered localities.

Nymphalidae

It was good to have more **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** present with us this spring with sightings reported for 16 well spread localities compared with only six last year. It was noted at five localities in May and 11 in June with a maximum of four at Sence Valley FP on 26 June.

Between 31 May and 11 June the **Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*** appeared in four widely spread localities but unsettled weather at the time probably prevented any satisfactory breeding attempts.

As usual the **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** was widely reported and noted at 22 localities compared with 28 last spring. Most sightings were of ones and twos but 15 were present at Willowbrook Park on 26 June, doubtless all new generation butterflies.



Peacock © Jim Graham

The **Peacock *Inachis io***, which had a poor breeding season locally last year, was only reported seen in 23 well spread localities this quarter and in low numbers. The old overwintered generation remained active throughout April and May with a late sighting on 15 June in Buddon Brook meadows at Quorn.

This spring the **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was only reported seen at nine separate localities; the over-wintering population at six sites and the new generation at five. Both generations were noted in gardens in Loughborough and Quorn during April and June.

Satyridae

The **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** has appeared less common during the last few years but this year appeared early on 4 April at Rally Bank in Leicester and at Mountsorrel on 7 June and was noted at 31 well spread sites up until the end of June compared with 24 during the same period last year. A few were noted in May but most sightings were made during April and June and the maximum number recorded at any site was 11 on 7 June at Sence Valley FP, which is, however, a very large site. A fair proportion were noted in members' gardens.

The only first generation **Wall Butterfly *Lasiommata megera*** reported was one seen by HS at Collier Hill near Charnwood Lodge on 26 May.

The first **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** noted were two on 9 June at Burton on the Wolds and between then and the end of June it was reported seen in 19 localities. In Buddon Brook Meadows, 14 were active on 15 June and small numbers ventured into gardens.

The first **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*** was noted on 13 June at Bede Island in Leicester and

the following day three were present at Buddon wood south mound, much earlier than last year when the first sighting was not until 26 June. On 26th this year DBF counted 351 at Sence Valley FP while carrying out his butterfly survey at this site! Sightings came from 13 widely spread localities during the month.



Small Heath © Jim Graham

Single **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** were noted during June at Bradgate Park on the 2nd and Hicks Lodge on the 14th, when two were also observed at Buddon Wood South Mound and the same number at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel on 17th. It seems a long time now since this little butterfly was really plentiful!

This has been a sad summer for members of the LNC and especially for those of us interested in butterflies and moths for, as most members will know, we lost two of our members who were especially interested in Lepidoptera. We had come to rely on Dr Les Purnell to keep us informed of the year by year state of local species such as the Dingy and Grizzled Skipper and the Dark-green and Silver-washed Fritillaries and Brian Hope was good at finding hairstreak species such as the White-letter and Purple Hairstreak where a degree of patience is all important in order to locate them!

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

Wow, quite a contrast in last quarter's numbers and an even bigger contrast in the same quarter for 2016. In the last quarter we were just coming out of the winter and realistically can only expect fairly low numbers, we had 159 individual moths of 18 species by two recorders. The second quarter for last year we had 772 individual moths of 116 species by

nine recorders. Right then, are you ready for this?

Our 2017 April, May and June quarter produced a staggering 7426 individual moths of 398 species (124 of these were micro moth species) by ten recorders. The total of individuals will be a minimum count as I still receive quantities stated as "few, several, many and abundant" which doesn't exactly tell you much at all, so with these I have to try and make a best guess, even so the totals are quite impressive. Obviously with this number of records (1094 records from 36 sites) only some of the highlights can be mentioned.

Although the night was not as good as it could have been (it never is, is it?) myself, Anona and Adrian Russell ran a moth night at the third Loughborough University 'Fruit Routes Celebration' where it was nice to see a couple of LNC members there too, we ended up with just over 200 moths of 57 species. The event, apart from being free, is a series of walks and talks all very environmentally themed, plus live music with some very tasty home-made food on offer too, well worth making the effort to attend, keep an eye out for next year's event. Also the permanent Actinic moth trap at Bradgate Park was operated throughout June and checked by Mick and Joy Braker, to whom we are very grateful, their records have been incorporated into the main account, where a wide selection of, 'macro' moths were recorded including the only records of **Pine Hawk-moth *Hyloicus pinastri*** and **Heart and Club *Agrotis clavis***.

Although it's going to be quite difficult, what follows is a very condensed summary of species, following the order of the 2013 Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles (Agassiz *et al.*). Starting off with the Swifts, which are technically 'micros' **Common Swift *Korscheltellus lupulina*** and **Map-winged Swift *Korscheltellus fusconebulosa*** were fairly widespread - all records from Charnwood Forest, except for the record of 17 **Common Swifts** at Kelham Bridge. Just the one record of **Gold Swift *Phymatopus hecta*** and two of **Ghost Moth *Hepialus humuli***, all the Swift records came from either the Charnwood Forest or Kelham Bridge and nowhere else. With the Tineid moths, a single **Cork Moth *Nemapogon cloacella*** from

Charnwood Lodge, *Tinea trinitella* from Stoneywell and Kelham Bridge plus *Monopis weaverella* Charnwood Lodge and Cloud Wood all from mid-May to beginning of June. The larvae of these moths can be found in fungi, bird's nests, owl pellets and dried animal skins so quite an interesting and specialised group. *Psychoides filicivora* while still in the same family, the larvae of these feed on the underside of various ferns, in particular Hart's-tongue Fern. The migrant **Diamond-back** *Plutella xylostella* was recorded in reasonable numbers mainly on the Charnwood Forest and also at Kelham Bridge all late May to mid-June. The only records for *Neofaculta ericetella* were from a few sites 'on the Forest' favouring heathland and moorland with the food plant of various heathers, it is well at home here. With a food plant of Oaks, Hawthorns and Bramble you would think *Epigoge grotiana* would be abundant at any moth trap on the Forest, but usually only found fairly infrequently and never in any numbers, a singleton was at light in Bradgate Park mid-June. The most recorded micro moth was **Light Brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana*. Two of the stunning *Lozotaeniodes formosana* were at Quorn late June. Normally out in May, **Green Oak Tortrix** *Tortrix viridana* were not seen until mid-June with the highest total 1200 individuals from Bradgate Park on 17 June and the extremely variable *Acleris cristana* was only seen at Cloud Wood early May. It is very common but one of the prettiest micros *Pseudogyrotoza conwagana* was widespread and in good numbers throughout May and June, with the highest number of 30 at Kelham Bridge in early June. The Pine feeder *Piniphila bifasciata* was only recorded from Loughborough University in mid-June.



Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet © Steve Woodward

The only record for **Six-spot Burnet** *Zygaena filipendula* came from Buddon Wood and **Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet** *Zygaena loniceræ* were only found in the city towards the end of June and two **Mint Moth** *Pyrausta aurata* were at Quorn in mid-May. The delicate looking *Anania perlucidalis* and in the same family but looking totally different **Small Magpie** *Anania hortulata* both species were well recorded throughout June. Not usually far from water, the only record of *Chilo phragmitella* came from Bradgate Park; the traps are sited close to the wall separating Cropston Reservoir from the park. This next little group labelled the 'Grass moths' also started a little later than normal, not appearing until mid-June. The first sightings of **Garden Grass-veneer** *Chrysoteuchia culmella* were widespread, but just a couple of sightings of *Crambus pascuella* but then *Crambus lathoniellus* was again widespread, with the first and only record for *Agriphila tristella* in mid-June in Bradgate Park.

Moving on to the macros with a solitary, **Barred Hook-tip** *Watsonalla cultraria* at Charnwood Lodge in mid-June, most records for this species still seem to come from the Charnwood Forest. It is noticeable how **Peach Blossom** *Thyatira batis* and **Buff Arches** *Habrosyne pyritoides* both always seem to appear at the same time. The first record for **Peach Blossom** was on 26 May, all the other records were evenly spread throughout June. Although in fair numbers, **Common Lutestring** *Ochropacha duplaris* was only found at two sites, Charnwood Lodge and Stoneywell Wood. The only Hawk-moth missing this quarter was **Privet Hawk-moth** *Sphinx ligustri*, the rest **Lime** *Mimas tiliae*, **Eyed Smerinthus** *ocellata*, **Poplar** *Laothoe populi* and **Pine Hawk-moth** *Hyloicus pinastri* were all recorded. **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* were at Barleston four days running plus a single at Groby. **Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila elpenor* and **Small Elephant** *Deilephila porcellus* were again widespread and particularly from the Charnwood Forest. The only record of the Beech feeder **Clay Triple-lines** *Cyclophora linearia* was from Bradgate Park in mid-June. Early May produced the only "beautiful" **Beautiful Carpet** *Mesoleuca albicillata* from Charnwood Lodge. Bradgate Park produced an early record of **July Highflier** *Hydriomena furcata* on 17 June with

May Highflier *Hydromena impluviata* from the middle of May to the end of June. Not surprisingly, Stoneywell Wood and Charnwood Lodge produced the only records of the Bilberry feeder **Northern Spinach *Eulithis populata***. It would be interesting to see a map of the distribution of this species and see how much it is restricted to the main Bilberry locations on the Charnwood Forest, or if there are any odd satellite records away from this area. On two occasions 23 May (three individuals) and 26 May (two individuals), Charnwood Lodge produced the remarkable records for **Devon Carpet *Lampropteryx otregiata***. As far as I know there is a tentative record from a Rothamstead trap from Rutland some years ago, but I am not sure how reliable this was. It is really been a south-western species but has had a considerable range expansion as far north as Lancashire and Cumbria. One of the main food plants is Common Marsh Bedstraw, so as the food plant is widespread, there is no reason this species should not become a regular, we will have to wait and see!

A single **Grass Rivulet *Perizoma albulata*** was a nice find at Kelham Bridge at the beginning of June. A respectable number of 12 species of Pugs were recorded for the quarter, including a total of 45 **Foxglove Pug *Eupithecia pulchellata*** from Stoneywell at the end of May. Cloud Wood produced the only **Treble-bar *Aplocera plagiata*** where a singleton was found mid-May, and the delicate **Seraphim *Lobophora halterata*** was at several sites throughout May and June. A species that usually makes you scratch your head when it first appears is **Early Tooth-striped *Trichopteryx carpinata*** the first ones started to appear in early April. There must be some Spindle, the food plant of **Scorched Carpet *Ligidia adustata*** somewhere close by to Kelham Bridge, as four turned up in the traps on 1 June.

A night was arranged at Stoneywell on 31 May specifically to see **Barred Umber *Plagodis pulveraria***, only a singleton was found, but at least we know it is still there, but the surprise of the night was a single **Brindled White-spot *Parectropis similaria***. I think the last record for this was from Burbage Woods many years ago. The caterpillars feed on Oak and Birch, no shortage of either in the counties but we are at the northern edge of its range so is this another

species expanding its range? We don't seem to get that many records of any of the Kitten species nowadays, so the two records of **Sallow Kitten *Furcula furcula*** at Cloud Wood and Kelham Bridge were nice to see. **Marbled Brown *Drymonia dodonaea*** took over from **Lunar *Marbled Brown *Drymonia ruficornis**** in early May, the latter seemed to be on the wing for about a month from 11 April to the end of May. There were only two sightings of **Chocolate-tip *Clostera curtula*** both as singletons and both from Cloud Wood on 11 and 29 May. **Straw Dot *Rivula sericealis*** were very widely recorded with some impressive numbers, 78 at Kelham Bridge on 1 June, 28 at Bradgate Park on 17 June plus other nights with over 20 individuals. This quarter has had more than its fair share of exceptional records and the two **Beautiful Snout *Hypena crassilis*** at Charnwood Lodge on 26 May are up there with the best. This species was last recorded in VC55 at Charnwood Lodge several years ago, I guess these latest records show it is actually established on the reserve, although seemingly in low numbers and quite elusive. The only record of **White Satin *Leucoma salicis*** was from Quorn end of June. The following species is another that seems to be having a range extension, previously only known from Rutland, three individuals of **Scarlet Tiger *Callimorpha dominula*** turned up in the traps at Bradgate Park on 17 June. Since then there have been several other sightings of this rather striking moth around the county.

All the Footman species were recorded with **Red-necked Footman *Atolmis rubricollis*** well represented at sites all on the Charnwood Forest, with **Orange Footman *Eilema sororcula*** getting recorded everywhere, including 56 individuals at Cloud Wood and 36 at Stoneywell. **Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica*** was widely



Burnet Companion © Steve Woodward

recorded including a count of 100 at Gypsy Lane in the city on 1 June. **Mother Shipton *Euclidia mi*** did not do so well with only two sightings at Ethel Road in the city and Castle Donington both as singletons. The grand total of 30 **Gold Spot *Plusia festucae*** were a pleasing sight at Kelham Bridge on 1 June but numbers dropped to eight on 18 June whilst all other records were in singles. A species we seem to be taking for granted now is **Marbled White Spot *Deltote pygarga***, it wasn't so long ago that this was barely recorded outside of the main Rutland sites, but all the trapped sites on the Charnwood Forest plus Kelham Bridge held this species.

We are not finished with the noteworthy species yet, first recorded in VC55 a couple of years ago in Swithland Wood, two individuals of the small but perfectly formed **Rosy Marbled *Elaphira venustula*** graced the traps, just a stone's throw away at Bradgate Park on 17 June. So again this begs the question, does this mean we have a small elusive colony breeding in VC55? Not quite resembling the Wainscots we are used to seeing, five **Silky Wainscot *Chilodes maritima*** were recorded from Bradgate Park on 17 June. The first **Brown Rustic *Rusina ferruginea*** arrived mid-June with **Bird's Wing *Dypterygia scabriuscula*** around the same period, the latter appearing at both MV light and also at sugar. The only **Light Arches *Apamea lithoxylaea*** were of eight individuals found at sugar in mid-June at Charnwood Lodge. I know 'sugaring' can be very hit and miss, but when it works it usually works well. A single **Pale Pinion *Lithophane socia*** was in the trap at Quorn late April. Most of the *Orthosia* species were around throughout the quarter, but not a single record of **Small Quaker *Orthosia cruda***, they seemed to have finished their allotted flight period a little earlier than usual. Quite a range, restricted species in VC55 **Glaucous Shears *Papestra biren*** was found at Charnwood Lodge on two occasions mid to late May. Back to the 17 June at Bradgate Park for two **Varied Coronet *Hadena compta*** and 56 **Shoulder-striped Wainscot *Leucania comma***. With the recent report of records for **Obscure Wainscot *Leucania obsoleta*** we were well pleased when five turned up in the traps at Kelham Bridge on 18 June. Finally the only record of **Heart and Club *Agrotis clavis*** was from Bradgate Park at the end of June. It will be noticed that 17 June

must have been a "good" night, well it certainly was. With near perfect weather conditions we operated four MV box traps all night and recorded 2207 individual moths of just over 145 species, one of those quantity and quality nights. This account has been just a snapshot of what has been a mixed quarter regarding mothing weather conditions wise but the good nights really have been exceptional, with species new for VC55 plus several records of scarce species. The next quarter looks at least as if it is going to carry on where this quarter leaves off.

Many thanks to all who have submitted records to make this report so interesting.

Graham and Anona Finch

BEETLES

The total number of individuals recorded this quarter, were 3437 and the number of species 246, by eight recorders, so only a slight drop on this time last year otherwise the overall outcome has been very similar. The Bradgate Park pitfall traps are still in place, but seem to be catching a similar, limited number of species, mainly a few Carabids, Staphylinids and the odd *Nicrophorus*. I think it's time to move them into a new location, preferably somewhere that's slightly more open, with a richer ground flora.

There has been an Arachnid survey at Charnwood Lodge undertaken by Richard Wilson and we look forward to seeing his results in due time. Once Richard had removed the material he wanted, the rest was passed on to Ray Morris who worked long and hard to separate the various orders from the 'by-catch'. Early in June Ray handed to me 21 tubes of beetles for identification, it's been quite a job, but eventually I managed to identify 98 species out of 677 individuals. Although there has been no VC55 firsts, there were several species that had been not recorded recently; the results have been incorporated into the main text. This summary follows the *Checklist of Beetles of the British Isles*, A G Duff 2012. It is also worth noting that a new revised checklist is apparently due out soon, so we will have to get used to yet another modified order.

The only Whirligig beetle was a single ***Gyrinus substriatus*** from Misterton Marshes in mid-

June. The **Screech Beetle** *Hygrobia hermanni* was found at Higham on the Hill in mid-May, Misterton produced a solitary *Hydroglyphus geminus* and *Rhantus suturalis* was at Bradgate Park in mid-June. The Misterton and Bradgate Park records were all from MV light traps. The Leicester City Knighton Bioblitz produced a large and impressive single **Great Diving Beetle** *Dytiscus marginalis*. A total of 49 species of Carabid were recorded; *Carabus nemoralis* is still mainly being noted from Bradgate Park, but a singleton was also found at Terrace Hills Pasture in Melton district. With so many species on the list most of the regular Carabids were recorded including eight species of *Bembidion* and seven species of *Pterostichus*. It was interesting how many Carabids were recorded at MV light, these include several *Pterostichus* species, *Harpalus rufipes*, *Ophonus rufubarbis*, *Stenolophus mixtus* and *Anthracaenus consputus*. There were a couple of exposed areas of soil at Terrace Hills and these produced the only records of *Microlestes maurus*. Out of the Silphidae *Thanatophilus rugosus* was found under a dead deer corpse at Bradgate Park. *Silpha atrata* was found throughout April and May but only in the pitfall traps at Charnwood Lodge. *Nicrophorus humator* was the most frequent, being recorded from moth traps, pitfall traps and various daytime observations. The pitfalls at Charnwood Lodge caught two *Nicrophorus vespillo* and one *Nicrophorus vespilloides* both species on the same day 24 May.

Now on to the Staphylinids, where 35 species were recorded starting with a few non-typical Staph like looking species. Sub-family Omaliinae, two records of *Omalius rivulare* both from Charnwood Lodge, both at sap runs but three weeks apart. Sub-family Tachyporinae, sieving reed bed debris at Misterton Marshes early April produced six *Sepedophilus nigripennis*, *Tachyporus chrysomelinus*, *T. hypnorum* and *T. obtusus* were all fairly widespread but *Tachinus rufipes* although the most recorded of this group was only found on the Charnwood Forest. The Family Staphylinidae is huge with approximately 1000 species, grouped into about 18 sub-families, within these sub-families many can be roughly arranged, on their similar looks as those above. This helps to break down the family into smaller batches and therefore particularly

helpful in identification. Another of these useful groups are the Oxytelinae, getting to grips with the appearance of these groups are a real advantage, two *Platystethus arenarius* and a single *Oxytelus laqueatus* were sieved from cow dung from Charnwood Lodge in mid-May. *Anotylus rugosus* is really abundant and once recognised can be and was found throughout the whole quarter. The charismatic sub-family Steninae, are mainly a pleasure to work with, as Derek Lott has left us with the most superb key, although with over 70 species, a few are a bit of a headache. Just six species were found this quarter and again all from the 'Forest' in fact all from Charnwood Lodge and all in May; *Stenus clavicornis*, *S. providus*, *S. similis*, *S. picipes*, *S. impressus* and *S. pallipes* mainly in twos and threes. Looking more like typical Staphs and in the sub-family Paederinae, a single *Lathrobium brunnipis* was found at Misterton Marshes in early April. Now to the main and more familiar sub-family Staphylininae. These are the often, large black rove beetles which are found everywhere, especially while gardening including the **Devil's Coach-horse** *Ocyopus olens*, which worryingly barely gets recorded these days and hasn't been this quarter. A total of 11 species were recorded from this group including ten of the spectacular looking *Creophilus maxillosus* under a dead deer corpse in Bradgate Park on 11 May.

Leaving the Staphs, a single **Lesser Stag Beetle** *Dorcus parallelipedus* visited the moth trap in Bradgate Park on 17 June. Eight species of *Aphodius* were recorded with all the *Aphodius rufipes* records from moth traps and most of the rest from dung of various sorts. I am surprised there were only six records of **Common Cockchafer** *Melolontha melolontha* all at light, except for a daytime observation of a singleton in Loughborough and apart from the 30 to MV at Stoneywell at the end of May all the rest were in low single figures. A quite early record of a solitary **Brown Chafer** *Serica brunnea* came to light in Bradgate Park in mid-June, and the only record of *Phyllopertha horticola* was from a Quorn garden on 10 June. The strange (in the nicest possible way) mud beetle *Heterocerus fenestratus* was found at Kelham Bridge plus six at Misterton Marsh in mid-June.

We did not do too bad with the 'Click' beetles as 11 species were recorded. The showy *Ctenicera cuprea* was found at Charnwood Lodge on three occasions, a single *Aplotarsus incanus* at Misterton Marshes and *Prosternon tessellatum* was beaten from Hawthorn blossom at Charnwood Lodge. The small *Kibunia minuta* was beaten from Gorse at Charnwood Lodge and not surprisingly *Athous haemorrhoidalis* was the most frequently found species from nine sites. The all blackish *Hemicrepidus hirtus* was found at Terrace Hills, with *Agriotes acuminatus* and *A. pallidulus* being widespread. *Dalopius marginatus* was only at Charnwood Lodge and finally, several records for *Melanotus castanipes*.

The only **Glow-worm** *Lampyris noctiluca* record is of a singleton, which made its way onto the white sheet under an MV trap in mid-June at Charnwood Lodge. We had to wait until 13 May before any Cantharids began to show themselves and then no records after 19 June, so they seemed to have had a mad rush for about a month and then fizzled out. We will have to wait and see if they made a come-back during the next quarter. A total of 12 species were recorded in the short time they were out and about. *Cantharis cryptica* was at Charnwood Lodge and Twenty Acre Piece in mid-May, *C. decipiens* was widespread, *C. livida* from Misterton and Charnwood Lodge, *C. nigra* Kelham Bridge and Bradgate Park, *C. nigricans* was fairly widespread, *C. pellucida* just at Twenty Acre Piece and Charnwood lodge, *C. rufa* at Kelham Bridge and Misterton, with *C. rustica* only from Terrace Hills. Charnwood Lodge and Kelham Bridge produced the only *Rhagonycha limbata* and *R. lignosa* was widespread. Finally, the only *Malthinus flaveolus* was from Bradgate Park but *Malthodes minimus* on two occasions Misterton Marsh and Loughborough University Campus all in June and all to MV light.

Both *Necrobia rufipes* and *N. violacea* were at their usual place in Bradgate Park. Out of the soft-winged flower beetles, *Dasytes aeratus* was widespread and in good numbers, particularly at MV light mid-May where 20s and 30s were recorded on several nights but *Malachius bipustulatus* was only recorded as singletons from Kelham Bridge, Charnwood Lodge and Twenty Acre Piece. The tiny, at 2 mm

long, *Sphindus dubius* was found during the night at a sap run at Charnwood Lodge in early April. This is in a family of two genera and two species which are associated with myxomycete slime-moulds on wood. This was quite a good find as there are only three previous records of it. First seen by S O Taylor at Copt Oak 1943 the next sighting was A B Drane at Burley 1996 and the last was P Kirby at Ketton 1999. This next species, the very flat, black and orange mottled *Soronia grisea* normally also found at tree sap, but this individual was attracted to MV light at Misterton Marshes in mid-June. The **Common Pollen Beetle** *Meligethes aenea* was one of the most frequently recorded species throughout the quarter and in high numbers, particularly fond of yellow flowers, especially Rape, where it can be found in thousands. Beating various flowers including Hawthorn, Gorse and Broom, but also by sweeping flowery vegetation produced hundreds at a time, it even came to MV light on several occasions. Contrastingly, the closely-related *Meligethes atratus* was only recorded the once when three individuals were beaten from Hawthorn at Cloud Wood at the end of April. A similar situation for *Meligethes nigrescens* just two individuals were beaten from Gorse at Charnwood Lodge at the end of May. Another sap beetle, this time *Glischrochilus quadriguttatus* was found at the Charnwood Lodge sap run early in April; there are just nine previous records for this species with the last from Stanford Park 2002. The next two species belong to the Monotomidae and usually found under tree bark, *Rhizophagus bipustulatus* was at the aforementioned sap run and *R. dispar* from underneath a large Dryads Saddle fungi. I think this really illustrates the need, that if you are lucky enough to find a decent sap run it pays to return as often as possible as there is a whole suite of select species that are likely to turn up at such a food source. Although small, *Micrambe ulicis* is quite recognisable and can be beaten from Gorse wherever it grows, needless to say it was found at all of the Charnwood Forest sites.

On to the ladybirds, ten species were recorded with first up **Orange Ladybird** *Halyzia sedecimguttata* widespread but almost exclusively recorded at MV light. There were just the two records of **Cream-streaked Ladybird** *Calvia quattuordecimguttata* with singles from



Harlequin Ladybird © Steve Woodward

Charnwood Lodge and Swithland Wood. As expected **14-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*** was everywhere, but **Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*** was even more widespread and abundant. The **2-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata*** was only recorded from Loughborough and **10-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata*** was found just the once at Charnwood Lodge. The **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*** faired slightly less frequently than the latter species and **Eyed Ladybird *Anatis ocellata*** was seen at Charnwood Lodge on two occasions, both in late May. The last two species have just a single record each **Adonis Ladybird *Hippodamia variegata*** from Lutterworth and **Larch Ladybird *Aphidecta obliterated*** from Charnwood Lodge. The strange and 'lumpy' ***Aridius nodifer*** was at Twenty Acre Piece and Charnwood Lodge all throughout May, one of which was at the sap run. The tiny fungus beetle ***Cis boleti*** was tapped from a Dryads Saddle bracket at Charnwood Lodge at the end of June. The next three Saproxylic species were beaten from aerial dead branches, three ***Orchesia minor*** and two ***Phloiotyra vauderi*** both from Stocking Wood 26 June, and not looking unlike a Cantharid a single ***Conopalpus testaceus*** from Charnwood Lodge.

A solitary ***Ischnomera cyanea*** was beaten from Hawthorn blossom at South Knighton, but **Swollen-thighed Beetle *Oedemera nobilis*** was found extensively throughout, however ***Oedemera lurida*** was only found once at Terrace Hills on Hogweed. The only three records of the stunning red **Common Cardinal Beetle *Pyrochroa serraticornis*** all in singletons came from Netherseal, Swinford and Loddington. Beating the spring blossom, especially Hawthorn blossom, produced four species of Scaptidae ***Anaspis frontalis*** found at

two sites, ***A. fasciata*** at three sites, ***A. maculata*** was by far the commonest at 11 sites and finally ***A. regimbarti*** at three sites.

On to the Longhorn beetles where seven species were recorded; singles of ***Rhagium mordax*** were found at Charnwood Lodge and ***Stenocorus meridianus*** from Terrace Hills. As usual ***Grammoptera ruficornis*** was the most frequently recorded, ***Rutpela maculata*** was seen at Terrace Hills and Swithland. A nice record of the **Tanbark Borer *Phymatodes testaceus*** was recorded from Kelham Bridge and just a single record of **Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietus*** again from Terrace Hills. The large and showy ***Agapanthia villosoviridescens*** were found at Charnwood Lodge and Thurlaston. Kelham Bridge produced three of the reed beetle ***Donacia simplex*** and the only record for **Lily Beetle *Liloceris lillii*** came from a Quorn garden. Although only recorded from Charnwood Lodge, **Heather Beetle *Lochmea suturalis*** was regularly found through April and May. Two of the rarely recorded species ***Luperus longicornis*** turned up in at MV light in Bradgate Park mid-June; there are seven previous records for this species the last being from High Sharpley in 1984. The typical habitat is stated to be in damp and wetland situations of open woodland, heaths, moors and marshes etc., so the last habitats certainly seem to fit.

Moving on to the Weevils with the **Birch Leaf Roller *Deporaus betulae*** found in abundance along the track besides Colony Reservoir at Charnwood Lodge. This is another species with very few records, these latest sightings takes us up to seven. The striking and shiny brick-red **Oak Leaf Roller *Attelabus nitens***, also at Charnwood Lodge, was beaten from shrubs end of May making this just the 14th record for this species. Sweeping Horsetail in a rough, overgrown, weedy field at Long Whatton produced six of the NB ***Grypus equiseti***. First recorded in 2014 from Croft Pasture ***Rhinocyllus conicus*** now seems to be widespread with latest records from Shenton, Moira, Earl Shilton, Gopsall Wood and way over in Melton district at Terrace Hills. ***Rhinoncus pericarpus*** was swept from brookside vegetation at the Knighton Bioblitz. There has only been a single confirmed record of ***Amalorrhynchus melanarius*** from J Owen's garden in Leicester 1982 and identified by D G

Goddard, so the record of a singleton from Terrace Hills was quite a significant find. C W Henderson found *Hadroplontus trimaculatus* in Buddon Wood, but there is only a date range of 1922-1972. This was the only record of this species until five individuals were beaten from Musk and Spear Thistle plants at Terrace Hills early in June. These were a surprise find, stated to particularly favour Musk Thistle, but can also be found on other thistle species. Musk Thistle is thinly scattered on this site with Spear Thistle dominating certain areas. Any sites with Musk Thistle, which is sparingly scattered in Leicestershire but fairly frequent along the eastern half of Rutland, could well produce more records of this species; it might also pay to beat/sweep areas of *Cirsium* and *Carduus* spp., a job for next year. Bringing the weevils to a close with **Beech Leaf Miner *Orchestes fagi***, as the name suggests found mainly on beech but rarely on introduced Oaks, it was beaten from Beech on two occasions, five individuals were beaten in the evening from Stoneywell Wood and eight from Burrow Wood, where the conspicuous leaf mines were found also.

This has been another quarter where several noteworthy species have been found or at least re-found, and again shows the potential for exciting discoveries all of us can make. Many thanks for everyone's contributions to this section.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS

Hemiptera

Two adult **Green Shieldbug *Palomina prasina*** were noted out of hibernation, one at ATO's window ledge in Shelthorpe on 22 April and another at PHG's garden at Quorn on 24 May. A **Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum*** was also at Quorn in May with another at Rough Hill, Newtown Linford on 7 April. I cannot remember a spring when I failed to record this species until now. Several adults of the **Woundwort Bug *Eysarcoris fabricii*** were seen in MF's Knighton garden on 30 May.

Other species noted were the **Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus***, common at Ethel Road hedgerow on 3 June and also noted at Gypsy

Lane Claypit on 1 June. The only two records of Rhopalids were ***Corizus hyoscyami*** one at Thurlaston Lodge Farm and ***Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*** at Gypsy Lane Pit. The Mirid Bug ***Stenodema laevigata*** was also swept from *Leucanthemum* at the same site.



Red and Black Froghopper © Jim Graham

The red and black Froghopper ***Cercopis vulnerata*** was recorded at Newbold - a single on 30 April, with four at Groby on 5 May; most records for this group submitted by SFW and HI.

Diptera

The **Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombylius major*** continues to be spreading across the county and was recorded from 18 sites this spring. Most records are of singles, even one in my small plot, which was a first! Some of the records submitted were of several individuals, probably at the site of its host, solitary bees. These were at: Rally Bank Park, Leicester; Quorn; Allextion Field road verge (10); Morcott cemetery (several); Hambleton Wood (several); with fewer numbers at King Street Lane, Coston and Belvoir Castle; most records were from April.

St Marks Fly *Bibio marci*, were recorded from Newbold in hundreds, some mating on 30 April and at Anstey, Castle Hill Park, Walton Thorns and Barton in the Beans churchyard in early May in various numbers.

The less encountered species ***Bibio hortulanus***, a probable female, was noted at Thurlaston Lodge Farm on 31 May. ***Dilophus febrilis***, sometimes called the **Fever Fly**, were noted in their hundreds at Barton in the Beans Baptist Churchyard on 6 May.

The only spring record we have of any

Robber-fly this quarter is a single **Striped Slender Robber-fly** *Leptogaster cylindrica* from Gypsy Lane Gypsum pit on 1 June.

A very poor quarter for Soldier fly records, just three singles of the **Broad Centurian** *Chloromyia formosa* at Ethel Road, Willow Brook Park and at Bradgate Park in a moth trap in mid-June.

Other records included the parasitic fly **Tachina fera**, one was noted at Quorn on 5 May. I usually encounter this species more in autumn but have recorded it once previous in spring. A **Splayed Deerfly** *Chrysops caecutans* was also recorded in PHG's Quorn garden on 26 June and photographed as was also the Conopid fly *Physocephala rufipes*, a sand wasp look-alike, foraging on Goats-beard on 26 June. The only other conopid seen was *Sicus ferrugineus* at Victoria Park, briefly at the pond margin on 30 May.

Hoverflies

Syrphids

Another mixed bag, some improvement with some common species, but overall a disappointing season generally.

The **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* was the most widely recorded from eight localities, mostly in small numbers in June, most peaked in the following quarter.

Syrphus ribesii was noted as common at Spinney Hill Park brookside on 22 April with several in low herbage at Humberstone Park on 19 April and in the hedgerow at Ethel Road, Evington on 22 April. A few were at Aylestone Meadows on 5 May and the only other record came from PHG's Quorn garden as frequent to the end of June. Two or three *Syrphus vitripennis* were with *S. ribesii* at Humberstone Park on 19 April and several at Spinney Hill Park on 23 April with *S. ribesii* - none were noted after this peak.

Two *Eupeodes luniger* were at Rally Bank Park on the 9 April and one during April and May in my garden. The only other recorded was a single at Quorn on 2 April.

The first record of *Epistrophe eligans* was a male at Leicester Arboretum on 6 April. Another was at Rally Bank Park with a few at

Spinney Hill Park and several at Evington Park; all records were in April.

Records of another spring harbinger *Leucozona lucorum* came from Ethel Road, Evington with two on 22 April. Singles were at Evington Golf Course on 10 May and St Mary's Mills the same day. Was also noted in PHG's Quorn garden from 5 May to 26 June.



Scaeva pyrastris © Steve Woodward

A single *Scaeva pyrastris* noted in my garden briefly on 24 June was the only record submitted.

Several *Cheilosia albitarsis/ranunculii* were at Leicester Arboretum on buttercups on 7 May. Three male *Cheilosia variabilis* were in pond margins at Aylestone Meadows on 5 May and one was in low vegetation at Leicester Arboretum on the 7th. Six *Cheilosia illustrata* were on Hogweed at Willow Brook Park on 1 June and one in hedgebank at Evington Park on 15 June.

A common species which I find rarely nowadays; *Rhingia campestris* was noted on Skerry Lane, Muston on 15 April. A male *Neoascia podagrica* was at Leicester Arboretum on 7 May; yet another common species I have not recorded for several years and cannot remember any recent records from anyone else. Allowing for its small size it may be overlooked, but unlikely.

Drone Flies *Eristalis tenax* were seen here and there, but not in any great quantity. Just two *Eristalis arbustorum* were reported and they were both in my garden on the 2 June. The only other member of this group reported was a single *Eristalis intricarius* in a hedge bank at Evington Park on 15 June.

Myathropa florea were more in evidence and two were recorded from Humberstone Park

and singles at Bede Island on 5 May, South Luffenham on the 28th, Ethel Road on 3 June, Spinney Hill Park on the 6th, Swinford Corner on the 7th and Grimston on the 15th.

The bee mimic *Merodon equestris* was recorded in June from Thurnby Lodge, Cathedral Grounds, Spinney Hill Park and a mating pair at Quorn.

The only records of *Volucella bombylans* were three in a hedgebank on 3 June, with two at Bede Island on 13 June; this *Volucella* is very much a June species. The **Great White Hoverfly** *Volucella pellucens* was recorded more widely, with singles at Newbold on 30 April, Belvoir Castle on 7 May, Tilton Cutting on the 9th, Gypsy Lane Pit on 1 June, Walcote, Green Lane and Swinford Corner on the 7th, Bede Island on the 13th and Evington Park in June. The Evington Park specimen was only half the normal size for this species and I have previously noted this before. I have no idea why this is so and would be interested in any explanation, has anyone else noticed this?

A single *Syritta pipiens* at Swinford Corner on 7 June will wrap up this not very exciting quarter.

Social Bees

We have a number of records of social bees and it is difficult to formulate any consensus on the distribution or otherwise of such a widespread group, all I can do is offer my own opinion. So I will start with **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum*, no social bee has made more of an impact in distribution in recent years than this bee, particularly so in urban areas and its readiness to breed in holes in trees under eaves and to utilize nest boxes. PHG states that people in Quorn are upset by bees using their nest boxes.

From my own records, I found the dominant bumblebees in spring to be Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* and **Early Bumblebee** *Bombus pratorum*, both species being particularly common on Bramble, Humberstone Park on 24 May, with a male and young queen of *B. pratorum* noted, again on Bramble, Evington Park Golf Course, very common on 24 May, with several males of *B. pratorum*, with a queen of *B. hypnorum* with similar numbers again, both species on Bramble and Hogweed on 3 June at Ethel Road in

Evington.

Other records of **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum* came from Spinney Hill Park, with several workers and a queen foraging Rosemary on 11 April. Also common in PHG's garden at Quorn frequent during April and May, but less so than last year. ATO had an active nest in eaves at a house in Loughborough and at Barlestone FTS had queens in April, May and June, with a maximum of three on the 9th and workers with pollen. HI and SFW waded in with this species from another nine sites.

Other records of the **Early-nesting Bumblebee** *Bombus pratorum* submitted were from FTS of Barlestone, with queens in April, queens and a few workers in May and queens again in June with a few workers. PHG reported good numbers in May and June visiting various nectaring plants during that period. On their travels, SFW and HI recorded this bee from a further 19 sites, proving, if proof needed, that this bumblebee is doing all right. Several were noted at Cossington, Goscote Nurseries in May, many at South Luffenham, mixed numbers at Roundabout Spinney near Peckleton with a few at the Gypsy Lane Pit - just a selection.

Fewer **Buff-tailed bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* records were received this quarter. Barlestone records were occasional during April and May, a few workers with pollen; during June, a few workers and males and a single queen were noted on the 30th; a few workers were noted foraging Comfrey at Willow Brook Park, Thurnby Lodge on 4 June with two workers with pollen in my garden on the 25th. Other records were of queens at Morcott, Beacon Hill, Woodhouse Eaves, and Coston, all in April.

The **Red-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lapidarius*, paints a rather difficult picture over the county as a whole for this species. FTS at Barlestone records queens as frequent during April with a maximum of five, a single queen on the 2nd and none at all in June except a single worker.

PHG only noted two in his garden this quarter and notes far fewer than usual. I recorded odd workers at Upperton Road in Leicester and Evington Park in June. SFW and HI recorded this species from a further 23 sites



Red-tailed Bumblebee © Steve Woodward

around the county, the majority of which were mainly of single specimens except one at the Old Gypsum Pit off the Gypsy Road which is now an SSSI. On a requested visit, they recorded over 200 of this species, nectaring on Birds-foot Trefoil on 1 June. This was more like old times, I used to record this species in good numbers in the past in this region, so that was very good news, but fails to explain the poor numbers generally.

The **White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*** agg. has now been split into three species but as the new species are situated in coastal regions and moorland, mainly in the north-west of Scotland, this should not concern us too much in the East Midlands.

I did not record this species at all this quarter and at Barlestone only a single queen was found on 30 April and none in May or June. PHG however reported it as frequent in his Quorn garden. Queens were recorded in April from Loughborough, Woodhouse Eaves and Coston, with others, mostly singles, from Oakham Canal, Muston, Hambleton, Groby, Lutterworth, Burton on the Wolds, Wymeswold Lodge, Saxelbye, the Allerton Project at Loddington, Swithland and Loughborough.

Of the seven common species of bumblebee we have in the county at the present day the **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** is the one showing some concern. From my own records for this quarter I only have a queen at Gartree Road with a full pollen basket on 6 April, with another at Evington on 3 June. The only workers noted were two foraging on Aquilegia on the 14 May. FTS at Barlestone records queens, all singles, on 22 April, 19 May and 3 June; with workers towards the end of May, with a few in June, all with pollen. Only

PHG reports this species as frequent in May and June especially visiting flowers of Marjoram. More records like this from members would give a better picture and would be welcome. The most interesting picture for me is in the widespread records SFW and HI send in, they did not show any records for this species.

The **Vestal Cuckoo Bee, *Bombus vestalis*** was well in evidence this quarter, single females in April were from Barlestone on the 3rd and 18th and 31 May. Other records included at West Bridge and Netherseal on 22 April; Belvoir Castle on 7 May; Ethel Road Evington on 6 June, and at Spinney Hill Park, nine females foraging Perennial Sage on the 4th. I have witnessed this on previous seasons and have no idea why this number of females are foraging this plant at this time, by the following week there was no sign of any. At Bede Island on the 13th, several males were flying low over the ground.

There were fewer sightings of the **Forest Cuckoo Bee *Bombus sylvestris*** with records of singles from MF's Knighton bee garden on 30 May and Barlestone on the 28th, with two on Ethel Road, Evington on 3 June, all males.

Honey Bee *Apis mellifera* was recorded widely this quarter, common on Cotoneaster, Hogweed and Bramble blossom, etc., from 17 sites.

A few queen **Common Wasps *Vespula vulgaris*** were noted in April from Coston, Netherseal, Belvoir Castle, Gartree Road, Humberstone Park and Evington.

Howard Bradshaw

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

Not a very good summer this year – not that the plants minded. No records of particular interest this quarter but quite a few unusual rather than rare plants. A few more recorders would be very welcome as all this quarter's records are from just two members.

Some plants of interest this quarter

Fringe-cups *Tellima grandiflora*: A plant which is becoming less common of late, especially on the eastern side of the county, was noted on the old railway in Loughborough.

Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense*: An attractive little plant, often occurring in quite dense colonies and usually found on sandy ground and quite often on railway ballast was located at Catsick Hill, Barrow-upon-Soar.

Hairy-fruited Broom *Cytisus striatus*: Another introduced species distinctive for its very hairy fruiting pods was found at the Gypsy Lane Claypit, Leicester and adjacent land. It can be told from the Common Broom when not in fruit as the stems are ten-ridged whereas the Common Broom has five ridges.

Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis*: A tree which can reach 27 metres with brown, egg-shaped berries it is one of the whitebeams which can be quite confusing to identify. Quite a rare plant in the county, the one north of road junction at Ives Head was presumably planted.

Annual Mercury *Mercurialis annua*: An interesting little plant uncommon in the country north of the Home Counties. Although it belongs to the spurge family it does not have milky sap and unusually it can be dioecious – male or female, it was seen in Leicester.

Narrow-leaved Pepperwort *Lepidium rudérale*: A weed of waste ground but usually quite insignificant. I particularly noticed it as being very common on waste ground in Leicester mainly on the central reservations of dual carriageways when I was in a traffic queue. Found at the A6 kerbside in Loughborough.

Annual Wall Rocket *Diplotaxis muralis*: Occasional throughout the county on dry waste ground particularly railway ballast. It is a small yellow-flowered crucifer with an objectionable smell when handled. It occurred for many years in the front garden of a house in central Loughborough. Found on New Zealand Lane, Queniborough.

Bistort *Polygonum bistorta*: A rather handsome plant. Unfortunately it is not very common in the county but much more common further north. Located in Groby.

Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*: This is a small version of the Common Forget-me-not which has the unusual property of the flowers changing colour from cream to grey-blue. It does not seem as common as it used to be but was

noted on the lawn at petrol station in Loughborough.

Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*: A small plant which is difficult to see in its main habitat – railway tracks, tucked in the ballast. The small flowers are not very showy making the whole plant difficult to see until you are very close to it. None-the-less it was found north of Terrace Hills SSSI near Stathern.

Knapweed Broomrape *Orobanche elatior*: Located on the verge of the A47 near Morcott.

Common Broomrape *Orobanche minor*: Seen on a public footpath at Morcott.



Knapweed Broomrape (L) & Common Broomrape (R)
© Steve Woodward

Both of these are uncommon parasites on other plants and lacking chlorophyll. The host of the former is Greater Knapweed, the latter parasitises a range of species, in this instance Black Medick.

Keeled Cornsalad *Valerianella carinata*: This is one of the cornsalads which look very much alike and really need to have ripe seeds to confirm the species. This species is quite common and according to the British Flora it is increasing. Found south of church centre in Glenfield.

Hairy Woodrush *Luzula pilosa*: A small plant which is not uncommon throughout the county but is only in Charnwood Forest and the east Leicestershire and Rutland woodlands was spotted in Armley Wood Hambleton.

Brown Sedge *Carex disticha*: A sedge which is locally frequent in marshes in the west of the county was found in Syston.

Sea Fern-grass *Catapodium marinum*: This is another invader from the coast. A short, rigid grass which likes to grow in stony places



Sea Fern-grass © Steve Woodward

including walls, it has increased inland as a result of road salting and was seen in Groby.

Orange Foxtail *Alopecurus aequalis*: A rather beautiful grass for which, although it is not common, we are lucky enough to have several locations in the county. It was located on the edge of a pond in Bradgate Park.



Orange Foxtail © Steve Woodward

Hungarian Brome *Bromopsis inermis*: A tall grass which was formerly grown for fodder but now found as a seed contaminant. The *Flora of Leicestershire* suggests that it is spreading in the county. It was seen on the road to the allotments in Walcote.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records have also been received for:

Ants, molluscs, galls, millipedes, woodlice, mites, mosses, lichens, liverworts and fungi, lacewings and mayflies.

WEATHER

April 2017 was the third driest in my 20 years of records with just 13.8 mm of rain falling which is only 25% of the usual total. Once again, high pressure dominated the month and this has now been a pattern since last November. The different position of the high pressure brought us very different weather - from heat from North Africa, to biting arctic winds and snow showers but all these weathers are not uncommon in April as winds from different directions bring in very different weather. Temperatures were above normal with afternoon maximums averaging 13.7°C, 0.7°C above the norm with night time minimums at 4.8°C or 0.2°C above normal. There were two air frosts recorded which were the first since February! The high pressure brought us lots of sunshine with 176 hours being recorded which is 20% above normal.

The first fortnight of the month was totally dry as high pressure settled over us. On the 8th this moved east and allowed a very warm air mass to affect us from Spain. Temperatures on the 9th reached 22.7°C, the highest recorded in April since 2011. The very dry ground was partly responsible for a grass fire in Bradgate Park on the 8th which is unusual this early in the season but we now have had five months with mostly below average rainfall. A short unsettled spell followed with a little rain for a few days before high pressure relocated to Iceland. This brought down a very cold air mass straight from the arctic and we had a few snow showers on the 24th and 25th as well as our first air frosts since February. The coldest day on the 25th brought a temperature of just 9°C and a bitter arctic wind which made it feel even colder with night temperatures at Barrow upon Soar dropping to 0°C. The mostly dry weather returned for the end of the month with temperatures close to average but with only a few showers. So a very dry April this time around but not the warmth

we had in the years of 2007 and 2011 which were more like summer. However a warm and sunny April is not a good omen for the following summer. Both 2007 and 2011 were very poor summers so, hopefully, we can look forward to some fine weather when summer comes.

May was a very warm month, indeed it was the mildest May since 2008. Afternoon temperatures averaged 17.8°C, 1.2°C above normal with night time minimums logged at 9.5°C which is 2°C above normal. The monthly mean therefore recorded 13.7°C, 1.6°C above the expected figure. May was also a wet month looking at the figures with myself in Mountsorrel recording 75 mm of rain, 35% above normal, with Ken in Barrow upon Soar recording 62 mm. However much of this rain fell in just seven days during week three and the month actually logged 20 completely dry days - sometimes statistics can be deceptive! May was also a sunnier month than usual with 190 hours being recorded which was 5% above normal. Winds blew in from various directions but the peak gust was logged on the 26th when 37 mph was observed.

The first ten days were mainly dry but cool at times with the month's lowest day temperature of 11°C being recorded on the 6th and the coolest night of 1.7°C logged on the 6th. There then followed a very wet spell from the 12th to the 20th that saw most of the month's rain falling. The wettest day was on the 17th when 24 mm, or approximately two weeks rainfall, fell in a single day with low pressure firmly in control at this stage. The fourth week however saw a complete contrast as high pressure and very warm air pushed up from southern Europe. Temperatures began to soar with the warmest day being recorded on the 25th when 26°C was logged with the day after seeing 16 hours of sunshine the highest total of the month. The warm spell ended as they usually do in this country after five days and we saw a return of some rain during the final week. Spring for the Midlands as a whole from March 1st to May 31st was the warmest season recorded since records began in 1659 with a mean for the three months of 10.25°C, 2°C above normal narrowly beating 2011 at 10.23°C So what does the summer hold in store for us? There has been a consensus

between the models that it will be warmer than normal with near average rainfall.

June 2017 was the warmest since 2006 and ranked as one of the warmest on record. Extremely mild nights helped to make this month so warm. Afternoon temperatures averaged at 20.7°C which is 1°C above normal but the night time average of 13.1°C was 2.6°C above normal for the month. The overall mean of 16.9°C helped to make it the mildest since 2006 when we managed a mean of 17°C In Mountsorrel it was another wet month with 64 mm falling which is 10% above normal but most of this rain fell in just eight days much as it did in May. There were actually 18 dry days in June. There were 161 hours of sunshine recorded a fraction below normal, mainly thanks to the very dull end to the month.

June continued to throw up some remarkable contrasts as the month went along. The first week was very wet and indeed it looked like another three figure rainfall would be likely for the month as 38 mm fell. It was also fairly cool with just 14.8°C recorded on the 6th and a max wind of 44 mph. On the 9th there was a dramatic turn-around as high pressure began to establish itself and temperatures started to rise. The second week saw temperatures rise to 24°C with 13 hours of sun on the 14th. A fairly short but intense heatwave started on the 17th and lasted until the 21st. Temperatures peaked at 29.5°C on the 19th with night time figures being very high too with a low of 18.9°C on the 21st which is not far from the average day temperature for June. Sleeping in the very humid conditions was a problem for most people as warm moist air retains its heat! The 22nd saw a welcome drop in temperatures for most people and then the final week saw the weather go into reverse as low pressure, heavy rain and a northerly wind saw temperatures plummet. On the 28th we saw a maximum temperature of just 13.8°C a full 15°C lower than the Wednesday before and remarkably the 28th was colder than the previous temperature we managed last Christmas day when temperatures peaked at 14.3°C! Such outrageous statistics just go to show how the weather can change very quickly in this country and it all depends where the air mass is coming from. A hot subtropical air mass one week was replaced by one from

the arctic the next! Across the Midlands this June ranked 18 out of the last 359 years for warmth and it even was a fraction warmer than 1976 thanks to how warm the nights consistently were. If the weather had not cooled down so dramatically in the final days it would have made the top ten! So we wait to see what July will bring us and once again we should expect lots of contrasts in our ever changing British weather.

Phil Morrish

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H Bradshaw, B Croxall, R D Dandy, P J Darby, M A Finch, G L Finch, D B Forgham, M F Frankum, P H Gamble, J Graham, S C Graham, D Gray, C Green, J Green, H Ikin, A T Onions, D A Perry, H Shacklock, F T Smith, S F Woodward,

We are grateful to them all.

Sadly, we shall not be receiving any more records from Fred Smith, a long-standing member from Barlestone who died recently.

Records for the next quarter of 2017 should be sent as soon as possible to:

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

email: helen.canids@btinternet.com

It is much appreciated if the records of different groups are on separate sheets, otherwise they may be missed when sending the records to the writers. Note – Butterflies should be on a different sheet from Moths as they go to two separate people.

Thank you.