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## 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.

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#### MAMMALS

**Hedgehog:** PJD has been putting out her camera trap in the garden and has recorded at least three different hedgehogs – discernibly different marking on the spines and the food is disappearing from the feeding box every night. Pam heard two making a lot of noise in courtship display but remarks that “she obviously said ‘No’ as he went back to feeding!” Hedgehogs were found dead on roads in Earl Shilton, Markfield and Ratby and a live one was ambling through SFW’s Groby garden at 9 pm one night in mid-June. TB has had regular hedgehog visits to her Quorn garden.

**Pygmy Shrew:** JG records one at Holwell in mid-April.

**Mole:** activity throughout the quarter in DAP’s Swithland garden and nearby. Molehills were recorded by SFW & HI in churchyards in Appleby Magna, Swepstone, Markfield, Peckleton, Kirkby Mallory, and Cossington and in the villages of Hoby, Leire, Snarestone, Ibstock, Manton, Edith Weston, Nevill Holt, Holwell, Sutton Cheney by the canal,

Tilton and Desford. A mole surfaced on the paved area in JG's Holwell garden where it seemed very confused so was put back into the nearby field.

**Bats:** DAP noted three Pipistrelles flying around a large Acer in Swithland. On 5 April PJD had a small bat, again possibly Pipistrelle, zooming up and down her Quorn garden.

**Brown Hare:** droppings were seen on Evington Golf Course and a regular walker there confirms that he has seen the animals there, as has HB in the past. Live animals were seen at Shenton, Theddingworth and Holwell.

**Rabbit:** one seen on Evington Golf Course – which would not be popular with the green keepers. Rabbits will be discouraged from golf courses as they disrupt the smooth greens that are required for this game – common ways of controlling them are by shooting (which has health and safety issues) or by ferreting with long nets. Predatory birds such as buzzards are encouraged and often make a big difference to the numbers of rabbits. Rabbit proof fencing is very expensive. A 'parson' was noted by HB among five rabbits at Aylestone Meadows – he remarks that parsons – which are black rabbits, were common here at one time. Rabbits were a common sight in Swithland with youngsters. Snarestone, Ibstock and Greetham had burrows and live ones were at Tilton, Desford, Ashby Parva, Beaumanor, Peckleton, Manton, Bradgate Park, Market Bosworth, Edith Weston, Holwell and at Sileby where staff at the gypsum works remember seeing lots. One was seen dead near Shackerstone.

**Grey Squirrels:** were spotted at Beaumanor, Market Bosworth, Long Whatton and Swithland Wood. There have been a number of squashed squirrels on the roads of Charnwood – the ones with "road sense" will live to reproduce.

We have no Vole records.

**Wood Mouse:** PJD had a dead one deposited in her garden – probably a present from the neighbouring cat. DAP has seen them throughout the quarter under the bird feeders in his Swithland garden.

**Brown Rat:** was seen in the vegetation by the pond at Coalville Meadows in mid-June and one was eating food put out for the birds on a Groby

terrace in broad daylight, again in June. Will the birds have to go hungry? [Yes! – SFW]

**Red Fox:** one was dead on the A6 near Rothley. One was seen on camera trap on four dates in PJD's Quorn garden. HI noted a strong smell of Fox at Snarestone and one was later seen running through a grass field in the parish. Two were seen at the bottom of JG's Holwell garden and in a field nearby later in April and another in the garden on 11 May at 10 pm and a young one in the front garden in late June.

**Stoat:** PJD watched one being attacked by a Buzzard in a garden at Ulverscroft on 19 April – the Stoat escaped.

**Badger:** on three occasions a Badger was caught by the camera trap in PJD's Quorn garden and Quorn has been plagued by Badgers digging up the outfield of the cricket ground – probably searching for beetle larvae under the turf – PHG says many Garden Chafers were emerging from this area last summer. He has also had visits from Badgers to his Quorn garden where they have been digging up and eating *Tulipa saxatilis* and *Erythronium tuolumnense*. Peter has had previous visits from Badgers targeting these species as well as other Erythroniums. DAP noted one dead on a road in Swithland and has had regular visits to garden, probably looking for some damp, wormy soil in the very dry weather that we have had this summer.

There were signs of Badger: dung pits and setts at Ashby Parva, Snarestone, Shackerstone, Skeffington and The Seek; live Badgers were seen at Newtown Linford; three cubs and a squashed roadkill cub were seen at Twycross, and a larger casualty near East Norton. At Ashby Parva we found pignut which Badgers really like.

**Otter:** DAP had a report of an Otter predating large carp in a lake near Swithland – just eating the parts around the gills and leaving the carcass.

**Muntjac:** one dead on a road in Long Whatton on 16 May. Live Muntjac were seen at Skeffington and Stapleford Park and there were the tiny characteristic slots in the mud at Leire.

Helen Ikin

## BIRDS

**Mute Swans** were noted around the Charnwood waters with 26 at Groby Pool and 36 at Swithland Reservoir, both in early April. **Greylag Geese** were not as common this quarter with a maximum of four at Cropston Reservoir in April. **Canada Geese** were even less in evidence with a maximum of two at Swithland Reservoir and Groby Pool. A pair of **Egyptian Geese** flew over Bradgate Park on 22 April.

Two **Shelduck** were at Wanlip Meadows and one at Brascote Pit, both in late April. **Mandarin Ducks** were found at four sites with a maximum number of eight at Cropston Reservoir on 8 April. 24 **Wigeon** were still at Groby Pool on 3 April. The most **Gadwall** seen together was four pairs at Cropston Reservoir on 8 April. The last **Teal** record was of six birds at Groby Pool on 3 April. **Mallard** were, as usual, widespread with ducklings recorded at most suitable waters. The most seen together was on the River Lin in Bradgate Park where 24 were at their favourite feeding station on 17 June. A **Garganey** put in a brief appearance at Brascote Pit on 28 April. Three **Shoveler** at Watermead Park on 17 April and one at Cropston Reservoir on 1 April were the only reports of the species.

A **Red-crested Pochard** was at Watermead Park on 13 May. **Tufted Ducks** were widespread across the Charnwood waters with 141 at Swithland Reservoir on 6 April. Two male and a female **Common Scoter** were noted at Cropston Reservoir on 14 April. A pair of **Goldeneye** was still present at Swithland Reservoir on 14 April.

**Red-legged Partridges** were found at five sites with no more than two birds at any of them. Two **Grey Partridge** were found at Measham on 19 May and one at Sproxton on 25 May. Not many **Pheasants** were reported although they were regularly seen in a garden at Holwell and young were seen at the Evington Golf Club.

**Cormorant** numbers seem to be down this quarter with only seven at Groby Pool and two at Cropston Reservoir. **Little Egrets** were regular at Cossington Meadows and Bradgate Park in small numbers but 20 were seen in meadows close to 'The Gate Hangs Well' public house.

A **Great White Egret** was seen at Cropston Reservoir and one at Watermead Park in mid-April. All **Grey Heron** records were of singles apart from eight nests at Groby Pool noted on 3 April.

**Little Grebes** in ones and twos were found at Brascote Pit, Thornton Reservoir, Luffenham Heath and Kelham Bridge. **Great Crested Grebes** were at Groby Pool, Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs. There were eight at Groby Pool on 3 April.

**Red Kites** were observed in eight separate places with never more than two birds. Most were in the east of the county with Bradgate Park being the furthest west. Most of the **Sparrowhawk** records were from Bradgate Park or Cropston Reservoir and unusually only one from a garden, this being in Loughborough in early May. **Buzzards** seem to have been seen in all parts of the county with numerous records - there were six over Waltham on the Wolds on 1 May and five over Groby Pool on 4 April. An **Osprey** was seen to catch a fish at Cropston Reservoir on 7 May and one was seen heading north over Leicester on 31 May. **Kestrels** were noted in ten areas, a pair at Kelham Bridge appeared to be nesting in a Tawny Owl box. On 15 May at least six **Hobbies** were feeding over Watermead Park. Two days earlier there were three over Cossington Meadows. Others were noted over Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs, Cropston village and Kelham Bridge. A **Peregrine** was over Bradgate Park on 22 April and pairs hatched off three young on Bottesford Church and two at Leicester Cathedral in May.



*Buzzard © Jim Graham*

Groby Pool had the only **Water Rail** and the only **Moorhen** (gross under recording) and the most (32) **Coots**. Swithland Reservoir also had Coots but not as many. Other waters must also

have had them but were not reported!

**Oystercatchers** bred at Cossington Meadows in early May and other pairs were seen at Brascote and adjacent to 'The Gate Hangs Well'. Displaying **Lapwing** were seen at Cropston and Sutton Wharf and individuals were at Thornton Reservoir and Watermead Park. A **Whimbrel** flew south from Cropston Reservoir on 21 April. The bubbling call of the **Curlew** was heard at Wyfordby, Melton on 21 April and another was at Hose on 9 April. The dam walls at Thornton, Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs provided the perfect habitat for migrating **Common Sandpipers**. Others were reported from Cossington Meadows, Brascote, Wanlip and Birstall from mid-April to early May.

An adult **Kittiwake** was at Cropston Reservoir on 13 April. **Black-headed Gulls** bred at Cossington Meadows and 100 were reported there on 15 May. What was probably the same **Little Gull** was noted at Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs between 4 and 6 April. A **Mediterranean Gull** was discovered near 'The Gate Hangs Well' on 1 April and a first-winter bird was at Swithland Reservoir the following day with 95 **Common Gulls** counted with the Mediterranean Gull at 'The Gate'. All **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were flyovers with never more than two birds apart from a pair that appeared to be nesting on a factory roof in Loughborough.

A **Little Tern** was found at Cropston Reservoir on 2 May. A **Sandwich Tern** flew high over Cropston Reservoir on 8 April. The same site produced the maximum number of **Common Terns**, 34 on 28 April. Others were noted at Watermead Park, max. 12, Cossington Meadows where they probably bred and Swithland Reservoir where there were six on 4 May. There were occasional sightings of **Arctic Terns** with the Common Terns with a maximum of six at Cropston Reservoir on 28 April.

All of the few **Stock Dove** records were of single figures with five in my own garden at Hugglescote the maximum count. Although being widespread, the most **Woodpigeons** seen together was 16 at Beacon Hill on 9 June. I am sure there were more **Collared Doves** around than those in Holwell and Cropston gardens in late June.



*Collared Dove © Jim Graham*

It was a poor year for **Cuckoos** with only a dozen records, all were of single birds and mostly heard but not seen.

The only **Barn Owl** of the quarter was one at Holwell on 19 April. Bradgate Park had **Little Owls** throughout the quarter; the one record away from there was in a garden at Cropston. **Tawny Owls** were reduced to two records, one at Beaumanor Hall and one at Shenton.

The first **Swift** of the year was seen over Holwell on 20 April followed by 20 at Cropston Reservoir on the 27th. In what was a poor year for this species 120 was the highest count also at Cropston on 25 May. **Kingfishers** were only noted at Groby Pool in early April and at Kelham Bridge where one was seen spasmodically throughout the quarter.

**Green Woodpeckers** appear to be common in Bradgate Park there were numerous observations with numbers of four, five and eight mentioned. Others were seen at Hoby, Groby Pool, Swithland Reservoir and a Quorn garden. As usual there were more reports of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** most of which came from the Charnwood area. Amongst the garden reports was one at Cropston with juveniles at the feeders. As usual there were no **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** mentioned.

Most **Magpie** records were of garden birds but never more than four and **Jays** were also noted in gardens notably at Holwell where one was a regular visitor. Others were seen around the Charnwood area. There were lots of **Jackdaw** nests in Bradgate Park and 100 birds were counted on 5 April. The most **Rooks** seen together was 60 at Stapleton where there were 30 nests in the rookery. Other rookeries were found at Asfordby, Hoby, Long Whatton, and

Stapleford Park where there was at least 24 nests. Very few numbers of **Crows** were mentioned. A pair of **Ravens** was feeding young at a nest on a pylon at Mountsorrel on 14 April. Other birds were seen at six other sites including Wymeswold where five were feeding in a field on 5 June.

Singing **Goldcrests** were heard generally around the Cropston area with five heard in Bradgate Park and three at Beacon Hill. **Blue Tits** were widespread with 17, including juveniles, counted at Beacon Hill on 9 June. It was a similar situation with **Great Tits** with eight counted in Bradgate Park on 24 April. Fewer **Coal Tits** were reported but there were four including juveniles at Beaumanor Hall on 9 June. Again, Kelham Bridge was the only place where **Willow Tits** were sighted; they were intermittent throughout the quarter. **Marsh Tits** were almost as rare with sightings only at Groby Pool and Swithland Reservoir.

Singing **Skylarks** were heard at a dozen different sites but usually only a single bird. However there were an estimated ten pairs in fields adjacent to Sence Valley Forest Park on 29 April. **Sand Martins** seem to have had a bad year; the wall at Kelham Bridge had no nests at all after a few birds visited and the wall at Sence Valley had only the odd one. The most birds seen together was 22 at Swithland Reservoir in early May. Not many nesting **Swallows** were noted but they were found at Twycross Zoo and Thistleton. The first bird seen was at Cropston Reservoir on 6 April and three weeks later there were up to 200 feeding there. Most **House Martin** reports were of the reduced numbers of nests. In an area of Quorn there were 12 nests where there were 16 last year and in Leicester there were seven compared with 16 last year. The first arrival was noted with the first Swallow at Cropston Reservoir.

Singing **Cetti's Warblers** were heard at Birstall Meadows, Watermead Park, St Mary's Mills in Leicester, Humberstone Park and Kelham Bridge where three were heard on 22 May. A few pairs of **Long-tailed Tits** were noted and the first family parties were seen in June with seven at Beaumanor Hall and 12 at Beacon Hill. By early April **Chiffchaffs** were singing in numerous places. Three or four birds were singing at the same sites and by early June nine

were heard at Beacon Hill. The first **Willow Warbler** was heard at Warren Hills on 8 April when four were singing. Observations were less than Chiffchaffs but were still widespread with up to ten heard at Beacon Hill. **Blackcaps** outnumbered the other warblers with birds being heard in around 20 different sites. Again Beacon Hill had the most with six singing in June. **Garden Warblers** were only reported from four sites, Beacon Hill, Humberstone Park, Luffenham Heath and Manton. Surprisingly, **Lesser Whitethroats** outnumbered **Common Whitethroats** by almost two to one. Most 'Lessers' were to the east of the county with the more local ones being at Bradgate Park, Watermead Park, Cossington Meadows and Thornton Reservoir, where there were three on 19 April. **Common Whitethroats** were only heard at Thornton Reservoir, Bradgate Park, Dadlington, Kelham Bridge, Long Whatton and Junction 23a on the M1. The only **Grasshopper Warbler** reported was on 2 May at Queen Elizabeth Wood, Normanton-le-Heath. **Sedge Warblers** were noted at Thornton Reservoir, Watermead Park, St Mary's Mills Leicester and Kelham Bridge. There were only as many **Reed Warblers** reported, these were heard at Groby Pool, Freemans Park Aylestone, Kelham Bridge and a pool near Junction 23a on the M1.

**Nuthatches** were found at Beaumanor Hall and Groby Pool. At Bradgate Park and Thornton Reservoir they were found in the same area as **Treecreepers**, the only sites for this species. **Wrens** could be heard at most sites with ten singing at Beacon Hill in early June. All **Starling** records were of garden visitors with a very low maximum of 15 birds.

It was a lean year for passage **Ring Ouzels** with only two seen. One was at Bardon Hill on 15 April and one at Thornton Reservoir two days later. Most gardens seem to have had **Blackbirds** present with some having successful breeding. Six **Fieldfare** were still present at Causeway Lane, Cropston on 14 April and these were accompanied by five **Redwings**, the last of both these species to be seen. All **Song Thrush** reports were of single singing birds mainly in the Charnwood area. Surprisingly there were just as many **Mistle Thrushes** reported but the majority of these were either at Bradgate Park or Beacon Hill.

Unfortunately, there were no local **Spotted Flycatcher** observations, only two were mentioned, these being at Nevill Holt and Medbourne in late June.

**Robins** were ubiquitous but only one **Whinchat** was found, this being at Queen Elizabeth Wood, Normanton-le-Heath on 2 May. **Wheatears** were not that much more common with the only sightings at Sproxton, Warren Hills where there were two on 8 April, and Brascote Pits with three there on 28 April.

Most **Dunnock** sightings were in gardens with up to four seen and it was a similar situation with **House Sparrows** but this time a maximum of seven. Two **Tree Sparrows** were noted at Ashby Parva in April and one in a garden at Holwell in June.

Only two **Yellow Wagtails** were seen, one at Sproxton and one at Measham, both in mid-May. Two adult **Grey Wagtails** and one juvenile were on the dam at Cropston Reservoir on 12 June. Others were seen at Groby Pool, Beaumanor Hall, and Swithland Reservoir. Pipits were in short supply, the only **Tree Pipit** of the quarter was found on Bardon Hill on 15 April and Charnwood Lodge provided the only **Meadow Pipit** record, at least ten birds on 24 April.



Bullfinch © Jim Graham

The most **Chaffinches** seen together was four which was the same numbers as the **Bramblings** in a Cropston garden in early April. Two Bramblings were seen at Swithland Reservoir on 21 April. Surprisingly there were many more reports of **Greenfinches** than Chaffinches but with a maximum count of just two. **Goldfinches** bucked the finch trend with most reports of small groups the biggest of which was 12 in Bradgate Park on 16 June. A

lone **Siskin** visited feeders in a Cropston garden regularly in mid-April. A flock of 30 **Linnets** at Swithland Reservoir was eclipsed by 120 at Causeway Lane, Cropston on 14 April. Two **Crossbills** flew south-west along Swithland Reservoir dam on 4 May. **Bullfinches** were seen at Beacon Hill, Cropston and Groby Pool but up to three were in my garden at Hugglescote daily throughout the quarter.

**Yellowhammers** were noted at half a dozen sites with birds seen regularly in Bradgate Park where the maximum number was six on 14 April and 16 May. **Reed Buntings** bred at Watermead Park and others in suitable breeding habitats were at another six sites. Unfortunately there were no **Corn Bunting** records again this quarter.

Bas Forgham

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

In spite of the unusual weather this year, the second quarter of the year proved to be quite productive for sightings of this group.

**Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara***: we have only one sighting for this reptile from Bradgate Park, which has often provided us with sightings in the past. On the 3 May SFW and HI found a single specimen near the ruins in the Park.

**Slow worm *Anguis fragilis***: we have one or two sightings for this reptile, and as usual they are provided by PJD, who lives in Quorn in an area which appears to be very popular with these reptiles! PJD reports finding two specimens in her neighbour's compost bins on the 7 May, and again on the 6 June. On the 12 June PJD found another specimen in her own garden under plants. This specimen was a small one, and was therefore presumably a young one.

**Grass Snake *Natrix natrix***: our first sighting of this reptile comes from HI and SFW one was observed on the 21 April while they were carrying out a survey in the St Mary Magdalene churchyard, at Stapleford to the east of Melton Mowbray. A day or two later, on the 26 April, they found another single specimen at Greetham, near Cottesmore. Later in the quarter, on the 11 June, HB observed a specimen rapidly disappearing into cover, at the Aylestone Meadows in Leicester. This sighting

is an interesting one, because it shows how different kinds of wildlife will move into an "oasis" in the busiest of cities, especially where, as in this case, there is a river which may act as a "wildlife corridor". On the 14 June, up on Charnwood Forest, DAP found a specimen which was approximately 45cm long, sunning itself on a footpath on the south side of Cropston Reservoir. Then finally, on the 26 June, SFW found a specimen on the dam at Stanford Reservoir, near South Kilworth, in the south of the county.

**Adder *Vipera berus*:** we have only one sighting for this reptile, and this comes from SFW, who found a specimen on the 6 May, at Ketton Quarry Nature Reserve in Rutland.

**Common or Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*:** HS reports that Smooth Newts arrived in her garden pond in Quorn on the 14 April. On that day there were only two specimens, yet on the 18 April she counted 12 specimens, and on the following day there were 13 specimens. PJD reports that on the 6 May there were at least six specimens in her neighbour's garden pond, on the other side of Quorn. On the 13 May, SFW and HI found two specimens in a garden pond at Willoughby Waterleys, near Countesthorpe. Then, on the 24 May SFW and HI found ten specimens in a pond at Luffenham Heath Golf course in Rutland. Given that we continue to receive sightings from all around the county, it seems reasonable to assume that the Common Newt is actually living up to its name!

**Common Toad *Bufo bufo*:** just one record for this amphibian. SFW and HI report finding one at North Farm, on the Shenton Estate in the south-west of the county. This was on the 23 May.

**Common Frog *Rana temporaria*:** in contrast to the lack of sightings of the Common Toad, the Common Frog appears to be doing well, with sightings from several different areas. PJD reports that during April and May there were large numbers of frogs present in her own and in her neighbour's Quorn garden. SFW and RP found a specimen on the 1 May, at Skeffington Wood, on the A47 between Leicester and Uppingham. On the 13 May SFW and HI found several tadpoles in a garden pond at Willoughby Waterleys, near Countesthorpe. On the 24 May,

SFW and HI found thousands! of tadpoles in the pond on Luffenham Heath golf course in Rutland. On the 26 May HI and SFW found large numbers of tadpoles in shallow water at the edge of the River Soar, near Hathern. The following day, SFW and HI found a single specimen in All Saints' churchyard at Cossington. Finally, on the 16 June SFW found thousands on a path around a lake at the back of the British Gypsum works, between Barrow and Sileby. Apparently there were so many of them that it was difficult to avoid walking on them. ATO reports that he found a large specimen in an old saucepan full of water in his back garden on the evening of the 11 June. On the 22 June, he found a second frog - with one being slightly larger than the other. The two frogs have remained in residence throughout the summer, living in a tangle of ivy and brambles, and using the nearby saucepan of water as a swimming pool. The saucepan is heavily shaded, and with a little topping up from time to time has retained its water throughout this summer's heat-wave!

... And that concludes our sightings for this group for this quarter. Although we have only one or two sightings for certain species, it seems that generally speaking our populations of reptiles and amphibians are holding up well, in spite of the vagaries of the English climate!

**Tony Onions**

### **FISH (including CRAYFISH)**

Sadly, we have only two sightings for this group; however, the second of these is a particularly interesting one.

**Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*:** SFW reports finding a specimen at Stanford Reservoir, near South Kilworth, in the far south of the county, on the 26 June. This was a male in breeding colours. This species was featured a year or two ago in the BBC 'Springwatch' programme. The programme followed the activities of a male Stickleback during the spawning period constructing a 'nest' of bits of vegetation on the substrate, enticing females to lay their eggs in the nest, and then guarding the nest until the eggs hatched. Apparently this feature was very popular with the viewing public, and I suppose that that

should not be surprising it is, after all, a colourful and interesting species.

**White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*:** DAP reports that on the 15 June he observed several specimens in the stream which runs through his garden at Swithland. This sighting is of particular interest because the White-clawed - which is the native species - has seen a drastic reduction in its numbers in recent years as the result of the spread of a fungal infection, to which it has no resistance. Consequently, we find that in some rivers there are no crayfish, while in others the native species has been replaced by the American Signal Crayfish *Pacifasticus leniusculus*, which is resistant to the fungal infection. Finally, there are pockets of surviving White-clawed Crayfish, usually in the headwaters of rivers, where they are isolated because of barriers or obstacles which prevent the upstream migration of carriers of the infection. This is very much the case on Charnwood Forest. As far as I am aware, White-claws can be found in the headwaters of the Wood Brook, which flows through Loughborough as well as the Swithland stream. These two brooks have something in common – they flow into reservoirs – Nanpantan Reservoir and Swithland Reservoir and reservoirs act as barriers to upstream migration. This is particularly important in the case of the Wood Brook, because the lower reaches of the stream - where it runs through Loughborough - are home to a population of Signal Crayfish which have probably migrated upstream from the river Soar. At the time of the sighting, on the 15 June, DAP notes that the Swithland Brook was running "low and clear", and this gives us grounds for some concern. It is conceivable that in a heat-wave summer, like the one that we have experienced this year, that these headwater streams might actually dry up completely, with consequent damage to these fragile populations of White-clawed Crayfish. If my memory serves me correctly, there was talk some years ago of developing a vaccine which would give the White-claw immunity to the fungal infection. I have no recent information on this, and if someone out there does have information on the progress or lack of progress of this project, I would be very grateful if they would contact me to provide me with an update!

The River Lin flowing through Bradgate Park also goes into a reservoir – Cropston but there are no longer any White-clawed Crayfish in the Bradgate section although no Signal Crayfish have been found here but the fungal infection may have been spread on children's fishing nets which have been previously used in streams which have the fungus. We hope that there may still be native crayfish in the upper reaches of the Lin.

Tony Onions

## DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

The report for Q2 will appear in Heritage 231.

## BUTTERFLIES

We could scarcely have guessed last summer when we were bemoaning the lack of any substantial sunny days that the following summer would be so very different with long periods of unrelieved hot sunshine when often our garden butterflies could be seen actively searching for cooler, shady places in which to rest up.

It would seem likely that whereas the prolonged sunny days probably favoured the first generations of those species with two or more generations, second and third generations might well have suffered as a result of their larval food plants drying up and dying. There was a marked absence during the quarter of migrant species such as Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

### Hesperiidae

Late in June the first **Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*** was noted at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel on the 22nd followed by one at Evington Park on the 25th. On the 27th several were active in Coalville Meadows and one at Bede Island in Leicester. On the 29th others were present at Kelham Bridge and on the 30th two were observed in Buddon Brook Meadows and one in HS's Chaveney Road garden in Quorn.

The earlier emerging **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*** was first noted at on 11 June at Quorn and between then and the end of the month was reported seen in 16 widely spaced

localities with double-figure counts at Willowbrook Park in Leicester with 15 on the 22nd and Charnwood Lodge with 16 on the 26th.

The only **Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*** reported was four seen by HI & SFW in Ellistown and Battleflat parish on 28 May.

### **Pieridae**

Between 5 April and 28 June the **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was reported seen in some 30 widely spread localities, usually as singletons, though six were seen at Luffenham Heath Golf Course, a large site in Rutland on 24 May. This distinctive and far ranging species is sometimes noted far from its nearest known larval food plant leading to speculation that some other plant species may be used but apparently none has ever been proved to exist. DBF reported having a female laying eggs on an Alder Buckthorn in his Hugglescote garden on 6 May while we had one in our Quorn garden laying eggs on Alder Buckthorn on 26 May.

The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was first noted on 20 April at Quorn and frequent sightings were reported throughout May and June, visiting parks and gardens in town and countryside.

Small numbers of **Small White *Pieris rapae*** became active towards the end of April and they became frequent in gardens and countryside in May and June but as usual were not well reported.

A **Green-veined White *Pieris napi*** was found at rest on an Honesty plant in our Quorn garden on 7 May and later they became widely reported during the rest of May and June. About 12 were noted at Willowbrook Park in Leicester on 22 June and one was observed laying eggs on watercress along the edge of Quorn Brook on 27 June.

The lovely **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*** was first noted on 18 April in our Meeting Street garden and nearby in a Warwick Avenue garden and on the following day in two other members' gardens, much later than during some recent years and was last reported seen in on 28 May HS's Quorn garden a much earlier date than some years. Altogether it was reported seen at 36 widely scattered sites, including two Leicester city parks but few sites

produced double-figure counts though 35 were noted at Sence Valley Forest Park on 7 May.

### **Lycaenidae**

Unlike our other British hairstreaks, the **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*** has quite a number of larval food plants representing different families, but the Charnwood populations seem to be largely, if not entirely, using Bilberry. On 7 May DBF saw lots around the Bilberry on Warren Hills and HS observed seven on Timberwood Hill on the same date. Further afield, on 6 May SFW reported two seen at Ketton Quarry NR and this population would certainly be using a different food source. One food plant is bramble which covers a large number of related *Rubus* species with a widespread distribution making it possible that hitherto unknown colonies still exist in VC55. However, the Ketton population may well be using Bird's-foot Trefoil or various vetches.

An early **White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrium w-album*** was found along a ride in the spinney nature area of Humberstone Park by HB on 28 June.

No **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** were reported and the **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** first generation butterflies were low in number, with no double-figure counts being reported. They were seen in only eight localities though several favoured sites were apparently not visited by our members. Thankfully, the first generation of **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** appeared more widely, being reported seen in 22 localities including town and country parks and members gardens with a first sighting on 19 April at Quorn and the last sighting on 1 June at Market Bosworth.

### **Nymphalidae**

The **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** was only reported seen in four localities in June with one at Church View garden at Quorn on 14th, three at Nevill Holt on 22nd, one at Stanford Reservoir on 26th and one at St Mary's Mills in Leicester on 3 June.

The only **Painted Lady *Cynthia cardua*** reported was on 3 June at Colin and Jackie Green's garden at Holwell.

The **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** was widely reported from some 26 well spread



Small Tortoiseshell © Jim Graham

localities with the new generation appearing in June but the only double-figure count reported was about 12 at Willowbrook Park in Leicester.

During April and May the **Peacock *Inachis io*** was reported seen in a dozen well spread localities and mostly as single individuals. A late well-worn specimen was still present at Charnwood Lodge on 26 June and these would all have been part of the over-wintering generation as the new generation does not appear until well into July. Sadly, numbers of this colourful woodland and garden species are at their lowest for very many years!



Peacock © Jim Graham

The **Comma *Polygonia c-album*** was first noted on 5 April at Quorn and the following day at Desford. The overwintering generation remained active during April and May and the new generation appeared towards the end of June. Altogether it was noted in 13 well scattered localities.

### Satyridae

The **Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*** was well reported and noted in some 30 localities; at some 14 sites in May and 16 sites in June. During May up to four were noted in several of

the Leicester parks and eight at Sence Valley FP on the 7th and seven at Herbert's Meadow in Ulverscroft NR on the 27th.

As usual the **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** was widely reported at some 23 localities and was first noted on 11 June at Edith Weston followed by others in Quorn village on the 14th, nine were seen at Willowbrook Park on 22nd and a similar number at Sence Valley FP. On 21st four were present at Buddon Brook Meadows and on 26th at Charnwood Lodge, 27 or more were counted. On large sites where this species can often be found it is especially difficult to estimate numbers present with the butterflies always on the move and thus, doubtless, underestimated.

The now local **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** was only reported seen in four localities. On 28 May one was found in Ellistown and likewise one only at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel on 22 June. On 25 June four were noted at Buddon Wood south mound and on 26th there were 44 or more at Charnwood Lodge – a site which could support really large numbers.

The now widespread **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*** was well reported from some 20 localities with a first sighting in the interesting wild area behind Motorway Junction 23 on 13 June followed by three seen on 18th in the grounds of Leicester General Hospital. Many sites eventually held good numbers and about 60 were noted at Sence Valley FP on 22nd and Charnwood Lodge had 22 or more on 26th. Small numbers also visited several members' gardens.

Peter Gamble

### MOTHS

The figures are quite interesting for this quarter, 4607 individuals (7462 for the same quarter last year) of 343 species (398 for 2017) from eight recorders (nine for 2017), so the individual total is well down but the species number is not at all far short. The weather conditions dictate all our natural history sightings so as the weather for the first half of this quarter was fairly unsettled with well below average temperatures, we had to wait until June to see the temperature begin to rise and then it didn't stop. The problem was, the hot sunny



*Blossom Underwing* © Graham Finch

days gave way to cool nights, and this limited the amount of evenings it was worth putting out the traps. I suspect the limited amount of trapping early in the quarter had a huge bearing on the numbers recorded, it seemed like most of the species were there but very few were in any great numbers. The ground was really drying out, becoming quite hard making it very difficult for any species that pupated underground to emerge in such extreme circumstances. Despite these trying conditions, I think we all did okay and towards the end of June results of over 100 species per night was becoming the norm. Grange Wood was mentioned last quarter and 18 April produced over 25 species with the highlight being a single **Blossom Underwing** *Orthosia miniosa*. Stated for VC55 as Rare, recent records from Rutland and Dadlington, I think there was just a single record from Dadlington and only odd records from Rutland. Considering the distance and spread between these sites, it makes you wonder where else it is likely to be, especially as another singleton was trapped in Cloud Wood the following night. More trapping in March and April, in our better quality woodland that hold plenty of willows and old oaks, just may help to provide an answer. 13 June saw our return to Loughborough University "Fruit Routes Celebration" for our fourth moth trapping event here; we finished with just over 60 species and everyone went away very happy indeed. If we get the chance for a repeat opportunity next year I can thoroughly recommend a visit.

Time to get on with the summary; starting with the micro moths, of which an impressive

146 species were recorded. *Micropterix aruncella* and *M. calthella* both visited the traps in singletons, not often attracted to light, they are more easily found during the day visiting pollen-loaded plants. *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella* was out through most of the quarter and the stunning metallic purple *Eriocrania sangii* was just at Charnwood Lodge (abbreviated to CL from now on). Only recorded from sites on the Charnwood Forest were a few **Map-winged Swift** *Korscheltellus fusconebulosa* whereas **Ghost Moth** *Hepialus humuli* was quite widespread. Many of the micro moths as adults, can only be reliably determined from dissection, so particular attention was paid to those, which would normally be discarded. With just one record in the VC55 database, a single *Stigmella myrtillella* was at Brown's Hay towards the end of May, without dissection this would not have been recorded. *Nematopogon schwarziellus* proved to be fairly abundant and widespread on the Charnwood Forest from end of May to early June. Six species from the family Tineidae were recorded and all from Charnwood Forest sites they were: *Narycia duplicella*, *Morophaga choragella*, *Triaxomera parasitella*, *Nemapogon cloacella*, *Tinea semifulvella* and *Monopis weaverella* all from mid-May to mid-June. The distinctive mines of **Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner** *Cameraria ohridella* were well reported, with several trees being absolutely covered. Fresh out of hibernation was a solitary bright orange *Zelleria hepariella* and *Ocnerostoma friesei* was on the wing in Cloud Wood from late April to early May. Looking far too delicate to be a migrant the **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella* was reported from far and wide although in small numbers. On the few warm sunny days throughout May *Glyphipterix fuscoviridella* could be seen with hundreds being disturbed when walking through the grassy areas of the reserve at CL, with just a few appearing at light during the evenings. Phil Sterling once told us that the micro moths love to "come out to play" when the temperature is around 16°C, this was certainly the case on numerous nights in June. Out of the 146 species of micros recorded this quarter 110 were recorded in June, particularly towards the end of the month.

Distinctive as a family, the Argyresthiidae, unless very fresh, can be a little awkward to get to species level. In late May and all through June when conditions were favourable gave us a good opportunity to try and get to grips with some of them. **Argyresthia laevigatella**, **A. brockeella**, **A. goedartella**, **A. retinella** and **A. conjugella** were all out and about to test us. Although often out in considerable numbers we had a couple of nights with 97 and 95 individuals of **Diurnea fagella** which seemed to have a very short flight period from 6 April to 19 April, barely a fortnight. Mid-May at CL and Stoneywell produced good numbers of **Neofaculta ericitella**, a Heather specialist, supposedly on the wing from late April to June and despite trapping in suitable habitat, it was only recorded on the two dates in May.

Another family of micros that tend to get ignored as adults are the Coleophoridae, so an effort was made to determine which species we were getting by taking a random sample for dissection. The following species were identified using this method **Coleophora trifolii**, **C. deauratella**, **C. betulella**, **C. albicosta**, **C. laricella**, **C. caespitella** and **C. alticolella**; whereas **Coleophora mayrella** is one of the few that can be identified on external characters. Occupied larval feeding cases of **Coleophora limosipennella** were found on Elm at Cloud Wood in late May. The only Plume moth recorded was **Common Plume Emmelina monodactyla** from the Loughborough University night in mid-June.



*Ancyliis myrtilana* © Graham Finch

Although way down in numbers, **Light Brown Apple-moth Epiphyas postvittana** and **Green Oak Tortrix Tortrix viridana** were both widely reported. Stoneywell has lush areas of Bilberry so a single **Ancyliis myrtilana** (just one

previous record in the database for this species), was a nice find towards the end of June, again extra trapping at the Bilberry sites on the Forest ought to find this species. A similar situation for the two spruce-feeding species **Epinotia nanana** (only four previous records) where a singleton was found at CL in mid-June, and **Epinotia tedella** at the end of May (six previous records). Two or three nights concentrated trapping at sites with Bilberry, Norway and Sitka Spruce and Scots Pine could boost the records significantly for these seldom seen species. Two other conifer feeding species, this time on Scots Pine **Spotted Shoot Moth Rhyacionia pinivorana** (48 previous records) and **Cydia cosmophorana** (just one previous record) were recorded in mid-June both from CL. Two very similar Tortricids were also caught at CL, **Pammene trauniana** (just one previous record) and **P. regiana** (48 previous records) both Maple feeders; care needs to be taken when separating these two. Another Tortricid that is rarely seen is **Strophedra weirana** (just three previous records) the singleton from Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation was a very pleasing find. This site just gets better, with most of our native trees and shrubs maturing nicely.



*Six-belted Clearwing* © Steve Woodward

The only Clearwing recorded was a single **Six-belted Clearwing Bembecia ichneumoniformis** from Stonesby Quarry and the only records for **Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet Zygaena lonicerae** were of approximately 42 from the City General hospital grounds, both at the end of June.

Twenty species from the Pyraloidea were recorded, just a few will be mentioned here starting with **Bee Moth Aphantia sociella** in small numbers but were fairly widely reported,



Scalloped Hooktip © Graham Finch

Hicks Lodge produced the only *Pyrausta purpuralis* and *Anania coronata* records, with CL the only *Anania perlucidalis* all as singletons in mid- to late June. **Small Magpie *Anania hortulata*** was well recorded, but Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation produced the understated surprise in a single *Agrotera nemoralis* in early June - what an attractive perky little moth. This specimen was the second within a few of days of each other, which is quite amazing as the last previous record for VC55 was 1907. All the usual *Scoparia* and *Eudonia* species started to put in an appearance from mid-May through June, whereas the *Crambidae* or Grass Moths were in evidence a bit later from the end of the first week in June. Usually recorded in vast numbers, only singles of **Water Veneer *Acentria ephemerella*** and **Beautiful China-mark *Nymphula nitidulata*** were at CL in mid-June.

Starting the macro moths off with **Scalloped Hook-tip *Falcaria lacertinaria*** being widespread, just two reports of **Oak Hook-tip *Watsonalla binaria*** from CL and Stoneywell, with **Pebble Hook-tip *Drepana falcataria*** again widespread. The only records of **Figure of Eighty *Tethea ocularis*** and **Yellow Horned *Achlya flavicornis*** were from Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation and both as singletons. We were a bit short on Hawk-moths with just four species, **Lime Hawk-moth *Mimas tiliae***, **Poplar Hawk-moth *Laothoe populi***, **Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor*** and **Small Elephant Hawk-moth *D. Porcellus*** all in low numbers but all fairly widespread. One of the things we have been taking notice of is records of the banded and non-banded forms of **Riband Wave *Idaea aversata***, with the non-banded form easily outnumbering the banded form. An early report of five **July Highflyer *Hydriomena furcata*** from Hicks Lodge in late June but **May Highflyer**

***Hydriomena impluviata*** was seen on all three months, but only on the Forest. Another species that seemed to have a shorter flight period than usual was **Mottled Grey *Colostygia multistrigaria*** first seen on 6 April with the last report on 17 April, whereas **Water Carpet *Lampropteryx suffumata*** was seen in all three months and well into double-figures on many nights. Always a pleasure to see is **Scallop Shell *Rheumaptera undulata*** but the total of 11 at Hicks Lodge at the end of June was even more special.

The Pug moths are not everyone's favourites, but they can add significantly to most nightly lists, 439 Pugs of 15 species were recorded for this quarter; I'll list them all but with brief details. **Double-striped Pug *Gymnoscelis rufifasciata*** only from Cloud Wood and Grange Wood, **V-pug *Chloroclysta v-ata*** widespread in all months, **Green Pug *Pasiphila rectangulata*** just at Loughborough University and Hicks Lodge, **Foxglove Pug *Eupithecia pulchellata*** apart from a singleton at Groby, all from the Forest.



Foxglove Pug © Graham Finch

The most widespread and abundant was **Brindled Pug *E. abbreviata*** with high nightly totals in early April of 85 at CL and 70 at Grange Wood, **Oak-tree Pug *E. dodoneata*** low numbers and mainly from the Forest sites, but just three **White-spotted Pug *E. tripunctaria*** from Cloud Wood at the beginning of May. Two records of **Golden-rod Pug *E. virgauerata*** at Cloud Wood and Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation, with low numbers of **Dwarf Pug *E. tantillaria*** again being widespread. A single record of three **Narrow-winged Pug *E. nanata*** at Hicks Lodge, two records of **Ochreous Pug *E. indigata*** and a single record of **Triple-spotted Pug *E. trisignaria***. Both **Common Pug *E. vulgata*** and **Mottled Pug *E. exiguata*** were well recorded, but all four

records of **Grey Pug** *E. subfuscata* were again from the Forest.

Two reports of **Latticed Heath** *Chiasma clathrata* a singleton attracted to light at Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation and three in the daytime at Freemans Lock, Leicester. With Bracken as the larval foodplant it is no surprise that all the records for **Brown Silver-lines** *Petrophora chlorosata* came from the Charnwood Forest with individual nightly totals reaching 200. Another extremely restricted species is **Barred Umber** *Plagodis dolabraria* with just a single specimen recorded from its most reliable site Stoneywell Wood. In the past odd records have turned up from several of the Charnwood Forest sites, but the records are far from annual. The larval foodplants are Downy and Silver Birch plus Hazel, of which there is no shortage of any, so why is this species almost restricted to Stoneywell Wood? The first **Early Thorn** *Selenia dentaria* and **Purple Thorn** *S. tetralunaria* appeared in early April but no more after mid-May. The only, and a little early, record of **Scalloped Oak** *Crocallis elinguaris* came from Hicks Lodge in late June. The last of the **March Moth** *Alsophila aescularia* and **Pale Brindled Beauty** *Phigalia pilosaria* were over by mid-April, just as **Brindled Beauty** *Lycia hirtaria* started to show, and the only record of **Oak Beauty** *Biston betularia* came from Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation. This site produced the only records of **Pale Oak Beauty** *Hypomecis punctinalis* and **Brindled White-spot** *Parectropis similaria*, the former we usually get a couple of recorded each year but the latter, apart from only a couple of records from Rutland, has only ever been recorded once from Burbage Wood. All the records for **Marbled Brown** *Drymonia dodonea* as usual came from the Charnwood Forest but **Lunar Marbled Brown** *D. ruficornis* was widespread. Early May saw the only record of the beautiful **Chocolate-tip** *Clostera curtula*, so from the last two years the only records received (from LNC members) for this species have been from Cloud Wood. Charnwood Lodge continues to produce records of the stunning **Beautiful Snout** *Hypena crassalis* with five adults 19 June, almost a month later than the 2017 sightings. This is well and truly established and may possibly spread to similar sites such as Ulverscroft and maybe even Stoneywell Wood, let us hope so. The same

night produced a single **Red-necked Footman** *Atolmis rubricollis*, the only record for this species. **Orange Footman** *Eilema sorocula* appeared from early May through to late June with several nights producing double-figure counts, including a total of 91 in mid-May. A respectable total of nine **Blackneck** *Lygephila pastinum* were at Hicks Lodge at the end of June. **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*, although all in single figures, was widespread throughout May and June. The first **Brown Rustic** *Rusina ferruginea* was slightly early towards the end of May and continued to be recorded at least to the end of the quarter. With larval foodplants as Dock, Sorrel and Knotgrass, you would think **Bird's Wing** *Dypterygia scabriuscula* would be ridiculously common, but there was only one record of a singleton at Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation in early June. All the usual Brindles, Rustics and Minors were in evidence and sightings of the **Chestnut** *Conistra vaccinii* finished in early May. **Clouded Drab** *Orthosia incerta* did the same with the last one on 15 May. In fact all the *Orthosia* species finished around the same time. Stated as rare and seemingly restricted to the Charnwood Forest, two **Glaucous Shears** *Papestra biren* were caught on 15 May at CL. They always seem to be in traps out in the open, but never far away from rocky outcrops, or maybe that's just a coincidence?

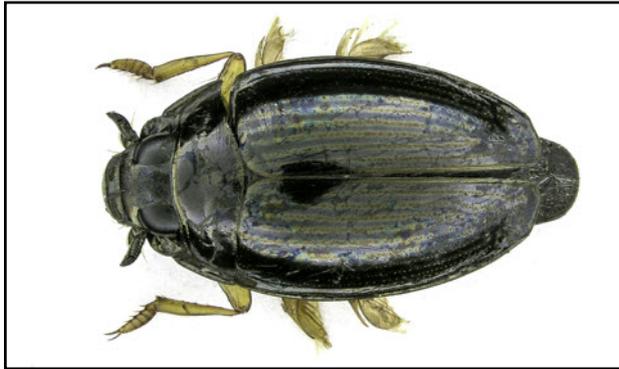
To finish the summary off with the usual Noctuids starting to show and help fill the traps, **Heart and Dart** *Agrotis exclamatoris*, **Purple Clay** *Diarsia brunnea*, **Ingrailed Clay** *D. mendica*, **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba*, **Green Arches** *Anaplectoides prasina*, **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum*, and **Double Square-spot** *X. triangulum* all started to appear from mid-June. All in all quite a good result with a few very welcome surprises backed up with several scarcely recorded species, plus with the heatwave well and truly taking hold we will see what the next quarter brings.

Many thanks to all who have submitted their records for this quarter.

Graham and Anona Finch

## BEETLES

Quite a drop in records received for this quarter, 1308 individuals (3437 for same quarter last year) 168 species (246 last year), with just six recorders (eight last year). Also last year we had the specimens produced from the Spider Survey from Charnwood Lodge and results from the pitfall traps in Bradgate Park, missing these contributed to a significant reduction in records. A summary of what we all found follows.



*Gyrinus urninator* © Graham Finch

A single rainbow-striped Whirligig beetle intriguingly named *Gyrinus urninator* was attracted to MV light in Grange Wood in mid-April. I've had several visits to this site in the last 12 months or so and still haven't found anything closely resembling a pond, or even any water filled ditches, so it makes you wonder just how far they do fly at night. Netted from one of the ponds in Gisborne's Gorse were two *Agabus bipustulatus* and one *A. sturmii*. Although this pond is in quite a dense part of the wood, it deserves a few extra visits especially through this autumn. Back to Grange Wood, a solitary *Illibius ater* was attracted to light in mid-April and *I. fuliginosus* also attracted to light at Whitwick in early June. Quite a short list of water beetles and it doesn't look like improving much as the heat wave continues into July, drying out many of the smaller field ponds, we will have to wait to see how they survive.

There were more species of Carabids recorded than any other family - 26 in all. The only *Carabus nemoralis* recorded was a singleton at Broombriggs in a pitfall trap and the only *Carabus violaceus* was found under a log at night in the Beacon Hill Native Tree Plantation both in early June. A single *Nebria brevicollis* was found running around on the ground at night in Leicester Belgrave Hall Museums'

gardens on a very cold night in mid-May. *Notiophilus biguttatus* was fairly well recorded, during the daytime and also attracted to MV light and the only record of **Green Tiger Beetle** *Cicindela campestris* was of just the one in Bradgate Park in early May. Very few Bembidions were recorded with four *Bembidion biguttatum* at Cloud Wood, one *B. lunulatum* at the Loddington Allerton Project, two *B. tetracolum* at Allextion and one *B. quadrimaculatum* from a manure heap at Odstone. Sweeping low vegetation at Broombriggs in early June produced four *Stomis pumicatus* and three *Poecilus cupreus*. As usual, *Pterostichus madidus* was found to be widespread, singles of *Pterostichus nigrita* from Grange Wood and *P. rhaeticus* at Charnwood Lodge (abbreviated to CL from now on), the latter determined by dissection, two *P. diligens* at Misterton Marsh and four *P. strenuus* two of each from Misterton and Cloud Wood. A total of 20 *Paranchus albipes* were found by grubbing along the Eye Brook water's edge at Allextion in early May. *Agonum fuliginosum* was found at several sites including 20 at Misterton Marsh in early April. MV moth traps produced a single of the colourful metallic *Agonum muelleri* from Grange Wood and the only records of *Platynus assimilis* were from CL. Singles of *Amara aenea* were found at Broombriggs, *Harpalus rufipes* at Beacon Hill and *Trichocellus placidus* at Misterton Marsh and finally *Paradromius linearis* was at several sites. Seven *Hydrobius fuscipes* were netted from the pond in Gisborne's Gorse in mid-April. Rummaging through cow and sheep dung at CL, Loddington and Breedon Hill produced reasonable numbers of *Sphaeridium bipustulatum*, *S. lunatum* and *S. scarabaeoides* with the latter being the most numerous at all sites. Just three species of Cercyon were recorded they were *Cercyon haemorrhoidalis* from CL, *C. melanocephalus* from Misterton Marsh and CL, *C. terminatus* at CL. Sieving grass tussocks at Misterton Marsh produced three of the small 1.5-2 mm black and shiny *Meagasternum concinum*. With over 170 records in the database you would think this species would be recorded much more frequently. I guess it just gets overlooked due to its tiny size, closely related and very similar, but with just over 30 previous records *Cryptopleurum minutum* was found at three

locations in sheep and cow dung, plus a single *Hister unicolor* was found in cow dung at CL end of June. The only record of *Nicrophorus humator* was from MV light at Quorn mid-April and then surprisingly none for the rest of the whole quarter.

On to the Staphs with 23 species found and all were recorded either by sieving grass tussocks, sieving manure heaps or from sheep and cow dung. I'll go through these quite briefly. Three *Lesteva longeoelytra* from Allextion with *Tachyporus dispar* and *T. obtusus* quite widespread; eight *Tachinus rufipennis* from CL with *T. rufipes* the most widespread and numerous out of all the Staphs, but *T. subterraneus* was only recorded the once from a large manure heap at Warren Hills. The same manure heap produced several *Oxypoda opaca* and one of the easier Aleocharine Staphs to identify *Aleochara languinosa* was found at Odstone and Breedon. The fairly distinctive *Oxytelus laqueatus*, a small shiny black Staph with bright gold/bronze elytra, was found several times at CL and *Anotylus rugosus* at CL and Misterton Marsh. Only three species of Stenus were recorded, the first with a red spot on each elytra *Stenus bimaculatus* from Misterton Marsh and Allextion, then *S. similis* and *S. flavipes* also Allextion, and the closely related *Astenus pulchellus* from Warren Hills. Out of the larger Staphs *Philonthus decorus* was found at Cloud Wood on two occasions in the first half of June, *P. intermedius* was at Breedon Hill and Odstone, and *P. umbratilis* and *P. varians* at Warren Hills. A single large and spectacular *Ontholestes murinus* was attracted to MV light at CL, and *Quedius fuliginosus* was fairly well reported. A solitary *Leptacinus pusilus* was in the manure heap at Warren Hills as were several *Gyrohypnus fracticornis* the latter also recorded from Odstone. A return visit to Loddington to look for additional sites for *Onthophagus coenobita* was marginally successful, as additional specimens were only found within a short distance from last year's. I think it is still worth putting in the extra effort, as I'm sure it will be found a little further afield. A total of 11 species of Aphodius were recorded and again briefly, *Aphodius luridus* a single from Loddington was the only record for this species. No surprise that *Aphodius rufipes* was the most recorded especially from moth traps, similar but

the much smaller *A. ater* only came from Loddington and Breedon Hill. Just a single *A. rufus* was found at Loddington, several *A. fimetarius* all from the Charnwood Forest, a single *A. pedellus* at Loddington with *A. prodromus* and *A. sphaelatus* from the same site plus CL. A single *A. haemorrhoidalis* came from Allextion, *A. fossor* only from CL on several occasions, and lastly *A. sticticus* from Loddington and CL. Although we had six reports of *Melolontha melolontha* I don't really think that is many, this species, as well as being abundant at light traps, is often found bumping into house windows at night and also numerous sightings by day. All the records we have are from moth traps and most in very low numbers, except for the 62 at Stoneywell in mid-May. The Garden Chafer *Phylopertha horticola* continues to be recorded at Quorn and was the only record for this species. There were eight species of Click beetles recorded and over half of them at MV light. The striking *Ctenicera cuprea* was swept off low vegetation at Allextion, the equally distinctive Chequered Click Beetle *Prosternon tessellatum* from CL, *Denticollis linearis* regularly attracted to light, *Athous haemorrhoidalis* was predictably widespread. Four *Agriotes acuminatus* at Allextion, and a single *Agriotes obscurus* from Broombriggs were the only records of these latter two species. The most widespread and abundant was *Agriotes pallidulus* with good numbers coming to light traps especially towards the end of May and beginning of June. Lastly *Dalopius marginatus* was recorded at several sites, all on the Charnwood Forest. The only Glow-worm *Lampyrus noctiluca* was of a singleton attracted to light at CL in mid-June.

A total of eight species of Soldier Beetles were recorded, a single *Cantharis cryptica* at Broombriggs in early June, the most recorded species was *C. decipiens* mainly attracted to light traps. Records of *C. nigra*, *C. nigricans*, *C. pallida*, *C. rufa* and *C. rustica* were all recorded as singletons. The only Rhagonycha species found was *Rhagonycha lignosa* when seven were attracted to light at Beacon Hill. A single *Malthodes minimus* was taken from the permanent Rothamstead light trap at Loddington and a single *Anthrenus verbasci* was found at Broombriggs. Three *Dryophilus pusillus* came from Beacon Hill, only five previous



*Hylecoetus dermestoides* © Graham Finch

records for this species and last recorded from Exton Park in 1994, and with only 13 previous records for *Hylecoetus dermestoides* a single was found on a dead birch log at CL. The **Malachite Beetle** *Malachius bipustulatus* seemed to be well distributed, but only a single record for *Cordylepherus viridus* from Broombriggs.

A little extra effort was made on the Pollen Beetles of the Family Nitidulidae during the spring and early summer, they are a bit daunting at first as there are a lot of them, just under 100 species and not a lot of variation between them, all either small and blackish/blue or small and brownish. However several are genus- or even host-specific regarding food plants so armed with the Royal Entomology Society Handbook by A. H. Kirk-Spriggs it is possible to make a start. Shaking flowering Bittersweet over a tray should produce a nice easy (easy-ish, you need to look at the underside for confirmation) brown *Pria dulcamaraea*. Its size and colouration are a great help, which is just as well as the only ones recorded were attracted to MV light at Grange Wood!

A single sweep with the net over any Oil Seed Rape field in full bloom (plus most other yellow Brassicaceae) will secure hundreds of, what must be the UK's most abundant beetle *Meligethes aeneus* and hundreds of these were swept from mid-April onwards. Out of the two species on Rosa sp. *M. atratus* was abundant at Cloud Wood in early June. Shaking a handful of White Deadnettle over a tray at Kelham Bridge found *M. difficilis* and the same site produced *M. nigrescens* from White Clover. Okay, five out of a hundred seems like a drop in the ocean, but it is not quite as clear-cut as that, dissection is usually needed to be sure, but at least you have whittled them down to two or three species for



*Meligethes aeneus* © Graham Finch

a very good start. A lucky sweep with the net over Hogweed caught a single *Pediacus dermestoides* again from Cloud Wood in early June, only 15 previous records and the last, was 1999 from Grace Dieu Wood. Another species which is always in great abundance on Gorse is *Micrambe ulicis*, it is tiny at 1.5 mm but is instantly recognised when beating Gorse, all sites on the Charnwood Forest produced this species. Examining the underneath of a large bracket fungus at Beacon Hill revealed five of the showy metallic blue and orange *Triplax aenea*.

Only five Ladybird species were recorded, **Orange Ladybird** *Haylzia sedecimguttata* were widely recorded with most records from moth traps, a single **Cream-spot Ladybird** *Calvia quattuordecimguttata* was swept at Loddington, **14-spot Ladybird** *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* were widespread, the **Harlequin Ladybird** *Harmonia axyridis* was the most frequently recorded species but never in any numbers, three was the highest single count. The usually abundant **7-spot Ladybird** *Coccinella septempunctata* was similarly widespread but in even less numbers. Since it was first found at Cloud Wood in 2012, *Corticus unicolor* was easily found on a particular standing dead tree in mid-April during the evening not too far from its original location in Cloud Wood. The **Swollen-thighed Beetle** *Oedemera nobilis* was found far and wide including repeat encounters at Aylestone Meadows in June, but only a single *Oedemera lurida* was recorded from Broombriggs early in June. The **Common Cardinal Beetle** *Pyrochroa serraticornis* was at Cloud Wood and Luffenham Heath Golf Course at the end of May and early June.

The flowers of Hogweed and Hawthorn blossom must not be ignored at this time of year and close inspection will generate numerous species of beetles of various groups. One such group are members of the Scraptiidae with about 14 species, some being reasonably straightforward and others quite a challenge. By beating Hogweed and Hawthorn flowers the following two species were found to be in high numbers, often in their hundreds, *Anaspis frontalis*, and *A. maculata*.



*Agapanthia villosoviridescens* © Steve Woodward

It was mid-May before any of the Longhorn beetles began to appear and then mainly as singletons, one *Rhagium mordax* at Broombriggs, *Grammoptera ruficornis* was the only species widely recorded and in numbers with peaks of 50 plus at Cloud Wood early June. The only *Rutpela maculata* came from Quorn in June. Four records of **Wasp Beetle** *Clytus arietus* all as singletons were quite widespread but just one record of a single *Anaglyptus mysticus* from Quorn, again June. The sixth species was *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* widespread but again only in singles. The bright red and very pretty, but usually very unwelcome by gardeners **Lily Beetle** *Lilioceris lili* was found at Newbold Verdon and Markfield. Just a single Tortoise Beetle *Cassida vibex* was swept from low vegetation at Broombriggs early in June; even the **Green Dock Beetle** *Gastrophysa viridula* only managed three individuals at Allextion in early May. A single *Phaedon armoraciae* and ten **Heather Beetle** *Lochmaea suturalis* were swept and beaten from low vegetation at Charnwood Lodge in mid-April.

To finish off, 24 species of Weevil were recorded, almost all were either swept or

beaten from various low vegetation, a few of which were **Gorse Weevil** *Exapion ulicis*, abundant from the Charnwood Forest, easily beaten off Gorse, it isn't restricted to the Forest but we all keep forgetting to beat Gorse in other parts of the county. A single **White Clover Seed Weevil** *Protapion fulvipes* was found at Allextion and five *P. trifolii* were at Cloud Wood. *Perapion violaceum* was found at Allextion and Kelham Bridge, both in reasonable numbers. *Apion frumentarium*, one of the familiar small red weevils, was quite frequently seen throughout April and May. Just singles of **Small Green Nettle Weevil** *Phyllobius roboretanus* and *P. viridicollis* were attracted to the moth trap at Beacon Hill in early June and 12 *P. pomaceus* were swept at Allextion in early May. The closely related, but with a brown and cream pattern, *Polydrusus tereticollis* was only recorded at CL. The **Nut Leaf Weevil** *Strophosoma melanogrammum* was found to be abundant at CL in mid-April, but only a single of the striking *Graptus triguttatus* was at the same site in late May. Added new to the VC55 list in 2014 *Rhynocyllus conicus*, now seems to have a strong foothold throughout. 2017 was a particularly good year for this species as out of the current 21 records in the database 12 were from 2017. Unfortunately up to now this year does not seem so good, as we have just a single record of two individuals from Cloud Wood in early June. Although almost all previous records fall in the months of this quarter, there are three records for July and even one for late August, so there's still time to add a few more sightings.



*Hypera nigrirostris* © Graham Finch

Two *Hypera* species were recorded, *Hypera nigrirostris* attracted to MV light at Beacon Hill and *H. plantaginis* swept from low vegetation from CL, both as singletons and both early in

April. Belgrave Hall Museum grounds held the only **Figwort Weevil** *Cyonus scrophulariae* found at night during a moth recording session there in mid-May. With only four previous records and the last one from Stonesby Quarry 1994, sweeping Forget-me-not on a small private reserve in Allexton produced nine individuals of *Mogulones asperifoliarum*. It just shows that targeting specific host plants for certain species does work, the problem is remembering what to target and when, too much to do and not enough of us doing it. I don't think there was quite so much fieldwork done this quarter, plus the fact it was getting increasingly hotter and drier towards the end of June, which obviously kept the numbers well down.

Many thanks to our contributors for this quarter.

Graham Finch

## OTHER INSECTS

### Hemiptera

After 'The beast from the East' few records were expected of emerging adults and so it proved. PHG, however, found a few in his Quorn garden noting a **Hawthorn Shieldbug** *Acanthosoma heamorrhoidale* on 18 April, a **Birch Shieldbug** *Elasmotethus interstinctus* on 14 April and a **Green Shieldbug** *Palomena prasina* on 10 June.

Four **Sloe bugs** *Dolycoris baccorum* were noted at Bede Island on White Dead-nettle on 18 May; White Dead-nettle is a much favoured plant for emerging spring adults of this species.

Just two specimens of the **Woundwort Bug** *Eysarcoris venustissimus* were noted, one on Spinney Hill Park on 17 May and another adult in my Abney Street garden on 1 June.

**Dock Bugs** *Coreus marginatus*, one in PHG's Quorn garden on 18 May, with several noted at Tom Long's meadow in Quorn. Other records - five adults at Evans Weir on 20 May, Evington Golf Course - three adults with one pair mating on 28 May and two at Freemans Lock on the 31st.

### Diptera

The **Dark-edged Bee-fly** *Bombylius major* did rather better than expected considering the harsh weather. Previously I only managed a single record. SFW and HI managed a few, mainly from their ongoing survey of churchyards over the county and elsewhere from mid-April to 15 May, from Stoke Golding Cemetery, St Paul's churchyard at Uppingham, Loughborough, Skeffington Wood, Laughton Hills and Manton parish, mostly in ones and twos, but at St Mary Magdalene's churchyard at Stapleford they observed several and also at St. Nicholas churchyard in Leicester, where they observed several probably egg laying in the territory of mining bee *Andrena cineraria*. They are fascinating to watch, as they hover and vibrate their abdomen to shake out the eggs near the hosts nest site, which later hatch and the larvae crawl into the nest to parasitize the hosts. Many of our *Andrena* species and others are prey for this Bee-fly and I am amazed they have done that well this spring.

### Hoverflies

Fewer than usual number of species noted locally and elsewhere. A few records of the spring harbinger *Epistrophe eligans* were noted with a male at Castle Gardens on 22 April, four at Humberstone Park on 4 May, Willowbrook Park - several under tree layer on 5 May and one in my Abney Street back garden on 14 May. Several *Syrphus ribesii* were noted by the brook in Spinney Hill Park on 1 May and several *Syrphus vitripennis* were at the same site on that date but after that, hardly seen a single one this quarter. Records of *Eupeodes luniger* came from Abney Street with singles recorded in my garden each month, Bede Island, three on 18 May, Coles Nursery at Thurnby - one on 27 May with a single at Evington Golf Course on 9 June. There was a single *Dasysyrphus albostriatus* at Humberstone Park Nature Area on 4 May and a single *Leucozona lucorum* at Evans Weir on 20 May and noted several times in PHG's Quorn garden during June. *Episyrphus balteatus* was noted at Quorn, Hoby and several other sites from mid-June but not in any great numbers. The only record of *Sphaerophoria scripta* was a single from my Leicester garden on 21 June. Interestingly 2017 only produced a single record

of this common species by members. Singles of *Xanthogramma pedissequum* were noted at a bridle path, Coleman Road on 18 June, and another at Spinney Hill Park on the 21st. A specimen of *Chrysotoxum cautum* was noted on a ride in Humberstone Park on 27th June; it has been a few years since I have noted this species locally.

### Cheilosini

Five *Cheilosia albitarsis/tranunculi* were at Humberstone Park, on buttercups as usual. *Cheilosia variabilis* was noted at Evington Golf Course, one on 14 May and two males in a hedgebank on 18 May. A female *Melanogaster hirtella* was at Freemans Lock on 18 May.

A female *Legogaster metallina* was on buttercups at Aylestone Meadows on 11 June. This species was not uncommonly years ago on boggy flushes etc., but not in recent years locally; good to see it survives in the Aylestone Meadows.

### Eristalini

*Eristalis intricarius*, a bumblebee mimic, was noted on: a Goodwood bridle path, two females on 25 June; Bede Island, a female on 27 June; Humberstone Park Nature area, several, mostly males hovering under shrubs on 28 June. A single *Myathropa florea* was at Spinney Hill Park on 17 May, two at St Mary's Mills on 31 May, singles at Market Bosworth in June, Stanford Reservoir on the 26th and Groby on the 30th; probably one of our most encountered (and easily recognised) hoverflies this year. There were two records of *Helophilus pendulus* one at West Bridge on 20 May and another at St Mary's Mills on 31 May. A single *Parhelophilus frutetorum/versicolor* was at St Mary's Mills on 31 May. **Bulb Fly** *Merodon equestris* were noted at Spinney Hill Park, one on 17 May and another at Shenton Estate on 23 May.

### Volucella

Singles of *Volucella bombylans* were at Quorn on 20 May, Freemans Lock on 31 May, St Mary's Mills on 6 June, City General Grounds on 18 June and Evington Park on 25 June.

### Soldier Flies

Just a single record of *Chloromia formosa*, from Aylestone Meadows on 11 June.

## Hymenoptera

A great number of records for this group have been submitted from SFW and HI, from their surveys, mainly around country churchyards and elsewhere. **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* were recorded from 24 locations, most of which were queens, from mid-April to the 31st May. Odd workers were recorded from May in my garden, Freemans Lock, St Mary's Mills and Aylestone Meadows, but not exceptional numbers. There were 31 records of **Red-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus lapidarius*, mostly queens again, a great number from the churchyard surveys; six workers were seen foraging on Hogweed at Aylestone Meadows on 6 June and a similar number on the same plant on Evington Golf Course on 9 June, with about another 20 workers foraging Knapweed on a flowery margin at Evans Weir on 10 June. A single worker was foraging in my garden at Abney Street for the last two weeks in June; the first in my garden for over a decade. The **Tree Bumblebee** *Bombus hypnorum* is without doubt the most common bee in urban habitats, certainly in my patch and a few of the numbers are mentioned here: Evington Golf Course - 20 plus workers on bramble on 23 May, numbers building up from this date with June records at Spinney Hill Park - common; St Mary's Mills - common on Comfrey with five queens present; Coleman Road workers very common on bramble blossom, likewise at Quorn with many workers foraging on 10 June. Most had finished by the end of the month but there was a fresh queen in my garden on 30 June. SFW and HI also recorded this species from a further 15 sites, none of which were in local churchyards.

Numbers of **Early-nesting Bumblebee** *Bombus pratorum* appeared rather lower than recent years, with records as follows: Cossington Village about 20 on 27 May; singles from Ellistown on 28 May, Thringstone on 30 May, Market Bosworth on 1 June, Edith Weston on 11 May and at Sileby on 16 May. A queen was at Bede Island on 19 May and a few workers on comfrey at St Mary's Mills on 31 May with a male at the same site on 27 June, two workers in my garden in April and one in late June - probably partial second generation. SFW and HI recorded **White-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus*

*lucorum* *sl* from a wide area of the county mostly queens with a few, probably workers, at Edith Weston on 11 June and in April. One with a full pollen basket was at Bede Island on 11 June. I don't find many records of this species in my area and Maggie Frankum doesn't record this species much in her bee-friendly garden at Knighton either. **Common Carder Bumbebee** *Bombus pascuorum* always has a long season and it was recorded throughout the quarter, mainly in ones and twos with queens recorded in April from Quorn and Greetham and in May from Willowbrook Park and Theddingworth and the odd worker over a wide area. The **Garden Bumblebee** *Bombus hortorum* appears to be declining rapidly and members should keep an eye out for this species which, having a long tongue, can be found foraging White Dead-nettle in the spring and it likes long throated garden plants such as Foxglove. The only records were a single worker foraging Foxglove in Scraftoft Lane on 8 June and a melanic male in my garden on several days in June.

Very few sightings of *Bombus vestalis* the parasite of *Bombus terrestris* were seen, the only records were from Willowbrook Park, where a male was foraging on dandelion on 5 May which is an unusual date for a male, and females at Bede Island on 18 May and Spinney Hill Park on 11 May. No other parasitic bees were reported this quarter.

### Hive Bees *Apis mellifera*

I had a few sightings locally this quarter, but not many. The following records are from SFW and HI: Cossington, All Saints churchyard, many in a swarm on the church tower on 27 May; Thringstone village on 31 May; South Luffenham, a few on 11 June; Kegworth, several on 13 June and Newbold Verdon, several in a garden on 30 June.

### Solitary Bees

I am incorporating some of the solitary bees in my garden and elsewhere locally this quarter, most of which are generally widespread.

The **Hairy-footed Flower Bee** *Anthophora plumipes*, a mainstay in my garden but the first male did not appear until April 7th, which was the latest I have ever recorded this species. Females were foraging until 2 June, a very long

season. PHG also records this species as common in his Quorn garden and at the Quorn War Memorial foraging on Lungwort, a favourite with this species. PHG records the **Tawny Mining Bee** *Andrena fulva*, an attractive mining bee, from his garden and elsewhere in grassy areas about Quorn village. There were just two records of another common species the **Chocolate Mining Bee** *Andrena scotica*, one foraging Herb Bennet in Spinney Hill Park and another at Bede Island, both in mid-May. A female **Orange-tailed Mining Bee** *Andrena haemorrhoa* was foraging dandelion in Willowbrook Park on 5 May and a single male was in Spinney Hill Park on 21 May.



Hawthorn Mining Bee © Steve Woodward

**Hawthorn Mining Bee** *Andrena chrysoceles* is normally quite a common bee most years, but not this one. Only records were of two females foraging dandelion on 11 May and single females resting in Humberstone Park the following day and at West Bridge on 20 May. The **Red Mason Bee** *Osmia bicornis* usually appears in my garden most years, usually in small numbers. In April up to three females were mostly foraging on *Geranium macrorrhizum*, and a similar number in Spinney Hill Park on 5 May were also foraging the same plant. Three females were also foraging on borders at the Cathedral gardens on 3 June. The **Blue Mason Bee** *Osmia caerulea* has been seen in my garden on occasions the last year or so, but just a single male on the 26 May and a single female on the 27 June, was all I could manage this year. The **Orange-vented Mason Bee** *Osmia leiana* has been appearing locally in my patch for the last three years or so, the female has a bright orange pollen brush on the underside. Three or four females were seen foraging Knapweed on a flowery margin near Evans Weir on 10 June

and a single was also in my garden on Globe Thistle on 27 June. **Smeathman's Furrow Bee** *Lasioglossum smeathmanellum* has been foraging in my city garden for several years now and up to six females were seen in late July, foraging mostly on Campanula blossom. Like many species, **Patchwork Leafcutter Bee** *Megachile centuncularis* was well down on numbers of former years. Three were foraging Knapweed in the Cathedral Gardens on 3 June and a single foraging in my garden from 15 June till the end of the quarter. The first male *Megachile willughbiella* were at both Aylestone Meadows and my garden on 11 June with a single female was foraging Bellflower at the end of the month.

Overall, not a very promising selection. Social Bees appear to have done rather better than expected, apart from the Garden Bumblebee. Solitary Bees on the other hand, like many invertebrates, have fared badly with some species such as the *Hylaeus* species not being seen at all.

Many thanks to HI, SFW and PHG for their efforts.

Howard Bradshaw

## FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

This report catches up with records between the last quarter of 2017 and the second quarter of 2018. Only three members sent in records – very disappointing, given that the National Atlas Project is under way.

PHG noted three harbingers of spring in his Quorn garden: **Lesser Celandine** *Ficaria verna* on 8 March; **Sweet Violet** *Viola odorata* on the 27th and **Coltsfoot** *Tussilago farfara* on the 28th. A little later, SFW and HI found another lovely springtime plant, **Goldilocks Buttercup** *Ranunculus auricomus* at seven churchyards: Stapleford, Uppingham, Diseworth, Long Whatton, Glenfield, Welby and Appleby Magna. It was also by the canal Sutton Cheney.

The bulk of records received for these three quarters arise from SFW and HI's fieldwork across Leicestershire and Rutland for *Atlas 2020*. That's 13,413 records (all now accepted by vice-county Recorder Geoffrey Hall). They are dominated by common species because

everything must be listed in a tetrad, not just the notable plants. Furthermore, we have concentrated on under-recorded areas, avoiding hot-spots like nature reserves. So we have 146 records of **Creeping Buttercup** *Ranunculus repens* but not a single record of **Betony** *Betonica officinalis* and just one record of **Tormentil** *Potentilla erecta*. The depressing truth is that habitat quality indicators (axiophytes) like Betony scarcely exist now in the 'wider countryside'. Consequently, I do not have many exciting plants to write about – with one startling exception - so please read on!

Thanks to super-efficient herbicides, arable weeds are now hard work to find. Our records of **Field Penny-cress** *Thlaspi arvense* came only from Manton and Croxton Kerrial, with **Night-flowering Catchfly** *Silene noctiflora* also at the latter site. Catchfly is so-called because it is covered in sticky hairs, but as far as I know the plant is not insectivorous, like a Sundew.

**Marsh Thistle** *Cirsium vulgare* was described as *Locally Frequent* in the 1988 *Flora*, but I note that we have only five records for it. Another one sliding towards the *Scarce* status?

The Polypody Fern aggregate comprises a few species, which can be difficult to separate. Five specimens were checked by the national referee, Rob Cooke. Four were **Intermediate Polypody** *Polypodium interjectum* from Woodhouse, Medbourne, Edith Weston and Rothley, the fifth was **Polypody P. vulgare sensu stricto** from Markfield.

On a visit to Jim and Sue Graham's Cropston garden, a tiny yellow trefoil in the lawn caught my eye. **Lesser Trefoil** *Trifolium dubium* is very common in lawns, but this one looked smaller and the stalk of the terminal leaflet comprised one short section (not two longer ones!). That makes it **Slender Trefoil** *Trifolium micranthum*. I have previously seen it at the Bradgate Park ruins but never in a garden. I suspect it is under-recorded.

Now for the highlight of this period - the astonishing find of one of the country's rarest and most spectacular plants – the **Lizard Orchid**! It was the sharp eyes of Dave Gray, bird-watcher and orchid enthusiast, that spotted a single flowering plant on a roadside verge near Breedon on the Hill. I received the news on 12



Lizard Orchid © Steve Woodward

June and decided to go and look early the next morning. This species is taller than most orchids, but its flowers are green and rather diffuse from a distance, so it might easily be missed among long grass. Fortunately, my directions were good and the plant was showing well: on a public road and set back from the traffic - non-existent anyway at 6 am! The long spike bears dozens of flowers. Orchids have three petals and three sepals, but it is not obvious which is which, so think of six “tepals” – in this species the upper five tepals form a hood (the lizard’s head). They are pale green with purple margins on outermost tepals and purple streaks inside. The lowest tepal is modified into three lobes, two lateral ones (the lizard’s legs) and an extremely long, ribbon-like, twisted central lobe (its body and tail). The base of the central lobe bears pink spots. I forgot to sniff the flowers but they are supposed to smell of goats.

The national distribution is sparse, with 30 spots (hectads) on the BSBI map for post-2009 sightings. They are predominantly in southern England and East Anglia, usually on chalk or limestone. Only one record is further north than Leicestershire. Populations are generally small, but an individual plant can live for 20 years. As one colony dies out, another seems to pop up somewhere else. The plant has special protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The Breedon plant narrowly escaped being mown this year, it remains to be seen in future years whether the mowing gang can be kept at bay until the orchid has set seed.

I will finish by mentioning two sites that we have ‘discovered’. The most surprising was Donington Services near M1 junction 23A (where we had breakfast after admiring the

Lizard Orchid). Walk through the building past the coffee shops and burger-bars, and out of the other end. There you will find a terrace with seats and a lawn containing a large pond with marginal vegetation. Many of the plants in there were doubtless planted, such as **Bogbean** *Menyanthes trifoliata* and **Galingales** *Cyperus longus* and *C. eragrostis*, but also in there can be found **Common Spotted-orchid** *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and **Southern Marsh-orchid** *D. praetermissa*. Beyond the pond is a network of paths through ungrazed grassland (with another pond) and planted woodland. The grassland is scrubbing over in places, as it seems to be unmanaged, but one area is occupied by **Ox-eye Daisy** *Leucanthmum vulgare*, in dazzling abundance.



Ox-eye Daisy at Donington Services © Steve Woodward

**Grass Vetchling** *Lathyrus nissolia* is virtually impossible to spot when not in flower, as its leaves so closely resemble blades of grass. Our visit coincided with flowering, revealing a good population here. There were only two records in the 1988 *Flora*, but in Leicestershire, as elsewhere, this species is now increasing. It



Grass Vetchling © Steve Woodward

seems to turn up particularly in disturbed and re-seeded grassland. **Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*** is also common here, a plant that we rarely see away from calcareous grassland and railway verges. The presence of these two species and the unnatural abundance of Ox-eye Daisy raises my suspicions that the grassland here is a creation rather than a survivor. Nonetheless the insects made good use of it and a few Loughborough Nats have enjoyed it.



Heads of Common Knapweed (above) and Greater Knapweed (below) showing the differences in the black tips on the bracts. © Steve Woodward



A sign by the road verge at Hoby (on the road to Brooksby) declares the adjacent meadow to be 'ancient'; the range of species visible along the verge certainly looks consistent with that claim. As well as the commoner meadow plants, we found **Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa***, **Quaking Grass *Briza media***, **Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulosa***, **Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*** and **Knotted Clover *Trifolium striatum***. The verge is not cut between April and August. Sadly, rich grassland verges like this, that are sympathetically managed, are extremely rare in the county.

**Steve Woodward**

## OTHER RECORDS

**Records have also been received for:**

Orthoptera, mayflies, ants, solitary wasps, molluscs, woodlice, arachnids, millipedes, mosses, lichens, liverworts, fungi, galls,

## WEATHER

**April** was warmer than usual, mainly thanks to a heatwave in the third week but it was also duller and much wetter. Afternoon temperatures averaged 13.5°C, 0.5°C above normal while night time temperatures of 6.7°C were 2.1°C above usual. The average of 10.1°C was 1.2°C above the long term average. It was a very wet month with 84 mm of rain falling in Mountsorrel which was more than 60% above normal. It was the wettest April since 2012. There were five dates where we recorded double-figure rainfall totals, which is unusual in this location. All the rain meant sunshine totals were lower than normal at 102 hours which was only two thirds of the expected figure. April was the dulllest month since 1998. Winds were mainly westerly with the maximum gust of 34 mph being recorded on the 17th.

The month began on a cool note with the month's lowest day temperature being recorded on the 1st at just 6°C and 16 mm of rain the month's highest total fell on the 2nd. Our coolest night was recorded on the 6th when temperatures in Mountsorrel dropped to 1°C so we avoided air frost in April but there were a few frosts on the ground. The 9th and 10th brought us 22 mm of rain with flooding once again a problem in the Soar Valley. Sunshine and showers can summarise week two before a big change in the weather occurred on the 18th. A large area of high pressure formed to the NE of the UK and this turned winds into a southerly direction. Very warm air from North Africa spread north and we enjoyed very high temperatures from the 18th to the 22nd. The heat peaked on the 19th when temperatures peaked at 26°C making this the warmest April day since 1836 in Leicestershire. The heat sparked off some thunder storms in the evening which brought heavy rain and squally conditions to parts of the region. The last week saw the heat disappear with more rain and some very

cool temperatures that failed to make double figures. So April brought us its usual mix of weather with great contrasts in temperature. The sun at this time of the year is strengthening and air masses to the south over Spain are becoming warm and when winds blow from the south it can become warm. To the north, however, it is still cold and winds from this direction can still bring us snow showers, so big contrasts in this month should be expected.

**May** 2018 was the warmest and sunniest Month for 26 years and came second after 1992 for warmth and sunshine in records going back more than 100 years. Afternoon temperatures peaked at 19°C which was 2.5°C above normal while night time values were logged at 9°C, 1.5°C above normal. The mean of 14.1°C was the highest for 26 years. May was also a dry month. In Mountsorrel I recorded 48 mm of rain which was 12% below normal but most of this fell on just four days with 23 days in the month being completely dry. The reason for the dryness and warmth was high pressure which was over or around the British Isles for most of the month. The jet stream was diverted northwards over Iceland and Scandinavia leaving us on the warmer and drier southern side of the jet. As a result of all the high pressure, sunshine totals were very high. We recorded a magnificent 259 hours of sunshine in May and it was the first month in over two years to break the 200 hours barrier. Indeed May 2018 was only seven hours of sunshine short of the record sunshine total of 266 hours set in 1992. Winds were mainly light and blew in from the east and south with much higher frequency than usual as high pressure sat mostly just to our north.

The opening week of the month saw, initially, some rain but dry and sunny conditions soon developed. The warmest day of the month coincided with the first bank holiday Monday when temperatures reached a staggering 25.4°C (making it the warmest and sunniest first bank holiday of the month since it began in 1978) after some very hot air over the Mediterranean moved north to reach our shores. After a few unsettled days the warm and sunny theme resumed again on the 14th with ten days of mostly sunny skies with our sunniest day of 15 hours of bright sunshine recorded on the 22nd. There was a brief blip on the 25th when 14 mm

of rain fell but then the weather warmed up nicely again for a second bank holiday in a row with temperatures on the 27th reaching 25°C once again. A cloudy last couple of days prevented us breaking the all-time sunshine record for May but, nevertheless, it was a fantastic month if you like dry and sunny conditions. The MET office have just released their three month guideline forecast for the summer and while it is not a precise forecast there is a 25% probability that the summer will fit into the warmest and driest category and only a 5% chance that it will be a cool one. These long term forecasts must be treated with some caution as we are still many years away from being able to produce accurate seasonal forecasts but the signs are encouraging!



*Bradgate Park showing the lack of rainfall*  
© Steve Woodward

**June** was the driest month locally recorded since our Leicestershire records began in 1836. In Mountsorrel I recorded just 4.6 mm on just the two days in the month when any rain fell. This represents just 7% of our usual total of 60 mm. Some parts of the county however recorded less than 1 mm of rain during the entire month and this beat our previous June low rainfall record for Leicestershire set in 1925. It was also a very warm month. Afternoon temperatures averaged 21.5°C, nearly 2°C above normal while night time temperatures averaged 12.1°C, 1.5°C above normal. The overall mean of 16.8°C was the warmest since the spectacular summer of 1976. It was also a very sunny month with 235 hours of sunshine being recorded making it the sunniest month since 2010.

The month began very warm and sunny and it was very humid. An isolated heavy shower affected a few of us on the 1st but most people

stayed dry. Our warmest night of the month was recorded on the second at a very sticky 15.6°C. High pressure then dominated for the entire four week period which is very unusual for this country. For the first half of the month it tended to sit to our NE and this gave us a refreshing NE breeze which at night time would bring in low cloud from the sea. Sometimes this would take some time to clear and temperatures were much lower as a result. Our coolest day was the 9th when the temperature only reached 16°C but only on one day the 4th was there no sunshine at all. After mid-month and the passage of a weak cold front which gave us the month's only other rainfall, the high then sat above the British Isles and this gave us days of clear blue skies and sunshine. The sunniest day was the 22nd when the sun shone for 16 hours the maximum possible for the UK as that was the summer equinox. The warmest day was the 25th when I recorded 27.2°C on the thermometer. The month ended as it began with clear blue skies and has continued into July. Although June was very dry, the general water situation is good with all our local reservoirs are in a healthy state. Severn Trent have advised us to try to conserve the use of water as they are struggling to pump enough through the pipes to meet demand! It a good excuse in my book not to wash the car!

Well, what a summer we have enjoyed or endured depending on whether you like the heat! I will briefly this time summarise August before talking about the summer as a whole. August had temperatures much closer to average with a day time average of 21.7°C and a night time figure of 12.4°C. The overall mean of 17.1°C was what we would usually expect of this month. There was much more rain than in the other summer months but having said this rain only fell on nine days in the month and the total of 56 mm was still 10% down on usual. It was also another dull August as many have been in the last ten years with just 134 hours of sun recorded or 20% below normal. The first week of August saw the last of the heat with the warmest day on the 6th of 28.2°C. The 7th saw the last of the warm conditions and after this the Atlantic westerlies took over giving us generally cooler and more cloudy conditions. Rain fell on nine days the heaviest on the 23rd with 14 mm falling and the month saw some

very cool nights at its end with just 6.4°C logged on the 30th.

Summer 2018 will be remembered for long spells of sunshine and heat which began in late spring and lasted without a break until the end of July. Nationally 2018 in terms of temperature was joint warmest with 2006, 2003 and 1976 with an overall mean of 15.8°C. Nationally too it was the hottest month for England since the MET Office records began in 1910. However for the midlands region there is a temperature record going back to 1659 called the central England temperature series and on this record 2018 came 5th with 1976 being 0.5°C warmer than 2018 at 17.8°C. Certainly on my figures 2003 equalled this summer in terms of heat but 2018 was much drier than anything we have recorded since 1976. So it all depends on which set of statistics you want to go with. Looking at my figures we have had the warmest summer since 2003. The 92 days of the meteorological summer saw temperatures above the very warm 25°C on 31 days. On 20 of these days they exceeded 27°C, or the threshold we call hot, and above 30°C on just three day with my warmest day coming on July 26th at 32.4°C. Compared to other hot summers these figures compare favourably but 1976 saw temperatures exceed 30°C on many more days locally than this summer so perhaps the heat was as long lasting but not quite as intense as in that memorable year. In 1976 temperatures exceeded 90 °F on 17 consecutive days nationally but this year we only managed three days. Looking at rainfall we had the driest summer since 1976. I recorded just 82 mm for the entire summer and most of that fell in August. Out of the 92 days it was dry for 75 of them with rain falling on just 15. June was the driest with just 5 mm falling. We had a 39 day drought from June 16th right up to July 28th and again the last time we did that was in 1976. It was also a very sunny month with more than 650 hours of sun being recorded locally making this the 5th sunniest year ever recorded. So in my book 1976 just shades it for me as it was warmer locally but nevertheless this has been a magnificent summer and one historically we should expect every 20 years but you notice we have had five recent fine summers 1976, 1995, 2003, 2006 and 2018. Global warming suggests that these will happen more frequently but don't expect them every year as extra heat

can also mean extra wet summer's rain as happened between 2007 and 2012. So a summer to remember and one we shall never forget!

**Phil Morrish**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*Heritage* has been compiled from records submitted by the following members and friends:

T Bergstrom, H Bradshaw, B Croxtall, R D Dandy, P J Darby, M A Finch, G L Finch, D B Forgham, P H Gamble, J Graham, S Graham, D Gray, J Green, H Ikin, A T Onions, D A Perry, R Parry, H Shacklock, S F Woodward.

We are grateful to them all.

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Late records may not be included in the quarterly reports.

Please put Moth records on a separate sheet from Butterflies – they go to different writers.

Thank You.