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1 January - 30 June 2019

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CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Q1 - January to March 2019

Hedgehogs were not seen in PJD's Quorn garden in January but at the end of February and throughout March the camera trap recorded one or two animals often visiting the garden. Hedgehog droppings were seen frequently.

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There was a dead Hedgehog beside the road in Sutton Cheney on 14 March.

Evidence of **Moles** were noted by DAP at Swithland and NHJ at Grace Dieu throughout the quarter, and molehills were seen by SFW and friends at Twycross, North Luffenham, Bagworth, Staunton Harold, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Whetstone, Barlestone, Exton, Seagrave, Twycross, Stapleton, Barrow (Rutland), Bottesford, Bagworth, Long Whatton, Sutton Cheney, Newbold Verdon, Eaton, Burley, Sheepy and Castle Donington.

Brown Hares were noted by SFW & HI at Odstone, Shenton, Exton, Seagrave, Groby, Waltham, Barrow (one alive and one dead by the road), four at Long Whatton on March 11 and three at Empingham. Signs of **Rabbit** were seen at Odstone, Twycross, Staunton Harold, Lubbesthorpe, Exton, Bottesford, Long Whatton, Peckleton, Bottesford, Newbold Verdon, Goadby Marwood, Burley cemetery and Sheepy Magna. DAP had up to six rabbits in his Swithland garden and paddock throughout the quarter and also noted them commonly at the reclaimed quarry site at Broad Hill in Mountsorrel.

Grey Squirrels were seen at Seagrave, Normanton and Shackerstone and one visited ATO's Shelthorpe peanut feeder on 20 January. Dead squirrels were often seen on the roads in Charnwood.

A **Wood Mouse** was seen on several nights in January by PJD at the hedgehog feeding station in her Quorn garden and JG had one in her Holwell garden on 31 January. They are good at taking advantage of bird feeders.

PJD recorded live **Red Foxes** on her Quorn camera trap on several dates during the quarter. DAP found one dead on the road at Long Whatton. SFW noted one crossing the road near Roecliffe, one dead at Market Bosworth and there was the distinctive scent of a fox at Shellbrook near Ashby-de-la-Zouch on 3 February.

DAP had a **Stoat** hunting along the side of the stream in his Swithland garden on 27 March. At Normanton (near Bottesford), HI saw a Stoat running down the road and turning towards a smallholding with bantams. At Normanton (in Rutland) and SFW had a good view of one on a track near Empingham.

PJD saw three **Badger** corpses on the A6 around Rothley and Mountsorrel and had a live one in her Quorn garden – recorded on the camera trap at 4 am on 21 March. On 9 February, DAP noted a dead Badger at Long Whatton. SFW & HI recorded dead Badgers at Empingham, Market Bosworth and Whetstone and a long-dead one at Exton. Setts or latrine pits were seen at Swepstone, Appleby Magna, Staunton Harold, Seagrave, Barlestone, Castle Donington and Sheepy Magna.

Muntjac slots were seen at Newtown Linford with droppings at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Live animals were spotted on three dates along the Groby Pool road and also at Sandhills Lodge on 30 January. A female **Roe deer** was seen near Empingham on 24 March.

Q2 - April to June 2019

PJD records two dead **Hedgehogs** on roads in Quorn, a live one in a friend's Barrow upon Soar garden and regular visits by two animals recorded on the camera trap to her garden. Occasionally there were three and once four. Courtship behaviour was seen but no young have appeared so far. One found in daylight in a Barrow Road garden was taken to the vets for treatment – activity in daylight usually indicates that a Hedgehog is unwell. SFW recorded dead Hedgehogs at Dan's Barn in Leicester Forest West, Quorn, Groby and near the Langtons. There was a baby hedgehog active in Stamford Road in Groby.

Moles were active in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter. Molehills were noted



Common Shrew © Steve Woodward

by HI & SFW in churchyards at Orton-on-the-Hill, Congerstone, Knipton, Elmesthorpe, Cottesmore, Eastwell, Cadeby, Newtown Linford Cemetery, Eaton, Desford, Stonesby, Leicester Forest West, Peckleton, Garthorpe and Quorn.

On 28 May, SFW & HI found a live **Common Shrew** on a footpath in late May, near the Brush factory in Loughborough – it was not running away and did not look “well”.

A **Brown Hare** was seen by PJD at Oakley Grange Farm at Hathern in late May and they were seen by SFW and friends at Knipton, Harston Wood (two), Thurlaston, Knossington, Teigh, East Norton, Croxton Kerrial, Garthorpe, Sproxton (four), Sheepy and Redmile.

Rabbits were a common sight in DAP's Swithland garden and in fields around the village during this quarter. Burrows were seen in hedgerows at Orton-on-the-Hill, Redmile, Huncote Grange at Thurlaston, Hoby, Knossington, Measham and Catthorpe. More burrows at Peckleton and Shangton. Droppings at Croxton Kerrial and Scaford and live Rabbits at Peckleton, Croxton Kerrial, Groby, Houghton on the Hill, Cotes and in the grounds of Barnsdale Hall Hotel – a Rabbit paradise. The hotel is very good too.

SFW saw **Grey Squirrel** at Redmile St Peters churchyard, one at Sproxton carrying an acorn, one at Sheepy and two in the extensive grounds at Barnsdale Hall hotel. Again, plenty of squirrel road kills in Charnwood.

A **Wood Mouse** was visiting bird feeders in DAP's Swithland garden throughout the quarter and SFW found one dead in Congerstone churchyard on 8 April.



Grey Squirrel © Steve Woodward

A **Red Fox** was seen to kill a hen pheasant in DAP's garden at 6 am in mid-April and two rabbits at 2 and 5 pm in early May – it seemed unconcerned by the observer. It was a large and healthy looking specimen – possibly feeding cubs. PJD had images of a fox on her garden camera trap on a number of nights during the quarter.

SFW had sightings of a **Stoat** at Greetham on 19 April and a **Weasel** running across a road at Seagrave on 23 June.

PJD noted two dead **Badgers** – an adult in Birstall on 8 April and a cub at Grace Dieu on 31 May. A live one was caught on the camera trap, visiting a garden in Loughborough. DAP recorded a live Badger in a shrubbery at Mountsorrel on 8 May and a dead one at Beacon Crossroads on 10 April. SFW notes dead Badgers on roadsides at Kimcote, Bradgate Hill in Groby, on the A47 at Houghton on the Hill and two on the A46 on 11 May. There was a dead cub at Syston on 28 May and Setts or dung pits at Twycross, Orton-on-the-Hill, Piper Hole, Greetham Wood and Eaton.

HI & SFW found fresh **Muntjac** droppings near Greetham Wood on 19 April. They also found a male **Roe Deer** dead in a ditch near Grimston whilst SFW saw one grazing near Sheet Hedges Wood on 11 May and had a good view of one near Bescaby Oaks, Sproxton on 29 May.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Q1 & Q2 January to June 2019

This report is an amalgamation of the first two quarters of 2019.

A single **Barnacle Goose**, most probably of feral origin, was at Thornton Reservoir on 20 February. **Canada Goose** were noted at 14 locations with the two highest counts being 120 at Thornton Reservoir on 23 January and 51 at Abbey Park on 16 February. Numbers of **Greylag Goose** were much smaller double-figure counts coming from five of 11 sites the largest being just 20 at Catthorpe on 28 April. A lone **Pink-footed Goose** was with a small flock of Greylags at Thornton Reservoir on 2 February. A pair of **Egyptian Goose** flew low over Swithland Reservoir on 6 January and one was over Groby Pool on 18 February. Two birds were in fields next to Barrow Sewage Works on 11 May whilst two were on Teigh Pond on the 24th.

Mute Swan was recorded from the 15 main waters with double-figure counts at four including 54 at Watermead CP North on 24 January and 32 at Swithland Reservoir on 25 February. Breeding was confirmed by cygnets at four sites with pairs were noted at a further six. A group of three adult **Whooper Swan** was at Cropston Reservoir between 11 and 17 February and a single was at Groby Pool on 7 June.



Whooper Swans © Jim Graham

A **Shelduck** flew over Bagworth Heath on 3 April whilst a pair was at Cropston reservoir on the 20th. An escapee **Ruddy Shelduck** was in the company of a male **Australian Shelduck** in a Swithland garden on 5 May.

Mandarin Duck were noted at nine localities with double-figure counts at two: 33 (22 male

and 11 female) at Swithland Reservoir on 25 February and 15 at Cropston Reservoir on 26 May. Pairs were seen at most sites and a female was entering a tree hole in Grace Dieu Wood on 19 March whilst six juveniles were noted at Dimminsdale Wood on 15 April. A **Wood Duck** of unknown origin was found at Thornton Reservoir on 23 January. There were few records of **Shoveler** and the only counts of note were 78 at Watermead CP North on 24 January and 52 at Cossington meadows on 26 February. Double-figure counts of **Gadwall** came from five sites with maxima of 118 at Watermead CP North on 24 January, 77 at Raynsway Lake on 19 March, 20 at Kelham Bridge on 18 January and 11 at Abbey Park on 16 February. **Wigeon** were reported from five sites with the best counts being 73 at Cropston reservoir on 11 February and 49 at Cossington Meadows on the 26th. Counts of Mallard from 22 sites were quite modest with just three in excess of 50: 150 at Thornton Reservoir on 23 January, 78 at Watermead CP North on 24 January and 56 at Abbey Park on 26 April. A drake **Pintail** was at Cossington Meadows on 26 February but did not linger. The highest counts of **Teal** all occurred in February with 32 at Swithland Reservoir on the 25th, 28 at Cropston Reservoir on the 17th and 21 at Cossington Meadows on the 26th. A single drake **Red-crested Pochard** was at Swithland Reservoir on 31 March, whilst **Pochard** was recorded at six localities the highest counts included 80 at Thornton reservoir on 23 January and 52 at Groby Pool on the 20th. By far and away the largest count of **Tufted Duck** came from Watermead CP North with 227 on 24 January. The next best was just 37 at Swithland Reservoir on 25 February. "Good numbers" of **Goldeneye** were noted at Swithland Reservoir during the winter period with ten still there on 21 March.

Just two sites reported **Goosander** with a maximum of 17 at Watermead CP North and a single female at Groby Pool on 1 January.

Up to 14 **Red-legged Partridge** were in DAP's Swithland garden through the winter period and a pair successfully raised six young, but other records were mainly of one or two. A rather bizarre sight was of one landing in the flowerbeds at Leicester Cathedral on 13 March and walking around the square before flying off

westward a few minutes later. One or two **Grey Partridge** were found at six sites. Small numbers of **Pheasant** were noted at 11 sites the best count being just six at Stathern Bridge on 20 April.

Little Grebes were noted at seven sites in small numbers with two pairs at Kelham Bridge throughout the first quarter the best count. The only double-figure counts of **Great Crested Grebe** came from Cropston Reservoir peaking at 27 on 20 January. A group of five **Black-necked Grebe** was at Cropston Reservoir on 22 March but did not remain. This equals the largest group at this location from April 2003.

The highest count of **Grey Heron** was 15 at Watermead CP North on 24 January with eight or fewer at a further ten sites. A single **Great White Egret** was seen on the south section of Swithland Reservoir from 1 January until the month's end. Records of **Little Egret** came from 15 widespread sites, mostly of one or two but a maximum of six were at both Oaks in Charnwood on 16 February and Cropston Reservoir on 12 May.

The best count of **Cormorant** came from Cropston Reservoir with 107 on 3 February during an extremely cold spell.

Osprey was recorded at five Charnwood locations including one catching fish at Cropston Reservoir on 12 and 22 May. One or two **Sparrowhawk** were noted at 11 widespread locations including five gardens but there was no mention of display birds. **Red Kite** sightings are continuing to increase and were noted at 16 locations mainly one or two but four were in aerial display over Queniborough on 30 March whilst three were over Knipton Reservoir on 23 March and Cropston Reservoir on the 31st. **Buzzard** records came from 33 widespread locations with pairs displaying over at least nine sites. The best counts were 12 near Belvoir Castle on 23 March and six around Cropston Reservoir on the 31st. **Kestrel** was recorded at 29 locations, mostly of one or two, with three at Ibstock on 13 January and a pair in Thurstaston All Saints churchyard had at least one noisy juvenile on the tower. The first record of **Hobby** was of two at Swithland Reservoir on 6 May with records from three other sites. Records of **Peregrine** came from 11 locations, four of which

are known breeding sites including Bottesford Church and Leicester Cathedral where both pairs raised three young each.

Water Rail was heard at a respectable six sites including two birds regularly through the winter period at Kelham Bridge but the only record during the breeding season was of one calling at Cossington Meadows on 11 May. Small numbers of **Moorhen** came from 17 sites with only two having double-figure counts with maxima of 21 at Abbey Park on 26 April and 18 at Albert Village Lake on 17 February. Numbers of wintering **Coot** were mainly low with just Albert Village Lake having a three-figure count, 136 on 20 January. The only mention of breeding was a count of 15 occupied nests at Abbey Park on 26 April.

The first **Oystercatcher** record was of a pair at Cossington Meadows on 26 February. One or two were noted at a further four sites. The largest flock of **Lapwing** was 60 at Cropston Reservoir on 13 February. Displaying pairs were noted at three sites in March: Croxton Banks, Goadby Marwood and Sheepy Magna. The only record of **Ringed Plover** was of two at Wanlip Meadows on 11 May. There were three **Little Ringed Plover** at the same site on the 15th and two at Cossington Meadows on the 1st. All **Curlew** records were of singles calling. The first was at Barrow in Rutland on 25 February, then over Cropston Reservoir on 24 March, Redmile on 14 April and Cottesmore on 19 May. On 15 June, one flew into Cropston Reservoir via Bradgate Park. Five **Black-tailed Godwit** were at Wanlip Meadows on 29 June. Eight **Dunlin** were at the same location on 11 May and two were at Thornton Reservoir on the 10th. A single **Woodcock** was accidentally flushed from a copse at Wigston Sewage Works on 19 January with another flushed from a wood margin at Breedon-on-the-Hill on the 31st. Singles flew over Bradgate Park on 15 February and 17 March whilst two were "Kwoking" over JSG's Cropston garden on the 27th. **Snipe** was regular at Groby Pool during the first two months with a maximum of eight on 18 February. Seven were at Kelham Bridge on the 22nd and singles were at a further three sites. The first **Common Sandpiper** was located at Thornton Reservoir on 14 April with another there on 10 May. Singles were at three other sites with two at

Cropston reservoir on 4 May. Wintering **Green Sandpiper** were at Cropston Reservoir, Kelham Bridge and Watermead CP North in January and February. A single **Redshank** was at Wanlip Meadows on 1 May and single **Greenshank** was at the same site on the 15th.

The largest count of **Black-headed Gull** was just 546 at Albert Village Lake on 17 February. Counts in excess of 100 came from a further four sites. Three **Little Gull** were at Groby Pool on 8 April with four at Swithland Reservoir the same day; two remaining on the 9th. At least 100 **Common Gull** were at Twyford on 13 March with smaller numbers at four other locations. There were three **Great Black-backed Gull** at Albert Village Lake on 20 January and singles at Watermead CP South on 26 April and 11 May. Four **Glaucous Gull** were at Cotesbach on 13 February in the company of an adult **Iceland Gull**, two **Yellow-legged Gull** and two **Caspian Gull** on the same day. Small numbers of **Herring Gull** were at five locations, the highest count being ten at Watermead CP South on 11 May. Counts of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** came from five sites with 86 at Albert Village Lake on 20 January the highest total.

The first **Common Tern** record of the year was of five at Cropston Reservoir on 19 April whilst 30 at Watermead CP South on 11 May was the highest count. Strangely there was just one record of **Arctic Tern**, two at Swithland Reservoir on 8 May. Records of **Black Tern** came from three sites, the first being one at Swithland Reservoir on 18 April, with four there on 8 May. One was at Thornton Reservoir on 1 May and three at Watermead CP South on the 11th.

The only record of Feral Pigeon was of 140 at Abbey Park on 26 April. Small numbers of **Stock Dove** were noted at eight locations with eight at Cossington Meadows on 26 February the best count. Records of **Wood Pigeon** came from 22 widespread sites with counts in excess of 100 coming from four including 300 at Kelham Bridge on 5 February and 200 at Knipton Reservoir on 23 March. As usual, most **Collared Dove** records came from Members gardens with ten at Holwell on 15 January the only double-figure count.

The first **Cuckoo** was at Bradgate Park on 30 April with calling heard here and at nearby

Cropston Reservoir throughout May and June. Calling males were also at Charnwood Lodge and Bescaby in May.

The only **Barn Owl** records were singles at Ibstock on 30 January and near Belvoir Castle on 5 May. Single calling **Tawny Owl** were heard at eight sites with a pair and at least one juvenile noted in DAP's Swithland garden during April. There were fewer than normal **Little Owl** records, in line with what appears to be a significant recent decline of this species. Singles were in two locations at Bradgate Park during January and February whilst one was calling from a roadside Oak tree at Orton-on-the-Hill on 7 April. Up to three **Short-eared Owl** were regular at Longmoor Lake during February.

The first **Swift** arrival was on 25 April but there were no other records until 2 May. The highest count was a minimum of 100 at Thornton Reservoir on 8 June.

Kingfisher records came from six locations, all of singles. There were no comments regarding breeding. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker are clinging on in the county and there were two records; one seen and heard at Charnwood Lodge on 24 March and one drumming near Swithland Reservoir on the 31st. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** were at 29 widespread sites, including three gardens. Most were of one or two but three were in Bradgate Park on 20 March and a pair in JSG's Cropston garden during June was in the company of at least one juvenile. A juvenile was also noted in J&CG's Holwell garden. Records of **Green Woodpeckers** came from 21 locations mostly of up to three but there were six in Bradgate Park on 6 February. There were no reports of juveniles.

One or two **Jay** were reported from nine localities plus three at both Cropston Reservoir on 3 February and Sandhills Lodge on 21 April. **Magpie** were better reported than usual with reports from 17 sites, the highest count being 15 at Abbey Park on 26 April. The largest flock of **Jackdaw** was just 320 at Bradgate Park, well below numbers in 2018 with just three sites recording counts in excess of 100. Of the 18 locations for **Rook**, 16 were Rookeries with four having 50 or more nests. The only other significant record was of 150 in a field near The Outwoods on 19 February. The largest count of

Carrion Crows from 17 locations was just 15 at Abbey Park on 26 April. One or two **Raven** were reported from 15 sites with display noted at just two.

It was not a **Waxwing** winter so unsurprisingly there was just one record, a group of seven in Loughborough on 7 January.

Records of **Coal Tit** came from 13 sites and included five pairs at The Outwoods on 19 February. A total of 19 was ringed at Charnwood lodge in the first quarter. Single **Marsh Tit** were found at five sites including one seen feeding a youngster in an artificial bat box in Dimminsdale on 27 May. The only **Willow Tit** noted were at Kelham Bridge through the first quarter but all sightings were of one. Counts of **Blue Tit** came from 20 sites with five in double figures, the largest being 22 at Sandhills Lodge on 21 April. **Great Tit** were noted at 22 sites the best individual count being 14 at Kelham Bridge on 4 March. However, a total of 38 was ringed at Charnwood Lodge during the first quarter. An excellent record was of three **Bearded Tit** found at Watermead CP North on 26 February remaining, but elusive, until 9 March; the first Charnwood record since 2011. As this species has recently bred in Nottinghamshire, how long will it be before they breed in Leicestershire? The reedbed at Watermead CP would be an ideal place.

All **Skylark** records, mostly of singing birds, were of single figures from 32 sites. The best count was just seven at Bradgate Park on 21 February.

The first record of **Sand Martin** for the year was of 12 prospecting the artificial bank at Bagworth Heath on 29 March. There were two three-figure counts, a minimum of 200 feeding over Cropston Reservoir on 4 April and 150 at Swithland Reservoir on the 6th. The best counts of Swallow from 16 sites were both at Swithland Reservoir with 300 passing through during a five minute period on 4 May and 250 there two days later. The same location also had the best counts of House Martin with 250 passing through with the Swallows on 4 May and 100 on the 6th. Smaller numbers came from just six further locations.

Most **Cetti's Warbler** records were from the Soar Valley with the highest single count being

four at Cossington Meadows on 1 and 28 May. There were up to three at Kelham Bridge through the first quarter.

Records of **Long-tailed Tit** came from 25 widespread sites but the only double-figure count was a family party of ten in PJD's Quorn garden feeding on fat ball on 30 June. A total of 15 were ringed during the first quarter at Charnwood Lodge.

The first **Willow Warbler** was heard at Thornton Reservoir on 10 April then a further ten sites to the end of the period. The best count was ten singing at Charnwood Lodge on 22 April. Overwintering **Chiffchaff** were few and far between and song was noted from 26 February but widespread singing birds, returning migrants, were not noted until the end of March. The best count was 14 at Bagworth Heath on the 29th. The only records of **Sedge Warbler** were two singing at Stathern Bridge on 20 April and one at Watermead CP South. Reed Warbler were more widespread with records from nine locations, most of one or two, with 16 singing along the Grantham Canal near Stathern Bridge on 5 June the best count by far. Reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** were heard at Watermead CP South on 26 April and at Cossington Meadows during May. Overwintering **Blackcap** were noted in Members' gardens in January but the first singing bird was at Swithland Reservoir on 26 March. The highest site count was 14 singing around Sandhills Lodge on 21 April. Singing **Garden Warbler** were heard at just four sites. Six birds at Cropston Reservoir on 12 May included two pairs displaying. **Lesser Whitethroat** were seen at a respectable 19 locations, usually one or two, with three singing at Seagrave on 21 April. Usually more



Garden Warbler © Jim Graham

widespread, **Whitethroat** were found at 21 sites the highest count being six at both Charnwood Lodge on 1 May and on farmland n Cropston on the 11th.

There were two records of single **Firecrest**, one was caught and ringed at Grace Dieu on 6 January and the second was seen at Cropston Reservoir on 19 May. By contrast **Goldcrests** were reported from 14 locations. The highest individual count was ten at The Outwoods on 19 February although a total of 24 was caught and ringed at Charnwood Lodge during the first quarter.

Most **Wren** records were of singing birds usually in low numbers but 14 were around Cropston Reservoir on 12 May and 13 at both Sandhills Lodge on 21 April and Abbey Park on the 26th. One or two **Nuthatch** were seen or heard in 12 locations with six at The Outwoods on 6 March the best count. A total of eight were caught and ringed at Charnwood Lodge during the first quarter. **Treecreeper** was noted at 11 localities, mostly one or two, with song heard from 16 February. A total of eight was caught and ringed at Charnwood Lodge during the first quarter.

There were no significant counts of **Starling** the highest being just 30 at Normanton in the Vale of Belvoir on 18 March. Breeding was confirmed at five sites.

Spring movements of **Ring Ouzel** were seen at Charnwood Lodge with a single male on 3 April and two males with three females on the 19th. Records of **Blackbird** came from 23 sites, most counts were in single figures but there were 14 in JSG's Cropston garden on 9 June, 12 in Stokeswood Park on 26 April and ten in J&CG's Holwell garden on 2 February. It was another poor year for flocks of wintering thrushes. The best counts **Fieldfare** were just 120 at Cropston on 22 March and 132 migrating over Copt Oak on 23 April, the last record of the period. There were fewer **Redwing** in both sightings and numbers. The best count from three sites was just 50 in Bradgate Park on 21 February. The last record of the period was of a single at Copt Oak on 23 April. **Song Thrush** was noted at 15 locations with singing at most. Five at Sandhills Lodge on 21 April was the best count. Records of **Mistle Thrush** came from 14



Mistle Thrush © Jim Graham

sites with four pairs at Bradgate Park on 6 February the best count.

The late arriving **Spotted Flycatcher** was found at just two sites, one at King Lud's Entrenchments on 19 May and two in Bradgate Park on 15 June. The status of this secretive Red-data species continues to freefall with approx. 90% of the population lost since 1967.

Robin was recorded in 27 locations, including Cropston Reservoir on 12 May where 12 of the 15 birds were singing and one was a newly fledged juvenile. There was just one migrating **Redstart**, a female at Charnwood Lodge on 19 April. At least one pair of **Stonechat** was around Bradgate Park during January and February with a male also in a hedgerow in nearby Cropston. Successful breeding was confirmed at Bradgate Park with pairs seen with juveniles in three separate areas. Migrating **Wheatear** were seen in four areas, the first was a pair at Warren Hills on 26 March with three males and a female at the same site on 19 April. One or two were also at Seagrave, Holwell Mouth and in a paddock near John Lee's Wood. The last of the spring was also at Warren Hills on 19 May.

There were few records for **House Sparrow**, most from gardens, and the highest count was 16 at ATO's Loughborough garden in March. Two in DAB's Hugglescote garden were the first recorded there in 12 months. There were no records of **Tree Sparrow** but **Dunnock** were noted at 17 widespread sites.

There first record of **Yellow Wagtail** was of three over Seagrave on 21 April. Singles were at Cropston Reservoir on 11 and 12 May and two at both Woodhouse and Woodthorpe both on the 15th. As usual, all six **Grey Wagtail** locations involved water with one or two individuals at

each. The only wintering roost of **Pied Wagtail** was in Loughborough with 100 birds using the Christmas tree during early January. The next best count was just 12 in short grass near Westmeadow Brook in Diesworth on 11 March.

Small numbers of **Meadow Pipit** came from six sites with ten at Bradgate Park on 31 March the only double-figure count. This site was the only location for Tree Pipit with a singing male heard in the Hallgates Valley area on 24 June.

Double-figure counts of **Chaffinch** came from five sites: 30 at Knipton Reservoir on 23 March with 20 at nearby Windsor Hill on the same date; 25 in fields in Cropston on the 4th; 15 at Kelham Bridge on 5 February, and ten at J&CG's Holwell garden on the 2nd. Smaller numbers were at 18 further locations.

Brambling were noted at three sites, the first was a pair near the feeders at Burrough Hill CP on 1 March then eight in a loose flock with Chaffinches at Windsor Hill on the 23rd, and five, including singing males, at Swithland Reservoir on 7 April. Small numbers of **Bullfinch** came from 14 locations with four at both Bagworth Heath on 3 April and Sandhills Lodge on the 21st. Most **Greenfinch** records came from gardens with seven in JSG's Cropston garden on 28 May the best count. The best wintering flocks of **Linnet** were 50 in fields in Cropston on 13 February and 40 at Swithland Reservoir on the 11th. Singing birds were noted from 19 April onwards. As to be expected, numbers of **Lesser Redpoll** were much higher in the early part of the year with four sites having double-figure counts: 40 at Swithland Reservoir on 17 January; 30 at Albert Village Lake on 16 March; 25 at Groby Pool on 11 January, and 10 at Bradgate Park on 19 March. Four **Crossbill** were seen flying over Bradgate Park on 19 March and three



Yellowhammer © Jim Graham

were over JSG's nearby Cropston garden on 9 June. The largest flock of **Goldfinch** was just 19 in Ibstock on 5 January. Smaller numbers came from a further 16 locations. By far and away the best count of wintering **Siskin** was a flock of 75 at Groby Poll on 26 January, with single-figure counts from seven other sites. Small numbers of **Yellowhammer** came from 19 sites with the highest count of six at four during February and March. Similarly **Reed Bunting** numbers were low with four at both Cropston on 4 March and Stathern Bridge on 5 June the best counts from 18 locations.

Jim Graham

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Q1 - January to March 2019

As might be expected, sightings of reptiles and amphibians tend to be few and far between during the colder months of the year. However, by the end of the first quarter, in March, the amphibians often start to move towards their breeding sites.

Common Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: PJD reports that by 17 March there were at least ten specimens, very active, in her neighbour's garden pond in Barrow Road, Quorn.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*: SFW & HI report seeing a specimen at Goadby Marwood on 22 March. There was a notice in the village which read "three squashed on road recently" and asking drivers to watch out for them.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: PJD reports that there was activity in her own and her neighbour's garden ponds from 1 March onwards. The first spawn appeared on 2 March in her own pond and by 12 March both ponds had become what PJD describes as "frog spawn soup".

PHG reports that two clumps of spawn were first seen in his daughter's pond in Warwick Avenue in Quorn on 21 March. By the following day there were four clumps and by 25th, six clumps were present and by 28th – ten clumps. I do not have a pond in my rather small garden; however there are several gardens nearby which do have ponds which attract frogs and most years I come across 'road casualties', but not

this year. Strangely enough, I cannot remember seeing a single frog this spring. As for the supposedly 'Common' Toad, I have not seen one in my garden in years and I wonder what has happened to them?

Tony Onions

FISH (including) CRAYFISH

Regrettably we have no sightings for the first quarter of the year. However in recent weeks there have been a number of television programmes which have included pieces on two fish species and related issues. A Panorama programme was devoted to the Scottish Salmon farming industry and the issues raised by it. SpringWatch this year came from the Cairngorms National Park and parts of the programme were looking at the problems facing the wild Atlantic Salmon. One programme featured a piece on the Grayling, courtesy of the Club's friend Jack Perks. Finally, the Countryfile programme on 9 June was largely concerned with the chalk streams of Hampshire – specifically the River Itchen. It is not my intention to review these programmes here; however, I do think it would be appropriate and helpful for our readers to provide some additional details on the two species of fish mentioned in these programmes.

Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar*

It may have escaped many people's notice but 2019 was actually the 'International Year of the Salmon'. One could argue that the Atlantic Salmon needs all the publicity that it can get: as a wild fish it is in trouble and this is true not only for the British Isles but across most of the Salmon's range with the possible exception of the rivers which drain into the Russian Arctic.



Atlantic Salmon © Steve Woodward

On the North American Side of the Atlantic, serious effort has been made to conserve the species but with only limited success; to quote Robert Behnke, writing in 2002:

“Restoration efforts increased and escalated in the 1980’s but at the beginning of the twenty-first century, still only a few hundred wild fish are making the journey back from the Atlantic Ocean up rivers to New England.”

Behnke goes on to list the reasons for the decline in the American populations:

“Over the past two hundred years the combination of dams, pollution and, more recently, decreased ocean productivity devastated these wild runs. They have never recovered and it is unlikely the species will ever reach its former abundance in the wild. However, and it is amazing to contemplate, the Atlantic Salmon has never been as abundant as it is today.... Over 95% of Atlantic Salmon abundance consists of domesticated fish – cultured salmon raise in cages in bays and fiords.... Norway, Scotland and Chile produce more than 1 billion pounds of ocean farmed (cage cultured) Atlantic Salmon each year.”

According to the Panorama programme, the Scottish Salmon farming industry is worth 600 million pounds per annum to the country’s economy. However, intensive rearing of salmon has not been without problems and controversies. Farmed salmon produce waste which can pollute the seabed below the cages and they also attract parasites and pathogens – which may be passed on to the wild fish which swim past the cages on their way into fresh water. If my memory serves me correctly, the main conclusion reached by the programme was that the Scottish industry needs to be more closely regulated and monitored in order to prevent environmental damage.

The situation for wild salmon in the UK appears to have reached a grim new low in the last few years. In one of the SpringWatch programmes, the River Garry in Scotland was featured. At one time the upper River Garry would have a run of 900 returning adult salmon: last year it was 27! However, it now seems that people are, belatedly, beginning to take action. One of the projects featured in the programme - and also described in detail in the July edition

of “Trout and Salmon” magazine – is a project on the River Muick in Scotland which consists of taking (worthless) shanks of culled deer and staking them out on the bed of the river to improve the nutrient content of the water. Other initiatives include seeding rivers with eggs or taking eggs from wild fish and rearing them to a reasonable size in hatcheries before releasing them into the wild, in order to reduce the numbers of young fish lost to predation. Unfortunately, helpful though these projects may be, it seems that the real problem is the one referred to by Behnke as “decreased ocean productivity”. There is obviously little point in increasing the numbers of young fish in the river if there is nothing for the young salmon to feed on when they migrate out into the seas around our coasts. One of the projects mentioned in the television programmes involved tagging young salmon in an attempt to find out what happens to them when they migrate to salt water.

In a difficult and complex situation, perhaps the best news of all is that, thanks to those television programmes, the General Public is beginning to become aware of the problems which this species is facing and that must give grounds for optimism. Public opinion can be a powerful weapon! I will leave the last word on the subject to Robert Behnke:

“Despite all of the problems facing the continued existence of wild Atlantic Salmon, members of this species are not only leapers but also survivors and a hard-core group of dedicated advocates are committed to ensuring that the noble Atlantic Salmon will endure.”

Tony Onions

The quotations from Robert J. Behnke are taken from the chapter on Atlantic Salmon in his book entitled “Trout and Salmon of North America”, originally published in 2002 by the Free Press, a division of Simon and Schuster Inc., New York. Dr Robert J. Behnke, who died in 2013, became a Professor Emeritus at the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology at Colorado State University. and is regarded as a leading authority on the Salmonids of North America.

The European Grayling *Thymallus thymallus*.

The SpringWatch programme of 28 May featured a piece on the European Grayling, courtesy of the wildlife photographer Jack Perks, who revealed that the Grayling is his favourite fish species and, coincidentally, it is also a favourite species of ATO who vividly remembers catching his first Grayling from the River Wharfe in Yorkshire in September 1965!

The Grayling is something of an enigma. It is a Salmonid species but not closely related to the Atlantic Salmon or the Brown Trout, although it is usually found in rivers which it shares with the latter species. It is native to the British Isles and can be seen as an 'Ice Age Relic'. It almost certainly was originally found in the river catchments which flowed eastwards from what is now the British Isles out across the Northern European plain to join the prehistoric River Rhine. So the Grayling is essentially a river fish, rarely found in lakes but also rather specific in its requirements. It is only comfortable in water which is neutral or alkaline, very clean and cold. In that sense it can be seen as an indicator species. On the continent it is typically found in the foothill sections of Alpine rivers.

The most striking thing about the Grayling is its sail-like dorsal fin, larger and longer in the male than in the female. Grayling spawn in early spring and at that time the males turn almost black in colour. Their normal colouration is more subtle and subdued than the bold, brash colours of the Brown Trout; silver with metallic sheens and tinges of maroon and blue in the fins.

Many years ago, some angling writer (it may have been the legendary Izaak Walton!) described the Grayling as having a soft mouth and angling writers have been trotting out this piece of nonsense ever since! Actually nothing could be further from the truth. The Grayling has a narrow head with a comparatively small, terminal mouth. The lips are bony and covered in leathery skin and the tongue is bony and domed in shape, fitting neatly into the hard concave roof of the mouth. The stomach of the Grayling is comparatively small and sausage-shaped with thick, hard walls, in contrast to the larger, rather elastic stomach of the Brown Trout. Another striking feature of the Grayling is its eye: the pupil, instead of being round is

pear-shaped, with the point towards the front, an adaptation which gives the fish improved stereoscopic vision. The Brown Trout can be described as an 'unspecialised predator' but the adaptations point to the Grayling as being more of a specialist, adapted to feeding on crustaceans and molluscs which it can pick up from the gravel substrate. This also includes cased caddis which both Trout and Grayling will swallow complete with ease.

Over the years the range of the Grayling has been extended quite considerably. The species was not originally native to the chalk rivers of Hampshire, the Test and the Itchen, but was introduced during the nineteenth century and flourished in these cool, clear, alkaline rivers. Unfortunately, during the twentieth century, an attitude developed on both the chalk rivers and elsewhere, that the Grayling was undesirable because it competed with the Trout and ate the eggs of the Trout. Consequently, on some rivers, large numbers of Grayling were "culled". However, research shows that the truth, quite simply, is that what goes on in the river can best be described as a "free for all". The Brown Trout and the Grayling will eat their own and other species eggs if given the opportunity. Bullheads will also eat Trout and Grayling eggs but lay their own eggs on the underside of a flat stone where Trout and Grayling cannot get at them. However, Grayling are perfectly capable of eating small Bullheads and Trout are capable of swallowing larger ones!

By the nineteen-seventies, this practice of "culling" Grayling was becoming less and less acceptable to a new generation of anglers and in 1977 a group of well-known fly fishers formed a society – The Grayling Society – with the express aim of changing attitudes towards the Grayling. ATO was a founder member of this society but dropped out of it some years ago for the simple reason that in his view the Society had succeeded in its aims. These days the "Lady of the Stream" enjoys the status and respect which she so rightfully deserves...

Tony Onions

The report for the second, third and fourth quarters of 2019 will appear in the next edition of *Heritage*.

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

A report for the whole of 2019 will appear in the next edition of *Heritage*.

BUTTERFLIES

Q1 – January to March 2019

There was a particularly warm spell of weather in February. As a result, first sightings of butterflies by Club Members were a month earlier than in 2018. On 14 February a **Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae*, was seen by PHG in his Quorn garden, sunning itself on a stone wall. A male **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*, was seen by HI & SFW in Farley Way, Quorn on 15 February. A **Peacock** *Aglais io*, was seen by PHG on 20 February and on the same date PJD saw a **Small Tortoiseshell**. A male **Brimstone** was seen by two people in Quorn on 21 February. There were also sightings of single **Small Tortoiseshell** on 22, 23 and 24 February (HS & PHG), the latter two nectaring on Grape Hyacinth flowers. A **Comma** *Polygonia c-album* was seen on 25 February (PJD). Three **Brimstones** were noted at Barrow upon Soar on 25 February and a male **Brimstone** on the 26th. Single **Small Tortoiseshells** were observed at Barrow upon Soar and Quorn, also on 25 February and **Small Tortoiseshell** again on 26 February, four in Spinney Hills Park, Leicester (HB) and in three in Quorn (HS). On 27 February two **Small Tortoiseshells** were seen at Quorn and one at Ashby de la Zouch (SFW & HI). A further sighting of a male **Brimstone** was on 26 February, again in Quorn.

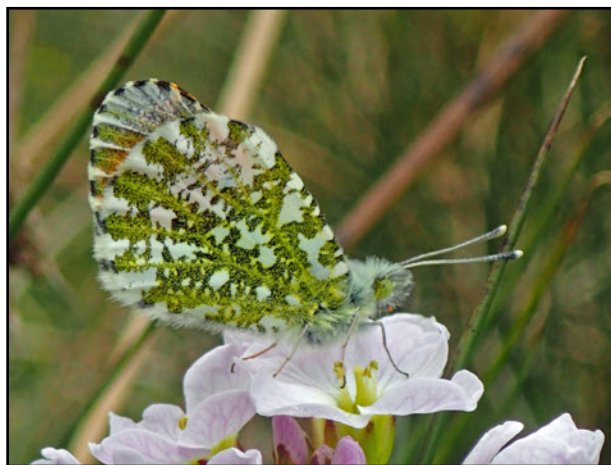
As a result of a change to wetter, colder weather, there was then a gap in butterfly records until 19 March. Warm, sunny weather returned and the only **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* to be seen this quarter was at The Brand on 19 March (SFW). On the same day, a **Brimstone** was seen in Quorn (PJD) and on 20 March a **Peacock**, **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Brimstone** were noted in different parts of Quorn.

One or two **Small Tortoiseshells** were also observed between 21 and 31 March at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Charnwood Lodge, Groby, Quorn, Sheepy Magna, Sheepy and Castle Donington. Five were seen at Evington Golf Course on

March 28 (HB). **Peacocks** were seen in ones or twos at Newbold Verdon on 20 March, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Quorn on 25 March, Sheepy and Sheepy Magna on 29 March and Quorn on 30 March. Four **Peacocks** were seen at Charnwood Lodge on 30 March. (HS).

Single **Commas** were seen at Empingham on 24 March and Quorn and Charnwood Lodge NR on 29 March. There were further sightings of single **Brimstone** males at Quorn between 28 and 30 March and at Goadby Marwood and Sheepy Magna on 22 and 29 March. Four **Brimstones** were observed at Bloody Oaks NR on 24 March, with singles at Gisbourne's Gorse on 23 February and Grace Dieu on the 25th. A **Brimstone** female was seen in Quorn on *Ipheion* and Winter Jasmine on 29 March.

Until March 24 all the butterflies that had been recorded were the hibernating or overwintering species. However, the **Orange-tip** *Anthocharis cardamine*, sometimes called "the harbinger of spring", was seen at Empingham on 24 March by HI & SFW. A male **Orange-tip** was seen in my Quorn garden on 30 March and I also saw three female **Orange-tips** and a male at Buddon Brook Meadows in Quorn on the same day.



Orange-tip © Steve Woodward

Thank you to those who sent in their records. Many thanks are also due to Peter Gamble who wrote the Butterfly report for a long period of time. His close observations, record keeping and extensive local knowledge have greatly contributed to our understanding of butterflies in this area of Leicestershire.

Q2 - April to June 2019

Hesperiidae

In this second quarter, **Large Skipper *Ochlodes venata*** was first recorded on 1 June at Buddon Brook meadows when two were seen (HS). Two were also observed at Pasture Lane, Scalford on 23 June and in Quorn on 29 June (HI and SFW). Individuals were recorded at Buddon Brook meadows on 9 June, Croft Road Thurlaston on 14 June, Witherley on 28 June, and Bottesford on 30 June.

Pieridae

The **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines***, had already been sighted in late March in this early year. A male Orange-tip was next recorded on 8 April in my Quorn garden. The butterfly was then seen in 46 different locations up to 1 June. DBF noted 45 on 19 April at Sence Valley FP and 17 (13 males and four females) were recorded by HS at Buddon Brook Meadows on 20 April. PHG saw a courting pair in his Quorn garden on 19 April. I noticed Orange-tips roosting overnight in my Quorn garden on Wood Anemones, *Anemone nemorosa*, on 18 April (male) on *Erysimum* "Bowles mauve" on 22 April (male and female) and on the wall next to my front door on 13 May. The **Brimstone, *Gonepteryx rhamni*** was seen by Members between 8 April and 9 June in 24 locations, mostly in ones and twos. PHG noted females laying eggs on alder buckthorn in his garden on the 23, 30 and 31 May whilst DBF recorded four at Sence Valley FP on 19 April. **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was sighted several times on 14 – 16 May and 16 – 20 June at PHG's garden and **Small White *Pieris rapae*** was recorded in seven widespread locations between 22 April and 31 May. **Green-veined White *Pieris napi*** was seen on 22 April, 15 May and 16 May at PHG's Quorn garden.

Lycaenidae

Five **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*** were recorded at Timberwood Hill, Charnwood Lodge on 17 April (HS) followed by at least 20 at Warren Hills by DBF on 19 April. **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** was recorded in eight locations. Single butterflies were seen on the 14 May in Groby and Croft Pasture (HI & SFW), at The Brand on 19 May, on 23 and 24 May in



Green Hairstreak © Jim Graham

Quorn (PHG), on 24 May at Sewstern, and on 25 May at Charnwood Lodge (HS). Two were seen at Groby Pool on 1 June (HI & SFW) and one was also seen on 9 June at Buddon Brook meadows. **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** was seen in seven places. A single first generation specimen was noted at Holwell NR on 12 May (JG), at Kelham Bridge on 21 May (DBF) and single adult males were seen at Sproxtton on 29 May and Garthorpe on 31 May (HI and SFW). One was observed at Groby Pool on 1 June, two at Scalford on 23 June and a further one at Sutton Cheney on 28 June. More widely recorded than Common Blue, **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*** was seen at 15 locations between 15 April and 6 June. Five were seen at Groby on 21 April and a couple were seen mating in Quorn on 15 May (HI & SFW). The remainder of sightings were of singles.

Nymphalidae

Single **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** were seen in eight places between the 22 April and the 30 June. **Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*** was seen in 11 locations from 22 to 30 June. One was seen at Broughton and Old Dalby (HI & SFW) on 22 June and two at Scalford on 23 June. Singles were seen on 23 June at Stafford Orchard Quorn



Painted Lady © Steve Woodward

(BH and JH), at Church View Gardens in Quorn on 27 June and in three Quorn locations on 30 June (JH, BH and PJD). Four were seen at JG's Holwell garden on 27 June. This was the start of a good year for the Painted Lady butterfly. **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*** was recorded in 19 locations from 11 April to 30 June. Ten were observed at Snarestone on 24 April (HI & SFW) and three were seen at Quorn on 29 June. All other observations were ones or twos. **Peacock *Aglais io*** was seen in 20 different places between 8 April and 30 June, mostly in ones or twos but six were seen at Charnwood Lodge on 17 April (HS) and seven at Warren Hills CLNR on the 19th (DBF). There were few records of **Comma *Polygonia c-album***. It was seen in PHG's Quorn garden on 1 and 15 April, 19 to 22 April and 14 May. It was also seen by DBF at Kelham Bridge on 21 May.

Satyridae



Small Heath © Steve Woodward

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* was seen in 34 widespread places between 15 April and 30 June. Five were seen at Buddon Brook meadows on 19 April by HS and 15 were recorded on Bagworth Heath by DBF on 24 April. Other sightings were all ones or twos. **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** was recorded between 14 and 30 June at 12 locations. SFW saw 100s at Atterton on 28 June and several at Sutton Cheney on 28 June and Quorn on 29 June. JG noted five in her Holwell garden on 27 June and PHG saw several in his Quorn garden on 28 June. **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** was seen in three places between 21 May and 28 June. One was seen by SFW & HI at Empingham Marsh on 21 May. HS saw three at Charnwood Lodge on 25 May and SFW noted two at Witherley on 28 June. More widespread was **Ringlet**



Ringlet © Steve Woodward

Aphantopus hyperantus, seen at eight sites from 22 to 30 June. DBF recorded one at Sence Valley FP on 22 June and SFW saw four at Quorn on 29 June. PHG had several sightings in his Quorn garden on 28 June.

Thank you to everybody who sent in butterfly records for the two quarters.

Helen Shacklock

MOTHS

Q1 & Q2 - January to June 2019

We have records from five recorders for this period covering five sites, although Charnwood Lodge will include several widely separated sub-sites. This produced a total of 4683 individuals of 279 species, although the number of individuals was about the same as this quarter for last year, the number of species were much less; a total of 91 micro moth species were recorded this quarter, so approximately a third of the total species. Mick and Joy Braker carry on with the Bradgate Park survey plus Margaret Mcloughlin at Whitwick continues to provide a string of interesting modern records from her garden abutting Holly Hayes Wood. This quarter, Margaret recorded 159 species, there is no doubt this historically important area will deliver more significant records with time.

On with a summary, starting in checklist order. ***Dyseriocrania subpurpurella*** was recorded throughout April but not seen after the 22nd. It never really seems quite right to record the Swifts with the micros, but we are told that is where they belong so, the only **Orange Swift *Triodia sylvina*** was from Whitwick late May, **Common Swift *Korscheltellus***

lupulinus was widespread but all the **Map-winged Swift** *Korscheltellus fusconebulosa* records were restricted to Charnwood Lodge. No reports of large numbers of **Nemophora degeerella** dancing in the sunlight, just a singleton attracted to light in Grange Wood near Netherseal in late June. A single of **Cedestis gyssemiella** was found at Charnwood Lodge (from now on CL) end of June and five **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella* at Grange Wood with several others from CL. **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella* and **Brown House-moth** *Hofmannophila pseudospretella* were both found widespread throughout. A species that has spread quite rapidly throughout the county is the pretty **Tachystola acroxantha** was recorded in May and June at Whitwick. The **Many-plumed Moth** *Alucita hexadactyla* was out in force recorded in all months throughout, as was **Light-brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana* although apart from a total of 12 at Whitwick, most of the rest of the sightings for this species were in low single figures. That is except in our garden where it seems to be feeding on everything, most days half a dozen can easily be disturbed. The low numbers of this next species have been mentioned before: **Green Oak Tortrix** *Tortrix viridana* now mainly recorded barely getting into double figures. So, the 55 at CL and 1200 at Grange Wood were exceptional counts, but these were the usual numbers we used to see a decade or so ago. A single stunning **Acleris literana** was recorded at Whitwick at the end of April, and you would think the thistle feeding **Aethes cnicana** would be abundant everywhere, but just two individuals were found at CL end June. It was particularly pleasing to record six individuals of the Aspen feeding **Pseudosciaphila branderiana**, obviously doing well in Grange Wood. This wood has a substantial amount of Aspen not just as scrub, which is the norm at many sites, but also there are quite a few sizeable trees. Active management is in progress here and many Conifers and Rhododendrons are being removed, allowing for regrowth of our native species. Another species, which was out in numbers and widespread was **Bee Moth** *Aphomia sociella* including ten at light in Grange Wood at the end of June. A species first recorded in VC55 in 2010 **Ephestia woodiella** (previously known as *E. unicolorella*) seems to

have had a favourable couple of years, although I only received a record of three individuals recorded from Grange Wood end June, but many local moth recorders have reported this species to be fairly widespread throughout.

The group of moths we tend to “lump” together as, Grass moths have been well recorded, particularly **Garden Grass-veener** *Chrysoteuchia culmella* and **Agriphila straminella**. The attractive **Brown China-mark** *Elophila nymphaea* were only recorded from CL and Grange Wood and **Small China-mark** *Cataclysta lemnata* from Grange Wood all at the end of June. The first **Scalloped Hook-tip** *Falcaria lacertinaria* put in an appearance mid-April, but that was it, with no other sightings during the rest of the quarter. **Oak Hook-tip** *Watsonalla binaria* began in early June and **Pebble Hook-tip** *Drepana falcataria* April and June but none in May.



Pebble Hook-tip © Graham Finch

All the reports of **Drinker** *Euthrix potatoria* came from the Charnwood Forest sites and all in June. All the Hawk-moth species were recorded except for **Privet Hawk-moth** *Sphinx ligustri* all species were in good numbers and every single record came from the Charnwood Forest with the exception of a single **Poplar Hawk-moth** *Laothoe populi* from Grange Wood. A solitary **Clay Triple-lines** *Cyclophora linearia* came to light at CL, this has never been a particularly common species, but we appear to be getting fewer records of this Beech-feeder over recent years. Not surprisingly CL produced the only record of the Bedstraw feeding **Galium Carpet** *Epirrhoe galiata* with Whitwick and Grange Wood providing the only Rose-feeding **Streamer** *Anticlea badiata* records. Other Bedstraw feeders, although they can be



Clay Triple-lines © Graham Finch

sometimes found on Cleavers, the first **Mottled Grey Colostygia multistrigaria** was at CL early April, followed by the first **Water Carpet Lampropteryx suffumata** which were widespread from mid-April to mid-June. The next species **Scallop Shell Rheumaptera undulata** seems to favour the North West of the county with host plants of Bilberry, Sallow and Aspen. There is plenty of Sallow and Aspen in Grange Wood, so the record from here at the end June is encouraging and hopefully helping to keep this restricted species in a stable situation.

A total of 13 species of pug moths were recorded all in single figures except for the 73 **Brindled Pug Eupithecia abbreviata** at Grange Wood end of April. The only records for **Early Tooth-striped Trichopteryx carpinata** were of three in Grange Wood in late April and none afterwards.



Purple Thorn © Steve Woodward

The first **Purple Thorn Selenia tetralunaria** put in appearance mid to the end of April, but none were recorded for the rest of the quarter. The first of the **Brindled Beauty Lycia hirtaria** started to arrive mid-April and continued until mid-May, **Waved Umber Menophra abruptaria**

did much the same with the last one on 1 June. A night in Grange Wood late June produced a respectable total of seven of the oak feeding **Blotched Emerald Combiaena bajularia** and (always nice to see) was a single **Puss Moth Cerua vinula** which came to light in early June in Bradgate Park. Although widespread and fairly numerous all the records for **Lunar Marbled Brown Drymonia ruficornis** were in April but we had to wait until mid-May at CL for the first **Marbled Brown Drymonia dodonaea**. The only records for **Chocolate-tip Clostera curtula** were mid-May at CL and end May at Whitwick, both as singletons. Grange Wood produced the only records of **White Satin Leucoma salicis** and **Yellow-tail Euproctis similis** both as singletons. Small numbers of **Muslin Footman Nudaria mundana** were recorded from Charnwood Forest and the only record of **Red-necked Footman Atolmis rubricolis** was from Grange Wood end June. The only records received of **Silver Y Autographa gamma** and **Beautiful Golden Y Autographa pulchrina** were from Whitwick in June. The first **Brown Rustic Rusina ferruginea** did not appear until late June and apart from two at Grange Wood and four from Bradgate Park all the other records came from CL. Records of **Bird's-wing Dypterygia scabriuscula** were from Bradgate Park and CL both mid to late June, all the **Dusky Brocade Apamea remissa** records came from the Charnwood Forest and its close relative **Rustic Shoulder-knot Apamea sordens** started in mid-May and continued throughout June and was present at most sites. Fond of Sweet Williams, so make sure your neighbours grow plenty.

A single **Varied Coronet Hadenia compta** was attracted to light at Whitwick late June. The only records of **Dingy Shears Apterogenum ypsilon** both appeared on the same night - 29 June, at Whitwick and Grange Wood. All the usual **Orthosia** species carried on throughout April with the 14 May being the last sightings for any of them. Amongst them were seven individuals of **Lead-coloured Drab Orthosia populeti** another Aspen feeder, on 22 April at Grange Wood. Despite feeding on a wide range of common food plants **Grey Arches Polia nebulosa** was recorded just twice CL and Grange Wood both late June. The first **Common Wainscot Mythimna pallens** showed in mid June and **Shoulder-striped Wainscot Mythimna**



Beautiful Golden Y © Graham Finch

comma in mid-May with **Obscure Wainscot** *Leucania obsoleta* at the very end of June. This last species seems to be getting quite a hold now and is turning up quite frequently.

We had to wait until late June for the first **Purple Clay** *Diarsia brunnea* to show and Whitwick had the monopoly on **Green Arches** *Anaplectoides prasina* throughout June.

What has been, thought provoking this quarter is that records of our day flying species have been virtually absent, all the records received have been from Mercury Vapour, Actinic or L.E.D. lights plus a scattering from sugar/treacle. Does this mean day flyers have been absent, no one has been out during the day or no one has kept any records? This has been one of the very few late April early May periods where no diurnal species have been reported, we can all do better.

Many thanks to those Members that sent in their records.

Graham and Anona Finch

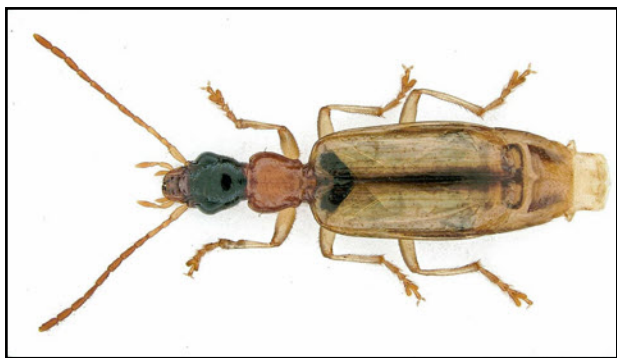
BEETLES

A marked increase in numbers, with 2043 individuals and 232 species (1308 individuals of 168 species from the same quarter last year), although we had a few extra casual records from a couple of additional recorders this time. The number of species for the main groups were: water beetles 24; Carabids 29; Staphs 19, and Ladybirds with an impressive 17 species.

We obviously somehow missed out on Longhorn species as just a meagre five species were reported, but Chrysomelids were up to 21 species. Considerable extra effort was put into the weevils this quarter and it seemed to pay off with a respectable 44 species found. Also over this period, I made a concerted effort to target specific host/food plants particularly for weevils, and I think finding so many Chrysomelids was something of a by-catch, but also I have been using a Husqvarna garden leaf blower/vacuum (on vacuum). Once slightly modified, this is extremely efficient at sucking up a whole range of ground dwelling beetles, especially small Carabids, Staphs., Chrysomelidae and Weevils and this no doubt helped to push the species list up.

On with the summary in checklist order. A little more effort was made with the water beetles and this certainly paid off. The pond was eventually found in Grange Wood where numerous *Gyrinus substriatus* were watched whirly-gigging about, although these were the only Whirligig beetles reported. Several *Haliphus obliquus* were found at a settling pond at Swinford, *H. Lineolatus* were found in a pond on Bagworth Heath, *H. flavicollis* and *H. fulvus* were netted from the pond in the ruins at Bradgate Park. *Noterus clavicornis*, *Laccophilus minutus* and *Hyphydrus ovatus* were widespread, recorded at most water bodies visited. Although stated as common throughout, we had just singles of *Hydroglyphus geminus*, *Hygrotus impressopunctatus*, *Hydroporus memnonius* and, living up to its name, the hairy *H. pubescens* were only found as singletons at three sites. The Grange Wood pond had singles of *Agabus sturmii*, *Ilybius fuliginosus* and *Acilius sulcatus* and the only *Rhantus suturalis* was found at Bradgate Park.

A total of 29 species of Carabids were found which covered all the usual suspects. Just a few comments on a couple of species are *Carabus nemoralis* unusually none were found at Bradgate Park this quarter, but good numbers were in the pitfall traps at Staunton Harold. *Poecilus cupreus* was widespread as was *Pterostichus madidus* which was the most numerous and widespread species. Vacuum sampling produced six *Trichocellus placidus* from Lea Meadows, *Badister bullatus* from Pick



Demetrias atricapillus © Graham Finch

Wood near Albert Village *Demetrias atricapillus* from Swinford and *Paradromius linearis* from Breedon on the Hill. Another seven species of water beetles were recorded, this time of the Hydrophyloidea, several reports of *Helophorus brevipalpis* were recorded, it being one of the commonest species, and in the same genus *H. obscurus* was found at Swinford. Another ubiquitous species *Anacaena globulus*, at 3 mm, a singleton of this small round beetle was found in the pond in the ruins of Bradgate Park. A series of small ponds at Nailstone produced four *Lacobius minutus*, one *L. bipunctatus* and four *Helochares lividus* and finally a single *Enochrus melanocephalus* was netted from Watermead Country Park. Formerly considered to be great rarity, the strange looking *Plegaderus dissectus* is a small Histerid beetle now found to be local, but widespread across southern England, with a few records as far north as Nottinghamshire and Lancashire, a solitary individual was found on a fallen dead tree in Abbey Park in late April. The only other Histerid found was a single *Gnathoncus nannetensis* under bark of a fallen dead tree at Staunton Harold. Dead timber on the ground, whether branches or main trees, is one of the most important (and threatened) habitats for a whole range of specialist beetles (and other invertebrates and fungi) and we must make sure nature reserves do not become over-tidied. Two fairly similar burying beetles *Thanaptophilus rugosus* was found in reasonable numbers in Bradgate Park but only a single *Nicrophorus humator* came to light in Grange Wood.

On to the Staphs., 19 species were recorded and as with the Carabids all of the regulars were in evidence, but none in any numbers. A surprise visitor to the moth trap in Grange Wood was a single *Trox scaber*, this species is associated with

dead carcasses and old birds' nests, with just ten previous records.

No dung sampling was undertaken this quarter subsequently the only Aphodine species was seven *Aphodius rufipes* at light again in Grange Wood, and remarkably the only Cockchafer *Melolontha melolontha* was also at light at the same site. Two individuals of Welsh Chafer *Hoplia philanthus* were found in Bradgate Park, this species seems to be recorded in ones and twos yearly, having been recorded well into September there is still time for additional records yet. With an interesting life style with the larva developing in tiny water pools in tree hollows, a solitary *Prionocyphon serricornis* was attracted to MV in Grange Wood. With the variety of beetles attracted to various moth trap lights I'm surprised we don't get more records of this sort.

A total of five of the strange *Dryops luridus* one of the so-called long-toed water beetles were netted from the large pond in the ruins at Bradgate Park, just five previous records for this species. An impressive ten species of "click beetles" were recorded including a single *Hypnoidus riparius* from vacuum sampling at Breedon on the Hill, the stunning *Ctenicera pectinicornis* from two sites plus the small *Kibunea minuta* beaten from Rose at Wymeswold Meadow. Not surprising *Athous haemorrhoidalis* was the most frequently found species, with *Agriotes acuminatus* the next. Other Agriotes species found were *Agriotes lineatus*, *A. lineatus*, *A. obscurus*, *A. pallidus* and *A. sputator*.

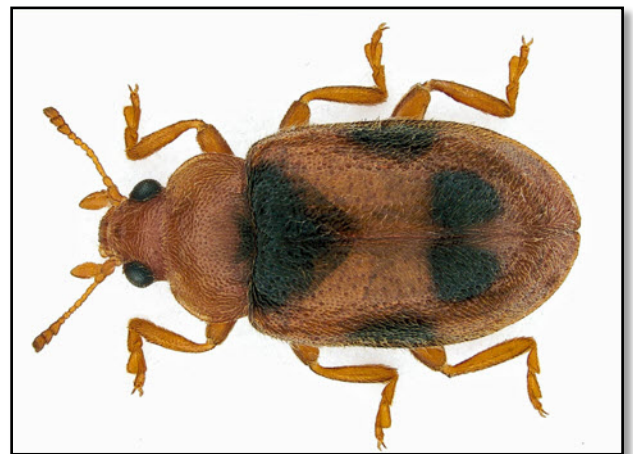
If we include the Malthine beetles, only eight species of the Cantharidae were recorded. They are a difficult and variable group, a situation, which is not helped by not having a user-friendly key available. So the few records we have include *Cantharis cryptica* Bradgate Park and the Ashby Canal, *C. decipiens* the most widely spread species, *C. nigra* only just recorded from Bradgate Park and *C. rustica* and *Rhagonycha lignosa* which were fairly widespread. A solitary *Malthinus flaveolus* was swept from grassland at the Sence Valley Forest Park and two *Malthodes minimus* were attracted to light in Grange Wood. *Necrobia rufipes* are still at Bradgate Park in their usual small numbers but 50 or more of its close relative *Necrobia*

violaceus were found on two occasions early April to mid-May and interestingly a singleton was vacuumed from Lea Meadows again in mid-May. Bradgate Park is usually the only site where both *Necrobia* species are found, so it was pleasing the latter has been recorded from a totally different site. They are both found in decaying corpses, so should be present throughout as you don't seem to go too far without finding the odd dead bird, Rabbit or something flattened on the road. A species that seems to have done well this summer is ***Malachite bipustulatus*** this was found very widespread and often in considerable numbers, very rarely was just the odd one found.

Another interesting species associated with dead things is ***Omosita discoidea*** a single individual was found on a dead Muntjac in Grange Wood early April. The adults and larvae of the genus *Olibrus* can easily be found feeding on the flower heads of the Asteraceae family during the summer and early autumn in warm weather. They are small, the largest being 3 mm, but there is a good key to this genus and no doubt with just a little effort we could so easily add to the distribution of them. Two species were found this quarter ***Olibrus affinis*** which is probably the most common and ***O. corticalis*** by vacuum sampling and sweeping low vegetation. Another fairly easy species to find is ***Telmatophilus typhae*** as the name suggests it is associated with Bulrush, and often found by peeling back the dead outer leaves on the stems.

I am quite pleased with the number of both records and species for the Ladybirds this quarter, 17 species, including a new species for VC55 out of the 47 resident species is a respectable total. We are familiar with the large and colourful regular species we find, but there is a small group of species that are described as "inconspicuous" Ladybirds, these are much smaller and less Ladybird-like than those we are used to. They can all be identified with a decent hand lens, but the main obstacle is finding them in the first place. Amongst these inconspicuous species this quarter were ***Rhyzobius chrysomeloides*** favouring Pine found at Breedon on the Hill and Leicester Botanic Gardens, ***R. litura*** a grassland species and can be easily swept from such habitats and ***R. lophanthae*** beaten from Cypress bushes. This

was the new VC55 species from Leicester Botanic Gardens and favours Leyland Cypress, it has also been found on Juniper, Viburnum and Spindle. Two other classics of dead Typha stems species are ***Coccidula rufa*** which can often be numerous, and the very pretty ***Coccidula scutellata*** the latter can also be swept from vegetation along the edge of marshy habitats. The last of the inconspicuous species ***Scymnus haemorrhoidalis*** was found on several occasions including Breedon on the Hill and Billa Barra NR, all by vacuum sampling. All of the above are small with the largest just about reaching 3.5 mm, they need to be specifically looked for in their respective environment, you would be very lucky to stumble across one casually, but they are there and there are more species waiting to be discovered in VC55.



Coccidula scutellata © Graham Finch

On to the "normal" Ladybirds **Orange Ladybird *Halyzia sedecimguttata*** fairly widespread with most records from moth traps including 12 in Grange Wood in late June. Vacuum sampling produced the most of the records for the widespread **22-spot Ladybird *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata*** and the only records of **Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quattuordecimguttata*** came from Grange Wood at MV light. By far the most frequently recorded species was **14-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*** which seemed to be just everywhere. Very few records of **Harlequin Ladybird *Hamonia axyridis*** and all in very low numbers, three records of **2-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata*** from Swinford, Watermead Country Park and Sence Valley Forest Park, two sightings of **10-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata*** at Bagworth Heath and Welford Road Cemetery. Numbers were down on **7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*** and just

one record of two individuals of **Eyed Ladybird** *Anatis ocellata* from Grange Wood to MV light. Typha stems proved reliable again for **Water Ladybird** *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* at Lount NR and Bagworth Heath and finally finishing off the Ladybirds with **16-spot Ladybird** *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata* again being fairly widespread.

Usually a regular visitor to various moth traps is **Lagria hirta** but just one record of a singleton at Grange Wood in late June, also on the same night at Grange Wood a solitary **Rust-red Flower Beetle** *Tribolium castaneum*. Out of the few Longhorn beetles recorded were just a single **Rhagium bifasciatum** was found at Brown's Hay in early June, **Grammoptera ruficornis** was the most frequently recorded, a single **Rutpella maculata** was at Staunton Harold and two records of the **Tanbark Borer** *Phymatodes testaceus* were reported, a daytime observation at Sileby and one to MV at Grange Wood both in June and the last a single **Agapanthia villosoviridescens** at Markfield again in June.



Bruchus rufimanus © Graham Finch

The Chrysomelidae did well with a variety of species being found, a brief summary follows starting with three species of the seed beetles were found, all swept from low vegetation **Bruchidus varius** from Piper Wood early May, **B. villosus** from Earl Shilton and Bagworth Heath and **Bean Beetle** *Bruchus rufimanus* was widespread in all three months. The only reed beetles found were **Donacia simplex** from the Ashby Canal and Watermead Country Park. Three species of Tortoise Beetles were reported, **Pale Tortoise Beetle** *Cassida flaveola* from Lea Meadows, **Thistle Tortoise Beetle** *Cassida rubiginosa* from Sence Valley Forest Park and **Cassida vibex** from Charnwood Lodge and Welford Road Cemetery. **Chrysolina herbacea**

is still found on the outflow of Colony Reservoir at Charnwood Lodge and **Chrysolina polita** was only found at Sence Valley Forest Park. The **Green Dock Beetle** *Gastrophysa viridula* was everywhere, at least 20 **Hydrothrassa marginella** which is a distinctive blackish/green with orange borders along the pronotum and elytra, were vacuum sampled in Lea Meadows mid-May, and of similar size but completely dark metallic blue eight **Brooklime Beetle** *Prasocuris junci* were found around the balancing pond at Swinford.



Phyllotreta ochripes © Graham Finch

Described as minute to small flea beetles, the Phyllotreta are a relatively small genus with 15 species, eight of which are black with a variety of shaped creamy spots or stripes, making them quite easy to pick out, the other species are a plain metallic black, green, blue or a slightly bronze colour, but lacking any other markings. A total of five species were recorded this quarter starting with **Phyllotreta atra**, **P. diademata**, **P. nemorum** and **P. ochripes** were all found on Garlic Mustard, and **P. exclamtionis** was vacuumed from the base of a clump of Lady's Smock in Lea Meadows. Most of the genus can be swept off various species of plants belonging in the Brassicaceae.

As stated earlier a significant amount of effort was dedicated to finding members of the Curculionoidea, which covers all the weevils, just a few are mentioned below. A single **Birch Leaf Roller** *Deporus betulae* was found on Birch at Staunton Harold despite the inference of the name this species can be found on a variety of broad-leaved trees. The Apions are probably the group we associate instantly as weevils, with their long down-curved rostrum, a total of 12 species were found. They can be quite challenging, as many are quite small and at first

sight very similar looking, here is where finding them on their chosen host/food plant can help tremendously, it doesn't work every time but it definitely helps. An easy one to find is ***Malvapion malvae*** and this time as its name suggests it is found on Mallows but especially on Common Mallow. Another species, although small is ***Exapion ulicis*** found on Gorse, by tapping their respective host plants over a tray both of these species are easily recorded. Several species of Protapion feed on Red Clover, but even that narrows down the choices two such species found on this plant were ***Protapion apricans*** and ***P. fulvipes*** whereas ***P. trifolii*** were only found on White Clover. Although there are five species of the red Apion weevils, only ***Apion frumentarium*** seems to be the common one and was found fairly widespread. A solitary **Raspberry Weevil *Otiorhynchus singularis*** was at Welford Road Cemetery, also a single **Strawberry Weevil *Barypeithes araneiformis*** was in a pitfall trap at Bradgate Park. Its close relative **Hairy Spider Weevil *Barypeithes pellucidus*** was found in numbers by vacuum sampling in Cloud Wood and Pick Wood. Vacuuming Marsh Marigolds in Lea Meadows soon produced three of the shiny blackish and heavily punctured ***Leiosoma deflexum***, this can be found on other species of *Ranunculus* and has also been taken off Wood Anemone. Targeting Docks, particularly in May and early June, produced widespread and numerous records of ***Rhinoncus pericarpus*** darkish grey, square-ish and with an oblong patch of pale yellowish scales between the shoulders. A real major effort was made on targeting Ribwort Plantain resulting in the weevil with the most records ***Trichosirocalus troglodytes*** this species was found literally everywhere. There are two other significant species found on Ribwort Plantain ***Mecinus pyraster*** and ***M. pascuorum*** again both species were found virtually everywhere the host plant grew. One of the few leaf mining weevils ***Orchestes rusci*** was attracted to light in Grange Wood and the last of the weevils, a single blunt-nosed ***Rhamphus pulicarius*** was swept off Comfrey at Shenton Estates, although this species is usually found on broad-leaved shrubs.

I will finish off with a few wood-boring beetles, a single ***Scolytus intricatus*** was attracted to the moth trap in Grange Wood, six



Mecinus pascuorum © Steve Woodward

of the **Small Elm Bark Beetle *S. multistriatus*** were found under Elm bark at Watermead Country Park and, finally, back to Grange Wood for a single ***Dryocoetes autographus***.

Quite a varied haul this quarter, which was no doubt boosted by targeting host plants, vacuum sampling plus a surprising number of noteworthy species turning up at moth traps.

Many thanks to those who sent in their records.

Graham Finch

OTHER INSECTS

A report will be in the next edition of *Heritage*.

FLOWERING PLANTS and FERNS

Q1 & Q2 - January to June 2019

I will combine records from these two quarters, all of which (7,056) are from SFW and HI's fieldwork for the national *Atlas 2020* project. I will refer to these recorders as "we". Yes, this was the last spring for finding elusive plants and for plugging those embarrassing holes in the map, so we were scooting around Leicestershire, probing its neglected corners.

Systematic order begins with the ferns and I will mention two from Thurcaston: firstly, **Water Fern *Azolla filiculoides***, which we noted in a pond during the "Open Gardens" day (29 June). This is a small fern that floats on the surface and looks more like a duckweed than a fern. It might well be an introduction here but this fern does manage to disperse (on ducks' feet?) and often proliferates where it lands. Occasionally, the pond near Cossington Church is covered with it. At the edge of Exning Spinney on 26 May we

found a plant of **Hard Shield-fern** *Polystichum aculeatum*. It has stiff, more-or-less evergreen leaves with a tiny whisker on the tip of each leaf lobe. I expect the new atlas will show a significant increase, based on my experience.

Conifers do not enthuse me, I have to admit, but the atlas project expects us to record mature trees, including those in gardens. **Giant Redwoods** *Sequoiadendron giganteum* were found at Sutton Cheney, Exton Park, Ashby-de-la-Zouch (Prestop Park) and Knossington. The record from Carlton Curlieu churchyard was a mere stump – the impressive tree was standing on our previous visit there. Giant Redwoods do tend to attract lightning strikes and tree safety officials.

Aquatic plants are generally under-recorded, so we make a special effort to find them on the rare occasions that we encounter an accessible and unpolluted pond. At Market Bosworth Park we fished out **Rigid Hornwort** *Ceratophyllum demersum* on 9 June. The leaves are sufficient for recognition, arranged in whorls on the stem with each leaf divided into two narrow prongs, each of which also forks into two.

Long-headed Poppy needs to be picked to identify it accurately. That is because there are two look-alike species, one with white sap *Papaver dubium* and one with yellow sap *Papaver lecoqii*. We found examples of the latter (the less common one) at Groby Co-op on 24 June and Sheepy Magna on 3 June.

Botany does not stop for the winter – somebody has to put on woollies and look for **Winter Aconite** *Eranthis hyemalis*! It seems to be popular in churchyards, turning up in Bottesford St. Mary, Leicester St. Mary de



Winter Aconite © Steve Woodward

Castro, Carlton Curlieu St. Mary and Harston St. Michael and All Angels. A little later, the **Lesser Celandine** *Ficaria verna* appears. Later still, its flowers begin to wither and that is the time to check for bulbils between the leaf bases. We found the two subspecies (*verna* and *fertilis*), distinguished by the presence or absence of bulbils. By the start of June, Lesser Celandine vanishes completely until early spring the following year.



Meadow Saxifrage © Steve Woodward

Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* is a real beauty, with milky-white flowers. Russell Parry and I were pleased to find it at Granby Farm, Belvoir, at the kind invitation of the farmer. Helen and I also found it at Croft Pasture NR, Eaton Cemetery (most likely planted) and Eastwell St. Michaels churchyard (a small quantity). A smaller saxifrage that is easily overlooked is **Rue-leaved** *Saxifraga tridactylites*. This plant turned up on a wall in Swithland, opposite the Griffin. In previous years we have found it in Loughborough town centre and suburbs on walls and footpaths.

We count **Broad Bean** *Vicia faba* as a “casual” wild flower when it turns up where it has not been planted. This is surprisingly often: we have 11 widespread records between February and May this year. Also in the Pea family, **Spotted Medick** *Medicago arabica* seems to be commoner than it used to be. We have records from Shenton and Appleby Magna. It resembles the more familiar **Black Medick** *M. lupulina*, but the flowers are a deeper yellow, the leaflets each bear a purple spot and the remarkable fruit resembles a crown of thorns.

The neglected meadow at Quorn, where the footpath to Woodthorpe begins, was examined on 29 June. We were delighted to find a colony of **Fragrant Agrimony** *Agrimonia procera*. It



Spotted Medick © Steve Woodward

looks superficially like the common **Agrimony** *A. eupatoria* but some of the hooked spines on the heads are reflexed and the leaves are fragrant. This plant qualifies as “scarce” in Leics. and Rutland. The site looks vulnerable to development and has already been threatened by one plan.

In contrast, the finding of **Piri-piri-bur** *Acaena novae-zelandiae* at Thurlaston churchyard filled us with horror! This is an alien invader (worse than Daleks) that has spread alarmingly at some nature reserves with sandy ground, such a Minsmere (Suffolk) and Skipwith Common (Yorkshire) and is very difficult to eradicate. Helen and I have personal experience of trying to remove it – the roots go deep and the plant fights back by releasing spiny fruits that make a tangled mess of clothing and boot-laces! Another plant that spreads from gardens is **Mind-your-own-business**. I am not being funny, that is its name! Perhaps someone can tell me how to pronounce its Latin name, *Soleirolia soleirolii*. Its mass of tiny, round leaves has spread over the ground in Thurcaston and Stanton under Bardon churchyards, also in Barlestone, Sproxton and Desford. Although the record is not in the period covered by this report, I will mention Blaby, whose shady churchyard is smothered in this plant.

I rarely find **Bistort** *Persicaria bistorta* locally, it seems to prefer northern England and I suspect it is a garden escape in Leicestershire. It was found near the Brush factory in Loughborough on 28 May. Its more common relative **Amphibious Bistort** *Persicaria amphibia* pokes its dense spikes of pink flowers out of the water, typically with its ship-shaped, glossy leaves floating on the surface. As its name implies, however, the plant can also grow on

land, where it presents quite a different appearance with dull and hairy leaves. We recorded Amphibious Bistort from Watery Gate Lane, Thurlaston on 14 June, Swithland on 26 May, and Exton Park on 12 May.

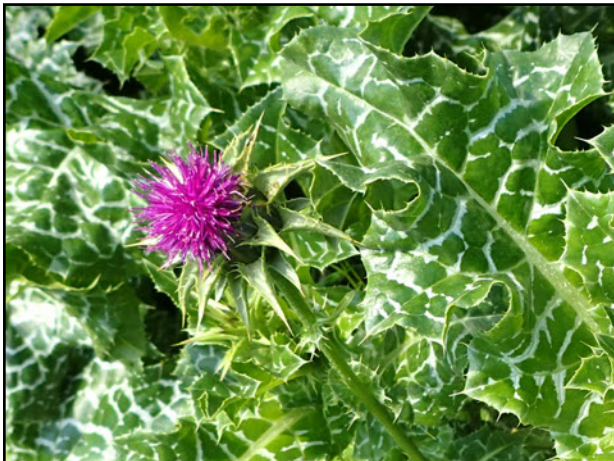


Amphibious Bistort © Steve Woodward

Ragged-Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* is easily recognised from its large, ragged, pink flowers, yet we rarely see it outside nature reserves. Its damp, meadow habitat is now reduced to tiny fragments and we have only two records: the meadows near Groby Pool (SSSI) on 24 June and Garthorpe parish on 31 May. Also with pink flowers, but very much smaller, **Field Madder** *Sherardia arvensis* is a plant of short grassland including lawns and verges. As a member of the Bedstraw family (Rubiaceae) it has four tiny petals. It seems to prefer the more calcareous ground in the east and north-east of the vice-county (although it can be found in Loughborough), so our records come from Burley on 24 March, Scalford cemetery on 23 June, Granby Farm, Belvoir on 11 April and Normanton (the one beyond Bottesford) on 5 June. In the same family, **Crosswort** *Cruciata laevipes* is a larger, upright plant with conspicuous yellow, cross-shaped flowers that is more likely to be found in longer grass. It was formerly common locally, but populations have crashed in the last few decades and is now hard to find. We recorded it at Croxton Kerrial on 26 June and Bruce’s Lane, Owston and Newbold parish, on 12 May.

On an excursion with Geoffrey Hall and others to Hallaton Castle on 27 May, our search for **Large Thyme** *Thymus pulegioides* was successful. The hairs of this rare plant need close scrutiny with a hand-lens to confirm identification.

The **Slender** (alias Sea-side) **Thistle** *Carduus tenuiflorus* is one of a number of coastal plants that are moving inland (another example follows). Small colonies were found at Briscoe Lane, Woodhouse on 12 June and Farley Way, Quorn (near the crossroads) on 15 May. The heads are narrow and the flowers pale pink. We made a special trip to see a rare and spectacular thistle at Church Langton (beside the Langton Arms) on 11 May. It is called **Milk Thistle** *Silibum marianum* and is probably a garden escape. The bright green leaves have a striking marbled pattern on them.



Milk Thistle © Steve Woodward

We recorded **Common Duckweed** *Lemna minor* in seven places, but I am now dubious about the identification! A poster presentation at the 2019 Annual Exhibition Meeting of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland revealed that Fat Duckweed *Lemna gibba*, previously recognised by its inflated leaves, has a thin form which closely resembles *L. minor* and may actually be the commonest duckweed. We will need to look at these more closely in the future.

We found six kinds of orchid in early 2019. **Broad-leaved Helleborine** *Epipactis helleborine* was still present in the arboretum at Bosworth Park on 9 June and one spike of **Common Spotted-orchid** *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* was growing near the entrance to The Brand on the Open Day (19 May). In my home parish of Groby I recorded **Heath Spotted-orchid** *D. maculata* ssp. *ericetorum* on 6 June and **Southern Marsh-orchid** *D. praetermissa* on 1 June, both near Groby Pool. Finding new populations of **Early-purple Orchid** *Orchis mascula* is a very infrequent event, but we recorded them by the crossroads at Grimston on 26 April and under a



Early-purple Orchid © Steve Woodward

hedge beside Bruce's Lane, Knossington on 12 May. Finally, three more roadside verge sites for **Bee Orchid** *Ophrys apifera* were added to our growing tally, at the Appleby Magna Inn, Empingham, and Castle Donington, near the Aeropark. These were all identified between January and March from their basal leaves – Bee Orchids rarely flower, thanks to tidy-minded people with mowers.

On 29 May, I spotted **Heath Wood-rush** *Luzula multiflora* in Sproxtton parish, in rough grassland on an arable margin. This is not its typical habitat and there are no records in the 1988 Flora for this corner of Leicestershire, so I got the identification confirmed by Geoffrey Hall.

The Vascular Plant Checklist ends with grasses, and I have three species to report. **Sea Fern-grass** *Catapodium maritimum*, as you might expect from its name, ought to be beside the sea, but is now colonising the salted roads, usually on the kerb rather than in the grassy verge. We found it at Bottesford on 30 June and Croxton Kerrial (near the water spout) on 26 June. **Downy Oat-grass** *Avenula pubescens* has something distinctive that I struggle to put into words, rather like False Oat-grass but more elegant, with silvery spikelets, furry sheaths and usually in a meadow rather than an unmown verge. It seems to have a very short "season". It turned up near Horn Mill in Rutland on 23 May. Another unusual grass appeared at Bottesford on 30 June, **Green Bristle-grass** *Setaria viridis*, an annual that pops up occasionally in disturbed places around town and villages.

Steve Woodward

WEATHER

January 2019 was a month of two halves. The first half was mainly dull but dry and on the mild side. The second half was cooler but with more sunshine and some night frosts. Temperatures balanced themselves out over the month with afternoon maximums logged at 6.9°C with night-time temperatures registering 1.5°C and this included nine night frosts. Both of these figures were very close to normal and our mean of 4.3°C was what you would expect for January. It was another dry month however with just 26 mm of rain falling which is less than half of the usual total. The total sunshine figure was 50.1 hours in Mountsorrel: about 20% below normal. The first half of the month was mild, cloudy but mainly dry as a large area of high pressure sat to the south of the UK giving us relatively mild westerly winds. The mildest day of the month was the 13th when the temperature reached 12°C. The second half of the month was much cooler with a frequent NW wind that gave us some crisp, sunny, winter days. One of these, the 28th, gave us 8.3 hours of sunshine and the Arctic airmass responsible produced our coldest night on the 31st of -5.6°C and on that day the temperature only climbed to 2°C, our chilliest day of the month. An area of snow moved into the UK from the south on the 31st but it never reached our area and although we did see six days with snowflakes falling in the month, any lying snow was very limited in nature and the snowmen builders and the sledge sellers remain disappointed this winter in Loughborough.

It was forecast at the start of the winter that February may break records and indeed it did but instead of the very cold month expected February smashed the records at the other extreme. It was the sunniest February in Leicestershire since records began 1896 with 141 hours of sunshine recorded or 75% above normal! The sun shone for, sometimes, ten hours each day - the longest time possible for this time of year. It was also a very mild month with the day time temperatures averaging 11.3°C, nearly 4°C above normal making it also the mildest days ever recorded for February. Night time temperatures were a little lower at just 2.5°C which were just 1.2°C above normal as the long clear nights after the sunny days did

mean they got quite cool. I recorded eight nights of air frosts. The overall mean temp of 6.9°C meant the February mean temp was 2.4°C above normal making it the warmest since February 2002 here. It was also another dry month with just 36 mm falling or just 75% of the usual rainfall. The only month since last May to see above average rainfall in the last nine was December 2018 all the others have been significantly drier than usual. Winds mainly blew from a mild S or SW direction with the maximum gust being just 47 mph when storm Eric visited on the 9th.

High pressure generally dominated the month and this accounts for the dryness. We did begin the month with cool NW winds and indeed our only cold day came on the 1st when the temperature only climbed to 3.7°C. The 3rd gave us our coldest night when the temperature dropped to -5°C, our coldest of the winter. The second week brought us milder but wetter weather with the 10th providing 13 mm of rain; nearly half the monthly total. The second half of the month was mainly fine and dry. High pressure established itself to the south of us and provided us with a warm airmass from the Azores. The pattern persisted for much of the last fortnight and provided us with mainly fine, sunny and warm days but cooler clear nights. The temperature on the 26th reached 17.8°C, locally my warmest February day since 2012 but unlike 2012 these temperatures were almost the same for five days. Nationally, all temperature records were broken and on 26 February London recorded a summer maximum of 21.2 °C a huge 12°C above normal, shattering the previous highest temperature set in 1998 of 19.7°C. It has been calculated that the return period of this happening is once in 200 years but if global warming continues these temperatures may become far more frequent. The winter itself was milder than normal with December and February being significantly warmer than normal with just January being average for temperature. It has been the mildest winter since 2016 and only six winters have been milder since 1896.

March was a month of two halves with the first half being very wet and windy with the second being mainly warm and sunny. Low pressure completely dominated the first 18 days

giving us the windiest spell since February 2014 with gusts exceeding 40 mph on eight days with three days over 55 mph. It was just the second wettest than average month since last April with only last December and this month registering more rainfall than the long-term average. The second half of March by huge contrast was influenced by high pressure with many cloudless days helping the sunshine total reach 161 hours, making the sunniest March since 2012. Afternoon temperatures averaged 12°C with night time minimum temperatures logged at 4.8°C. The overall monthly mean was 8.4°C which was 1.6°C above normal. I recorded just two air frosts but there were also a number of round frosts too.

As stated, the month's weather fell into two halves. The first half saw our coldest day being recorded on the 7th with 8.2°C with our wettest on the 10th with 14.5 mm. It was windy every day from the 2nd to the 16th as areas of low pressure crossed the country. The month's total of 67.6 mm was reached by the 18th, which is nearly 50% above normal. Only the fact that rainfall in previous months had been on the low side stopped the rivers going into a major flood but there were a few problems along the Soar Valley flood plain. The 19th saw high pressure take control with completely different weather with the sun shining for up to 12 hours a day with the warmest date on the 29th recording 17°C with the 25th seeing 12.2 hours of sunshine - the maximum possible for this date.

April was yet another dry month with temperatures close to normal and sunshine just above. Only 21 mm of rain fell at Mountsorrel which is less than half of the usual total. The month had 21 dry days with only small amounts of rain falling in the first and last weeks with 20 completely dry days mid-month. High pressure dominated the month but it was in different positions. At times it lay to the north and it gave us a chilly east wind and cold clear nights which resulted in five night frosts. The Easter weekend, however, saw temperatures soar, as very warm air from the Mediterranean spread north under virtually clear skies. The Easter weekend was the sunniest in history giving us 46 hours of sunshine and temperatures up to 23°C, not bad indeed! These up and down temperatures in many respects cancelled themselves out with

afternoon temperatures averaging 14°C (+0.8°C) while night time temperatures were logged at 4.5°C (+0.1°C). The overall mean of 9.2°C was very close to the long-term average for April. The last week of the month saw different weather as storm Hannah arrived giving us some rain, with winds gusting to 47 mph. April was a sunny month with 170 hours recorded in Leicestershire which is 13% above the normal total, thanks to the spectacular Easter weekend! The last 12 months have witnessed some very similar weather patterns with high pressure dominating far more frequently than normal with unsettled and wet spells being significantly shorter. Over the last 12 months I have recorded just 490 mm of rain which is 30% less than normal or 150 mm less than usual, which is a significant amount. Let us hope we get some consistent rainfall soon so any water supply problems can be avoided in the summer time.

May was another drier month than normal making it the 11th drier than average month out of the last 13 and the driest in Leicestershire since 2010. 43 mm of rain fell at Mountsorrel which was 20% below normal. Twenty days in May remained dry. Temperatures were very close to normal with afternoon temperatures averaging 16.3°C and night time temperatures averaging 8°C. The overall mean was 12.1°C. These were close to normal for the month. Sunshine too was registered at 194 hours, 5% above the normal. The month began on a wet note with our wettest day recorded on the 8th at 10.5 mm. The 12th brought an abrupt change in the weather when high pressure took over for a week. This high pressure brought us clear skies and sunshine with 64 hours of sunshine being recorded between the 12th and the 16th. The sunniest day was the 14th when 15 hours was recorded - the maximum possible for the date. There was then a short, showery spell but the dry weather soon returned. There were no exceptional temperatures in May with our highest reading of just 22.4°C on the 30th but there was no air frost either! In short, a fairly decent weather month and this is in keeping with normal. May and September have been the best weather months to take a UK break recently and the trend seems to be continuing!

June was the coolest and wettest month locally since 2012. The most noteworthy feature

was its wetness. I recorded in Mountsorrel 138 mm of rain or more than twice the usual total and Loughborough University recorded 169 mm or nearly three times the usual June rainfall total. Only the incredibly wet June in 2012 beats this figure in my 20 years of records. It was also a very cool month with afternoon maximum temperatures averaging 18.3°C, 1.3°C below normal but the minimum temperature average of 11°C was 0.5°C above normal thanks to the large number of cloudy, mild nights. The overall average of 14.7°C was 0.5°C below normal; the coolest June since 2013. Not surprisingly it was also very dull with just 100 hours of sunshine recorded with nine days where there was none at all. It was the dullest June since 2012. Winds peaked at 35 mph on the 7th.

The start of the month saw a warm temperature of 24°C on the 1st but then it became cooler. The second week saw a staggering 100 mm of rain falling at Mountsorrel. This was caused when a low pressure formed over the UK with very hot air to the east combining with cool air coming down from the north. This fuelled a very active weather front which stayed virtually stationary for 36 hours causing the rain to pour down. The wettest day was the 11th when 41 mm poured down making this my wettest individual day of any month since I started my records 20 years ago. The next day the 12th saw another 21 mm fall making a total of 61 mm or more than the whole of June's rainfall fall in just 36 hours. Luckily, due to recent dry weather, flooding was very limited to the usual locations and a fall of rain when the water table was higher as in 2012 would have had far more serious consequences. The second half of the month was generally drier and even had a short burst of intense heat on the 29th, when the mercury reached a peak of 30.3°C, making it the warmest June day since 2005, with a very sunny 13 hours thrown in for good measure, but this heat only stayed for a day before cooler conditions returned. So this June was a total contrast to June 2018 which saw virtually no rain and high temperatures but last year was a rare event with cool and wet Junes occurring far more often at every five years. Let us hope the sun shines for longer in July!

Phil Morrish

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

H Bradshaw, B Croxtall, R D Dandy, P J Darby (PJD), M A Finch, G L Finch, D B Forgham, P H Gamble (PHG), J Graham (JSG), S C Graham, H Graves, D Gray, J Green (JG), C Green, J Hollingsworth, B Hollingsworth, H Ikin (HI), N H Judson (NHJ), M McLoughlin, A T Onions (ATO), D A Perry (DAP), H Shacklock (HS), S F Woodward (SFW).

Thank you to the 23 recorders, which is about 15% of Members (plus some friends) – *what about the rest of you??*

Records should be sent ASAP to:
Helen Ikin, 237 Forest Road, Woodhouse,
Loughborough, Leics. LE12 8TZ.
email: helen.canids@btinternet.com

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

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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.