LEICESTERSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VC55

NEWSLETTER 63

September 2020

Donacia versicolorae beetles live on the surface of Colony Reservoir, feeding on pondweed *Potamogeton* leaves - the damage is evident. Full story: p. 13. Photo: Ann Smith.

In this edition

Peter Gamble with Anona Finch in 2016 - see p. 2.

LEICESTERSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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The editor will be happy to receive articles, short notes and photos (in focus please!) about insects or other invertebrates in Leicestershire and Rutland, also news of members' activities further afield. Photos to be sent separately please at high resolution. Unless otherwise credited, photos are by the author of the article.

Next Copy Deadline: 5 Jan 2021

Peter Gamble 1927 - 2020

Naturalists across the county will be saddened to learn of the death, on 21 September, of long-standing member Peter Gamble (photo on front cover).

Peter Horace Gamble was born in Quorn on 20 March 1927 and remained there for the rest of his life. He worked initially as a bricklayer and built his own house in Meeting Street. Between 1961 and 1987 he was employed as a technician at Loughborough Technical College.

Peter was very well known among local naturalists and was widely acknowledged as the best "all-rounder" of his generation. He was a skilled ornithologist and was deeply involved with the LROS from the 1940s. He published articles in the Annual Report on Buddon Wood in 1957 and on the impact of severe winter of 1962-3. Peter and myself collaborated with Mike Webster and others on the *Birds of Charnwood* project in the 1990s and his knowledge of songs, calls, behaviour and local sites was invaluable.

Peter was a first class botanist and one of the principal contributors to the *Flora of Leicestershire*, published in 1988. Peter taught me a lot about plant ID and I recall an expedition down Flesh Hovel Lane where he showed me an abundance of an elusive little plant called Mousetail. Peter and his wife Margaret kindly invited me to join them on a natural history holiday to Poland in 1994, where I realised that Peter's encyclopedic knowledge extended to Eastern European flora and fauna too!

From the 1960s Peter travelled around Leics with a moth trap and generator, in the company of Don Tozer then later, Jack Ward. Their records are, no doubt, some of the earliest in the county for many species. Peter was able to identify insects from other groups as well - his interests were wide indeed. He was patient with beginners and generous with his time.

One of Peter's greatest achievements was the setting up of Loughborough Naturalists' Club in 1960. Peter became President and up to about a year ago was still making valuable observations on butterflies and birds, sending in the records for the club's journal *Heritage*.

In recent years, much of Peter's declining energy was devoted to looking after Margaret. Peter was diagnosed with a serious health problem himself a few months ago: so both of them ended up in the same care home. Our sympathies go to Margaret, his daughter Jane and son Ian.

Editor

Saltmarsh Plume Moth new to Leicestershire

From Monday 10 August, until Wednesday 12 August, the East Midlands basked in some wonderful summer sunshine. Daytime temperatures soared to well over 30° C. The night of 12 August was exceptionally humid and sultry and the night-time low temperature in our Queniborough garden (SK6412) was 17.9° C. As I sorted through the contents of my moth traps, next morning, I suddenly found myself looking at a plume moth (Pterophoridae) with a most unusual posture: its wings were held forward in a broad Y shape, as shown above.

Incredibly, a little further down inside the box was a second, very similar, specimen. This was slightly darker and more worn, but it adopted the same unusual pose. A quick check of the Pterophoridae illustrations in *The Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Sterling and Parsons (2012) suggested two possible candidates: Saltmarsh Plume or Cliff Plume. Both species are coastal and used Sea Lavender or Rock Sea Lavender as food plants. It seemed unlikely that either would be found in a moth trap almost fifty miles from a coast of any description.

I consulted Adrian Russell and he agreed to come round immediately to examine the specimens for himself. In the meantime, I concentrated on obtaining some photographs of both moths. I used image stacking techniques to ensure that I had enough depth of field to cover the entire structure of the wings, legs and bodies. I also tried to get a low angle shot to show the dramatic pose that they both seemed to use when relaxed as shown by the second specimen, below.

When Adrian arrived I opened the patio doors and he was able to have a close look at both specimens. He had had some experience of the genus some years ago and he turned and said to me "Well, what else can they be?" He had used some of the intervening time to consult some references, including Colin Hart's authoritative book *British Plume Moths*. The situation was even more complicated than we had first assumed. A third species, Tamarisk Plume *Agdistis tamaricis* had been recorded from Jersey in 2007 by Mark Hammond, the County Lepidoptera Recorder for Northants. So there were three, not two, candidates in the frame: Saltmarsh Plume, Cliff Plume and Tamarisk Plume. Saltmarsh Plume *Agdistis bennetii* was the favourite because Cliff Plume has a very south westerly distribution and Tamarisk Plume has never been recorded on mainland Britain. No *Agdistis* species has ever been recorded in VC55, so we were looking at two specimens from an entirely new genus for the county!

With the specimens now secure and photographic documentation obtained, Adrian took the moths home and began the process of precise identification. He rang me later to say that he was pretty sure that both moths were *Agdistis bennetii*, but that he wanted to make further checks to be absolutely certain. Probably the only person in the British Isles familiar with all three *Agdistis* species is Mark Hammond: he was the man who had found the larvae of Tamarisk Plume on Jersey in 2007 and had reared them through to adult moths. Adrian drove down to Mark's home next morning to let him see the moths and obtain his opinion. Mark agreed with Adrian's identification. He thought that our specimens were Saltmarsh Plume *Agdistis bennetii*. Adrian later emailed the information and the images of the moths to Colin Hart, the national authority on the group. The answer received was definitive: *Agdistis bennetii* without a doubt. His book provided further supporting evidence: "on warm nights, especially in August, this species is prone to wander and may turn up many miles from the sea".

So there we have it. The specimens were set, so as to allow proper identification and they will go into the Leicestershire Lepidoptera reference collection.

A new species belonging to a new genus has been added to the moth fauna of VC55. How and why two individuals wandered almost 50 miles inland to arrive in the same trap on the same evening is anyone's guess.

John Tinning

Sugaring for moths

Sugaring for moths was invented by nineteenth century entomologists and became a very popular technique amongst collectors of the day. As a child in the 1960s I knew it as treacling, but knew nothing of its origins or why it was also called sugaring. However, an excellent description of its development is given by Wilkinson (1966), and its practice is given by Bartsch (1912). As these papers are freely available to download, it is not necessary to repeat their contents here. Sugaring provides a bait that stimulates natural foraging behaviour of moths, and in this regard it is very different to the modern light traps that have largely superseded the technique. This has happened for the simple reason that light traps are more convenient and effective than sugaring. However, the two methods attract different species and some, such as the Copper and Red Underwings, are far more frequent at sugar than in light traps, so there are good reasons for the modern entomologist to continue using this traditional method.

There are many recipes for sugar to be found in books and on the internet, but my own preference is for a thinner mix that can be applied with a small garden spray to trees, fence posts, and dried flower heads, as shown in Fig. 1 as I do not get too sticky in the process. It seems to me that the old books are correct when they say that wet nights are best for sugaring, and even though you might expect the rain to wash away the sugar, this does not seem to happen. Moonlight does seem to put moths off though, so cloudy, warm, wet nights are the best to try, especially in sheltered places away from the wind.

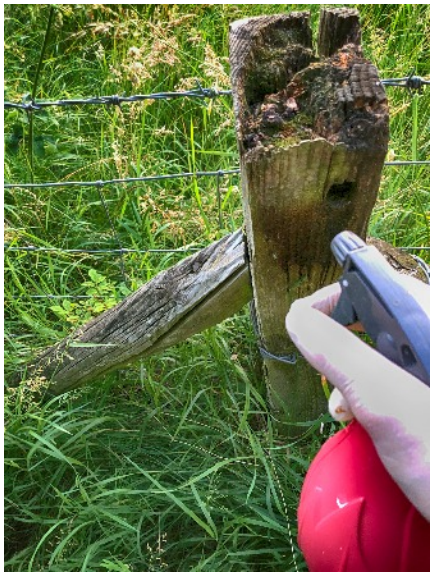

Fig. 1. Using a garden spray to apply sugar.

The sugar patches need to be laid at sunset, and the first moths will attend as it grows dark, with most appearing in the first few hours. While walking around with a headlamp at night one encounters many moths behaving naturally, visiting flowers and generally flying purposefully about their business, presenting a very different aspect to the frenetic activity seen around a light trap. The photographs of Angle Shades, Snout and Square-spot Rustic (Figs 2-4) show moths feeding on sugar, illustrating the photographic potential as the small droplets arising from the spray make for natural looking photographs as the moths drink from them.

While a few patches of sugar will work in gardens, and on a good night give some fun results, it is definitely best when used on a larger scale. When sugaring in the countryside, I would aim for 70-100 patches using around 0.3 litre of sugar and laying them just before sunset. As already mentioned, warm, cloudy, damp nights are best, and as most moths attend in the first few hours, I usually pack up before midnight.

As a final safety note, take care when moving around at night, and make sure that you have permission to visit your chosen location as you are likely to attract attention. Personally, I like to walk my locations during the day checking for hazards, and when I visit them at night, always make sure that someone knows where I am and when I get back home.

Fig. 2. Angle Shades

Fig. 3. Snout

Fig. 4. Square-spot Rustic

Moth Sugar Recipe

- Makes about 1.75 litre.
- 500 g muscovado sugar. (Rich, unrefined brown cane sugar).
- 500 g black treacle.
- 0.50 litre ale.
- 0.75 litre cheap red wine. Mulled wine is often cheaply available and works well.
- A little rum.

Warm the black treacle tin in hot water so it can be easily emptied into a large saucepan. Add the sugar, then apply gentle heat and add the wine and the ale. Stir the whole mixture until it is a very runny liquid with no lumps. Keep stirring and heating until the mixture just starts to boil. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. The aroma will fully develop over several days and adding some rum before use adds something extra that the moths seem to like.

References

Wilkinson, R. S. 1966. The Invention of "Sugaring" for Moths in Nineteeth Century. *The Michigan Entomologist*, **1**(1):10. URL https://scholar.valpo.edu/tgle/vol1/iss1/1.

Bartsch, R. C. B. 1912. "Sugaring" in the Autumn. *Psyche* (New York), **19**(6): 195–199. ISSN 16877438. doi: 10.1155/1912/70954.

Paul J. Palmer

Can you help in tracing the antecedents of *Andricus infectorius*?

The occurrence of, hitherto, unrecorded galls caused by the gall wasp *Andricus infectorius* at Charnwood Lodge (SK467153) and Ulverscroft Nature Reserve (SK490124) was reported in *LES Newsletter* No **62** (2020, p10) under the heading *Andricus infectorius (Hartig 1843): a new gall causer visits an old friend*. This report also indicated that these galls had also been found in Devon and Cornwall. Here I report a further find on a mature tree adjacent to Fludes Lane in Oadby (SK631001). I know of no other record of this gall in the UK. The known distribution of the causative gall wasp in Britain is, therefore, odd perhaps suggesting that the observed sites may represent the remnants of refuges of this species rather than a progressive migration of a recently introduced alien gall causer from a single or limited number of access points. The distribution of *A. infectorius* is decidedly different from that of other similar gall causers such as *Andricus aries*, *A. gemmeus* and *A. grossulariae* that have been introduced to Britain recently.

It is known that large quantities of the galls of *A. infectorius* and related species were imported from the Middle East as sources of tannins well into the 19th century. The imported galls were collected from a variety of countries and often given commercial names such as "galle d'Alep", "galle du Levant"," galle d'Istrie", "noix de galle". Swanton (1912) reported that over 800 tons of "Aleppo galls" were imported annually into Britain even as late as 1861. They may well have been galls of more than one species but almost certainly included galls caused by wasps of what is currently named as *A. infectorius*. Systematic names in this area are a nightmare. For example, the *A. infectorius* section of *Fauna Europaea* cites 69 synonyms. Through DNA analysis, we know that *A. infectorius* is a distinct species and is related to *A. kollari* (marble gall) and *A. lignicola* (cola nut gall). There is a possibility, therefore, that the galls that have been reported recently are simply remnants of "escapee" populations brought in and released by accident or design through trade almost two centuries ago and have, in the interim, simply been missed.

It would be of interest to know the antecedents of this new gall. Please help this endeavour by looking out for and reporting these galls. The period September - December is critical. The galls are deciduous and fall from the tree by about New Year. The place to look is on the small adventitious shoots arising from the bole of *Quercus robur*. Initially, the galls are green but turn reddish brown as they mature. When young, they look like small misshapen marble galls with whitish warts. The surface of mature galls may be sticky and the internal gall is hard. Photographs were published in *LES Newsletter* **62** earlier this year.

If you find any, please email me (see below) with a location and, if possible, include a photograph. Also record it in your favoured recording scheme.

Reference

Swanton, E.W. 1912. *British Plant Galls*. *A Classified Textbook of Cecidology*. Methuen

Chris Leach
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Brilliant Beetles, Fantastic Flies and Marvellous Moths

January and February

Occasional sunny days brought out Pine Ladybird *Exochomus quadripustulatus*, Gorse Shieldbug *Piezodorus lituratus*, and a Common Green Shieldbug *Palomena prasina* - its dark bronze winter 'camouflage' conspicuous against the greenery. Visitors to the moth-trap in our Cropston garden were as drab as expected for the time of year.

March

Signs of impending spring included visits by assorted Dipterans - the Dark-edged Bee Fly *Bombylius major* and numerous *Eudasyphora cyanella* which would have overwintered as adults. Examination of an old Red Mason Bee *Osmia bicornis* nesting tube revealed five small but distinctive beetles, *Ptinus sexpunctatus*, a species associated with Hymenoptera. Their natural habitat is under decaying bark in areas with broadleaved trees. Adults consume detritus and dead insects, and possibly also bee larvae and pupae, whilst the beetle larvae eat pollen intended for the developing bee.

April

A Malachite Beetle, *Anthocomus fasciatus*, was spotted in the garden on several occasions. At only 3 mm long and with flashes of bright red on the black elytra and dark metallic green pronotum, it can be easily identified under good lighting conditions. This is a local species with a distribution throughout parts of southern and central England, but is possibly under-recorded due to its size. Adults can be found on spring flowers where they feed on pollen and predate smaller insects and mites.

A Chamomile Shark moth *Cucullia chamomillae* made its inaugural appearance in the garden light-trap.

May

A single Tanbark Borer beetle *Phymatodes testaceus* found in the house heralded a steady stream of variously coloured individuals emerging from a log basket, with nine being counted on one day. Two weeks and twenty beetles later, the last resident was relocated to an outdoor wood pile and from then on a further nineteen observations were made. The larvae develop under the bark of standing dead timber or logs with oak being the principal host.

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* at Ketton Quarry NR.

Two trips to Dimminsdale NR brought sightings of the Ramsons Hoverfly *Portevinia maculata*. The larvae develop in the bulbs and stem bases of Ramsons *Allium ursinum* where they overwinter. From May to June adults can be seen flitting among swathes of the flowering plant.

At the end of the month, the large and spectacular Puss Moth *Cerura vinula* appeared in our light trap. The larvae feed on poplars *Populus* and willows *Salix*, the latter being abundant along the nearby Rothley Brook.

June

Ketton Quarry NR never fails to deliver, and trips are hotly anticipated - partly because there's an excellent roadside café on the way. I was pleased to spot a Wood Vase Hoverfly *Myolepta dubia* (confirmed by Brian Wetton), which is classed as Nationally Scarce and has a scattered distribution across the southern and eastern counties of England. It may be found in habitats with old trees where the larvae develop in water-filled rot holes. *Variimorda villosa* beetles were also observed on two occasions and confirmed by Graham Finch as possible fourth and fifth VC55 records. This species can be found on flowers in a range of wooded habitats and can perform a somersault as a means of escaping a potential predator. It is widespread but local across southern and central England.

More than fifty Marbled White butterflies *Melanargia galathea* were observed on one day at Ketton, and well over a hundred Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* at Bloody Oaks Quarry NR.

Towards the end of the month two fascinating beetle species visited our garden light-trap and were subsequently confirmed by Graham Finch: *Pseudocistela ceramboides* (Tenebrionidae) is

considered a local species and occurs in broadleaved woodland and wooded pasture, showing a preference for oak. This individual was accompanied by two *Phloiotrya vaudoueri* (Melandryidae) which were notable for their distinctive shape and posture with the head tucked below the pronotum. Both species live and breed in decaying wood habitats and have scattered populations in southern and central Britain.

July

Whilst in the garden a Houseleek Hoverfly *Cheilosia caerulescens* landed on my hand. This record was later confirmed by Brian Wetton and Roger Morris (Hoverfly Recording Scheme). It is widespread in continental Europe and presumed to have been accidentally imported with garden plants. First recorded in Surrey in 2006 it has extended its range across southern England and into the Midlands. The larvae mine the leaves of the non-native Houseleek *Sempervivum* sp.).

Hoverfly *Cheilosia caerulescens* in a Cropston garden.

An invitation to record on private land in the Ulverscroft area led to my first encounter with a Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii*. This omnivorous species is rapidly expanding north and west from its original stronghold in the coastal areas of southern and eastern England, thought to be due to its ability to exploit the coarse vegetation on road verges and waste ground. A separate visit to the same site yielded my second record of the robust Bog Hoverfly *Sericomyia silentis* which favours boggy and peaty habitats. Its distribution range includes much of the UK including Scotland and Wales.

August

A distinctive grey fly with a yellow face and 'rusty' knees was found in the garden light-trap and consigned to the freezer. This was confirmed by Dr Ian McLean

Bog Hoverfly *Sericomyia silentis* - Ulverscroft area.

A Scathophagid fly *Hydromyza livens* in a Cropston garden.

(Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme) as a male *Hydromyza livens* (Scathophagidae). Adults can be found on the leaves of Yellow Water Lily *Nuphar* sp. which are mined by the larvae, causing easily visible corridors that take a long and winding route. Ray Morris confirmed that there is one other VC55 record dating from 1993. The NBN database shows only 45 records ranging from the south coast to Sunderland but it is likely that this species is under-recorded, as Yellow Water Lily is relatively common and widespread.

Notable micro-moths included a Leek Moth *Acrolepiopsis assectella* confirmed by Mark Skevington. It is an invasive pest species and abundant and troublesome throughout continental Europe, as the larvae feed on cultivated *Allium* species, primarily leek and onion but also garlic and chives. As a somewhat scarce and local species within the UK there is currently little cause for concern. A Waste Grass-

veneer *Pediasia contaminella* was confirmed by Adrian Russell. This member of the Crambidae family has a characteristic resting posture with head down and abdomen raised. It is a rather local species that prefers dry, grassy habitats where the larvae develop in a silken tube.

An unduly concerned neighbour rang to warn of a wasps' nest in the eaves of our house, which helped to explain the two *Metoecus paradoxus* beetles that had just landed in our lounge. This species is a parasite of various social nesting wasp species, including *Vespula vulgaris* and *V. germanica*, and has a complex lifecycle. In short, beetle eggs are laid in crevices in dry wood in late summer or autumn and the following spring the wood is visited by wasps collecting fibres for nest-building. Newly emerged beetle larvae cling to the wasp and are transported back to the nest where they search for a brood cell with a half-grown wasp larvae.

Metoecus paradoxus beetle (Ripiphoridae) in a Cropston garden.

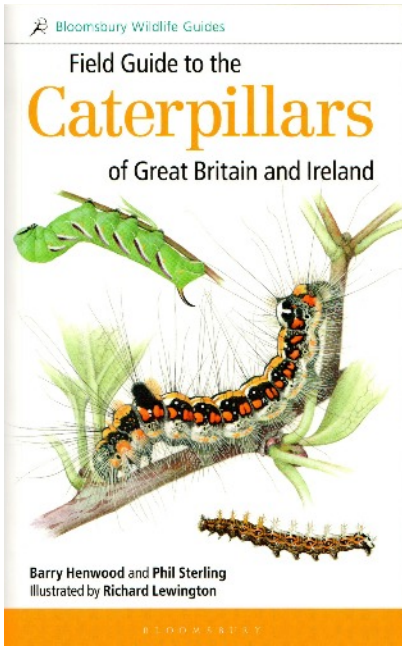
The beetle parasitises the wasp larva and develops inside its host before completely consuming it and pupating inside the brood cell.

Autumn ...

The mellow months of autumn should be interesting too, and I look forward to watching hoverflies feasting on our late-flowering ivy and checking for signs of life in our fire-side logs. Our wasps' nest will, of course, remain untouched.

Kate Nightingale

Book review - Caterpillars



This volume describes the last instar larvae of 832 species of butterfly and macro-moth. The 54-page introduction covers topics including rearing techniques, how to find larvae and defence mechanisms. Useful resources are then listed: books, web sites, recording schemes and societies.

The majority of pages are devoted to the description of larvae, in systematic order. There is no identification key, but typical larvae in each family are illustrated in the at-a-glance guide. Each family starts with a half-page summary of the life history and appearance of larvae. For each species, the text gives both checklist numbers in common use, status, field characters, habitats, foodplants and field notes. Similar species are mentioned (but not cross-referenced). Where feeding signs are helpful, such as the Lunar Hornet Moth, a small photo is included. The caterpillar illustrations are paintings, gathered into the centre of the book (cross-referenced in both directions). The artist Richard Lewington is, in my opinion, the best insect illustrator in the business (I always go to admire his work at the Rutland Water Bird Fair) - but I do think many of these illustrations are too small to see the detail. Indeed the descriptive text is a strain on my ageing eyes! These are my only criticisms of what is otherwise a superb book.

The Appendix includes a list of plants and what feeds on them, also tables of differences between look-alikes, such as the Carpets.

Book Details

Henwood, B., Sterling, P. & Lewington, R. 2020. A *Field Guide to the Caterpillars of Great Britain and Ireland*. Bloomsbury. ISBN 978-4729-3356-0. 448 pages, 64 plates with 900+ colour illustrations; 199 colour photos, 828 colour distribution maps. Paperback £34.99 from NHBS (https://www.nhbs.com/)

Steve Woodward

A hot night at Charnwood Lodge

On 11 August I joined two others to do some moth trapping at Charnwood Lodge NR (with permission from LRWT and following their new guidance). Much that we would have loved to have re-found a Devon Carpet, our other records reflected our location.

A Cerambycid beetle *Arhopalus rusticus*

Antler Moth - 100 recorded; True Lover's Knot: a Bilberry and Heather feeder; Purple Bar: a bedstraw feeder; and a Blue-bordered Carpet. One site rarity was a Leopard Moth, only the third site record, last seen in 2008.

Mothing in 25 degree heat was a new experience but it caused the considerable presence of flies, craneflies, caddis and beetles.

One of the Caddis caught our attention and was retained for further examination by Ray Morris. It was determined as *Arthripsodes bilineatus*, only the ninth record in VC55 (see below).

We also had a rarely-recorded Beetle *Arhopalus rusticus*. This large 25 mm beetle is a pine feeder but is largely nocturnal which reflects Graham Finch's comment that most records are of those that come to light.

So quite a night.

True- Lover's Knot *Lycophotia porphyrea*

Purple Bar *Cosmorhoe ocellata*

Blue-bordered Carpet *Plemyria rubiginata*

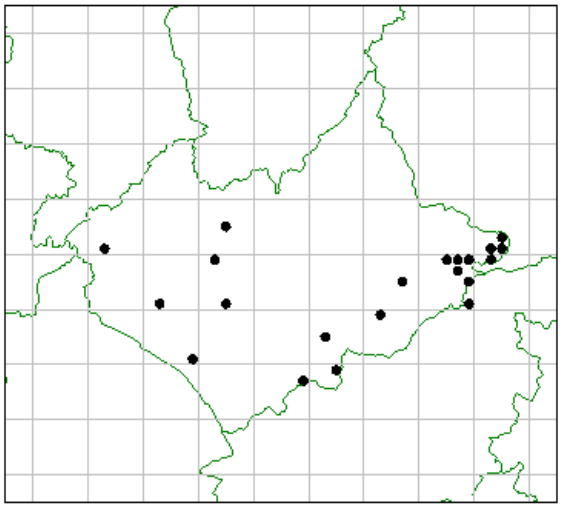
Margaret McLoughlin

Two similar caddis flies easily separated

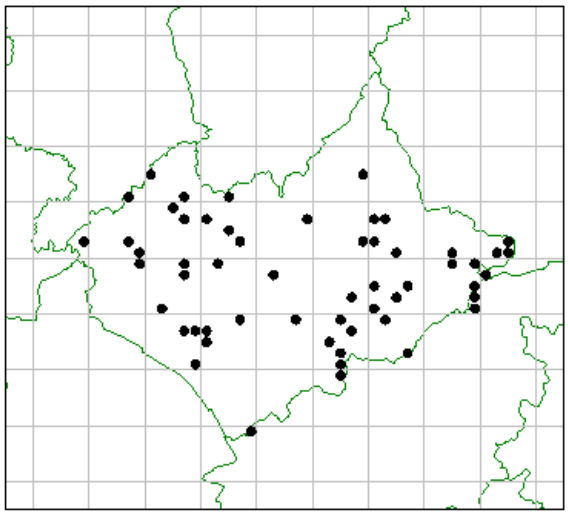
Athripsodes bilineatus is a leptocerid caddisfly that is similar to the black *interjectus* form of *Athripsodes albifrons*. Genital examination of both male and females can easily separate the two taxa. However, an easy visual aid is the presence of white hairs on the frons and base of the antennae of *A. albifrons* whilst *A. bilineatus* is totally black. Possibly due to this subtle visual difference some records of *A. albifrons* are actually of *A. bilineatus* or perhaps *vice versa*. Both taxa are considered widespread in Britain although *A. albifrons* seems to be more frequently recorded. In VC55 larval records of both show a wide distribution (data ex Environment Agency via Ian Wallace, National Trichoptera Recorder) with *A. bilineatus* being more frequently found.

Athripsodes bilineatus, Charnwood Lodge, August 2020. Photo: Margaret McLoughlin.

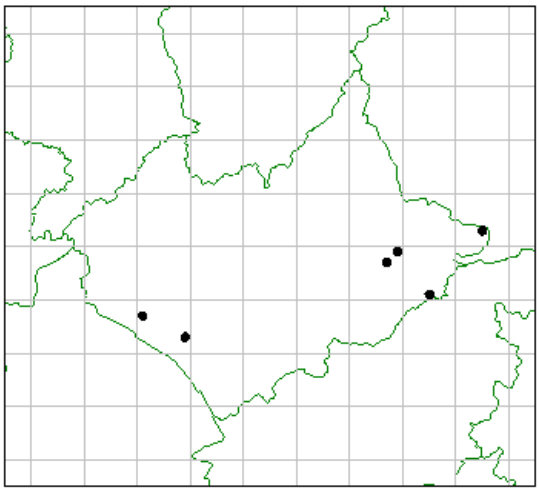
Athripsodes albifrons larvae



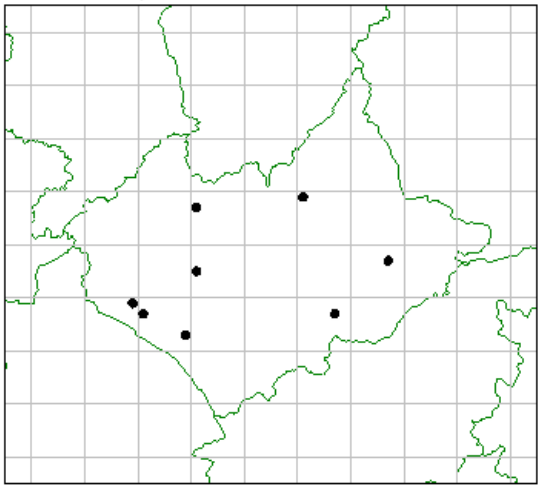
Athripsodes bilineatus larvae



Athripsodes albifrons adults



Athripsodes bilineatus adults



Records of the adults show the opposite picture. *A. albifrons* has been recorded on eight occasions to date compared with the 80 for *A. bilineatus*; however, it should be noted that 71 of these latter were from the malaise trap surveys at the Wood Brook, Nanpantan during the 1980s. It is possible that, whilst adults of both taxa come to light, the majority may be day-fliers although this remains to be confirmed.

Ray Morris

Ethyl Acetate

I recently needed some more ethyl acetate and decided to try a new supplier that I found on the internet: APC Pure www.apcpure.com. Online ordering was simple and straightforward and the goods arrived promptly. I purchased 1 litre for £11.18 (including VAT & carriage) which, on the same basis, compares favourably with other, more obvious suppliers: Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies £14.75 for 250 ml and Watkins & Doncaster £9.54 for 100 ml.

P.S. I have no pecuniary interest in this company!

Adrian Russell

Wigston and Broughton Astley moths compared

Looking back on 29 years of trapping with my dad in Wigston we've had some great records, such as: Blue-bordered Carpet *Plemyria rubiginata* (illustrated on p. 9), The Gem *Nycterosea obstipata*, Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria*, Tawny Pinion *Lithophane semibrunnea*, Merveille du Jour *Griposia aprilina*, Red-necked Footman *Atolmis rubricollis*, Garden Dart *Euxoa nigricans*, Pine Beauty *Panolis flammea*, Privet Hawk-moth *Sphinx ligustri* and a second national record: the micro *Earias vittella*. Not to mention some species that we caught in the early 1990s which have now severely declined, like the Lackey *Malacosoma neustria*.

Having been in my new home in Broughton Astley for over a year now, one of the main differences in the area compared to Wigston is how wet it gets. Even after a small shower the ground seems to remain damp for a long period of time.

Habitat wise, we have a stream that runs through the village similar to Cosby which I believe is a tributary of the river Soar. There are quite a lot of fields and farmland around us containing various crops, but also of which the landowners have kept some of the boundaries to incorporate many wild flowers, nettles, thistles and brambles. We also have sites like Stoney Cove, Fosse Meadows and Croft Quarry not too far away. There appears to be a healthy population of Alder trees in the area as well.

Fig. 1. Cypress Pug *Eupithecia phoeniceata*

I managed to start trapping in March but it wasn't until April when I recorded a species completely new to me – Flame Carpet *Xanthorhoe designata* (Fig. 2). This was followed by some other interesting species over the coming months including Brown Rustic *Rusina ferruginea* (a moth rarely caught in Wigston but seems to be commoner in Broughton Astley), May & July Highflyer *Hydriomena impluviata* & *furcata* (Fig. 3, May being a new one to me), Oak Hook-tip *Watsonalla binaria*, Least Carpet *Idaea rusticata* (Fig. 4) and the micro *Stathmopoda pedella* (Fig. 5), again, all new to me with the latter not even looking like a moth!

There also seems to have been an increase in Buff Tip *Phalera bucephala*, Magpie *Abraxas grossulariata* and Ruby Tiger *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* this year. The highlight of the year so far was a beautifully pristine Cypress Pug *Eupithecia phoeniceata*, (Fig. 1) only the second record for VC55! Just recently I've caught a lovely Frosted Orange *Gortyna flavago*, again, one that rarely turned up in Wigston.

Fig. 2. Flame Carpet *Xanthorhoe designata*

Fig. 3. July Highflyer *Hydriomena*

Fig. 4. Least Carpet *Idaea rusticata*

Fig. 5. The micro-moth *Stathmopoda pedella*

I look forward to seeing what other species this area brings.

Adam Poole

Ferrari's Photo Gallery

White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lucorum* agg.

Swallow-tailed Moth *Ourapteryx sambucaria* had a very good year in my Barrow upon Soar garden: one night I had 14 in the moth trap.

Buff-tip Moth *Phalera bucephala*.

Brimstone Butterflies *Gonepteryx rhamni* are from this year's second generation.

Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS

Some highlights of 2020

Cranefly *Ctenophora pectinicornis* - infrequent in VC55, this record confirmed by John Kramer as the second for Charnwood Lodge NR, found on 25 May on woodland edge. The current conservation status of this Cranefly is Nationally Scarce A. It favours old broadleaved woodlands, containing dead or diseased wood in which the larva develops.

The weevil *Cionus tuberculosus* is one of three *Cionus* species currently being recorded on Figwort in VC55 and all likely to be called the Figwort Beetle - beware of common names! The more common *Cionus scrophulariae* (72 records) has a pale head and thorax, while the *C. tuberculosus* (17 records) has orange tarsi and orange-yellow scales at the side of the pronotum, which are diagnostic.

Platystomas albinus - Classed as Nationally Scarce B. This is a Fungus Weevil (Anthribidae), the larvae of which live in decaying wood stumps or fallen branches of a range of deciduous trees, probably feeding on the mycelia in the rotting wood. They are cryptic, looking like bird droppings. The first record in VC55 was in 2011 at Ketton Quarry, since when there have been four more records in Ketton Quarry and one in Cribb's Meadow (2015). This specimen - a female - was found in June on a fallen limb of Horse-chestnut near Owston Woods, making it the furthest west record in VC55 - is it extending its range or has it been under-recorded elsewhere in VC55?

Some of the lovely *Donacia versicolorae* beetles, that live on the surface of Colony Reservoir, sitting on and eating the pondweed *Potamogeton* leaves (see front cover). Not a frequent beetle in VC55 - Graham Finch's 2019 *Checklist* shows eight records, the last in 1992. I have now seen a total of seven individuals at one time. I like the description (on www.coleptera.org) of the tiny pin-prick reflections of light on the elytra, giving the appearance of gold speckles, which does indeed happen in the sunlight. The background body colouration can vary in darkness, resulting in individuals appearing variously greenish or bronzy. The damage to the pondweed leaves is very evident now at Colony Reservoir, so there seems to be a thriving colony of these beetles too.

Ann Smith

2020 sucks - one man and his leaf blower

Fig. 1: Black and Decker GWC3600L20-GB 36V Lithium-Ion Blower.

Inspired by the exploits of Graham Finch and others who use vacuum samplers, I bought one at the end of January. In my case this was a Black and Decker GWC3600L20-GB 36V Lithium-Ion Blower Vacuum (Fig. 1), which I would highly recommend. Obviously, 2020 has not worked out the way any of us planned, and I would like to claim my purchase was due to pre-pandemic prescience. In reality the timing was just good luck as my new noisy orange friend has been a constant companion during lockdown. A few tentative trial runs during February revealed what I had hoped - even in February floods a vacuum sampler produces far more entomological nuggets than months of conventional sampling methods.

I had spiders in mind when I acquired the Black and Decker, and lots of lovely Linyphiidae are now filed away awaiting my attention - they are my future lockdown insurance policy. It was not long before I got sucked in to a project organized by British Arachnological Society, members which became known as the Lockdown Sucks Challenge. Seven arachnologists from Cornwall to Scotland vacuum sampled their garden lawns for a timed 120 seconds once a week. A total of 69 species of spider in 14 families were recorded in the nine week period of the study (*Lockdown Sucks. An enforced survey of garden lawns* - in press).

Like all sampling methods with the exception of pheromone lures, vacuum samplers are not taxon specific. I was delighted to find that the seemingly violent process of being sucked into a nylon strainer bag not only produced a wide range of specimens from springtails to crickets, but also that in almost all cases these were miraculously undamaged. Late winter samples produced plenty of Lygaeid ground bugs, which I habitually record when sifting leaf litter for spiders and springtails. As the weather warmed up the diversity of Hemiptera expanded dramatically, and for the past few months I have been seriously distracted by Mirid bugs and leafhoppers.


Fig. 2: Mirid bug *Stenodema holsata*.

A brief lockdown interregnum allowed a trip to Owston, which produced several specimens of the Mirid Bug *Stenodema holsata*, new to VC55 (Fig. 2). Even more surprising were specimens of Apple Brown Bug *Atractotomus mali*, from a Leicester allotment in June when Leicester was locked down again. There is only one previous record of this species from VC55, taken at Ketton in 1999. Why a bug which feeds on Apple and Hawthorn but which also has carnivorous tendencies and a cosmopolitan distribution has not been recorded more frequently is a mystery to me. After lockdown, I was off to Lyddington Meadow like a cork out of a bottle on my annual pilgrimage to look for Wasp Spiders *Argiope bruennichi*. Sadly the site had been mown flat in July before I was able to get there, but the banks of the Welland produced a specimen of *Anoscopus serratulae* - new to VC55 (Fig. 3). A productive trip to Bardon Hill in August to


Fig. 3: Leafhopper *Anoscopus serratulae*.

vacuum the heather produced a specimen of *Orthotylus ericetorum*, which is apparently new to VC55 (Fig. 4), and *Anaceratagallia venosa* - one possible record from Mountsorrel in 2011.

Fig. 4: Mirid bug *Orthotylus*

The vacuum sampler has been worth its weight in gold. Although it is far less noisy, heavy and smelly than the original two-stroke D-Vacs, it is a shame it is not as silent in operation as a sweep net, but you cannot have everything. Two or three one minute samples from likely looking patches produces more material than I can identify and record in a week. My freezer runneth over.

Alan Cann
alan.cann@gmail.com

Longhorn beetle *Paracorymbia fulva* at Sapcote

An area of land in Sapcote (SP493935) which was set aside after the development of a new housing estate has produced a bumper crop of Wild Carrot, which in turn is providing a refuge for the uncommon longhorn beetle *Paracorymbia fulva* (sometimes known as the Tawny Longhorn Beetle). It was noted on several occasions between the 14 and 28 July 2020. On one visit I noted nine individuals so it seems to be thriving in this area.

Graham Calow

Editorial

The sad news of Peter Gamble's death arrived as the Newsletter was nearly finished, so the Editorial has been displaced to the back of this edition. Peter will be greatly missed, particularly by those of us in Loughborough Naturalists' Club - the words "end of an era" come to mind.

The Covid-19 pandemic has suppressed or restricted many activities, fortunately insect-hunting was not outlawed and many members seem to have been busier than usual. We are treated to several wide-ranging and well-illustrated accounts of what they have found. The continuing enthusiasm for moth recording has again turned up a new vice-county record, a species that ought to be in a saltmarsh (p. 3). The fact that two individuals turned up in John Tinning's trap makes me wonder if they have emerged from a garden plant or floral display involving *Limonium*. Yet another Lepidoptera book has been published, this time on caterpillars (reviewed on p. 8).

Garden blowers have proliferated in the last few years, a triumph of marketing over common sense (we managed with a simple brush previously) - but set the device into reverse and it becomes genuinely useful (p. 14). Cookery is only occasionally covered in the Newsletter (woodlouse sauce was once mentioned), but in this edition celebrity chef Paul Palmer recommends a recipe (p. 4), along with hints on how best to present it to the diners without getting into a sticky mess.

Thank you to all contributors.

Steve Woodward

Looking for help?

The following are willing to act as an initial point of contact for providing advice and information to members.

Arachnids (Mites & Ticks):- Ivan Pedley, 48 Woodlands Drive, Groby, Leicester LE6 0BQ. 0116 287 6886. ivan.pedley@gmail.com

Arachnids (Opiliones, Harvestmen): - Ray Morris, see page 2.

Arachnids (Spiders):- Paul Palmer palmerpjp@gmail.com.

Arachnids (Pseudoscorpions):- Ed Darby 01509 569670 lboro.ecols@ntlworld.com

Biological Recording:- Sue Timms, Leics & Rutland Environmental Records Centre; Room 400, County Hall, Glenfield LE3 8RA. 0116 3054108 Sue.timms@leics.gov.uk

Chilopoda:- Helen Ikin, 237 Forest Road, Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves, Leics LE12 8TZ. 01509 890102. helen.canids@btinternet.com

Coleoptera:- Graham Finch, 14 Thorndale, Ibstock, Leics. LE67 6JT: finchgraham1@gmail.com

Collembola: Alan Cann, 17 Overdale Road, Leicester LE2 3YJ. alan.cann@gmail.com Online identification guides: https://collembolla.blogspot.com/p/identification-guides.html

Diplopoda:- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Diptera (Some families):- Ray Morris (see page 2).

Diptera (Nematocera - Mosquitoes, Blackflies & Craneflies):- John Kramer, 31 Ash Tree Road, Oadby, Leicester LE2 5TE. 0116 271 6499. john.kramer@btinternet.com

Hymenoptera (Symphyta - Sawflies):- Dave Nicholls, 69-71 Church Lane, Ratby, LE6 0JF. nicholls.99@btinternet.com

Hymenoptera (Bumblebees):- Maggie Frankum, see page 2.

Hymenoptera (Other aculeates - Bees, Wasps & Ants):- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Hemiptera:- Dave Budworth, see page 2.

Isopoda (Woodlice):- Helen Ikin (see Chilopoda).

Lepidoptera:- County Moth Recorder Team:- VC55CMR@gmail.com

Mecoptera, Neuroptera, Plecoptera :- Steve Woodward, see page 2.

Mollusca: - Dave Nicholls (see Hymenoptera (Symphyta)).

Odonata:- Ian Merrill i.merrill@btopenworld.com

Orthoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda.

Plant Galls:- Maggie Frankum, see page 2.

Psocoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda.

Thysanoptera: - Ivan Pedley, see Arachnids - Mites.

Trichoptera (adults):- Ray Morris, see page 2.

Indoor Meetings Programme

The current Covid-19 situation is making life difficult for many. The latest Government instructions on numbers that can meet together has resulted in meetings of groups, such as the LES, being impossible to be held. In addition, the room we use at Kirby Muxloe Free Church would not allow social distancing even if there was no limit on the number that can meet (currently six). Accordingly, it is with regret that the Winter programme of the LES cannot go ahead for the 2020-2021 season.

However

This does not mean that recording cannot continue - even small group recording would seem to be permissible at this time. So you are encouraged to keep an eye open for insects! Anything of interest can be passed on to members through the LES Newsletter and "Lockdown Snippets" - both are effective ways for members to be kept in contact. Don't forget that detailed reports of any survey work can also appear as part of the LES *Occasional Publications* Series.

It is also unlikely that the LES AGM will happen this year although it is intended that Committee reports will be circulated by email.

Keep in contact!

Ray Morris, LES Chair