

NEWSLETTER 60

January 2019

Full set of Backswimmers in one trough



Notonecta maculata
14.0 - 16.0 mm



Notonecta obliqua
14.0 - 16.0 mm



Notonecta viridis
13.0 - 15.0 mm



Notonecta glauca
14.0 - 16.0 mm

Photos: Tony Cook

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In October 2018 all four British species of *Notonecta* (backswimming water boatmen or backswimmers) were found in net samples taken from a grassland water trough (SP77879369), a short distance from a disused railway embankment between Slawston and Medbourne in south Leicestershire. The trough was a shallow brick and concrete construction, about 4.0 m x 1.7 m, fed by a spring, with some floating algae (*Cladophora* sp.), a water depth of about 20 cm and a fine sediment covering the bottom. Although it may not be unusual to find all four species together in more complex habitats it must be fairly rare to find them in such a simple habitat. At the time of sampling nearly all of the field ponds in the area were dry following the hot summer, so it may be that they packed together in a habitat of last resort and were not all permanent inhabitants. *Notonecta maculata* is a species often associated with concrete or brick sided pools, reservoirs, etc. and has been shown to feed most effectively in simple habitats (Giller & McNeill, 1981). It is the only species that is likely to breed in a water

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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 Sep 2019

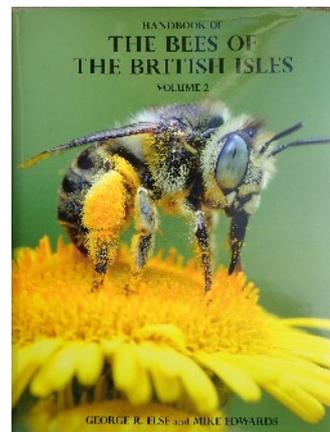
Editorial

I am running out of space to lay out articles - so I will simply thank all the contributors for their efforts and wish readers a Happy New Year.

Steve Woodward

Bee Handbook - worth the wait?

Handbook of The Bees of the British Isles was published in late 2018, in two volumes. The authors are George R. Else and Mike Edwards, publisher The Ray Society ISBN 978-0-903874-51-9, £130 from NHBS. Before Steven Falk's *Field Guide* appeared in 2015, no bee identification guide (other than Bumbles) had been published for more than a century! Accurate identification then required the use of draft keys, originating from George Else and circulated by BWARS. The *Handbook* had been in preparation for so many years that some bee enthusiasts began to doubt whether it would ever materialise - well, it has and they will not be disappointed. Identification, description, biology and distribution of all 270 British species are covered. Each substantial volume is a little larger than A4 and the combined length is 775 pages. The binding, paper and print quality are superb, as we have come to expect from the Ray Society. The *Handbook* is profusely illustrated with very clear photographs of all species. Steven Falk has contributed a detailed line drawing of a typical bee from each genus. In the keys, many of the couplets have line drawings or photos alongside, often with the critical features annotated on the photos. I know from personal experience how difficult it is to photograph shiny, black bees so I am very impressed with the results here. All the images are provided on a DVD for viewing greater detail.



It is too early to evaluate the published keys, but having worked with the drafts I know what to expect - hard work! The good illustrations will certainly make them easier to use and the detailed description of each species should confirm that the keys have given the right answer. The only defect I have noticed is the lack of an index. Worth the wait? - yes!

Steve Woodward

Water beetle and Water bug numbers fall at Priory Water Nature Reserve



Priory Water NR. Photo: Frank Clark

The lakes at Priory Water NR (near Melton Mowbray, SK7118) were sampled for water bugs and water beetles between 2009 and 2010 (see Cook & Clark, 2011 & 2012). A total of 26 species of water bug and 29 species of water beetle were recorded over the two year period among which were two species new to VC55 (*Sigara iactans* & *Rhantus grapii*). The same lakes were sampled again in 2018 to record changes that may have occurred during the intervening period. The techniques used were similar although in 2018 bottle traps were used, in addition netting, throughout the sampling period while in 2009/2010 they were only used for a few months in 2010. As abiotic and biotic conditions and the presence and abundance of species will change from year to year, it is impossible to say with any certainty that changes recorded between two periods (2009-2010 and 2018), with no intervening samples, are part of a long-term trend or the result of random variation. The weather in 2018 during much of the sampling period was exceptionally dry and hot, very different from that in 2009 & 2010, and probably influenced the results of this second survey. The dry summer resulted in a substantial draw-down which made sampling more difficult. We estimated drop in water level between spring and summer was at least 0.5 m.

Survey year	2009	2010	2018
Water beetle species	22	23	19
Water beetle individuals	314	287	121
Water bug species	23	24	16
Water bug individuals	2709	2678	218

For a comparison of results between the two periods each of the two full years covered in the first sampling period, 2009 & 2010 are treated separately and compared to the 2018 results. The species found in 2018 had all been previously recorded.

There have been a number of studies reported recently which have shown dramatic declines in insect numbers

due to a variety of factors which include habitat loss and climate change. The lakes at Priory Water appear to be in a similar state to that in 2009/2010 – but they will have undergone some successional changes in the intervening years as well those possibly due to more widespread factors. Further samples would be required over a number of years to reach any reasonable conclusions.

References

Cook A. & Clark F. (2011) Two-year Study of the Water Bugs (Hemiptera: Heteroptera) of Priory Water NR, Leicestershire. *LESOPS* 27.

Cook A. & Clark F. (2012) A study of the water beetles of Priory Water NR, Leicestershire. *LESOPS* 28.

Frank Clark & Tony Cook

Indoor Meetings Programme



Our venue is Kirby Muxloe Free Church, Main Street, Kirby Muxloe LE9 2AN SK517042. The session starts at 7:30, but most members arrive half an hour earlier for a natter, with tea, coffee and biscuits. Visitors are welcome.

Thursday 21 February 2019 – Bees and Wasps. Steve Woodward. Our Newsletter Editor will give us an insight into this complex group of insects. Steve has focused on solitary bees and wasps and with Helen Ikin they have added several new species for VC55.

Thursday 21 March 2019 – Flies - the next adventure playground. Ray Morris, our Chairman, who has taken a keen interest in the Diptera. No doubt his enthusiasm will encourage us to take 'note' of these insects.

Anona Finch