

**LEICESTERSHIRE
ENTOMOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

19

September 1997

Researching the invertebrates of VC55

***Saffron Lane spider
may be first
British record!***

On 11.x.96, whilst looking for the spider *Tegenaria saeva* on a demolished housing estate, a recently moulted female *Steatoda triangulosa* was discovered beneath a piece of hardboard. The material lay in what had once been the garden of a post-war council house on the Saffron Lane estate in Leicester (SK584002). In the late spring/early summer of 1996, these houses had been demolished as part of an urban renewal scheme.

Mike Roberts (author of the Collin "*Spiders of Britain & Northern Europe*") confirmed the identification as *Steatoda triangulosa* which, as far as we know, is the first British record for this species. The spider is a synanthropic species with a wide European distribution, being found in and around houses. This spider may be present in other large centres of population in southern Britain, so keep your eyes peeled!



Jon Daws

Next copy date: January 15th 1998

Butterflies for the New Millenium

Now in its third year, the *Butterflies for the New Millenium* project is bringing together all records of these threatened insects across the country. With quite a few county Trusts and BRCs involved, as well as Societies such as our own, the project is funded through the Vincent Wildlife Trust. As with so many projects of this kind, National Lottery money was not forthcoming (Why is that when plenty is available for ephemerals such as the Greenwich dome?)

The project is being coordinated by *Butterfly Conservation* in association with the national Biological Records Centre. Nick Gretorex-Davies is currently the man with the day-to-day job of dealing with all the records flooding in!

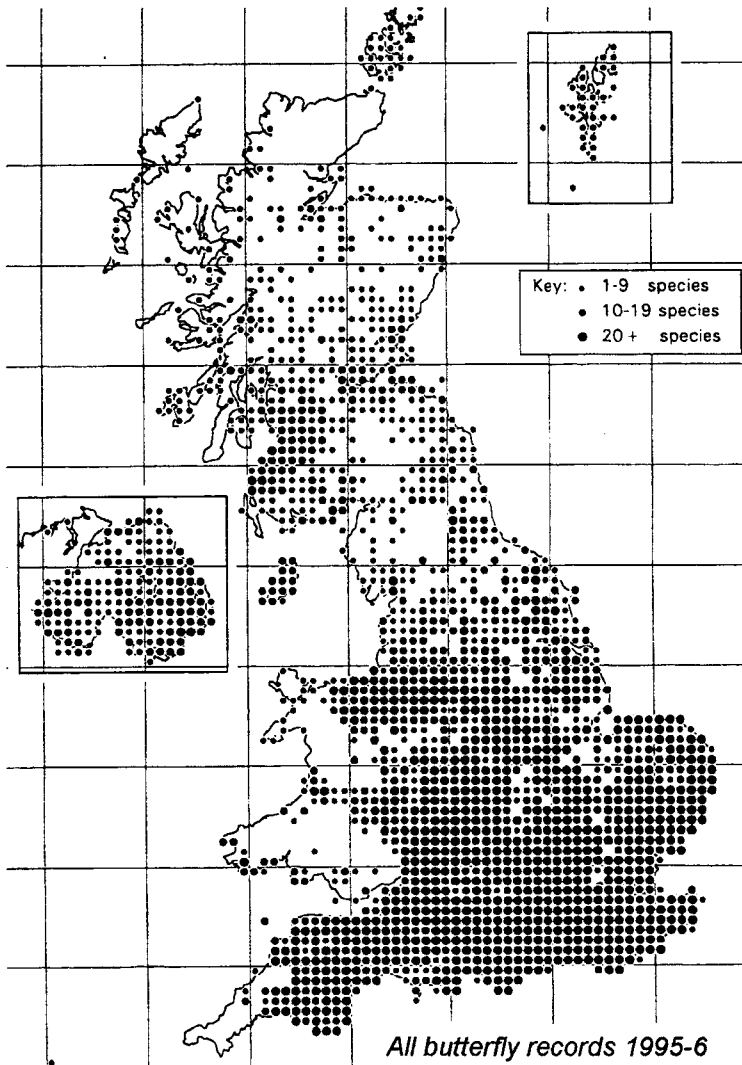
With much of the 1996 data now in, there are already over a quarter of a million butterfly

records on computer and the million mark is expected to be passed by the end of the project!

Some areas of the country are only sparsely recorded (see map) - so if you are in such areas, even just on holiday or passing through, make a note of the butterflies you see and let us have them - we will pass them on! In particular, much of Wales and the higher parts of Scotland need urgent recording.

Some interesting data on the apparent rarity of species is already emerging (see table on p3), although such conclusions, at this time, must be treated with a degree of caution.

As may be expected the Lulworth and Chequered skippers are the rarest butterflies with the Swallowtail occurring in twice as many 10km squares! Perhaps surprisingly, neither the Large and Small White is the most widespread species this honour falling to the Small Tortoiseshell.



The highly widespread distribution of the Painted Lady in 1995-6 may well reflect the unusual massive migration into the country at that time giving a strong bias over the usual state of affairs. Out of a total of 58 species recognised in the British Isles in 1995-6, 21 (36%) are known from less than one hundred 10km squares and nine from less than twenty 10km squares. A sorry plight for our butterflies!

The Wall Brown, for example, is apparently becoming quite scarce in the English Midlands without a clear explanation. What was once a garden butterfly in Oxfordshire, for instance, is now a notable sighting on the few occasions when it is recorded. In coastal sites it seems to be more stable.

In contrast, the Essex Skipper continues to spread west and is now being reliably recorded from Warwickshire and Gloucestershire although in Leicestershire it seems to more or less have come to a halt in Rutland! Remember to check the antennae tips of your "Small Skippers" for black undersides!

contd p3

Millenium butterflies contd

Of particular interest to Leicestershire lepidopterists is the scarcity of the Black Hairstreak (nationally ranked in the "league table" and a RDB species). The species was only recorded from thirteen 10km squares nationally including the Rutland colony of this rare butterfly.

Of the list only 30 species (marked *) are known to be breeding regularly in vice county. What the table does not show is the geographical distribution of the butterflies. As may be

expected we do not really hope to record Swallowtail or Scotch Argus in this area, but the Small Blue, for instance, is not too far away in Warwickshire as is the Wood White - so perhaps, with continued climate change, these may slowly creep into our patch!

Our local contact for the *Butterfly Millenium Project* is Adrian Russell to whom ALL lepidopteran records should be passed. I am grateful to Adrian for letting me borrow his copy of the BMP report for the preparation of this article.

Ray Morris

Species	10km squares	Species	10km squares
Lulworth Skipper	4	*White-letter Hairstreak	328
Chequered Skipper	6	Dark Green Fritillary	335
Large Tortoiseshell	6	Green Hairstreak	393
Heath Fritillary	12	*Essex Skipper	427
Swallowtail	12	*Marbled White	427
*Black Hairstreak	13	*Brown Argus	440
Mountain Ringlet	14	Clouded Yellow	495
Silver-spotted Skipper	18	*Purple Hairstreak	520
Glanville Fritillary	19	*Holly Blue	735
High Brown Fritillary	27	*Wall Brown	737
Northern Brown Argus	50	*Brimstone	839
Purple Emperor	52	*Comma	907
Adonis Blue	55	*Large Skipper	933
Silver Studded Blue	56	*Ringlet	953
Scotch Argus	56	*Small Skipper	984
Duke of Burgundy Fritillary	71	*Speckled Wood	993
*Brown Hairstreak	78	*Gatekeeper	1002
Wood White	81	*Small Heath	1004
Large Heath	83	*Orange Tip	1140
Marsh Fritillary	88	*Small Copper	1183
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	95	*Common Blue	1229
Chalk Hill Blue	134	*Peacock	1300
Small Blue	142	*Large White	1333
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	218	*Small White	1357
Grayling	227	*Meadow Brown	1413
*Grizzled Skipper	228	*Painted Lady (but migrant)	1427
White admiral	239	*Red Admiral	1455
*Dingy Skipper	278	*Green-veined White	1473
Silver Washed Fritillary	307	*Small Tortoiseshell	1535

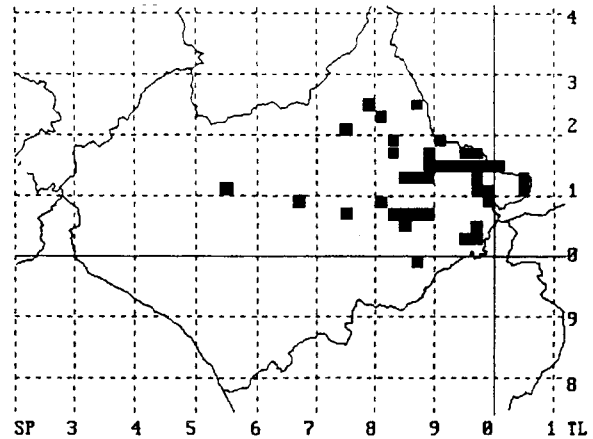
Essex Skipper in Leicestershire 1995-6

The *Butterfly Millennium* annual report indicated that the Essex Skipper was slowly expanding its range westwards - but what's happening on a local basis?

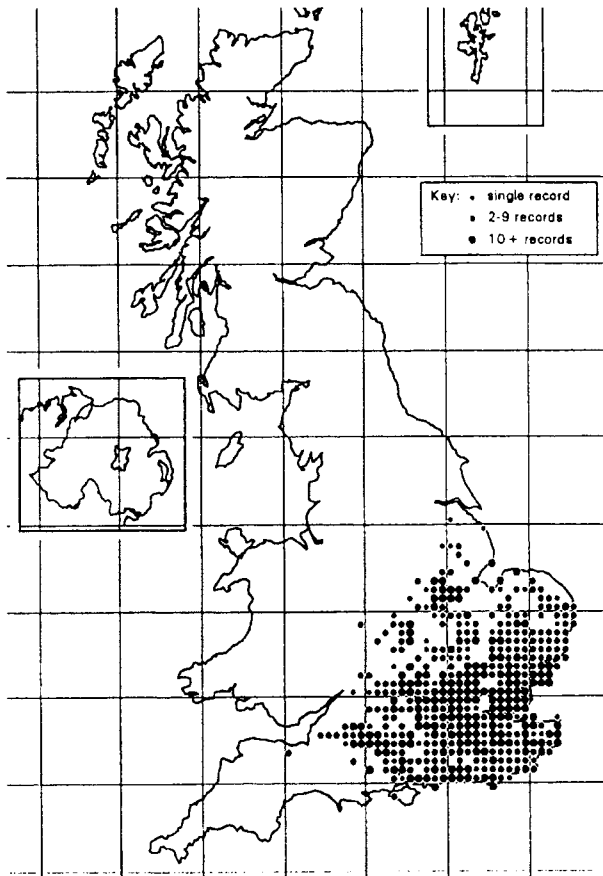
The two maps show the species of this small butterfly, so easily confused with the Small Skipper unless the antennae are closely examined.

Very much a south-easterly species, Leicestershire is very much at its limits although records from VC55 do indicate a slight expansion out of Rutland. In Rutland it seems to be well established although close monitoring of virtually every "Small" Skipper one day in June failed to turn up a single "Essex" at Ketton Quarry!

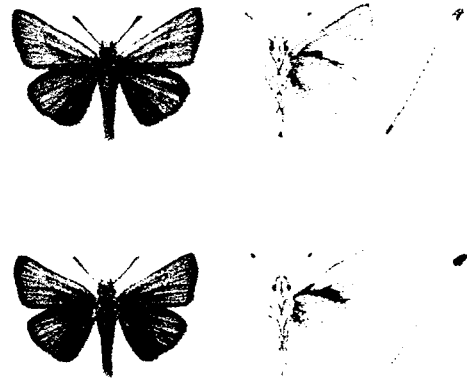
More attention needs to be paid to the correct separation of the two species with particular emphasis being put on correct identification when records are received from east Leicestershire.



Essex Skipper in VC55 1995-6 ex Adrian Russell



Essex Skipper 1995-6 national distribution



Differences between Small Skipper (top) and Essex Skipper (bottom)

Had any entomological experiences during the summer of 1997 that can be shared with fellow enthusiasts?

The please send them in!

Photos, drawings etc

Painted Ladies - where are they? Similar story for the Wall Brown!

Do you remember last year's invasion of Painted Lady butterflies? Where have they all gone? I haven't seen one yet this year and the news around the country is much the same. At the beginning of August, Tony Pritchard in Suffolk comments that he has heard of very few records and hasn't seen one himself. Singles have been recorded in Somerset (18th July) and County Durham (14th August) with a comment that the recorder had nearly 500 at one time during the same period last year. Again in the east, singles were seen at Aldeburgh (Suffolk) (August 9th & 11th) and another on the 12th near Cambridge.

Things are not much better across the Atlantic where Gary Anweiler from Alberta, Canada, noted that he'd only seen one Painted Lady all summer commenting that last year they were abundant. He wonders whether a parasite caught up with last year's population explosion of the butterfly. Have you seen any Painted Ladies yet?

Ray Morris

Watch out for oddities!

Recently reported on the Internet were some experiences of a moth trapper in Hertfordshire. At the end of July a trap run by John Murray had a possible Saltern ear moth and another resembling a White Colon, both species are unknown in Leicestershire! He also had in July Waved Black, Lesser-spotted Pinion, Least Carpet and *Monochroa palustrella*. The Least Carpet was also taken at St Albans by Mark Sterling of micro fame.

With the weird weather we have been having anything could turn up although at the moment I would be happy if numbers rose a little not just the range of species.

Ray Morris

Black rustic at Barwell

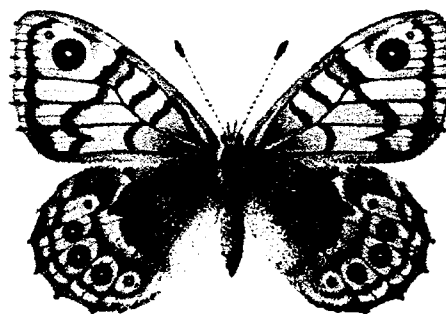
A single, almost pristine, example taken of this unusual moth (for Leicestershire) at mvl in Barwell on 4.x.97 - a first for the garden.

Ray Morris

Reports of the paucity of the Wall Brown butterfly (*Lasiomatta megera*) have recently been found on the Internet. Typical of the stories are:

"Walking in Suffolk recently, I was pleased to see a Wall Brown between Eastbridge and the sea on September 27th... another one at Aldeburgh on the 29th"

"Nice to hear that Wall are doing well somewhere at least...I can't remember the last time I saw one in south Oxfordshire. Is this a UK-wide thing? Are Wall Browns on the decline or had they gone through a period of expansion (in the last 30 or so years) which collapsed?"



In contrast - "Lots of them in my garden in County Mayo, western Ireland!"

Have you had any Wall Browns in the last few years? Let us know!

Ray Morris

The smell of success?

On 6.iv.97, while looking for cave-spiders in the sewer system of a small housing estate in east Leicester, two sub-adult and an adult female *Steatoda grossa* were found. They were discovered hanging beneath the underside of man-hole covers. The spiders were found singly with two of the specimens being about 200m apart. The sub-adults were the first to be found and at first these were taken to be large *Steatoda bipunctata* but on finding the female - new for the county. The sewer system also contained hundreds of *Nesticus cellulanus*, the odd and locally rare *Lessertia denticelis*, *Tegenaria domestica* & *T gigantea*.

Jon Daws

***Ligidium hypnorum* in Leicestershire**

The woodlouse *Ligidium hypnorum* was discovered new to the county by AJ Rundle on 6.vi.81 from around the lake and in an adjacent ditch in the grounds of Gumley Hall (SP681901).

On 6.v.93, Derek Lott and myself confirmed the continuing presence of this species at this site when several specimens were collected from the marshy area at the inflow to the lake. This population of *L hypnorum* is on the north-western edge of its range in Leicestershire with the next nearest population being over 50km away to either the south or east. Paul Harding, back in 1985, had suggested that this could mean that the woodlouse would be far more widespread in the Midlands than present knowledge had indicated.

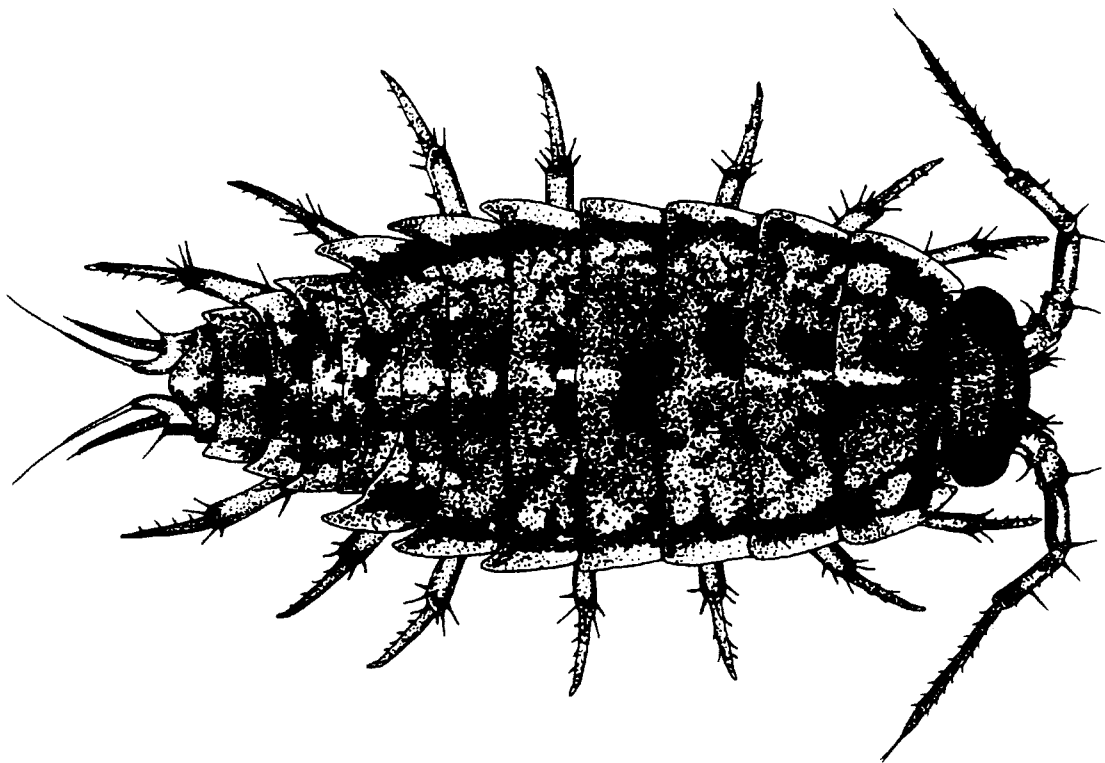
This was found to be true on 5.xi.96 when, on a visit to the village of Welham, three specimens were collected from the side of the River Welland (SP766925). They were found beneath pieces of drift wood left behind by the last flood in what had been a nettle bed. *Trichoniscoides albidus* was also recorded from this site, also from beneath pieces of drift wood.

This find has led to several visits to further stretches of the Leicestershire side of the Welland since the river now forms the boundary with Northamptonshire. At a further two sites, *L hypnorum* has been found on the tall herb/rough grass-covered embankments of the river in very small numbers. At Medbourne (SP792917) a specimen was collected on 20.xii.96 and at Bringhurst (SP845911) another specimen was found on 17.i.97. Specimens were obtained only after at least half an hour's searching on site, with some sites producing no specimens at all.

The River Welland has also produced several recent records of *Trachelipus rathkei* from a small reed bed and beneath a large boulder in sheep grazed grassland. These were at Thorpe-by-Water (SP8995) on 22.xi.96 and west of Tixover (SK963006) on 24.i.97 but this species has not so far been recorded at the same site as *L hypnorum*.

All three of these species of woodlice must be common on the Northamptonshire stretches of the River Welland as they are on the Leicestershire side.

Jon Daws



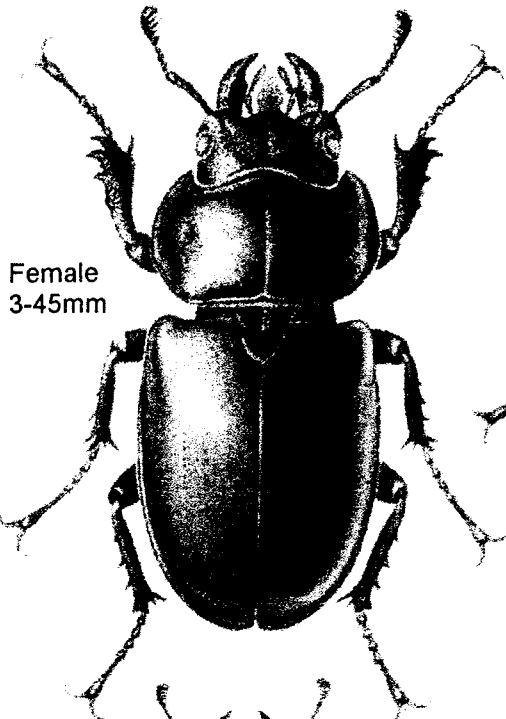
Ligidium hypnorum

Great Stag (beetle) hunt

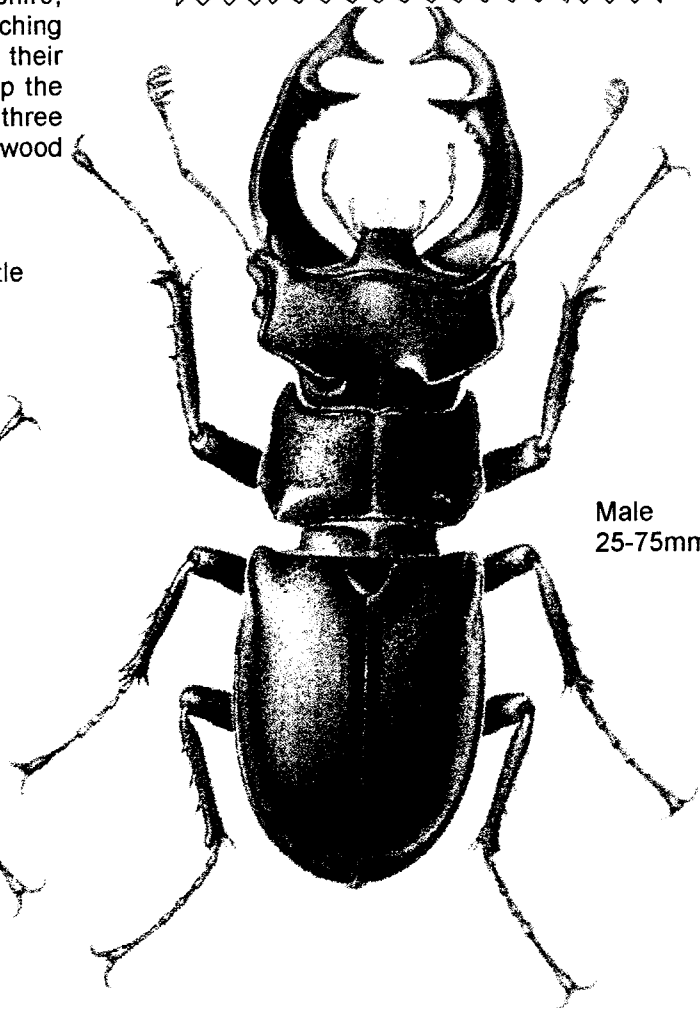
The male Stag Beetle is a large and imposing member of the coleoptera and is probably familiar to most entomologist. But how common is the species? BBONT (the Wildlife Trust covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire) is launching a recovery programme for this beetle in their part of the country. The plan is to map the distribution of the beetle across the three counties and then to set up new deadwood areas to encourage its breeding.

*Records
wanted!*

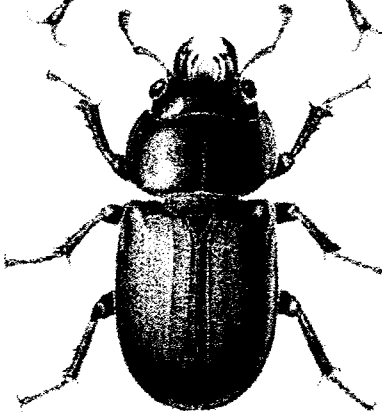
Lucanus cervus - the Stag Beetle



Female
3-45mm



Male
25-75mm



Dorcus parallelipedus
Lesser Stag Beetle
19-32mm
male

The larvae of both the Stag and Lesser Stag Beetles live in the root stocks of deciduous tree stumps, less often in conifer stumps. Their development may take up to five years. Primarily found in oak woodlands, where the adults apparently like to feed at escaping sap, but in eruption years may be found well away from such habitat. I recall such an invasion in the early 1970s when late one afternoon, Beckenham town centre was invaded by thousands of this beetle, some crashing into shop windows and cracking the glass!

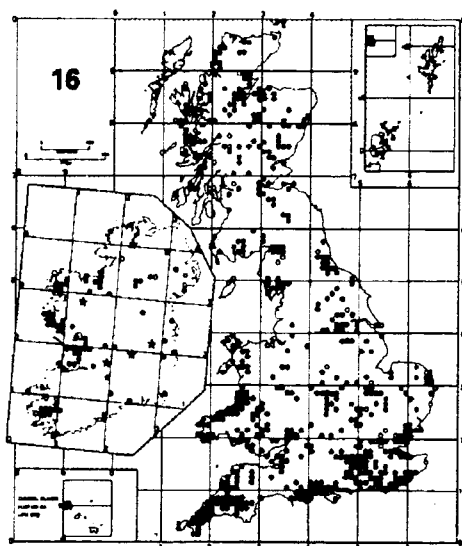
The beetle is rare outside its southern England range but does occur occasionally in Leicestershire. All records of the species, and of the Lesser Stag Beetle, would be most welcome. Please send to Ray Morris.

Odonata 1996

[The following article is adapted from an item published by the Loughborough Naturalists' Club in their Annual Report]

A total 838 records of the Odonata (covering 104 1km squares) were received for 1996. This is the largest number of records ever received for the group indicating a growing interest in these magnificent insects. The hot summer of 1996 was ideal for dragonflies and damselflies with nearly all species having a good season. Even the Emerald Damselfly was seen at 15 sites in 15 1km squares. The Southern Hawker, whilst well-recorded, did not seem to be as abundant as in other years. The Four-spotted Chaser was seen in 14 squares, the Black-tailed Skimmer in 21 and the Emperor in 24. There was an unconfirmed sighting of the Hairy Dragonfly at Six Hills in June.

Barlestone Hay Meadow had the highest number of species (15) with 14 species seen at both Saltersford Valley Picnic Area and Peckleton Glebe Water Project while 13 were seen at Desford Lakes. In the Charnwood area, Puddledyeke had 11 species (but no Broad-bodied Chasers this year) and Old John Watering had



Emerald damselfly

10 species. A garden ponds in Beeby Road, Scraptoft also had 10 species.

The records only reflect recording effort, however, and it is likely that other strong sites exist in the county.

Helen Ikin

Theridion hemerobius in Leicestershire - second national site!

On 6.vii.96, while collecting spiders by torchlight at the Wanlip fishing complex and former gravel pits, a single female *Theridion hemerobius* (first county record) was collected from a post and rail fence (SK606115) separating the fishing complex from a cattle-grazed field.

This spring I returned to the pits on several occasions to sweep and grub about in the vast areas of marsh and scrubby rough grassland which forms part of the River Soar flood plain.

On one of these trips (27.iv.97) while sweeping bankside vegetation and searching beneath pieces of dumped plastic, a single male *T hemerobius* was collected. The exact site this specimen was collected from is unknown as the spider only came to light while looking through the catch under the microscope. The collection this spider came from was centered on SK605117, being at least 200m from the original 1996 site.

I find it incredible that this species is presently restricted in its known national distribution to a site in Sussex and now to one in Leicestershire! Although a trip down the M1, M25, M23 and short journeys along A and minor roads mean that they could easily visit each other in a matter of hours, depending upon the traffic of course!

Jon Daws

[Editor's comment: it will not have missed the notice of LES members that Jon Daws regularly reports on additions to the county's spider list. On occasions, his observations have resulted in additions to the rarities list nationally. This has been achieved by sound field craft, looking where most of would not even consider looking, and developing an enthusiasm for his study group that verges upon fanaticism! Keep on grubbing about Jon - you're doing a valuable service to natural history, locally and nationally!]

Don't forget!
December meeting
AGM

Leicestershire records On the menu today from down-under!

Through the miracles of the Internet, contact has been made with Peter Mackey of Queensland. He lived in Leicester during the 1960s when he collected lepidoptera. He notes that many of the localities, now part of the city sprawl, were mixed arable farming. He comments "I expect they are all built over now!". How true! He has provided a list of 102 species from the period 1957-1964 which help fill in a noticeable gap in the county's record history. Most of his records came from Evington (where he lived) with a smattering from other areas. The following list is of the butterflies he recorded at Evington with other locations being noted.

Speckled Wood; Wall (also Kilby Bridge); Meadow Brown, Small Heath (also Kilby); Red Admiral; Painted Lady; Small Tortoiseshell; Peacock, Small Blue; Small Copper; Large White (also Wigston Magna); Small White (also Wigston Magna); Green-veined white; Orange Tip; Brimstone, Small Skipper; Large Skipper.

Of particular interest are the records of the Small Blue from Evington (1.vii.60; 28.viii.61) - unfortunately, after all this time it is not possible to validate the records as no specimens seemed to have been taken.



Wood tiger

The rest of the list provided by Peter is made up predominantly of macromoths, most of them common. The following are of some interest:

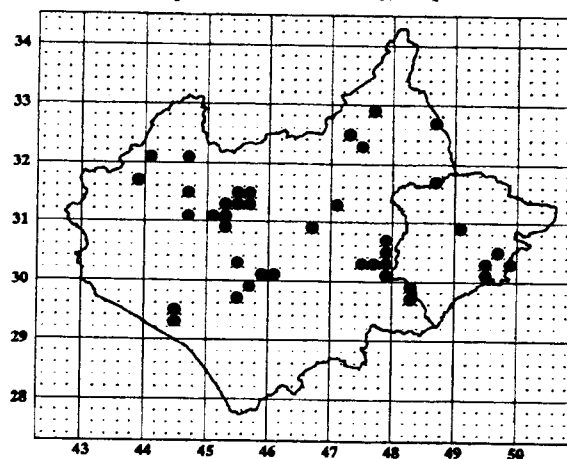
Oak Eggar taken at Evington on 20.vii.63.
Wood tiger at Evington on 8.vi.63 (unvalidated)
Mother Shipton at Evington 8.vi.63
Old Lady at Evington on 2.vii.59

The full transcript is being deposited into the Lepidopteran Recording Scheme.

Ray Morris

Having only a couple of hours to spare and no transport, my collecting for the day (3.v.97) was limited to the close vicinity of my flat situated in east Leicester.

A quick look at the spider distribution maps confirmed my mission for the day as finding *Linyphia hortensis* in a small spinney in tetrad SK6204 and *Lathys humilis* in tetrad SK6202. *L. hortensis* is present in most spinneys, old hedgerows and some gardens in urban Leicester, while *L. humilis* has been found in every privet hedge between my home and Hong Kong (a local Chinese restaurant!).



Linyphia hortensis

Having swept the spinney and a tall herb/rough grass verge, I set about beating a strip of some 5m high coniferous trees. These had been planted about ten years ago as a shelter belt on the edge of Evington Park, Leicester (SK624036). The shelter belt includes several species of pine, with a few spruce and deciduous trees mixed in.

A single male *Pityohyphantes phrygianus* was beaten from one of the pine trees. This is only the second county record for this species, with a female having been beaten from spruce at Pickworth Great Wood (SK985148) on 26.vi.94.

This is an interesting capture which could well indicate that this species may be present in other centres of population throughout Britain. So get out there and beat the living daylight out of the conifers in your local park!

Jon Daws

Garlic lover!

Ramsons is one of my favourite plants. The unmistakable garlic smell in spring heralds the presence of this glorious member of the onion family. I recall in my youth walking country lanes where the smell was so overpowering in spring to be followed by the sewwt heavy scent of honeysuckle later in the year. But from an entomological point of view I have never thought that anything would want to eat it!

In the latest issue of the *British Journal of Entomology & Natural History* (Bland & Nelson, vol 10, pp65-66,1997), Bland & Nelson describe the leaf-mining activity of the weevil *Orthochaetes setiger* in ramsons *Allium ursinum* in Scotland (see figure).

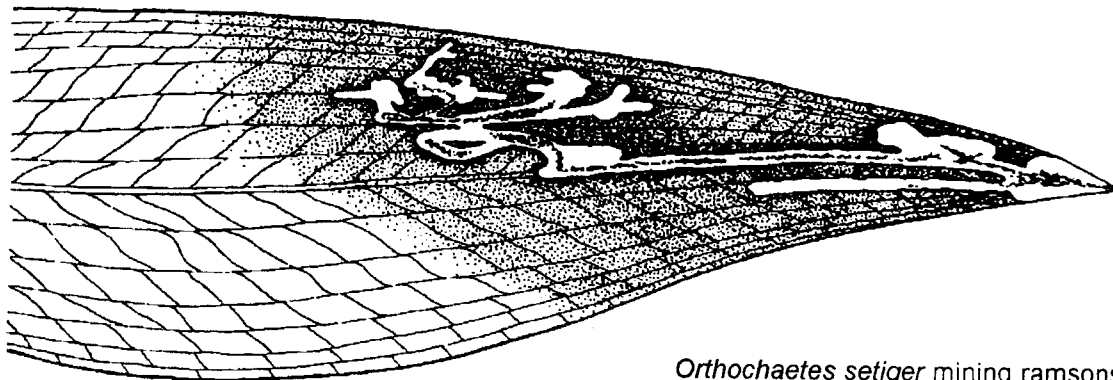
Initially the mine was a small blotch occupying only the extreme apex of the leaf. Subsequently,

the beetle larva mined down the midrib of the leaf for about 3cm before mining out into the lamina of the leaf where a complex series of short forays occurred. The larva left the mine and burrowed down into the sandy substrate for pupation. In due course an adult *Orthochaetes setiger* emerged seven days later.

The weevil has been apparently listed as nationally scarce (Nb) but others consider it common. The European literature records the weevils being a leaf miner of some 19 genera of plants, 16 of which are composites. *Allium* is not mentioned anywhere as a foodplant.

Other insects known to be associated with ramsons include three species of the hoverfly genus *Cheilosia*, the tortricid moth *Cnephasia interjectana* (which has twice been reared from ramsons flowerheads) and an agromyzid fly (*Chromatomyia horticola*).

Ray Morris



Orthochaetes setiger mining ramsons

Something for the gardeners!

In a three year study of the beetles colonising a grass compost heap, 184 species were encountered. Fourteen are currently regarded as being of national importance including six with Red Data Book status.

Twenty of the species found are usually considered to be cosmopolitan normally confined in Britain to man-made aggregates of organic matter, including compost heaps, dung heaps and food stuffs. The majority (132 species) are normally associated with man-made aggregations of organic matter but are also found in natural situations. The remaining 32 were species not considered to be particularly associ-

ated with man-made organic aggregations.

Among the species noted were:

Perigona nigriceps - originally oriental now common throughout western Europe

Scydmaenus rufus - a native species normally recorded from dead wood and considered an indicator of such habitats. Has been noted from manure heaps.

Aridius nodifer - an Australian species first recorded in Britain in 1839 and now widespread.

What does your compost heap hold?

[Owen *et al*, *Entomologist's Gazette*, vol 48 pp111-124, 1997]

Holly Blues making a comeback?

Non-one will have missed the Holly Blue butterfly this year with a strong spring and summer generation being obvious. With both generations I have been fortunate to have several laying eggs on both holly and ivy in the garden boding well for next year.

However, I have come across reports suggesting a third generation in some part of Britain during 1997. One observer saw this powder blue butterfly feeding at ivy flowers on October 5th and thought that this might be a late record. In response a member of Butterfly Conservation pointed out that a third generation is known particularly when it has been a good year for the first two generations.

In contrast, a recorder in Hertfordshire considered numbers of the species to much lower than usual on a regularly walked transect with plenty of holly and ivy. He commented that last year (1996) was an excellent year for the butterfly with the suggestion of a third brood when he saw one on October 19th 1996. However, when he visited Cornwall in July 1997, the Holly Blue was common!

A further note from the BC member seemed to think that the butterfly's natural parasites were about a year or so behind the resurgence of the Holly Blue. Last year in the West Country (and the East Midlands) (where did his data come from? - Editor) the insect was just starting to recover after its last crash whereas in the South East they were already peaking again.

In Gloucestershire the second generation of the Holly Blue is reputed to have suffered badly from predation so that next spring's numbers may well be down.

A final comment from Yorkshire notes that the butterfly was very common several years ago and both broods were seen all over the east of the county. In the last two years the species has become very scarce with only one being seen in 1996. This year they seem to be recovering from the collapse. Perhaps this adds credence to the ups and downs of this lovely butterfly?

Ray Morris

Correction

In the last issue of the LES Newsletter (number 18, January 1997) in Clive Stace's article entitled "What a gem!" it was noted that Chimney Sweeper moths were seen among the *Chenopodium* in his meadow,

Apart from Clive, nobody spotted the typographical!

It should have been, of course, Chimney Sweepers amongst the *Conopodium* which is the moth's foodplant. and not *Chenopodium*!

As Clive says - "*Chenopodium* is a ghastly weed that I hope does not occur there!"

Oops! Sorry!

Editor

*Don't forget your
articles and observations
for the next Newsletter*

*Deadline
is January 15th 1998!*

Winter programme 1997-8

All meetings are held at the Leicestershire Ecology Centre, Holly Hayes, Birstall

Start time is 7.30 p.m.

Tea and coffee available and exhibits always welcome

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 6th EXHIBITION EVENING

Bring along your prize finds of 1997 for identification and scrutiny! If you want to do close-ups, a camera system will be available.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 3rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Following this most essential of events in the Society's calendar (!) members will have a chance to present their slides from 1997.

THURSDAY JANUARY 15th ACTION FOR INSECT CONSERVATION

An entomologist's guide to how we are going to help save the planet with the Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan!

DEREK LOTT
(Leicestershire Museums)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 19th LEPIDOPTERAN MEMORIES

Staying out late into the night; mixing weird concoctions of beer and treacle. PG certificate at the very least for this account of the study of moths and Marsh Fritillaries.

ADRIAN RUSSELL
(Leicestershire Entomological Society)

THURSDAY MARCH 19th FLIES I HAVE LOVED

Flies can be charming and beautiful! And the things that flies get up to can be extraordinary! Come along and find out the amazing truth about flies with

DARWYN SUMNER
(Leicestershire Museums)

The Society thanks Leicestershire Museums and the Ecology Centre for support of its activities and the provision of facilities for its meetings