

NEWSLETTER 27

September 2002

Bumblebee Rescue

On the 24th May 2002, a neighbour was having a sort out in his shed and managed to disturb a nest of bumblebees that he hadn't noticed. He shovelled the nest into a cardboard box and asked me what to do next, because his wife doesn't like bees. I decided that the species was the early bumblebee *Bombus pratorum* (yellow bands and red tail) – and that I'd have a go at rescuing them later in the evening, when the bees were less agitated and all the foraging bumblebees had returned.

Luckily, I just happened to have an Oxford Bee Company bumblebee nest box available and so when it was getting dusk, armed with my net and some glass tubes, we carefully and calmly approached the bumblebee nest. The workers were climbing all over the grapefruit size cluster of cells and there were one or two flying around the shed. I gently scooped up the cells and workers with the shovel, popped them into the brood section of the nest box, speedily put the Perspex lid back into position and pushed a cork into the entrance hole. The box had already been primed with some diluted honey. With my neighbour holding a torch, I managed to catch and tube the remaining strays and I found the queen on the shed floor, no doubt looking for her nest. I took the contained bees back home and into my greenhouse, where I introduced the tubed bees into the nest box via the entrance hole. One was a newly emerged male found in the nest debris, looking pale and silvery in colour. They spent the night in the greenhouse because it was too dark to do anything more.

Next morning, it was sunny and warm and I sited the box at the back of a flower boarder,

pulled out the cork and watched and waited..... Eventually the first bees emerged and went straight to the nearby flowers. However, I was really pleased when the foraging bumblebees eventually returned – business as usual! Our neighbour reported two more bees around the shed and these I caught and introduced into the nest box with the others. The bumble nest is active and the *B. pratorum* workers and new drones (males) have joined those already in the garden and are busily foraging perennial cornflowers; various geraniums – blue, pink and especially maroon *Geranium phaeum*; white deadnettle; Daboecia; various alliums including chives; and secondary robbery of purple aquilegia and pink comfrey (using the holes bitten in the spurs/corollas by short-tongued *Bombus terrestris* bumbles).

However best of all, these bees provide an excellent pollination service for my raspberry crop!

NB:- Also foraging at the perennial cornflowers and alliums, were *Bombus (Psithyrus) sylvestris*, "cuckoo bumbles" in the established nests of *B. pratorum*. With no worker caste and no means of pollen collection etc, the female cuckoo bumbles in some way intimidate the host workers to raise their young.

Prys-Jones & Corbet (1987) *Bumblebees*.
Naturalists' Handbook 6, CPU
T. Benton (2000) *Bumblebees of Essex*,
Lopinga Books
C. O'Toole (2002) *Bumblebees (Oxford Bee Company)*, Osmia Publ.

Maggie Frankum

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ENTOMOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

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Next Copy Deadline:

15th January 2003

Lepidoptera in a Wigston garden

Holy Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) butterflies appeared in good numbers this year. The Turnip Moth (*Agrotis segetum*) remains scarce in my garden, usually we get only 2-3 each year with none last year and only one this year.

Freyer's Pug (*Eupithecia intricata*) was a new addition to the garden in 1999 and is still being caught in good numbers. The Lilac Beauty (*Hygrochroa syringaria*), which we caught for the first time last year, has been caught again this year (single specimen retrieved from the fish pond). Quite a few moths end up in sticky situations. Our first, and only record, of the Common White Wave (*Cabera pusaria*) in 2000 ended up with the moth being released only to finish in the web, and later the jaws of a spider.

I am always amazed by the fact that birds, usually House Sparrows, can find more moths around the trap than I can. My only chance is to wait until the birds have dropped the moth's wings, so I can identify them. So as you can imagine it's not a pretty sight to see your hawk moths or new records gobbled up by a hungry predator.

As well as recording Lepidoptera, I try to look out for other insects that visit the garden. This year has produced one 16 Spot Ladybird (*Micraspis 16-punctata*) on 19/5/02, a species which feeds on mildew. A French wasp (*Dolichovespula media*) seen on 2/6/02 collecting wood for its nest. Unlike the Common Wasp (*Vespa vulgaris*), the French Wasp is black with thin yellow stripes running horizontally across its body. It has the reputation of being more aggressive than the common wasp.

Adam Poole

Never Seen Anything Like it!

I was looking out of the window one sunny afternoon when something caught my eye. A large insect with a hoverfly type body landed on one of my honeysuckles. I called to Adam to come and have a look. Our first thoughts were it might be one of the large clearwing moths. After netting and jarring the insect, we could see that it was not a clearwing. A closer look revealed a queen wasp sized insect with a black body and head. When at rest its layered-back forewings were clear and veined, with a dark border running along the front edge and tips. Its hindwings were raised diagonal,

skipper like. We had not seen anything like it before wasp, bee or fly. There was only one thing to do, contact Maggie Frankum to see if she could help. On seeing the insect Maggie thought it might be a sawfly; I did not realize there was a species of sawfly that large. We left the insect with Maggie and awaited identification. After contacting Andrew Halstead and using AID-GAP keys they came up with a male *Trichiosoma lucorum*. This species feeds on birch and willow trees. Many thanks to Maggie for her help and time.

Stuart Poole (Treasurer)

Early Aphids? – Then here come the Chapel Lane Cavalry(O.S Grid Ref:- SK596014)

Yesterday's glorious spring weather (15°C, sunny, dry) enticed me out into the garden, only to find that the *Euphorbia characias* flowerheads were covered with aphids. No panic! Sprays absolutely unnecessary, because this garden is a balanced habitat and the ladybirds were in action, having a feast! Just for interest, I decided to do a timed catch of five minutes, to see which ladybird species were at work. A quick session using the Naturalists' Handbook No 10, Ladybirds by Majerus & Kearns (1989) identified them as follows:-

| Common name | Scientific name | No. |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Pine ladybird | <i>Exochomus 4-pustulatus</i> | 9 |
| Two-spot ladybird | <i>Adalia 2-punctata (f. typica)</i> | 5 |
| Ten-spot ladybird | <i>Adalia 10-punctata</i> | |
| | <i>(f. decempunctata)</i> | 2 |
| Chequered ten-spot | <i>Adalia 10 punctata</i> | |
| | <i>(f. decempustulata)</i> | 2 |
| Cream spot | <i>Calvia 14-guttata</i> | 1 |
| Seven spot I | <i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i> | 2 |

They were released back onto the flowerheads and were soon munching away.

Maggie Frankum

Leicester 28th March 2002.

Leicestershire Orthoptera

This summer I became involved with a project concerning the Lesser Marsh Grasshopper (*Chorthippus albomarginatus*) at the Game Conservancy farm, Loddington. This species has appeared at the farm over the past two summers and the aim of the project is to find other local populations to see how closely related genetically they are to the Loddington population.

In addition Leicestershire Orthoptera seem to be under-recorded. I would be very grateful therefore for any records of *C. albomarginatus* or any other species of Orthoptera in Leicestershire.

Frank Clark (Editor)

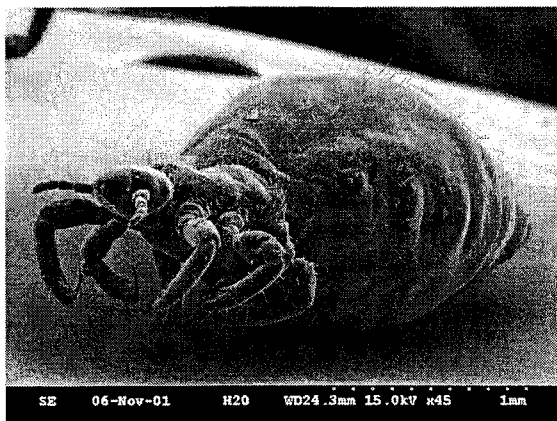
Here to stay

For the second year running, the hoverfly *Volucella inanis* has visited my garden in Knighton, Leicester (SK596014). It was foraging on marjorum flowers on 25.07.02 and blue sea holly (*Eryngium*) flowers on 08.08.02.

Stubbs & Falk (2000). *British Hoverflies*. B.E.N.H.S.

Maggie Frankum

Ectoparasitic insects do not get much of a mention. They are not usually obvious, leading rather secretive lives. Below is a Scanning Electron Microscope image of a body louse. Very similar to the head louse, so prominent in today's society, the body louse is not so frequently encountered. **(Frank Clark Editor)**



Body louse *Pediculus humanus humanus*

ANNOUNCEMENT

Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society (Natural History Section)

"The Red Mason Bee: taking the sting out of bee-keeping"

Christopher O'Toole

Head of Bee Systematics and Biology Unit,
Hope Entomological Collections,
Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

Venue: New Walk Museum
(back entrance - Princess Road West)

~~18th~~ November 2002
Time: 7.30pm

THE WINTER PROGRAMME 2002 - 2003

The meetings room at Holly Hayes has been booked for our use on the following dates.

2002

Thurs Oct 10th Members Evening.
Bring along specimens and tell everyone what you have been up to.

Thurs Nov. ~~9th~~ 14th
Thurs. Dec. 14th AGM and Slides. ^{5th}
(Dec 10 LCP)

2003

Wed 15 Jan, Wed 12 Feb, Wed 12 Mar.

Note that the first meeting is on Thursday October 10th, so come along and bring your slides and any other material. It would also be a good opportunity for all members to discuss our future activities.

John Kramer
Secretary

Looking for advice or information?

The following are willing to act as an initial point of contact for providing advice and information to members. As you will see, this list is far from complete - If you think you can help, please let us know.

| | |
|---|--|
| Coleoptera | Derek Lott, Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicester LE4 4DG Telephone: 0116 267 1950 Email: dlott@leics.gov.uk |
| Diptera | John Kramer, 31 Ash Tree Road, Oadby, Leicester LE2 5TE Telephone: 0116 271 6499 Email: jk@chezejog.demon.co.uk |
| Hymenoptera (Bees) | Maggie Frankum, 3 Chapel Lane, Knighton, Leicester LE2 3WF Telephone: 0116 270 5833 |
| Lepidoptera | Adrian Russell, 15 St. Swithin's Road, Leicester LE5 2GE Telephone: 0116 241 5101 Email: adrian@wainscot.demon.co.uk |
| Biological Recording (and other orders) | Darwyn Sumner, Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicester LE4 4DG Telephone: 0116 267 1950 Email: dsumner@leics.gov.uk |

The Newsletter is rather short on articles this time around. Obviously the continuation of the Newsletter very much depends on members sending in reports of their observations, experiences etc. Please send contributions in good time for the next Newsletter.

Frank Clark (Editor).