



NEWSLETTER 37

September 2007

It's a small world full of surprises!

Many of you will know that I've been involved for the past five years, with the British Plant Gall Society's "Bedeguar Project". What is a "Bedeguar" you may ask? Its other name is "Robin's Pincushion" and the books say that it is a gall found on Dogrose and caused by the gall wasp, *Diplolepis rosae*. Since the galls always take the same growth form, the scientific name of the gall is that of the causer. Five years ago, that is all I knew about them, other than I'd often seen the attractive, bright red shaggy growths along the hedgerows. Little did I know that I was at the bottom of a steep learning curve that even now continues to intrigue. However, it seems that there's far more to these galls than just the causer, in fact a whole microcosm of inquilines [lodgers] and parasitoids all depend on these galls for shelter and food, either the vegetarian kind - or protein [!] for developing larvae. The causer provides for her own offspring but it's not always those that emerge the following year!



Robin's Pin Cushion Bedeguar

The aim of the Bedeguar Project has been to rear out and establish just how many different

species actually emerge from mature bedeguar galls. Thanks to the help of others who have collected galls for me to rear out, I have been dealing mostly with the occupants of bedeguars from VC55, and these include the causers, inquilines and parasitoids. The rearing-out process was very much an L-plates affair at first; and I was learning to identify the emergees, using a high power microscope and the Keys that were being developed by Robin Williams and Simon Randolph [BPGS]. It's all about antennal segments, tarsi and ovipositors and since the insects are small [mm], then the bits are even smaller! Still my identification skills improved greatly [always with back-up from Robin W. to verify any tricky ones]. So in VC55, I've now identified the males and females of the following bedeguar occupants: - cynipid wasp causer: *Diplolepis rosae*; cynipid wasp inquiline: *Periclistus brandtii*; ichneumon parasitoid: *Orthopelma mediator*; and chalcid parasitoids: *Eurytoma rosae*; *Pteromalus bedeguaris*; *Caenacis inflexa*; *Glyphomerus stigma*; *Torymus bedeguaris*; and *Torymus rubi*. It's the old story of when you become familiar with the regulars, you then notice any different species, for instance on 19/05/2007 [Year 5], I nearly missed a tiny wasp in amongst the gall debris - and it proved to be yet another species, keying out as the chalcid parasitoid, *Eupelmus urozonus*. Finding something new in amongst all the other identifications [500+ this year] lifts the spirits and so again on 30/05/2007, there was yet another wasp under the microscope, that stopped me in my tracks - antennae - swollen scape - white club - it was nothing like any of the others and in fact wasn't in Robin's Keys. I quickly despatched the specimen to Robin, who sent it on to Dick Askew for identification. The resulting information highlighted an

**LEICESTERSHIRE
ENTOMOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

Affiliated to:
Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

**Chairman &
LES Occasional Publications Editor:**

Ray Morris
142 Hinckley Road, Barwell
Leics. LE9 8DN
Telephone: 01455 842145
Email: ray.morris@ntlworld.com

Secretary:

Anona Finch
14 Thorndale,
Ibstock,
Leicester LE6 1JT
m.finch4@ntlworld.com

Treasurer:

Stuart Poole
18 Croft Drive, Wigston,
Leicester LE18 1HD
Telephone: 0116 288 0236
ad.ap@virgin.net

Committee Members:

Dave Budworth
121 Wood Lane,
Newhall, Swadlincote
Derbys. DE11 0LX
Telephone: 01283 215188
Email: dbud01@aol.com

Maggie & Roy Frankum
3 Chapel Lane, Knighton,
Leicester LE2 3WF
Telephone: 0116 270 5833
royfrankum@tiscali.co.uk

Consultant Entomologist

Derek Lott
5 Welland Road,
Barrow upon Soar
Leicester LE12 8NA
Telephone:
Email: Derek@lott.fsnet.co.uk

Newsletter Editor:

Frank Clark
4 Main Street,
Houghton on the Hill,
Leicester LE7 9GD
Telephone: 0116 243 2725
Email ClrFlea@aol.com

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amazing set of circumstances: - the tiny wasp, *Homalotyloidea dahlbohmi*, of the family Encyrtidae, wasn't anything at all to do with the bedeguar community. In fact it is a parasitoid of Coccinellidae and has been reared from the ladybird *Rhizobius litura*. Dick says that probably a parasitized ladybird pupated amongst the hairs of the bedeguar gall and then the tiny little wasp [1.4mm] emerged in my jam jar!



Homalotyloidea dahlbohmi: parasitic wasp showing distinctive white antennal clubs



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Rhizobius litura

Peter Brown [of CEH Monks Wood] gives the following information about the ladybird:- *R. litura* is probably the most common of the inconspicuous ladybirds and is often quite easy to find when sweep netting. It is widespread and fairly common in south and central England and Wales, but rarer further north. It is a species of grassland and low-growing herbs, especially composites. It is an aphid feeder, but also eats pollen and mildews. It overwinters in low vegetation, grassy tussocks, plant roots etc, at or just below ground level [bedeguar from Wigston Triangle]. It lays eggs in crevices, often leaf cavities. Most specimens do not have fully developed wings.

Wigston Triangle [Network Rail], Leics.			
[accessed from South Wigston Station]			
Grid Ref: SP589987			
Gall 15			
Date Collected:	16th April 2007		
Collected by:	Maggie Frankum		
Identified by:	Maggie Frankum		
Date	Species	male	female
24.05.2007	<i>Eurytoma rosae</i>	1	0
30.05.2007	<i>Eurytoma rosae</i>	1	0
30.05.2007	[<i>Homalotyloidea dahlbohmi</i> *]		
31.05.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	1	0
4.06.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	0	3
4.06.2007	<i>Eurytoma rosae</i>	0	1
5.06.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	0	2
7.06.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	0	1
8.06.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	0	2
10.06.2007	<i>Periclistus brandtii</i>	0	1
10.07.2007	<i>Torymus bedeguaris</i>	0	1
14.07.2007	<i>Torymus bedeguaris</i>	0	1

Data from Wigston Triangle Gall number 15 showing all of the other different species of wasp (1 X inquiline & 2 X parasitoids – but no causers) that emerged from it.

Maggie Frankum

Leicestershire invaded by Bush-crickets.

As Frank Clark and Phil Rudkin mentioned in previous newsletters two species of Bush-cricket have been spreading from their southern strongholds. This year they are getting increasingly common in Leicestershire.

Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* was seen at Priory Water again this summer and Steve Houghton still has the small colony of Long-winged Coneheads *Conocephalus discolor* that he found last year in his wild-flower meadow at Thorpe Satchville. Howard Bradshaw netted a Roesel's Bush-cricket in August 2006 at Little Stretton. As far as I know, no one has checked Aylestone Meadows this year.

Steve Woodward recorded two or three stridulating Roesel's Bush-crickets at Wymondham Rough on 11th August. Then Steve W. again had a female Long-winged Conehead at Ulverscroft NR on 26th August while, on the same sunny Sunday, I discovered, with the aid of a bat detector, stridulating Roesel's Bush-crickets at Cossington Meadows in rough grass alongside the main track.

Not to be outdone, Steve Smith had a Long-winged Conehead at North Farm, Dadlington on 30th August.

Since then Roesel's Bush-cricket has been heard in rough grassland in Loughborough near Woodbrook Vale School, at Cossington opposite the playing field car park and in another field in the same area where we tried in vain to catch the elusive insects. The peak frequency is around 20kh but can be picked up in a wide band around this.



Roesel's Bush-cricket

Long-winged Coneheads have been heard at Sence Valley Forest Park, Kelham Bridge NR and at the far end of Puddledyke. Faint stridulation was picked up in the right wave band (peak 30kh) by the bat detector in a field near Ulverscroft Pond on Sept. 5th

In fact they seem to be moving into suitable habitats throughout the county. No doubt we shall have records from a wide range of sites as recorders get their "ear in". It also seems to help if your name is Steve!!

The stridulation of both species can be heard by younger people and it is much easier to pinpoint the insect when you can actually hear it. The bat-detector, because it is so sensitive and picks up the sound from up to 25m away is not a good tool for homing in on the calling cricket. So get your kids listening for them.

Even when you can see them you have to be very skilful (or is it luck) to catch them - they are adept at jumping at the last possible second and disappearing into the bottom of grass tussocks. Their camouflage is wonderful – especially the Conehead when it perches along a grass stem. No doubt we shall develop our skills as they become commoner.

Don't forget our old friends the Oak-bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum* and the Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima* which have been with us for some time. All records gratefully received. Perhaps the Dark Bush-cricket *Pholidoptera griseoptera*, whose chirping is familiar to our Rutland friends, will spread further into Leicestershire – it has been found in Owston Wood, along with the Speckled Bush-cricket, over a number of years. It is, however, handicapped by having very short forewings and no hind-wings so is unable to fly.

Helen Ikin

Another new micro moth record from Shenton area.

Luquetia lobella was taken at light on June 8th 2006 at Shenton Cutting, this has transpired to be a new record for VC55. This species belongs to the Oecophoridae family and feeds on Blackthorn. Continued moth recording through the first half of 2007 in the Shenton Cutting paid off as *Eidophesia messingiella* (Yponomeutidae), a striking little moth all black with a creamy white fascia across the central part of the wing, was recorded on June 23rd 2007. This seems to be the first record for VC55.

Graham Finch

A Confusion of Bumblebees

I thought that you'd like hear about some bumbles that I found on Knighton Park, on 22nd May 2007. At first I spotted a *Bombus vestalis* cuckoo bumble in the grass [yellow flashes adjacent to white tail clearly seen], then on closer inspection I realised that there was another bumble underneath [two yellow bands and a buff tail].....and yet another one. I decided in the end that it was a mating pair of buff-tail bumblebees, *Bombus terrestris*, with a *B. vestalis* cuckoo bumble clinging to the queen's back..... Wait a minute! - it's only mid-May, a bit early for local buff-tails to be producing new queens and drones! Normally, only the mated queens from the previous year hibernate through the winter [any drones and workers die off, as do any cuckoo males as well]. The queens emerge in early spring, spend some time feeding up and then start their new colonies. Batches of workers are produced first; and new daughter queens and drones are usually on the wing in July or August, when they mate. [However colonies are known to over-winter in the London area and further south]. For the last couple of winters, occasional buff-tail queens and workers have been seen foraging the scented flowers of *Mahonia* and *Lonicera purpurei*, at the Attenborough Arboretum and in local gardens [perhaps you have seen them too?]. The bumbles found in the park were a mating pair, so were produced at the end of their colony's lifespan, so finally is this proof that there must have been an over-wintering bumblebee colony in Leicester? [due to milder winters?]. In fact, there would need to be a second over-wintering nest that had been parasitized by a *Bombus vestalis* female, to account for the male cuckoo. Comments in the BBCT "Buzzword" newsletter: - *the really odd thing is the third bee, a southern cuckoo, which is sitting on the queen. From its size it is probably a male and hence it is perhaps [rather foolishly] trying to mate with the buff-tail queen. Most insects use smell to distinguish mates of the correct species and so avoid this kind of mistake. Southern cuckoo females invade buff-tail nests and may have evolved to smell like buff-tails to help get past the host workers. Perhaps this has led to the confusion.* I wonder what will happen this coming winter? Already, possibly as a result of the changing weather patterns that have happened so far this year, many bumble species seem low in numbers and have finished their lifecycles early.



Maggie Frankum

Bats... love em or hate em.

Few moth recorders will have many enthusiastic words to say about our nocturnal mammalian friends, when we set up our light traps in the hope of catching that rarity that has been eluding us for so long. As the dark night draws in the moths begin to stir so do our furry friends. You can watch them patrolling up and down stealing the very same quarry you have left comfort and warmth for, to sit by a wood side until the early hours of the next morning.

As P. B. M. Allen wrote in A Moth Hunters Gossip 1937.

“Oh, surely there is no living beast so hateful to the entomologist as a bat. The number of *alni*, *rubiginea*, *satura*, *conspicillaris* and who knows what rarities, of which, I am certain, I have been robbed by this hateful tribe is awful to think on.”

So as an interesting aside a count of a steady accumulation of moth wings that had been building up for some time beneath the summer roost site of Brown Long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus* was done. This is a small colony situated in a fairly frequently used farm building. Except for a few head capsules and a few legs, individual were the only remains, so only an estimation of individuals could be made. A handful of wings were collected and two counts were made at home and a figure of over 150 individual moths was reached. After identifying each forewing, the total was then halved to give a rough assessment of numbers involved. It is realised that out of all the 178 forewings of Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*, this more than likely represented over 89 moths, but we felt this was a fairly safe assumption. It was quite obvious that the vast majority belonged to the Noctuid, Large Yellow Underwing, with Dark Arches *Apamea*

monoglypha a very low second in the rating as the most popular prey item. In fact out of over 250 wing samples counted (not every wing was collected)

Large Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	1 7 8
Dark Arches	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	1 9
Smoky Wainscot	<i>Mythimna impura</i>	7
Lesser Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctia comes</i>	5
Light Arches	<i>Apamea lithoxyaea</i>	3
Nutmeg	<i>Dicestra trifolii</i>	2
Common Wainscot	<i>Mythimna pallens</i>	2
Common/Lesser Common Rustic	<i>Mesapamea secalis/didyma</i>	1
Herald	<i>Scolopetryx libatrix</i>	1
Bright-line Brown-eye	<i>Laconobia oleracea</i>	1
Drinker	<i>Euthrix potatoria</i>	1
Brown-line Bright-eye	<i>Mythimna conigera</i>	1
Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua fimbriata</i>	1
Flame Shoulder	<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	1
Beetle sp	<i>Carabidae</i>	1

Several other areas of the buildings were explored but very few wings were found and again Large Yellow Underwings were most frequent with Dark Arches following behind. Many of the wings could not be identified due to age/wear etc but their abundance highlights just how important this food source is to our bat species.

Reference

Allen, P.B.M (1947). A Moth Hunters Gossip. Watkins & Doncaster, (Second Edition).

Graham Finch

European Chinchbug (*Ischnodemus sabuleti*) in VC55

In May 2007 I found a swarm (Circa 200 individuals) of *I.sabuleti* on sweet grass (*Glyceria* spp) at Priory Water (Grid ref. SK 7118). In such swarms it is not unusual to find both short and long-winged individuals (Southwood & Leston 1959), this proved to be the case in this swarm (see photograph). According to Southwood and Leston (*op cit.*) the distribution of the chinchbug in the Britain in 1959 was “in ten English counties south of a line from Hampshire through Oxfordshire to Essex”.

According to Chinery (2005) this species has a south eastern distribution in the British Isles and was not recorded in Leicestershire by Clements & Evans (1973). Is this yet another case of a southern species expanding its range with recent climatic warming events? If anyone has any information on the chinchbug in VC55 I would be happy to receive it.



European Chinchbug (*Ischnodemus sabuleti*)

References

Chinery M (2005) *Complete British Insects*. HarperCollins Publisher Ltd. ISBN 0 00 717966 9.

Clements H.A.B. & Evans I.M. (1973). Leicestershire Bugs. *Transactions of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*, Vol. LXVII. pp 50-68.

Southwood & Leston (1959). *Land & Water bugs of the British Isles*. Frederic Warne.

Frank Clark

NEW in August 2007. A Photographic Guide to the Grasshoppers & Crickets of Britain and Ireland.

Martin Evans and Roger Edmondson

Covers all of the resident, vagrant and introduced species in Britain, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

Includes identification features, life Histories and habitats.

Photographs of the adults, nymphs and colour forms. Distributions maps are given for all resident species together with a photographic key to the adults. Published in a hard cover with 183 pages and 580 colour photographs. Available from WGUK, 6 Branscombe Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, BS9 1SN at £21 including postage in the UK. This book is in the same series as *A Photographic Guide to Shieldbugs and Squashbugs of the British Isles* and would make a useful addition to your book shelf.

Frank Clark (Ed.)



Speckled Bush-Cricket (*Leptophyes punctatissima*) (Photo Steve Houghton)



Lesser Marsh Grasshopper (*Chorthippus albomarginatus*) (Photo Steve Houghton)



Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus discolor*) (Photo Steve Houghton)

Indoor programme for Autumn-Winter 2007-2008

18 October 2007	Members' Evening	This is your evening. Members' photos, 35mm slides or digital images, exhibits etc. welcome.
15 November 2007	'Some Victorian Naturalists'	Tony Fletcher will give a digital presentation and a very interesting insight into the Victorian naturalists.
13 December 2007	Annual General Meeting	As usual, followed by members' photos, exhibits etc.
17 January 2008	To be announced	
21 February 2008	'In Search of Dragons and Damsels'	Steve Cham will give a digital presentation of his favourite insects.
13 March 2008	'Insects through camera and microscope'	Mick Chaplin will give a digital presentation of insects and other invertebrates complete with video clips and sound.
17 April 2008	'Apart from dragonflies'	Steve Houghton will present digital images of the other insects he encounters whilst searching for dragon and damsels in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Meetings are held at Holly Hayes Environment and Heritage Centre, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG 7:15 pm for 7:30 pm start.

Looking for 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, 5 Welland Road, Barrow on Soar, Leicestershire LE12 8NA
Email: Derek@lott.fsnet.co.uk

Diptera :- John Kramer, 31 Ash Tree Road, Oadby, Leicester LE2 5TE
Tel. 0116 271 6499. Email: johnkramer@tiscali.co.uk

Hymenoptera :- Maggie Frankum, 3 Chapel Lane, Knighton, Leicester LE2 3WF
Tel. 0116 270 5833. Email: royfrankum@tiscali.co.uk

Lepidoptera:- Adrian Russell, 15 St Swithin's Road, Leicester LE5 2GE.
Tel. 0116 241 5101. Email: Adrian@wainscot.demon.co.uk.

Biological Recording:- Darwyn Sumner, Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicester LE4 4DG. Tel. 0166 267 1950. Email: dsumner@leics.gov.uk