

Another *Volucella* hoverfly at large

The hoverfly genus *Volucella* contains some large and distinctive species. Previous articles in this newsletter have reported sightings of *V. zonaria* and *V. inanis*, which until recently were confined to the south of



Volucella inflata. Photo: Graham Calow

England (Ball *et al.*, 2011). Graham Calow was lucky enough to find a third species, *V. inflata*, at the edge of Burbage Wood on 25 May 2011 and again on 13 June. This fly also turned up near Grace Dieu Wood on 20 June, seen by Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin.

Reference

Ball, S., Morris, R., Rotheray, G. & Watt, K. (2011) *Atlas of the Hoverflies of Great Britain*. BRC

Graham Calow & Steve Woodward

NEWSLETTER 46

February 2012

Snow Flea jumps onto Leics insect list

Unlikely as it sounds, there is an insect that seems to thrive in cold conditions and enjoys hopping about in the snow. Users of Colin Plant's key to Mecoptera (Plant 1997) will have skipped over the Snow Flea *Boreus hyemalis*, in couplet 1, en route to the more typical scorpionflies. This bizarre creature has long legs, vestigial wings and a head with a long, downward-pointed beak.

I am not sure why I decided to turn over that particular bit of loose moss, on exposed rocks below Old John (Bradgate Park) on 11 November 2011, but I chose it well. Within it I could see a yellow, segmented abdomen. Having got the insect into a tube, its distinctive shape became clear. The long ovipositor showed that this was a female. I sent the photo to Colin, who confirmed the identification and advised that there were no previous records for Leicestershire.

I have never seen a photograph of a Snow Flea actually on snow. So if the white stuff falls this winter, I will be at Old John with my camera!

Reference

Plant, C.W. (1997) A key to the adults of British lacewings and their allies (Neuroptera, Megaloptera, Raphidioptera and Mecoptera). *Field Studies* 9(1).



Photo: Steve Woodward

Steve Woodward

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

Next Copy Deadline:

5 Sept 2012

Editorial

So Holly Hayes has finally been vacated by the Leics & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC), a sad occasion for staff and users alike. Most of us will have visited at some time or other, for meetings, training courses, to borrow equipment, or to consult the biological records. I have personally visited many, many times and invariably been made welcome and provided with the space, information and facilities to pursue my enquires. In recent years the service had improved under Sue Timms' leadership, with her enthusiastic team getting to grips with GIS, scanning of paper records, sorting out the biological records database, producing the *Recorder* newsletter and organising the annual conference.

So how does LRERC's new home at County Hall compare? I have visited twice to consult records - these are housed in a room known as B28, separate from the office. It is spacious, with windows along one side and even a door opening to the real world outside. Alas, no garden with resident foxes, but the view could be a lot worse! Car parking has not been a problem for me so far - a place can be reserved on the conveniently-sited visitor's car park by contacting LRERC at least 24 hours in advance. It is irksome to have to divert to Reception, get labelled then wait to be collected, but it will probably waste only 10 minutes. The welcome is as warm as always and the staff as helpful as ever.

Of more concern than the location of LRERC is its diminishing support from the County Council. The number of staff is being severely cut back, so the level of support to recorders and recording will drop substantially. Gareth Price, Community Support Ecologist, will already have departed by the time this is published - we wish him well in his new job. It remains to be seen whether progress towards a quality-controlled, unified database of county records can be maintained - but it is difficult to be optimistic. Priority will doubtless be given to Bat, Badger and Great Crested Newt records, as they have legal implications for planning, so it seems unlikely that our invertebrate records will receive much attention. Discussions are under way on how to avoid the fragmentation of biological recording, involving the council, the county recorder network and the Wildlife Trust - let us hope a solution can be found.

Thanks to members who have sent in articles this time - there are a number of first county records and even undescribed species! Observant amateurs really can add to entomological knowledge - keep them coming.

Steve Woodward

Black Hairstreak survey at Luffenham Heath: 2011 results

Lenny Holton and Harry Ball have provided the following update on the Black Hairstreak (*Satyrium pruni*) survey at Luffenham Heath Golf Course, Rutland (SK9502).

The butterfly was seen on each of the five visits that were made during its flight period. All the records were made at the butterfly's stronghold, behind the 15th and 16th holes, in a very large mature blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The fact that Lenny found the butterfly on most of his visits to the golf course suggests that it might now be found at other points on the heath. Time will tell if this is shown to be correct, as he plans to do more survey work in future years. The one fact that he knows for certain is that the 2011 survey produced much better news than 2010, when only three positive sightings were made.

The following are the dates when the butterfly was recorded:

2 June: 2; 4 June: 1; 8 June: 6; 9: June: 3; 14 June: 2.

The total sightings of this rare butterfly in this survey was 14 specimens. It is now hoped that if we get a reasonable summer in 2012 and onward, the upward trend will continue and the colony can for certain expand around the course again.

During Lenny's time at the golf course, surveying the Black Hairstreak, the following butterfly records were made: Brimstone, Comma, Common Blue, Green-veined White, Large Skipper, Large White, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Ringlet, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Orange-tip. Other wildlife: Buzzard, Red Kite, Kestrel, all the common warblers were heard, also sightings of Fox, Muntjac and Brown Hare.

Lenny Holton & Harry Ball



Fig. 1. Common Mouse-ear



Fig. 2. Pouch gall



Fig. 3. *Dasineura* larva



Fig. 4. Chalcid wasp

Galls found on Common Mouse-ear

It is well worth looking closely at common plants - even weeds - as new gall discoveries are waiting to be made... On the 15 March 2011, Gareth Burton brought along some Common Mouse-ear, *Cerastium fontanum*, (Fig. 1), that he had found at the University of Leicester Arboretum, Leicester (SK600015). The terminal leaves of some of the shoots looked as if they had been pressed together into a pouch, (Fig. 2). In the *British Plant Galls Keys* (Redfern, et al. 2011), they were identified as galls caused by the midge *Dasineura lotharingiae* (Diptera, Cecidomyiidae).

I scanned the plant material and sent specimens to Keith Harris (British Plant Gall Society Cecidomyiidae expert) to get them verified. I sectioned the gall that I had retained and inside found white silken cocoons, one containing an orange larva (Fig. 3). Keith thought that it certainly looked like a cocooned *Dasineura* larva and that they probably overwintered in the gall.

Keith mentioned that he had only seen *D. lotharingiae* once before in the UK but that it is probably much overlooked and under-recorded. I decided to rear out the cocoons and, a month later, on the 11/12 April, there was a surprise when two metallic green chalcid wasps emerged, (Fig. 4) – there were no midges - they had been parasitised! The wasps were females, with long ovipositor sheathes, five tarsal segments and antennae with seven funicular segments. I thought that they looked like some sort of *Torymus* sp. I emailed images to Keith, who searched the Natural History Museum Universal Chalcidoidea Database and found no records of chalcids associated with *D. lotharingiae* midges. So what species were they?

I sent one wasp specimen to Robin Williams (BPGS) for help with identification. He forwarded the specimen to gall wasp expert Dick Askew, who replied: "It is a female *Torymus* in the large and

Photos: Maggie Frankum

difficult *chloromerus* group. In Graham and Gijswijt's key it runs to *T. monticola* but it does not agree with the original description in having the tibiae too pale. It is quite probably an undescribed species but more material would be needed before this could be established or a description prepared". Meanwhile he has dry-mounted my wasp specimen and hopes that one day we will have a name for it!

Keith mentioned that Keiffer had collected galls in November and December 1888, so what we needed was for Gareth to find more samples of *Cerastium* galls. This he managed to do - one plant was growing on a lawn, where the grass had been left unmanaged for three years. However, the galls that he found this time were different, in that they were affecting the seed capsules and keyed out to yet another midge species - *Dasineura fructum*. The larvae of these galls emerge from the seed capsule and drop to the soil to pupate.

By late October 2011, Gareth was lucky enough to find more *Cerastium* growing along the grass verge next to the arboretum car park. In this case, the galls were affecting the side shoots, and I took photos (Fig. 5) and sent the specimens to Keith.

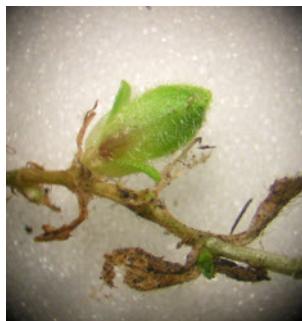


Fig. 5. Gall on side shoot of Common Mouse-ear

Larvae of *D. lotharingiae* were found in the vegetative bud galls and a few larvae of *D. fructum* were in the seed capsules. Parasitoids were also present. He said that there seemed to be morphological differences between the larvae of the two species and checked them against the original descriptions. Further investigation, including DNA sequencing and a comparison of reared adults (when available) is needed to confirm that the species are distinct; including a third species, *D. cerastii*, which was described by Binnie in 1877. A more in-depth article (Harris & Frankum, in prep) is due to be published.

References

Redfern, M., Shirley, P. & Bloxham, M. (2nd ed. 2011) *British Plant Galls*. Field Studies Council.

Harris, K. & Frankum, M. (in prep) UK Records of Cecidomyiid Galls on Common Mouse Ear, *Cerastium fontanum*, and other species of *Cerastium*. In a future edition of *Cecidology* (Journal of the British Plant Gall Society).

Maggie Frankum

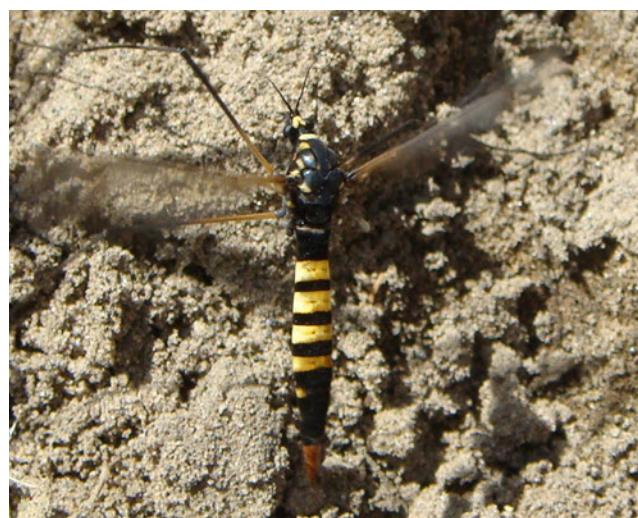
Cranefly Update 2012

While trawling the archives, I have again come across a new cranefly record for Leics & Rutland (Watsonian Vice-County 55), bringing the total species to 147. *Tipula pabulina* was found by Jon Cole, a dipterist from Huntingdon, at a wood near Collyweston, Rutland in May 2005, and this seems to be the only record of the species so far. It is a widespread but local species which seems to be restricted to deciduous woodland on base-rich soils. It occurs all over England, Wales, and rarely in Scotland and seems to be declining quite rapidly, especially in south-east England.

There is plenty of woodland on base-rich soil in Leicestershire and Rutland, either on Lincolnshire limestone, or on the chalky boulder clay, transported by glaciers from the north-east to the east of the county, so *Tipula pabulina* is a species to look for from May to the end of June.

Areas of sand and gravel are another under-recorded biotope for the county. *Nephrotoma crocata* is a black striped yellow species of 'tiger cranefly' which occurs on drier, well-draining sandy soils which are rarer in VC55, laying its eggs in damp hollows in the sand. Like *T. pabulina*, it is a species which appears to be declining, especially in the south-east. There is a single Leicestershire record, and as yet no site from which it is regularly recorded. Again, the adults fly in May and June.

Both of these biotopes would provide interesting records for VC55, so let me know if you want to join me in exploring them.

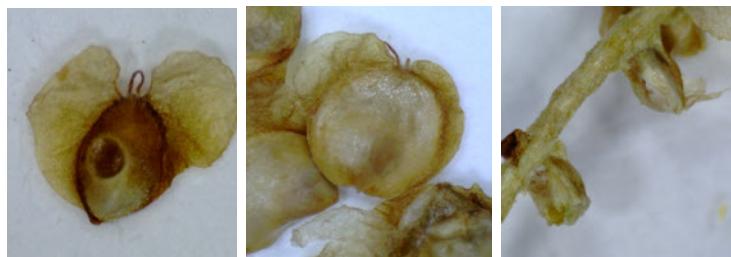


Nephrotoma crocata. Photo: Louise Hislop

John Kramer

The Birch Catkin Galls of *Semudobia* spp. (Cecidomyiidae)...an Invitation

There are three species of gall midges belonging to the genus *Semudobia* which induce galls in the female catkins of various species and hybrids of white birches (*Betula* spp.). Two (*S. betulae* and *S. tarda*) cause deformation of the seeds whilst the third (*S. skuhravae*) causes gall development at the base of the bracts which separate the seeds. The galls are common throughout Europe but, because they are small and hidden within catkins, often go unrecorded.



Semudobia betulae, *S. tarda*, *S. skuhravae*. Photos: Chris Leach

Recently, the British Plant Gall Society has launched a major project centred on these three species. See Leach (2011) or contact the author for full details. In outline, the project has the following objectives:

- determine the distribution and abundance of these species throughout the British Isles;
- determine the host range of each gall-causing species;
- describe the growth phases (ova, larvae, pupae and imagines) of these midges including detailed descriptions, dimensions and duration of each;
- determine the distribution of the galls on individual trees (especially in relationship to orientation and environment (open ground, woodland, etc.);
- determine the variety and distribution of inquilines and parasitoids found in each type of gall;
- establish the temporal relationship between ovipositing of the various gall-causers and their inquilines and parasitism;
- determine whether there are significant effects on gall-midge survival caused by predation by ants and interaction with other catkin grazers such as aphids and weevils.

It is hoped that LES members might like to contribute to this project. Some suggestions for actions are:

- Collecting catkins from around the county (noting location and time of collection) and determining whether or not they contain any galls (numbers per catkin would be even better). Observe catkins from July onwards. If possible, identify the host plant.

- Collect and breed out gall inhabitants. They are best collected as late as possible, just before seed fall in September. Store galls in normal outside ambient temperatures on slightly damp peat with a few drops of propionic acid or similar seems to achieve best survival and emergence rates. Be careful with closures as the emergents are small (some less than 1 mm) and you will need to observe carefully to avoid missing insects sitting on the peat. Anticipate perhaps as many as a dozen different emergents including chalcids, inquiline dipterans and ichneumons as well as gall-causers.

- Take photographs. Catch catkin inhabitants ovipositing from spring onwards. (The gall-causers are often found on female catkins whilst they are in their erect orientation during March onwards. Some of their chalcid parasitoids are often co-ovipositing alongside their host gall-causers). Where and when other species associated with these galls (e.g. *Torymus* spp., *Dasineura* spp.) oviposit is unclear. Information on these aspects would be helpful. Photographs of emergents would be valuable.

- Trace the development cycles of gall inhabitants. How many instars? How long does each instar last?. Descriptions of each instar would be helpful. Photographs and/or drawings would be fabulous. Advice on how to dissect these minute galls would be helpful (the author has about a 5% success rate of opening galls without damaging the inhabitants!).

It is anticipated that it will take 3-5 years to complete this project. In the meantime, as well as accumulating data, we are developing a library of support information and a Help Guide is almost ready for distribution to participants. In the meantime, contact the author at c.leach23@btinternet.com or on 0116 2711991 for further information.

Reference

Leach, C. (2011) An Invitation to Contribute to a Study of *Semudobia* galls. *Cecidology* 26, 2 pp73-78.

Chris Leach

Giant Sawfly startles readers in Leicester

Staff at Leicester's Central Lending Library had a shock recently when a large yellow mystery insect turned up. As staff ushered it outside, an intrigued passer-by, Matthew Barker, had the foresight to take a photo on his phone. Matthew sent the image to NatureSpot where it was confirmed as *Cimbex connatus*, a rare sawfly, and the first record for Leicestershire! Consultation with national sawfly expert, Guy Knight at Liverpool Museums, revealed that this species had not really been seen in Britain for about 50 years before one turned up in Wiltshire in the early 1990s. Over the past decade or so it has spread quite dramatically all across the south of England and up the east coast as far as Yorkshire. A number of the records have been from places where Italian Alder, *Alnus cordata*, is present as amenity planting and it is speculated that these insects are a continental strain which may have been introduced with these trees, although there is no real evidence for this. However this does not really explain why a specimen should turn up in the Leicester Central Lending Library



Cimbex connatus, female. Photo: Matthew Barker

Sawflies are not true flies, but belong to the order Hymenoptera, along with bees, wasps and ants. The larvae feed on most alders, including *Alnus glutinosa* and *Alnus incana*, and are large

(~50 mm), green, with a darker stripe running along the length of the body. It might be possible to find them curled up on alder leaves in late summer. The size of the adult is about 30 mm in body length - a really impressive insect.

There are three *Cimbex* species found in Britain, though only *C. femoratus*, the Birch Sawfly, has been previously seen in VC55. *C. luteus* feeds on willows and is extremely rare with very few British records.

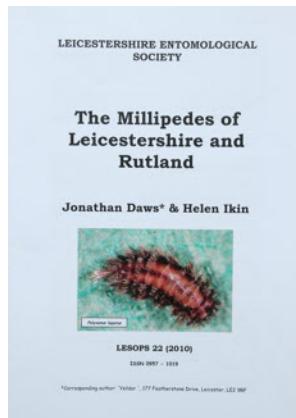
Images and further information about both the *Cimbex* species found in VC55 (and other local sawflies) can be seen on the NatureSpot website – www.naturespot.org.uk

David Nicholls

LESOPS

The Society, since its inception in 1988, has published detailed reports of its members' recording interests. To date, 27 of these LES Occasional Publications Series (LESOPS) papers have been published and it is gratifying that members are prepared to put their research into words. All LESOPS have an internationally recognised reference number – ISSN – which allows the publications to be referable, as copies of LESOPS are deposited with the British Library.

LESOPS have tended to be up to 30 pages long which is just about the limit for printing as a centre-stapled folded document. More recent LESOPS have been substantially longer, making publication of printed copies more of a problem and, indeed, quite expensive. This is compounded when colour photographs or diagrams are included.



The advent of broadband has allowed the society to distribute all its publications as portable document format (pdf) files. This substantially reduces the size of the file for emailing when compared with the original Word text. The net result is that members with broadband receive a pdf of a LESOPS in full colour which the recipient is free to save electronically or, should they wish, print off locally.

It is recognised that not all members will have this facility – so how best to ensure that they receive the same LESOPS as other members? They can, of course, still receive printed copies although for larger issues it may become necessary for the society to recoup some of the cost by applying a charge. Some may consider that, as they pay their subscription each year, this is a bit much, but the LES individual subscription has been at £5 since 1988 – so perhaps a small charge on occasions should be bearable! An alternative, as long as the member has a computer, is to provide the document saved onto a CD – this would incur no charge. Alternatively, when LESOPS are produced members may choose whether they receive a copy if the issue is not of particular interest to them.

Following the 2011 AGM, Dave Nichols who runs the NatureSpot web site (www.naturespot.org.uk) kindly offered to host our publications and as a result 26 of the 27 LESOPS published to date are now freely available. One LESOPS (number 7 - micro moth atlas

by Jane McPhail) remains to be scanned but this will take some time as it more than 200 pages long! It is recognised that older LESOPS may not be up-to-date but personal experience in other fields has shown that the availability of older publications for perusal can be beneficial in putting current information into the historical context. Past issues of the Newsletter are

also planned to be added to the site as these contain a substantial amount of data that give an account of the diversity of invertebrate life in VC55.

Ray Morris
LESOPS Editor

LIST OF LESOPS

- 1: *The hoverflies (Diptera, Syrphidae) of some woodlands in Leicestershire* - J Kramer (February 1989)
- 2: *The hawkmoths (Lepidoptera, Sphingidae) of the Hinckley district* - R Morris (February 1989)
- 3: *The hoverflies (Diptera, Syrphidae) of a Leicester garden* - N Frankum (July 1989)
- 4: *The macro-lepidoptera of Burbage Wood* - R Morris (August 1990)
- 5: *The wetland and riparian coleoptera of the Soar valley - I Carabidae* - D Lott (November 1990)
- 6: *The butterflies of the Hinckley district* - R Morris (December 1990)
- 7: *Provisional Atlas of the Leicestershire microlepidoptera* - J McPhail (July 1993) – **NOT AVAILABLE**
- 8: *Leicestershire harvestmen* - J Daws (March 1994)
- 9: *Leicestershire woodlice* - J Daws (March 1994)
- 10: *Some mid-century Leicestershire butterflies* - T Robertson (September 1994)
- 11: *Leicestershire lepidoptera recording scheme: annual review for 1994* - A Russell (September 1995)
- 12: *Invertebrate recording at Launde Big Wood SSSI: results of the LES field meeting 4th June 1995* - LES members (December 1995)
- 13: *Invertebrate recording at The Wilderness, Staunton Harold: results of survey work during 1995* - LES members and (December 1995)
- 14: *Leicestershire lepidoptera recording scheme: annual review for 1995* - A Russell (December 1996)
- 15: *A study of the foraging preferences of the Hairy-footed Flower Bee (Anthophora plumipes Pallas 1772)* - M Frankum (February 1999)
- 16: *Lepidopteran survey of land at Stanton-under-Bardon 1998* - J McPhail (February 1999)
- 17: *The Stathern-Bottesford disused railway line: lepidopteran (and some gall) observations 1997* - J McPhail (February 1999)
- 18: *A study of the butterflies of Fosse Meadows Nature Park using transect monitoring* - DA Phillips, R Morris & J McPhail (September 1999)
- 19: *A checklist of the moths of Rutland Water Nature Reserve 1991-2001* - R Follows (January 2002)
- 20: *Garden bees update 1998-2001: Anthophora plumipes and other solitary bees that frequent a suburban garden in Knighton, Leicester* - M Frankum (November 2002)
- 21: *Foraging behaviour of bumblebees in a suburban garden in Knighton, Leicester 1998-2001* - M Frankum (January 2003)
- 22: *Fleas (Siphonaptera) of Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55)* - F Clark (December 2006)
- 23: *The Millipedes of Leicestershire and Rutland* – J Daws & H Ikin (December 2010)
- 24: *The rove beetles (Staphylinidae) of Leicestershire and Rutland. Part 1: Sub-families Paederinae, Pseudopsinae and Staphylininae* – D Lott (May 2011)
- 25: *A Provisional Atlas of the Carabidae of Leicestershire and Rutland* – D Lott, G Finch & G Price (November 2011)
- 26: *The Craneflies of Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55)* – J Kramer (November 2011)
- 27: *A Two-year Study of the Water Bugs (Hemiptera: Heteroptera) of Priory Water NR, Leicestershire* – T Cook & F Clark (December 2011)
- 28: *The larger moths attracted to light at Barwell 1981-2007* – R Morris (due early 2012)

The Hornet

Rain hammered on the window like impatient fingers, running streamlets down the glass and dashing heavily into the garden beyond, once glorious but now faded into autumn. The flowers' picture-postcard colours now looked pale and limp as they slumped under the wet and wind.. It was the long wished-for rain after a bakingly hot summer and everyone was glad of it but for the inhabitant of Honeysuckle Cottage on the Green at Great Peterly, the rain only reflected her deep inner pain.

Miranda looked out at her treasured plot and would once have smiled. But not now. She and the sky cried together.

She stood motionless before the French windows with her eyes on a stone sundial and the rose beds surrounding it. She saw the elegant silver birch and the pergola of climbing roses and the little lawn with its ring of beds brightened by begonias. But there was no pleasure taken in what she saw for a completely different picture now came into her mind and cast a dreadful shadow. That picture was of George. Affable, happy George who, on bended knee had offered her a bunch of snowdrops and that wonderful ring. The gem was huge. She had slid it onto her finger barely able to speak while George stood up, took her shoulders in each hand and lifted her to her feet. "Miranda," he said "Please...will you marry me?" She had said "yes" right away as she flung herself into his arms. Of course it was Yes. This was George, whom she loved and worshipped, and of course, of course, she would marry him.

Then plans had been laid for the date of their wedding, the place and the great beaded dress had been ordered. Then all she had to do was perhaps lose a bit of weight and bask in the reflected joy of her friends. That dress, though, it was special. It fitted her like a glove (a bit too much like a glove) but no problem, a little starvation would help and, on the day of course, it would be perfect. She had hummed Vidor's Toccata, their chosen music, at every opportunity.

She had day-dreamed often at work in the weeks before the wedding, "Give over, love" her boss had said, "You're not married yet!" She had laughed. But if she had known what would happen....

Then this morning she had run to the door when a sheaf of mail came tumbling through her letterbox, containing confirmations from the florist, a note from her hairstylist and the receipt for that wonderful dress with the comment that it could be collected tomorrow. Everything was going well..

And there was also a yellow envelope, which announced itself as George's stationery. She had ripped it open and eagerly read the letter...

But as she held it in her hand the smile of eager anticipation slowly gave way to shock. The bright, happy eyes, scanned and re-scanned the words, not believing what they read.

"Not coming....second thoughts....think it's a bit too early.....perhaps we should re-think..... Sorry to upset you. George"

She read it several times because of course it didn't mean what it seemed to mean. George wasn't crying off, he was suggesting ...well, what was he suggesting.....a later date?a different location? Something like that. It wasn't *final*.Depended how one read it..... But though her desperate mind offered explanation after explanation the truth eventually became clear. George did not want to marry.

Then she had dropped the letter and cried for two hours. An anxious pet dog came to her and put a paw on her leg. A small whine of uncertainty escaped it. Absorbing emotion, as dogs do, it knew something was wrong. The dog jumped onto the settee where she had collapsed and she pulled its little body to her, still crying. The dog licked her face, but was restrained. This was no time for joy.

As the morning wore into midday, she had got up and walked to the French windows where she now stood, motionless. Her face, like the windows, was wet with running water as tears welled up and continued to fall, though the desperate sobbing had stopped. She looked at the garden but saw only the memories that now played themselves out in the forefront of her mind. The holidays together, the nights in the cottage, and with each remembered scene, the tears poured freshly down.

She looked out at nothing in particular, but began to see from a corner of her eye, something moving on the crazy paving..

Absently, she looked at the slowly progressing object and could not make it out. It didn't matter, but whatever it was, it was definitely in trouble. But grief or no grief, Miranda's heart was a compassionate one. For a moment she made her mind push the sorrow away and allow itself to concentrate on the small, struggling thing. Rain drops battered it continuously so that every part seemed to droop and she realised that by seconds, this creature was drowning. She went into the kitchen and looked for something to help and after sending crockery flying in her impatience, found a cup.

Without putting on her raincoat she went outside and approached the sodden creature. She bent down, then knelt on the wet paving and looked more closely. She was about to cover the creature with the cup but quickly backed up and away like a horse in sudden fright. It was a hornet!

Breathing fast with shock, she ran back towards the house, but then reduced her run to a walk and turned. With the cup still in her hand she again looked at the saturated insect. Its wings were flat to its body, stuck there by the rain. Its legs made shaky progress as it struggled to pull itself forward, antennae hanging from its head in limp disuse. She walked towards it again and, as she approached, a yellow triangular head turned towards her and a single quivering leg became uplifted in a gesture that seemed to say, "Don't hurt me. I am down here". She placed the cup over the hornet and stood back. It seemed silly. To protect an insect! But she was like that. Miranda had compassion in spades that reached out in all directions and to all things. It was why all who knew her loved her.

Aware now that she was wet, she went back to the house and closed the door.

She allowed herself a hot bath and calls to friends, whose appalled reactions to events were a comfort. She talked with them until too weary and then went to bed, though not to sleep.

The next morning she went to the cup and, lifting it carefully, found it empty. She noticed that there was a large piece missing from the rim that would have provided a means of exit. She was glad as that meant the creature had probably survived.

In the following days she was comforted by her colleagues at work and her boss, though usually rough and somewhat snappy, had put an arm around her shoulder and said that if there was anything he could do... And the weeks passed and the pain lessened and she learned in a roundabout way that George was abroad, not expected back for some time.

A month or so later she had had a night out with married friends and after their meal they parted at the restaurant door. She waved them off and walked towards her car where she had left it at the kerb of a quiet lane, out of the way of traffic. Her feet clapped a merry sound from the tarmac as she made her way down a narrow path. She could see the lane at the far end of this narrow path the locals called a "jitty" and the modest homes softly lit from within as the night encroached.

Still walking quickly, she opened her bag and reached in for her keys, then suddenly the ground fell away from beneath her feet and she felt herself being raised into the air.

A hand clamped itself over her mouth and another held both her wrists. She could not scream, she could barely breathe. Two voices shouted to each other and at her to keep still but she could not keep still. She strained every muscle to be free and saw that her assailants were tall and young and wore scarves to cover their faces. One youth grabbed her bag and emptied its contents onto the ground, snatching up her purse with credit cards and money. The other looking down at what had been spilled released his grip just enough for her to find one hand free and rip his scarf away. She knew who it was! "Lee!" she screamed. "Lee, for goodness sake..." but she could say no more as her mouth was again clamped shut despite her now wildly flailing hand punching and hitting where she could. "You done it now" said the second youth. "You really done it now! You gotta kill 'er! She knows you!"

"I can't" said Lee, "'er mum's a mate of my mum's. I can't do that!" The second youth had no compunction. "Get off, I'll do it" he said, and pushing Lee backwards so he stumbled and fell, grabbed Miranda and at once put his hands around her neck. He walked her backwards to the jitty's fence and held her there. She put both hands onto his wrists to pull them away, but it was hopeless. He pressed harder. His thumbs now crushing her windpipe. Lee got to his feet and tackled him, shouting at him to stop. "You can't do that! It's murder. Let 'er go!" But Lee's attempts to save the day were met with silence and greater pressure.

Miranda's world began to fade. She could see the determined, ruthless eyes of her strangler, and heard his grunting breath as he summoned the strength to end her life.

Her breaths came in laboured heaves and the light dimmed. The face before her

became foggy and stars flicked before her rolled up eyes as life departed. She began

to sink against the fence, taking ivy and with her as her flailing hand caught the creeping plant, blackness deepening. Then, as the last of her strength ebbed away, she felt a soft breeze against her brow and then a voice very close, that said: "Hast thou need of my help?"

Hearing this as life began to flee her body she imagined a rescuer, someone running down the path, strong and

valiant, to stop the crushing pain, though she heard no footsteps, rapid in their determination, nor an ensuing struggle, but only a deep, soft hum.

Then suddenly the fingers lifted and in the blackness she heard a commotion. There were screams and cries of pain and she felt herself released. The darkness became lighter and she found a great single breath surge through her lungs and life began to come back in a series of rasping heaves. Lightness became lighter still and she opened her eyes. From her crumpled position she could see what appeared to be a yellow cloud surrounding the boys, against which they flung out their arms and screamed again and again. Amid the screams there was a deep and constant whirr. It was a sound of vengeance and of hate. On her knees now, she looked up and, her vision clearing, saw the two youths covered in insects. Large insects. Hornets! They stung again and again. Alighting to sting, then taking off and coming in again. Stinging the head, the ears, the cheeks – each youth's face moved with these creatures, almost entering the boys' mouths as they screamed in agony and terror.

Then, abruptly the pair fled, their feet propelling them as fast as humanly possible from the inhuman demons that tortured them.

The furious swarm followed.

The jitty became silent.

Miranda found her struggling breaths coming more easily and she fell onto all fours to gather her possessions. Then she saw a single hornet. It was on the ground in front of her, but not wet this time, and its triangular head turned towards her, with one foot raised. Then it rose, circled her once, and followed the screaming boys.

Michaela Kelly

Unexpected December records

At the December meeting of the Market Bosworth NHS, a member turned up with a large moth that had been found flying around a workshop between Carlton and Barton-in-the-Beans in west Leicestershire. Amazingly, it was a healthy humming-bird hawk moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*), a regular migrant to these shores. It probably breeds here when conditions are favourable but I was not aware that it could occur so late in the year. Was the moth searching for a hibernation site? According to Waring *et al.* (2003) the species migrates to Britain up to December, with some apparently hibernating in unheated situations but coming out on favourable days during January!

The second surprise was when a family friend provided me with a leaf with an obvious ladybird case on it but also what she described as a "woodworm". This latter had apparently been collected from a bathroom wall in Barwell having been noted in some numbers earlier in the year in the same situation. I am not much of a coleopterist, but I do have some idea what "woodworm" beetles and their larvae look like - this certainly was no woodworm! Members will recall the excellent LESOPS on millipedes published in 2010 (Daws & Ikin, LESOPS 23) with the cover photograph (Steve Woodward) of the bristly millipede (*Polyxenus lagurus*). [A better photo appears below - Ed.]



Bristly millipede *Polyxenus lagurus*. Photo: Steve Woodward

Although a little darker than Steve's example, the Barwell "woodworm" was indeed this millipede! Although apparently a common species, now that I have seen how small these beasties can be, it is no wonder that they are overlooked!

Reference

Waring, P., Townsend, M. & Lewington, R. (2003) *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland*. BWP.

Ray Morris

Looking for help?

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

Arachnids (Spiders, harvestmen, pseudoscorpions):- Jon Daws, 177 Featherstone Drive, Leicester LE2 9RF.
jonathan.daws@yahoo.com

Arachnids (Mites & Ticks):- Ivan Pedley, 28 Woodbank Road, Groby, Leicester LE6 0BQ. 0116 287 6886. ivan.pedley@gmail.com

Biological Recording:- Sue Timms, Planning, Historic and Natural Environment team; Room 400, County Hall, Glenfield LE3 8RA
Sue.timms@leics.gov.uk

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

Coleoptera:- Graham Finch, 14 Thorndale, Ibstock, Leics. LE67 6JT: m.finch4@ntlworld.com.

Diplopoda:- Jon Daws, see Arachnids.

Diptera (Acalyptates, Syrphids & Brachycera):- Darwyn Sumner, 122 Link Road, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7BX. 0116 212 5075.
Darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com

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

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

Hemiptera:- Dave Budworth, see page 2.

Isopoda (Woodlice):- Jon Daws, see Arachnids.

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

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

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

Orthoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda

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

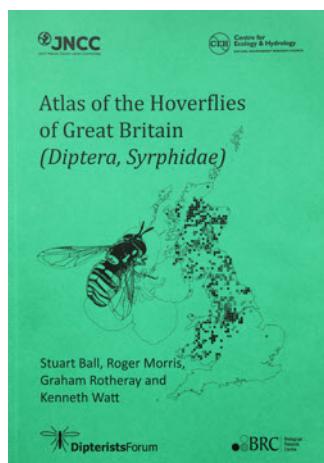
Plant Galls:- Maggie Frankum, see page 2.

Psocoptera:- Helen Ikin, see Chilopoda.

Thysanoptera: Ivan Pedley, see Mites.

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

New hoverfly atlas is published



As a contributor to the national Hoverfly Recording Scheme (www.hoverfly.org.uk), I have just received a free copy of the new atlas. Members may recall that two of the authors, Stuart Ball and Roger Morris, ran a superb hoverfly workshop for us at Barrow a few years ago. The usual dot maps are there, with three date classes: before 1985, 1985 - 1999 and 2000 onwards. Some of the maps clearly show changes in range (e.g. *Volucella inanis*) but recorder-effort seems to influence many of the maps, judging by the county-shaped blocks of dots! This bias is fully acknowledged in the atlas and various statistical methods have been

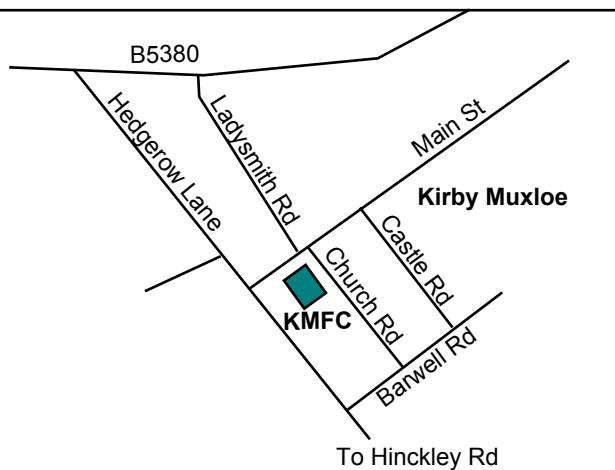
applied to allow for it, for example a chart is provided showing, for each species, the trend in the proportion of records received. Also included are charts showing the trend in its range and the distribution of records throughout the year (phenology). The shapes of these trends are clear enough, but the titles and scales on these charts are so small they are illegible. The fourth chart, showing habitat preference, is almost useless without legible habitat names. In addition to the maps and charts, a very useful summary of the biology, status and distribution is provided for each species.

The introductory section comprises 28 pages, covering the history of the recording scheme, gains and losses to the British fauna, an interesting review of hoverfly biology, followed by an explanation of the atlas results and analysis.

Published by the Biological Records Centre (2011) ISBN 978-1-906698-25-6.

Ed.

Indoor Meetings Programme



Our venue is Kirby Muxloe Free Church, Main Street, Kirby Muxloe LE9 2AN SK51 7042. The session starts at 7:30, but most members arrive half an hour earlier for a natter and a cuppa. Visitors are welcome. We need to be out by 10:00.

The February and March meetings give a different perspective to close-up photography of insects. Both presenters are adept photographers and members should benefit from both sessions.

Thursday 9 February – Session 1: Basic macro photography in the field A practical session where Roger Ellis will show us how the use of different techniques with the camera should help us to achieve better images of insects taken in the field. Aware that not everyone can afford expensive equipment, his presentation will take us through the process so that members will see comparable images between photographs taken with an instant snapshot and a SLR camera. Roger will bring his cameras, lenses and some printed photographs. He will set-up several indoor mini-studios using affordable equipment so that you can practise taking photographs with your own camera so do bring them along to the meeting. Specimens and flowers will be available to practise with.

Thursday 8 March – Session 2: Insect Macro Photography Darwyn Sumner, editor of the *Bulletin of the Dipterists Forum* will talk us through the first part of the evening with his presentation to show us how he obtains his excellent digital images of insects in the field. He will bring his camera and lenses to the session. Darwyn wants to use the second part of the evening as an open discussion session where members can talk through any problems they have had and he will do his best to remedy them.

Nationally Scarce beetle in Grace Dieu Wood



Uleiota planata.
Photos: Steve Woodward

On 22 September 2011, a fallen broadleaf tree-trunk blocked my way in Grace Dieu Wood, so I scrambled over it, accidentally knocking off a piece of loose bark. Four beetles were revealed, of unusual appearance. They were quite flat, with red legs and very long, red antennae, held forward, with a kink at the end of the elongated first segment. On closer inspection, I noticed teeth on the sides on the “shoulders” of the thorax. My identification of *Uleiota planata* (Coleoptera: Silvanidae) was confirmed by Steve Lane of Coventry. This is a nationally scarce beetle and designated as

“Notable A”. The NBN map shows a cluster of records in the London area, but only 11 widely-scattered dots over the rest of England and Wales, with no records at all in the east Midlands.

Steve Woodward

Don't forget to record dragonflies in 2012

Those who missed Ian Merrill's talk in November may not know that the British Dragonfly Society (british-dragonflies.org.uk) intends to publish a national atlas in 2013. So *Lestes sponsa* Emerald Damselfly.



this is a reminder to make a special effort to record local dragonflies in 2012, the last year of fieldwork. Ian is the county recorder for dragonflies, his contact details are on page 11.

Ed.