

**Six-spotted Pot Beetle *Cryptocephalus sexpunctatus* (Linnaeus, 1758) Chrysomelidae, Coleoptera found at the Devil's Spittleful, Worcestershire.**

John Bingham & Denise Bingham

On 27th May 2022 Denise Bingham spotted two small red beetles on a Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* bush growing at the Devil's Spittleful heathland NR near Kidderminster. On collection one was identified as *Cryptocephalus sexpunctatus*, listed as Nationally Endangered. Later the live specimen was released back onto the bush where it was found. This species was first recorded from Shrawley Wood, Worcestershire by Ross Piper in 2008 (Piper 2008) and has been seen subsequently at that site. The habitat at the Devil's Spittleful where it was found in May 2022 consisted of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* heathland with an open covering of small bushes of various shrub and tree species, both Broom *Cytisus scoparius* and Gorse *Ulex* spp. being frequent as were yellow Asteraceae, typically Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*.



01. Six-spotted Pot Beetle *Cryptocephalus sexpunctatus* at Devil's Spittleful 27.05.22. John Bingham.

The typical habitat is not heathland, but ride margins and glades in broad-leaved woodlands with a diversity of vegetation structure: it also occurs in chalk grassland with scrub. Hubble (2014) gives the habitat and ecology as 'on a variety of plants, including scrubby trees, Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* and yellow Asteraceae. Found on chalk grassland with dense scrub, especially on west-facing slopes, and in broadleaved woodland. Adults feed on leaves (and possibly pollen) of various scrub trees, larvae probably feed on low-growing plants'.

Finding this beetle at the new site was unexpected and extends the known range of this species in Worcestershire, perhaps suggesting there may be a small dispersed population around the River Severn corridor area in the north of the county. Nationally the distribution is restricted to three widely separated sites – Kirkconnell Flow NNR, Kirkcudbrightshire, Shrawley Wood, Worcestershire and Stockbridge Down, Hampshire (Hubble 2014). None of these sites appear to have clearly viable populations with very few records known. Shrawley is perhaps the best site with several sightings over recent years. Clearly, we have more to understand on the species' requirements, but open low scrub and sunny glades appear to be favoured. Soil type is presumably less important but perhaps a friable soil, such as the heathland sands of Devil's Spittleful suits it. Ideally finding the larval pots of the beetle would help us understand more about its ecology and also to confirm that a breeding population occurs at the Devil's Spittleful site.

**References**

Hubble, D.S. 2014 A review of the scarce and threatened beetles of Great Britain. The leaf beetles and their allies Chrysomelidae, Megalopodidae and Orsodacnidae Species Status No.19. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR16.

Piper, R. 2008 *Cryptocephalus sexpunctatus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Chrysomelidae) in Shrawley Wood, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* 25:15-17

**Images**

01. Six-spotted Pot Beetle *Cryptocephalus sexpunctatus* at Devil's Spittleful 27.05.22. John Bingham.