

## Worcestershire invertebrates: interesting records 2017.

John and Denise Bingham

Coleoptera, Scarabaeidae, *Aphodius distinctus* (Müller, O.F., 1776). Nationally Scarce, Dung Beetle.

Recorded 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 along with many other common dung beetles flying to fresh cow dung on the Devil's Spittleful NR. *Aphodius distinctus* is a small (4.5mm long) dung beetle, listed as Nationally Notable B. It appears to have a preference for sandy soils, according to NBN Gateway this may be a new beetle species for Worcestershire.

Diptera, Conopidae, *Myopa hirsuta* = *strandii* (Stuke & Clements, 2008). RDB3.

This Red Data Book species has only been recorded before for Worcestershire at Hartlebury Common in 2009 by Kevin McGee. Several were noted by John Bingham on 2nd April 2017 at the Rifle Range NR, Kidderminster resting on *Prunus spinosa* flowers. It is quite a hairy *Myopa* with adpressed black ventral hairs at the bases of the tibiae. Several *Myopa buccata* and *M. tessellatipennis* with distinctive banded wings were also seen on the *Prunus* flowers. The prey species being solitary bees were present in some number flying amongst the *Prunus* flowers.

According to Steve Falk's webpage *M. hirsuta* is a scarce species with records concentrated in the East Anglian Brecks, the heaths of the West Midlands (Staffordshire) and blossom-rich coastal sites in SW England. The presence of blossoming Gorse combined with sallow at many if not all of its sites suggests that the preferred host may be the mining bee *Andrena bimaculata*. (Falk 2017).

Thanks to Steve Falk who confirmed my initial identification.



01. *Myopa hirsuta*=*strandii*. John Bingham

Diptera, Bombyliidae, *Bombylius discolor* (Mikan, 1796). Nationally Notable. Bee-fly

The unseasonably warm period around 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 saw numerous *Bombylius major* at a site near Menith Wood. Amongst them was the slightly larger and darker form of *B. discolor* that was first recorded there by Brett Westwood. Reports have come from elsewhere in the county suggesting an expansion of range of this southerly bee-fly. The spotted wings and a darker chestnut/black appearance in the field makes identification possible, but confirmed only when they rest which is not very often! Bare earth banks offered the best opportunity and a few *Primula vulgaris* flowers seemed attractive. The larvae are parasitoids of mining bees and *Andrena cineraria* was common on the site, a species I don't normally see in such good numbers. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April Gary Farmer spotted a single *B. discolor* in woodland at Rock Coppice, Wyre Forest and then a small colony was found on the edge of the wood.

Thanks to Brett Westwood who alerted me to the Menith site in 2016.



02. *Bombylius discolor*. John Bingham

Coleoptera, Dermestidae, *Ctesias serra* (Fabricius, 1792). Cobweb beetle, Nationally Notable.

Several larvae and pupa of *Ctesias* were found in an old hollow tree trunk at Shrawley Wood on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017 by Denise Bingham. The larvae feed on the left-over meals of spiders using their hairs as a defence mechanism against attack by spiders. Two were collected in the pupa stage and emerged a week later as adult beetles.



03. *Ctesias serra* Cobweb beetle larva. John Bingham



04. *Ctesias serra* Cobweb beetle. John Bingham

Lepidoptera, Sesiidae, *Synanthedon myopaeformis*, Red-belted Clearwing Moth.

Over 15 of these moths were attracted to a lure in our Kidderminster garden on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The weather was mild but quite breezy. Moths appeared within a few minutes and kept arriving for over 30 minutes or more, we caught (and released) 15 but more were seen arriving. The location of the breeding site, presumably an old apple tree, was not known as none occur in our or any adjacent gardens. Another clearwing, the Yellow-legged Clearwing moth *Synanthedon vespiformis* was found to be common in Wyre Forest near Bowcastle. At one location over 20 moths were attracted to a lure within 30 minutes in the late afternoon.



05. *Synanthedon myopaeformis* Red-belted Clearwing moth. John Bingham.

Hemiptera, Rhopalidae, *Chorosoma schillingi* (Schilling, 1829)

Swept off grasses on Hartlebury Common Lower Heath by Denise Bingham on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017. This unusual insect looks more like a tiny stick insect or a thin Mirid bug. It is typically a coastal species found on sand dunes with marram grass but also occurs in the Breckland area of East Anglia. It was first recorded locally by John Meiklejohn at Burlish Top in 2007 and also at Hartlebury Common in 2008 by John Partridge. The cryptic colouration makes it hard to spot and therefore may be more common than the records suggest in grassy places with sandy soil.



06. *Chorosoma schillingi*. John Bingham.

Coleoptera, Anthicidae, *Notoxus monoceros* (Linnaeus, 1761). Monoceros Beetle.

Two individuals of *Notoxus monoceros* a small (4mm) ant-like beetle were found by Denise Bingham on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at Blackstone Fields in sparse sandy grassland of a former arable field.

The beetle is known from the Kidderminster 'sandlands' area being first recorded in 1932 by S. E. Wace Carlier at Hartlebury Common.

Other records are from Burlish Top by Don Goddard in 1997 and John Meiklejohn in 2005, Upper Blackstone Farm by Allan Lawson in 2007 (two sites) and Alan Brown in 2009 near Spennells, Kidderminster. The only record away from the Kidderminster area was by John Meiklejohn on a visit to Cherry Orchard, Worcester on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

This is a common species around the coasts with sites inland in the Breckland area but it becomes very rare in the Midlands. Clearly the sandy soils centred around Kidderminster are a focus for this species and for many other sandy or heathy inhabiting species. Our local north Worcestershire 'sandlands' appear undervalued and not known as well as the East Anglian Brecklands, being much smaller in area and more fragmented by modern farming they have a lot of unusual species to offer.

Harry Green wrote an article in the *Worcestershire Record* (Green 2005) detailing the beetle's local history. To quote his concluding remarks..... "there is something of a challenge here! Can we find more sites for this beetle in present-day Worcestershire? There are still plenty of suitable sandy areas in the Kidderminster district" .... So more records please!

Thanks to Harry Green and Simon Wood for information on many of the species noted.

Reference.

Green, H. 2005. *Notoxus monoceros*. *Worcestershire Record* 19:38.



07. *Notoxus monoceros*. John Bingham.

Hemiptera, Coreidae, *Ceraleptus lividus* (Stein, 1857). Slender-horned Leatherbug.

Another sandy grassland specialist this species was found as a last instar nymph by John Bingham on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at Blackstone Fields at the same site where *Notoxus monoceros* also occurred. *C. lividus* has been recorded at two sites in Worcestershire - Lower Smite Farm in 2006 by John Meiklejohn and seen regularly since 2011 by Jane Scott at Astley Buff. There are very few records away from its main area of distribution in the south-east of England and hardly any records in the Midlands. It was first found in Shropshire by John Bingham in 2014 on a sandy field at the Dudmaston Estate (Fowler 2014) and may be responding to a warmer climate spreading further north but limited by habitat and suitable food plants. It appears to feed on *Trifolium* species and at Blackstone *Trifolium arvense*, Hare's-foot Clover was the most likely species present.

References.

Fowler, K. 2014. *Ceraleptus lividus* (Hemiptera: Coreidae) new to VC40 (Shropshire) and other shieldbug news. *Shropshire Entomology Newsletter* 9:10-12.

<http://www.invertebrate-challenge.org.uk/media/1559808/shropshire-entomology-issue-9.pdf>



08. *Ceraleptus lividus*. John Bingham.

Diptera, Asilidae, *Asilus crabroniformis*, (Linnaeus, 1758). Hornet Robberfly. UKBAP

A female *Asilus crabroniformis* was seen (heard flying to start with!) by John Bingham, it was ovipositing on old cattle dung on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2017 at the Devil's Spittleful NR, Kidderminster. I followed the fly around watching it ovipositing on numerous dung pats for over 10 minutes. This species has not been seen locally for some years so it's good to know that it is still present. Green (1998) gave a summary of the possible Worcestershire habitats. It well may occur at other sites around Kidderminster, possibly using horse dung, such areas tend to be privately owned sites where access can be difficult. *Asilus* needs prey items such as grasshoppers, moths, bees and wasps and most frequently dung beetles, *Aphodius*. Scrubby, slightly unkempt fields are better suited as they will support more insects.

Reference.

Green, D.M. 1998 *Asilus carboniformis*, Hornet Robbery Fly. *Worcestershire Record* 5:10.



09. *Asilus crabroniformis*. John Bingham.

Hemiptera, Rhopalidae, *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus* (Goeze, 1778). Bug

This bug has been noted in Worcestershire before by Jane Scott (2011) at Astley Burf on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Two specimens were found in Kidderminster on old garden flower heads of Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* by Denise Bingham on the 9th October 2017. One specimen had a very dark colouration making it difficult to discern but the second specimen was much better marked and its identity confirmed. This is the first time we have seen this species despite regular monitoring of garden insects for several years.



10. *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*. John Bingham.

Araneus, Araneidae, *Araneus diadematus*, Clerck, 1757. European garden or Cross spider.

A record of a common *Araneus diadematus* spider is hardly unusual as every garden in Worcestershire may well have at least one. But on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at Ribbesford Woods Denise Bingham found a very pale form of this species that at first had us stumped on identification. It lacked nearly all markings and identification could only be made by checking the epigyne. A Google search for 'pale forms' of the spider provided nothing and Shropshire spider recorder Nigel Cane-Honeysett, who confirmed our identification, remarked that he had not seen one so pale. It was kept for several days and did not darken so unlikely just a skin moult.



11. *Araneus diadematus* pale form. John Bingham.

Reference.

Scott, J. 2011. Notes on plant bugs (Heteroptera) in Worcestershire. Interesting Bugs at Woodbank, Astley Burf. *Worcestershire Record*. 32:25-32

Images

- 01. *Myopa hirsuta*=strandii. John Bingham.
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- 10. *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*. John Bingham.
- 11. *Araneus diadematus* pale form. John Bingham.