

An Umbellifer Longhorn Beetle *Phytoecia cylindrica* spring?

Wendy Carter

In April 2014 I found a single Umbellifer Longhorn beetle *Phytoecia cylindrica* on cow parsley along the verge just outside the wildlife garden at Lower Smite Farm. Whilst not uncommon in Worcestershire, it has an almost exclusively southerly distribution and nearly half the records are from Kevin McGee's concerted recording in the Drakes Broughton area over several years. The occasional record in the north of the county, however, indicates a distinct possibility that the species is overlooked (records from the Worcestershire Biological Centre database). I've been looking out for this Nationally Notable B beetle ever since my first sighting four years ago but to no avail – until this spring.

They are a relatively easy to identify longhorn beetle; long and thin, mainly dark grey but with red profemora and tibiae (01). It's the least obliging of the longhorns that I've so far had the pleasure to photograph; almost every one moved on once it realised that it had caught my eye. Indeed, a little research showed that these beetles are very sensitive to movement.



01. Umbellifer Longhorn *Phytoecia cylindrica* Birlingham 7 May2018. Wendy Carter

During the hot May Bank Holiday weekend (5th to 7th May 2018), I came across 13 individuals in three different places. The first two were at Brotheridge Green, a Worcestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve near Upton upon Severn, on the Saturday of the weekend; both associated with cow parsley. Two days later there was one in Defford and 10 were found along a cow parsley-rich footpath near Birlingham.

According to the Watford Coleoptera Group (www.wcg.org.uk) the females lay eggs singly in the stem below the inflorescence (not just cow parsley, it's also been recorded from hogweed, wild carrot and chervil). I observed one of the beetles seemingly 'testing' the stem (02) with her mandibles and presume that she was readying herself to lay an egg; she did not seem satisfied with any of the places that she tested.



02. Umbellifer Longhorn *Phytoecia cylindrica* 'testing stem' Birlingham 07 May2018. Wendy Carter

Most Worcestershire records are from May although the beetles do persist into June and occasionally into July so there's still plenty of time to explore umbellifers in search of this beautiful beetle.

Images

01. Umbellifer Longhorn *Phytoecia cylindrica* Birlingham 7 May2018. Wendy Carter

02. Umbellifer Longhorn *Phytoecia cylindrica* 'testing stem' Birlingham 07 May2018. Wendy Carter