

Twelve-spotted asparagus beetle *Crioceris duodecimpunctata* at North Littleton, Worcestershire.

Wendy Carter

On 3rd June 2018 while I was photographing a solitary bee feeding on asparagus flowers (a naturalised plant from nearby commercial plantations) in a scrubby patch at the far end of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Windmill Hill nature reserve near North Littleton (grid reference SP070472) when I spotted a red beetle. At first glance I thought it was a ladybird mimic but as I leaned forward to photograph it, I realised that it was something very different.

When I downloaded the photos I could see that the beetle closely resembled an asparagus beetle *Crioceris asparagi* but it still wasn't quite right (01). A quick internet search brought up a non-native male spotted asparagus beetle *Crioceris duodecimpunctata* (L., 1758) (Coleoptera, Chrysomelidae). It's known from mainland Europe and America but, according to the NBN Atlas, there are no records for the UK.



01. Twelve-spotted asparagus beetle *Crioceris duodecimpunctata*.
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Unlike our native *Crioceris asparagi*, this 'new' beetle is not considered quite such a pest as the larvae feed only inside the berries (and so do not damage the asparagus spears).

Although the photographs clearly showed *Crioceris duodecimpunctata*, as there were no records of it on NBN, I thought it best to seek a second opinion on identification. Many thanks to the recording community for their help and to Paul Whitehead in particular for confirming the identification. Paul suggested that it has the potential to spread fairly readily by the asparagus trade in the Vale of Evesham and elsewhere and went on to say that he is aware of recent records of *Crioceris* species new to the UK but not of *Crioceris duodecimpunctata*; colonisation of the UK would not be a surprise given present climatic trends. Paul also kindly confirmed that historical records of *C. duodecimpunctata* include those cited for Somerset ("Bath and near Bristol," also in June) by Stephens (1839), later quoted by Fowler (1887) and Duff (1992).

Paul suggested that I return to Windmill Hill to try to find evidence of a breeding population. Time, as we know, tends to fly by and although I intended to get return to see if I could either find more adults or even find larvae in berries, I haven't been able to. Resolving the mystery of whether or not there is a breeding population on Windmill Hill or in the Vale of Evesham will have to wait until 2019!

References

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Image

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