

## A few host-plant-specific weevils in Worcestershire in 2016

Gary Farmer

Most weevils go unnoticed, except for a few which may take advantage of garden plants such as the figwort weevils (*Cionus* species) which will feed on many plants in the *Scrophulariaceae* family; the large Vine Weevil which has larvae that feed on the roots of many garden plants; some of the leaf-eating *Phyllobius* species which feed on the young leaves of trees including fruit trees. Some weevils are restricted to only one or two host species, including some uncommon plants with limited distribution in the county (Maskew 2014). These are just a few of the weevils I found in the county in 2016 that depend on one genus or even just one species of plant.

### Mallow Weevil. *Malvapion malvae* (Fabricius)

A small but very distinctive weevil found on Mallows, especially *Malva sylvestris* (01).

The larvae develop in the fruits. This is a common plant especially in the south of the county along road sides, field borders and hedgerows. The weevil is very common where the host grows and by mid- May dozens of them can be present on a single plant.

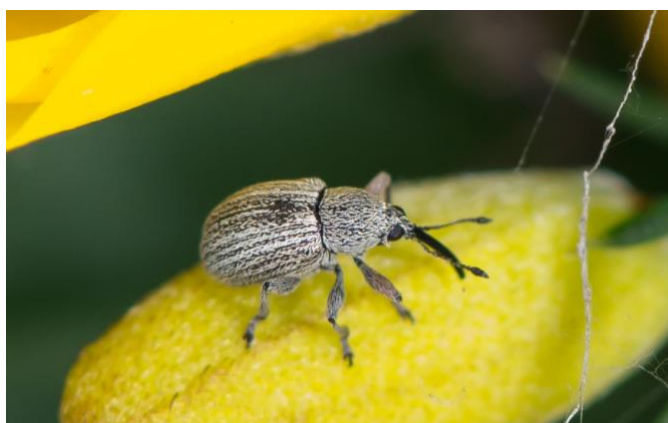


01. Mallow Weevil. *Malvapion malvae*. Gary Farmer.

### Gorse Weevil. *Exapion ulisis* (Forster)

Host plant – Gorse *Ulex*

A small, silvery weevil most noticeable when it leaves the cover of the Gorse spines and venture on to the yellow flowers of the host plant (02). The larvae feed on the seeds. Despite the abundance of Gorse in the county I have only encountered this little weevil a couple of times (Wyre Forest and Monk Wood); records on NBN Gateway however suggest that I need to look harder!



02. Gorse Weevil. *Exapion ulisis*. Gary Farmer.

### Heather Weevil. *Strophosoma (Neliocarus) sus* (Stephens)

Host – Heather *Calluna*

This is a shiny black, broad-nosed weevil with few silvery scales which reflect the pink of the heather (03). It is restricted by the distribution of its host plant which is found mostly on the heaths around the Wyre Forest area and along the Malvern Hills. My only records are from the heathland at the Rifle Range near Bewdley where I swept several individuals from the heather in September 2016.

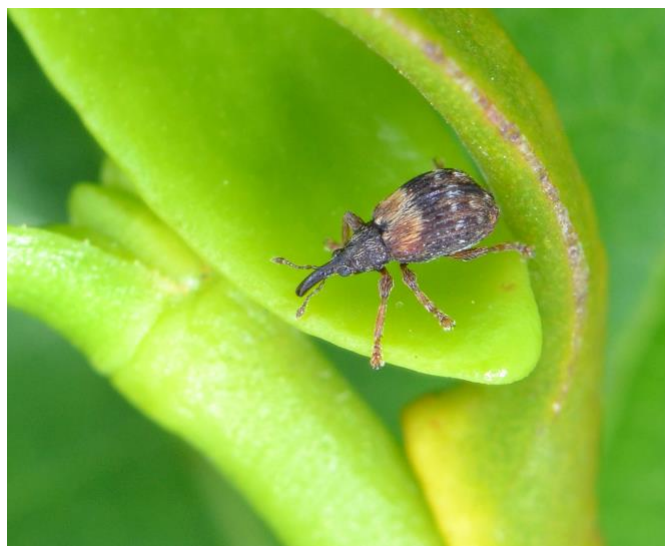


03. Heather Weevil. *Strophosoma (Neliocarus) sus*. Gary Farmer.

### Mistletoe weevil. *Ixapion variegatum* (Wenker)

Host - Mistletoe *Viscum album*.

A small but distinctively patterned weevil found exclusively on Mistletoe (04). This is possibly a relative newcomer to the county or may have been overlooked (Green & Meiklejohn 2004). My only record of this species is from Vale Landscape Heritage Trust's orchard in Naunton Beauchamp where I swept as single specimen from Mistletoe in an old apple tree. The larvae of this species feed in the stem of the Mistletoe leaving a characteristic exit hole at the base of a bud when they emerge as adults.



04. Mistletoe weevil. *Ixapion variegatum*. Gary Farmer.

### Wild Liquorice Weevil. *Pseudoprotapion astragali* (Pykull).

Nationally Notable 'A'

Host – Wild Liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*

One of the many small, apparently black apion weevils (05) found in the county but restricted by the scarcity of its host plant. Wild Liquorice is a declining species in the county due to the two extremes of inappropriate grass cutting removing the liquorice or neglect leading to dense scrub cover in which the low-growing plants cannot compete. The larvae feed in the seed pods and the adults feed on the leaves, leaving characteristic feeding marks (06).

I found several individuals on Windmill Hill this year, the only recorded site in Worcestershire for this rare weevil.



05. Wild Liquorice Weevil *Pseudoprotapion astragali*. Gary Farmer.



06. Wild Liquorice leaf with feeding damage from *Pseudoprotapion astragali*. Gary Farmer.

**Water Speedwell Weevil. *Gymnetron villosulum* Gyllenhal**  
Nationally Notable 'B'

Host – Pink Water Speedwell *Veronica catenata*

Pink Water Speedwell is widespread in the county and can be found on base-rich soils around ponds and water courses, where it grows in the muddy margins. This weevil (07) is a gall- causer on the flower heads where the larvae feed and pupate (08, 09, 10). These galls are much easier to find than the adult weevils. My only positive record from the county is Vale Landscape Heritage Trust's site between South and Middle Littleton where I found several galls and two adult weevils in 2016.



07. Water Speedwell Weevil. *Gymnetron villosulum*. Gary Farmer



08. *Gymnetron villosulum* gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.



09. *Gymnetron villosulum* larva in gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.



10. *Gymnetron villosulum* pupa in gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.

**Elm Weevil. *Orchestes alni* (Linnaeus)**

Host – Elm *Ulmus*

A leaf-mining red flea-weevil marked with black ladybird-like spots (11). This is one of the weevils with a down-turned rostrum which is directed under the body rather than forwards in typical weevil fashion. Adults feed on the leaves of elms and the larvae mine the leaves forming a blotch where they pupate. Adults emerge in late June/August and over-winter under loose bark and leaf-litter. I have only found this species once in Worcestershire, in Flyford churchyard on an Elm hedge in late June 2016.



11. Elm Weevil. *Orchestes alni*. Gary Farmer.

**References**

- Duff, A.G., 2016. *Beetles of Britain and Ireland* Volume 4: *Cerambycidae to Curculionidae*. A.G. Duff Publishing, West Runton, Norfolk.
- Rheinheimer, J. and Hassler, M. 2013. *Die Russelkafer Baden-Wurttembergs*. Verlag Regionalkultur, Germany.
- Maskew, R. 2014. *The Flora of Worcestershire*. Published privately.
- Green, H. & Meiklejohn, J. 2004. Mistletoe Bugs and a Weevil: *Ixapion variegatum* in Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* 17:24-25
- Website of the Watford Coleoptera Group <http://www.thewcg.org.uk>
- British Leafminers  
<http://www.leafmines.co.uk/html/Coleoptera/o.alni.htm>

**Images**

01. Mallow Weevil. *Malvapion malvae*. Gary Farmer.
02. Gorse Weevil. *Exapion ulisis*. Gary Farmer.
03. Heather Weevil. *Strophosoma (Neliocarus) sus*. Gary Farmer.
04. Mistletoe weevil. *Ixapion variegatum*. Gary Farmer.
05. Wild Liquorice Weevil *Pseudoprotapion astragali*. Gary Farmer.
06. Wild Liquorice leaf with feeding damage from *Pseudoprotapion astragali*. Gary Farmer.
07. Water Speedwell Weevil. *Gymnetron villosulum*. Gary Farmer
08. *Gymnetron villosulum* gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.
09. *Gymnetron villosulum* larva in gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.
10. *Gymnetron villosulum* pupa in gall on Pink water speedwell. Gary Farmer.
11. Elm Weevil. *Orchestes alni*. Gary Farmer.