

An observation of a mass ‘stranding’ of *Helophorus* beetles, Sherriff’s Lench near Evesham 15th June 2022

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Helophorus are aquatic, semi-aquatic and in a few cases terrestrial water beetles that feed on decaying vegetable matter. They have larvae that generally live as predators on the edge of aquatic habitats. The adults are recognisable by the deep longitudinal grooves on their pronotum which can appear metallic, reflecting the light (01).

Many *Helophorus* sp. have the ability to fly and some are commonly intercepted on reflective surfaces such as car roofs (Foster, Bilton & Laurie 2014) and in some years large numbers are reported landing on cars during hot weather (e.g. Wright 2018). I have experienced this on a few occasions, when a few individuals have landed and consequently ‘cooked’ on the bonnet of my vehicles. But on one occasion the numbers involved were many hundreds.



01. *Helophorus* beetle pronotum showing deep grooves and reflected light. Sherriff’s Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.

On 15th June 2022 I had parked my (dark blue) car in Sherriff’s Lench near Evesham, in a parking area next to a patch of bramble scrub that surrounds a small, overgrown pond. I noticed a few insects flying around the car in the hot morning sunshine and recognised them as *Helophorus* beetles. I left my car in that location for the day, returning around 4p.m., and immediately noticed many dead beetles scattered across the roof of the car. On closer inspection they were *Helophorus* beetles, mostly quite small with just a few larger individuals. There were also many hundreds of dead beetles covering the windscreen wipers (02 & 03).



02. *Helophorus* beetle bodies on car windscreen. Sherriff’s Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.

I collected a few specimens to identify later (04). The vast majority appeared to be a single species, which I identified as *Helophorus*

brevipalpis, with a few of the larger *H.aequalis*. Both later confirmed from microscope images by Martin Skirrow.



03. Several hundred *Helophorus* beetle bodies covering windscreen wipers. Sherriff’s Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.



04. *Helophorus* beetles collected from car windscreen wipers. Sherriffs Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.

References

Foster G.N., Bilton D.T., Friday L.E. 2014. *Keys to adults of the water beetles of Britain and Ireland (part 2)*. Field Studies Council
 Wright R. 2018. Wildlife Reports; beetles. *British Wildlife* vol.29. No.6: 445-447.

Images

- 01. *Helophorus* beetle pronotum showing deep grooves and reflected light. Sherriffs Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.
- 02. *Helophorus* beetle bodies on car windscreen. Sherriffs Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.
- 03. Several hundred *Helophorus* beetle bodies covering windscreen wipers. Sherriffs Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.
- 04. *Helophorus* beetles collected from car windscreen wipers. Sherriffs Lench 15.06.22. Gary Farmer.