

## The long wait - Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus* found in Fladbury, Worcestershire

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Around 2004 I visited the Oxfordshire Cotswolds where I photographed a large brown bug, which I later identified as a Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*. I knew something of the history of this species, which had been known only from Box Hill in Surrey for 150 years, until a sudden and rapid range expansion began in 1989 (Hawkins 2003). So having found this bug in Oxfordshire I was hopeful that it would turn up in Worcestershire quite soon. However, I had to wait longer than I had hoped.



01. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*, Oxfordshire 2004. G. Farmer.

Hope was raised by the discovery of a Box Bug in Edgebaston (Curran 2011). Then in 2015 the species finally turned up in Worcestershire, at Ashton-under-hill (Umpelby 2015). It was another 12 months before I saw my second Box Bug. In September 2016 I visited Brandon Marsh in Warwickshire with Nicki Farmer where she found “an unusual bug” on Privet, basking in the afternoon sunshine: a juvenile Box Bug. The juvenile of this species is a very distinctive large green bug with brown wing-buds, head and antennae. It made no attempt to move while it was photographed.



02. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*, nymph, Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire, September 2016. N.J. Farmer.

I was very pleased that I did not have to wait another 12 years before finding my third, this time finally in Worcestershire. In fact, I had only to wait for a few weeks. On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 I was at Mike’s Meadow, one of Vale Landscape Heritage Trust’s meadows near Fladbury, when I spotted an adult Box Bug resting on Buckthorn. I was able to positively identify it before it flew off,

frustratingly before I could get a photograph. However, I had just added yet another species to my ever increasing list of new or recently arrived invertebrates in Worcestershire.

The fall and rise of this insect has been remarkable. Restricted to one host species of plant at one location in Britain then suddenly becoming scarce at that location before expanding its range rapidly, turning up at many locations in southern England. But it is its change of diet which is possibly more extraordinary. It is also no longer dependent only on Box, as Box Bugs have now been found feeding on many berry-bearing bushes including Buckthorn, Holly, Hawthorn, Privet, Yew, some roses and still Box. On the continent the bug has also been found on Juniper and Lawson’s Cypress. And while you are checking out Ivy looking for bees, mini ladybirds and little green spiders, keep an eye open for Box Bugs as they now appear to have developed a taste for Ivy berries.

### References:

- Hawkins, R.D. 2003. *Shieldbugs of Surrey*. Surrey Wildlife Trust.  
 Curran, A. 2011. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus* in Edgbaston. *Worcestershire Record* 30:23  
 Umpelby, R. 2015. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus* in Ashton-under-Hill. *Worcestershire Record* 39:18-19

### Captions

01. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*, Oxfordshire 2004. G. Farmer.  
 02. Box Bug *Gonocerus acuteangulatus*, nymph, Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire, September 2016. N.J. Farmer.