

**Two beetle species new to Worcestershire: *Dactylosternum abdominale* (Hydrophilidae) and *Hypera meles* (Curculionidae); and larvae of *Prionychus melanarius* (Tenebrionidae) in a hollow cherry tree.**

Martin B. Skirrow

***Dactylosternum abdominale* (Fabricius, 1792)** (Hydrophilidae) new to Worcestershire. I found a single specimen of this species (01) on 18 October 2015 in the top layer of a garden compost heap containing mixed plant material, kitchen waste, and a little horse dung at SO777339. Small flies and their larvae were plentiful and numerous examples of the rove beetle *Oxytelus sculptus* were observed. A search for more examples of *D. abdominale* at Carpenter's Farm has so far been unsuccessful.

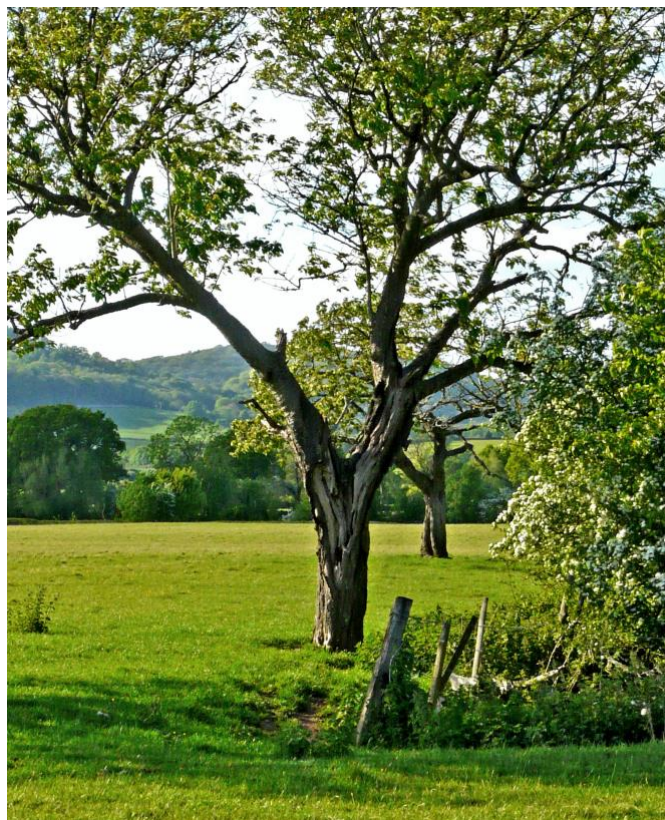


01. *Dactylosternum abdominale* from compost heap; length 4.8 mm. Martin Skirrow

*Dactylosternum abdominale* was first found in Britain as recently as 2003 in Dorset in wet material at the edge of a silage clamp (Allen, 2004). It has since turned up in a few locations as far north as Northamptonshire, notably in compost bins, but up to now there have been no records for Worcestershire (VC37). It is a predator of other insects in rotting organic matter. Paul F. Whitehead, who kindly confirmed the identity of the beetle, stated that it is regarded as a 'tramp-

species' closely following human activity through the influence of climatic change. It has a worldwide distribution and in Africa has been shown to reduce numbers of the banana weevil *Cosmopolites sordidus* (Germar) by larval predation of its eggs.

***Prionychus melanarius* (Germar, 1813)** (Tenebrionidae). Three old cultivated cherry trees (*Prunus domestica* cv) exist at the farm (at SO774341) as survivors of a traditional orchard that had been grubbed up some years previously. One was hollow with granular and powdery rot accessible halfway up the trunk (02, 03). On examining this granular material on 6 April 2015, I found two beetle larvae which I kept in the larval pabulum in a cool room indoors. On 16 May 2015 an adult *P. melanarius* was found alive in the container (04) with another on 20 May 2015. Both were returned to the host tree after identification.



02. Old hollow cherry, host tree of *Prionychus melanarius*. Martin Skirrow

*Prionychus melanarius* had previously been found at the farm on 1 August 2013 when a specimen flew to a Robinson 125 watt light trap run on a particularly warm night when the temperature hardly dropped below 17°C. Nocturnal dispersal of *P. melanarius* is rarely observed, mostly on warm humid nights. That specimen was determined by Paul F. Whitehead, so I was able to identify the recent specimens with reference to that and a



preserved and verified specimen of the similar species *Prionychus ater* also caught at the farm. The Severn Vale in South Worcestershire and Gloucestershire is a noted area for *P. melanarius* which is designated vulnerable RDB2. It is a relict old forest species whose larvae develop in the rotting interiors of hollowing oak (*Quercus*) and other broad-leaved trees (Alexander, 2002) with numerous records from hollow trees in traditional plum and cherry orchards.



03. Close-up of hollow cherry tree trunk where larvae of *P. melanarius* were found. Martin Skirrow

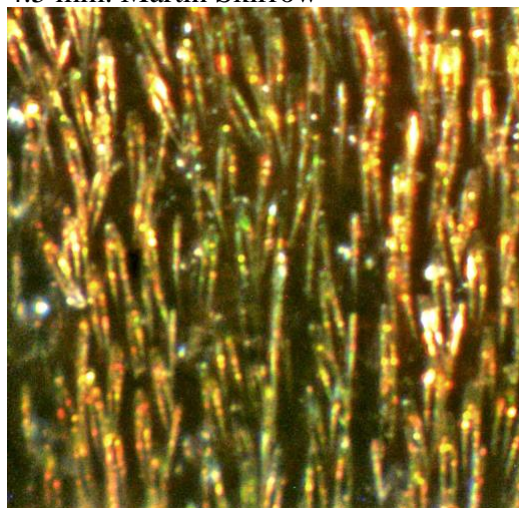


04. *Prionychus melanarius* bred from hollow cherry tree (mm scale). Martin Skirrow

***Hypera meles* (Fabricius, 1792)** Clover Head Weevil (Curculionidae) new to Worcestershire. On July 10 2015 an example of *Hypera meles* was found while sweep-netting in a seven-acre herb-rich meadow (SO777337) shortly before it was due for seed harvesting (05). I sent it to Paul F. Whitehead who identified it as *Hypera meles* a species traditionally regarded as nationally rare in Britain. It has a scattered distribution in the eastern counties and from some southern coastal counties but none from Worcestershire (VC37) until now. It is closely associated with clovers *Trifolium*, which are plentiful in the meadow where it was found. Four species of *Trifolium* have been found there: *T. pratense* (Red Clover); *T. repens* (White Clover); *T. dubium* (Lesser Trefoil); and *T. medium* (Zigzag Clover). Paul Whitehead pointed out a particular feature of the elytra that should help field identification: the sutural striae distal tend to have clear alternate dark and light spots, as can be seen in this specimen (05). The scales on the dorsum are deeply cleft (06) although this feature is not unique to this species. *H. meles* can be a pest species in some parts of the world, notably in the USA.



05. *Hypera meles* from Carpenter's Farm; length 4.5 mm. Martin Skirrow



06. Deeply cleft scales on the dorsum of *Hypera meles*. Martin Skirrow

## References

- Alexander, K.N.A. 2002. The invertebrates of living and decaying timber in Britain & Ireland: a provisional annotated checklist. *English Nature Research Report* **467**. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Allen, A.J. 2004. *Dactylosternum abdominale* (Fabricius) (Hydrophilidae) in Dorset new to Britain. *The Coleopterist* **13**:1-3.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Paul Whitehead for determining the *Hypera meles* and *Dactylosternum abdominale* and for helpful information.

## Images

01. *Dactylosternum abdominale* from compost heap; length 4.8 mm. Martin Skirrow
02. Old hollow cherry, host tree of *Prionychus melanarius*. Martin Skirrow
03. Close-up of hollow cherry tree trunk where larvae of *P. melanarius* were found. Martin Skirrow
04. *Prionychus melanarius* bred from hollow cherry tree (mm scale). Martin Skirrow
05. *Hypera meles* from Carpenter's Farm; length 4.5 mm. Martin Skirrow
06. Deeply cleft scales on the dorsum of *Hypera meles*. Martin Skirrow