

**Gorse Bug *Piezodorus lituratus* (F., 1794)
(Hemiptera, Pentatomidae) feeding on the soft
tissues of a fallen apple.**

Paul F. Whitehead
Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10
3EH. Email: paulpfw@outlook.com
All photographs © Paul Whitehead.

Introduction

On 23 October 2019 an adult Gorse Bug *Piezodorus lituratus* (F., 1794) was observed feeding on the soft tissues of a fallen apple *Malus pumila* 'Flanders' Pippin' in a Little Comberton garden (VC37 SO94). In my experience Hemiptera only occasionally feed on fallen apples.

Discussion

The Gorse Bug *P. lituratus* is widely scattered across Worcestershire breeding typically on gorse *Ulex europaeus* L. or broom *Cytisus scoparius* (L.) Link. New generation adults overwinter and their dispersal to winter quarters occurs from the start of October; in favourable years they may be active in November for example in flight at Evesham conurbation, Worcestershire (SP04) on 1 November 2005. This apple-feeding example (01) was one such dispersant. During dispersal the bugs may visit a range of plants, including trees, incidentally but are rarely found terrestrially like this individual on grassland underneath the open-grown fruiting tree. Further evidence that fruit may be an occasional part of their diet does exist. In Caernarvonshire *P. lituratus* breeds widely on gorse on the coastal headlands but on 3 October 2006 autumn dispersal took adults to the berries of Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* L. at Llandudno (VC 49 SH7781). Fruit feeding in *P. lituratus* is therefore probably a not-so-infrequent preliminary to successful overwintering.



01. This Gorse Bug *Piezodorus lituratus* on a fallen apple at Little Comberton on 23 October 2019 is darkening its integument prior to overwintering. Paul Whitehead.

Although the vernacular name Gorse Bug is reasonably indicative the affinity is far from absolute. At Beckford, Worcestershire (VC33 SO93), I observed *P. lituratus* breeding on lupin *Lupinus x regalis* Bergmans on 25 July 2006, evidently an unrecorded host, and at Hoylake, Cheshire adults were on Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* L. on 7 June 2016. I have records of species from six taxonomic families of Hemiptera feeding at fallen cultivated apples in Britain but they are far outweighed by Coleoptera of which I recognise species from 14 families feeding at fallen apples.

Conclusion

The Gorse Bug found feeding on a fallen apple in a Little Comberton garden during October 2019 demonstrates the opportunism shown by invertebrates, even if it is rarely observed. It underpins their ability to utilise and target a wide range of available resources to enhance success.

Image

01. This Gorse Bug *Piezodorus lituratus* on a fallen apple at Little Comberton on 23 October 2019 is darkening its integument prior to overwintering. Paul Whitehead.