

Some invertebrate records of note from 2024.

John Bingham

Hairy Fungus Beetle *Mycetophagus piceus* (Fabricius, 1777) Coleoptera, Mycetophagidae.

Found on 29th May 2024 (01) on an old decaying Beech (*Fagus sylvestris*) under fungus-infected bark at Piper's Hill Common NR, Hanbury. It is believed to be restricted to old woodland. Length about 5mm. Widespread but an indicator of old woodlands and pasture woods.



01. Hairy Fungus Beetle, an indicator of old woodlands and pasture woods. John Bingham.

The Rusty Clown *Haeterius ferrugineus* (Olivier, 1789) Coleoptera, Histeridae.

For much of the 20th century this tiny 2mm long hister beetle (02) went unrecorded; it was found in Surrey in 1909 and then on the Isle of Wight in 1920 but was then absent until 2012 when it was found in Kidderminster (Brown 2012). Two new sites were found in 2024 at the same sandy grassland near Kidderminster. The first was by Will Heeney on 18th May 2024 and later then on 31st May 2024 by John Bingham. Both were in the same general area and were associated with *Lasius niger* ants. The beetle is associated with various ants, more particularly *Formica fusca*, but Alan Brown reported it with *F. sanguinea*. There is some doubt about this host however as *F. sanguinea* has not been recorded from the site: possibly a misidentification of the ant, or an attempt to thwart would-be collectors?

The Rusty Clown is considered to be strictly myrmecophilous and is only found within ant nests, where it feeds on dead and injured ants and their early stages as well as mites. They are transported around the nest and have been observed being fed by the ants but very little is known of their life-cycle (UK Beetles).

Surveying for the beetle is difficult and can cause disturbance to the ant nests, so having discovered that the beetle had an established population on this site, no further recording was undertaken. Ants and beetles collected were returned to the nest location once identified and photographed. It is possible this beetle could occur on other similar sandy grassland sites around Kidderminster, so perhaps further careful recording could be undertaken, taking due regard not to cause damage to the habitat.



02. The Rusty Clown, a myrmecophile found near Kidderminster. John Bingham.

Green-tipped Rubytail *Chrysis viridula* (Linnaeus, 1761) Hymenoptera, Chrysididae.

Recorded in the Wyre Forest near Dowles Brook on 6th June 2024, this jewel wasp (03) is particularly brightly coloured. A parasitoid of the Eumenid wasps, *Odynerus spinipes* and *O. melanocephalus*. It is widespread throughout southern England and north to North-east Yorkshire (BWARS). A species more typical of sandy soils so somewhat unusual for the forest.



03. Green-tipped Rubytail, a parasitoid of the Eumenid wasps. John Bingham.

A spider *Neriene radiata* (Walckenaer, 1841) Araneae, Linyphiidae.

This species has a very restricted distribution with most sites in western Scotland, but it was first recorded from the Wyre Forest (Shropshire and Worcestershire) by Mike Taylor in 1989 (Taylor 1989) and more recently at two locations on the Surrey/Sussex border. This spider is common in the forest and can be found on bushes about 1m above ground level, on tall Heather *Calluna vulgaris* or gorse *Ulex sp.* in ancient woodland. It seems to occur particularly in managed clearings within oak woodland, where a scrub vegetation of birch *Betula sp.* saplings and Heather grows (Taylor 1989). There is some debate as to whether it was introduced by forestry planting or is native to the Wyre Forest, though there are other northern or Scottish species also found in the forest.

Adults are found from May to August, and I observed a mating pair on 20th May 2024 (04 & 05) in a Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* when the male repeatedly approached the female with caution. Mating was swift, with the male retreating quickly to a safe distance.



04. *Neriene radiata* mating, Wyre Forest 20.05.24. John Bingham.



05. *Neriene radiata* mating before the male retreated quickly to a safe distance, Wyre Forest 20.05.24. John Bingham.

Orange-tailed Dung Fly *Scathophaga inquinata* (Meigen, 1826)
Diptera, Scathophagidae.

This small dung fly (06) appears to be under recorded and could possibly be common. It prefers damper, shady habitats such as wet flushes. Its larvae feed on animal dung. Found at several sites in Wyre Forest in 2024 including Pound Green Common and Hurst Coppice.



06. Orange-tailed Dung Fly, an under-recorded species. John Bingham.

A longhorn beetle *Poecilium alni* (Linnaeus, 1767) Coleoptera, Cerambycidae.

This small longhorn beetle (07) is seldom recorded from Wyre Forest, but it seems to have had a good year in 2024 with several reported sightings. This specimen was photographed on a cut birch *Betula sp.* log in New Parks, Wyre Forest on 10th June 2024.



07. *Poecilium alni*, seems to have had a good year in 2024. John Bingham.

Orange-horned Nomad Bee *Nomada fulvicornis* (Fabricius, 1793)
Hymenoptera, Apidae.

I found this bee (08) on 22nd April 2024 in Kidderminster. It is a cleptoparasite of various *Andrena* bees, typically *A. bimaculata*. The Orange-horned Nomad Bee is often found on sandy soils; in this case in our garden which has some sandy habitats quite nearby. It is widely distributed in the south-east of Britain, but uncommon in the Midlands.



08. Orange-horned Nomad Bee, a cleptoparasite of various *Andrena* species. John Bingham.

Cat's-ear Nomad Bee *Nomada integra* (Brullé, 1832)
Hymenoptera, Apidae.

Well known as a cleptoparasite of *Andrena humilis*, this nomad bee (09) was found on the Devil's Spittleful on 18th May 2024, and is one of many bees that prefer sandy soils. Widely distributed in England but listed as Nationally Scarce.



09. Cat's-ear Nomad Bee, a Nationally Scarce species of sandy soils. John Bingham.

A ground bug *Megalonotus praetextatus* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1835)
Hemiptera, Lygaeidae.

This small (4.0-5.0mm) ground bug (10) was found at Dropping Well Farm on 20th August 2024, on disturbed sandy soil in an arable rotation consisting of sunflowers. It was associating with Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, its main foodplant.

Megalonotus praetextatus is a local ground bug, found widely in southern England although more coastal in Wales and the west. There appear to be no records for the Midlands area so this may be the first record (NBN Gateway). It favours dry, well-drained soils with a warm and sheltered aspect, including sand dunes, sandy grasslands and the Brecklands of East Anglia (British Bugs).



10. *Megalonotus praetextatus*, possibly a first county record. John Bingham.

English names used

Hymenoptera & Diptera follows Steven Falk's Flickr pages. Available at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/collections/72157629222209764/> [Accessed 06.12.24].

Histeridae follows Lane, S.A., Lucas, C.B.H. & Whiffin, A.L. 2020. *The Histeridae, Sphaeritidae and Silphidae of Britain and Ireland*. FSC Publications, Telford.

References

Brown, A. 2012. *Haeterius ferrugineus* rediscovered after 92 years absence. *Worcestershire Record* 33:11.

Taylor, M. 1989. *Linyphia (Nerienne) marginata* C.L. Koch: New Record for England. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* 54: 5.

British Bugs Webpages. Available at:

<https://www.britishbugs.org.uk> [Access 23.11.24]

UK Beetles Webpages. Available at: <https://www.ukbeetles.co.uk/> [Accessed 23.11.24].

Images

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