

Some more scarce insects encountered in north-eastern VC37

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I have been using iRecord, the online biological recording resource for several years. It is valuable not only for gaining verification of a wide variety of, mainly in my case, fauna records but also a store for my records which can be accessed quickly. I can also view all of the records submitted by thousands of other recorders in the UK, thereby gaining location information, including maps, images, identification features, time of year and useful contacts should I want further information.

The verifiers at iRecord are volunteers. Some verifiers deal with records on a purely county basis, whilst others deal with virtually every UK record submitted for an insect family eg, Syrphidae (hoverflies). Because the verifiers are volunteers, the speed with which records are assessed varies depending on workload or other commitments. The Syrphidae verifier returns an assessment very quickly, just like our own Mike Averill, sometimes in a few hours, whilst some records, like the ones I will deal with in more detail later, can take years to be finally scrutinised by a critical eye.

Bearing in mind the above, I was recently surprised by notifications from iRecord of two species I had submitted for verification four years ago. I had forgotten about the records and was pleased to see that my identification of the species had been accepted as correct. It was also interesting to note that the verifiers are leaders in their field. The first verified record was of *Antherophagus pallens* (01), a beetle about 3mm-5mm long with clubbed antennae that is associated with bumblebee nests, and has also been observed in flowers, hitching a ride on a bee from a flower to a nest. My garden in Moseley (SP 826827) hosted *A. pallens* during the COVID-19 year of 2020. Map 01 shows a scattered distribution in the UK and no records, except mine, highlighted with a green line, in VC37.



01. *Antherophagus pallens*. Moseley. 14.06.2020. Des Jennings.

Moving to the second verification, again recorded in Moseley during 2020 but at Moseley Bog (SP 090821), I photographed an interesting looking insect (02) and (03) that deserved more research. *Polyporivora picta* (02), is a flat-footed fly of the family Platypodidae, that performs erratic movements on leaves, feeding on surface deposits. Map 02 suggests that *P. picta* is another species with a scattered UK distribution and includes two records in VC37, one recorded by Mick Blythe in 2002 near Feckenham, plus my 2020 record highlighted with a black line.



02. *Polyporivora picta*. Moseley Bog. 26.10.2020. Des Jennings.



02. *Polyporivora picta*. Moseley Bog. 26.10.2020. Des Jennings.

The third and final scarce insect verification that doesn't fall into the 'recently surprised' category is a hoverfly *Cheilosia grossa* (04) checked speedily by verifier Roger Morris. This is a mining bee mimic, with a particularly long-haired thorax and abdomen. I saw this spring insect at Moseley Bog in late March 2024 feeding on emerging blossom. *C. grossa* are on the wing during a small window of opportunity (March to early May) and I considered myself lucky to have encountered it. Map 03 indicates the Moseley Bog record with a red line, but there are very few historical records in VC37 : however, three were noted during the years 2022-24.



04. *Cheilosia grossa*. Moseley Bog. 30.03.2024. Des Jennings.

To sum up, whatever the outcome concerning record submissions, we should be thankful for such a valuable resource and the people who contribute their time and knowledge to verifying thousands of records annually.

Maps

Reproduced with kind permission from iRecord.



Map 01. UK distribution of *Antherophagus pallens*. 15.12. 2024.



Map 02. UK distribution of *Polyporivora picta*. 15.12. 2024.



Map 03. VC 37 records of *Cheilosia grossa* to 2024. iRecord website.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to iRecord for permission to use their maps.

References

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- Nature Spot- wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire and Rutland website. Available at: <https://www.naturespot.org/species/Antherophagus-pallens>. [Accessed 15.12.2024]
- iRecord website. Available at: <https://irecord.org.uk/> [Accessed 15.12. 2024].

Images

01. *Antherophagus pallens*. Moseley. 14.06.2020. Des Jennings.
02. *Polyporivora picta*. Moseley Bog. 26.10.2020. Des Jennings.
03. *Polyporivora picta*. Moseley Bog. 26.10.2020. Des Jennings.
04. *Cheilosia grossa*. Moseley Bog. 30.03.2024. Des Jennings.

Maps

- Map 01. UK distribution of *Antherophagus pallens*. 15.12. 2024. Reproduced with permission from iRecord.
- Map 02. UK distribution of *Polyporivora picta*. 15.12. 2024. Reproduced with permission from iRecord.
- Map 03. VC 37 records of *Cheilosia grossa* to 2024. iRecord website. Reproduced with permission from iRecord.