

One advantage of living with Hornets *Vespa crabro*

Tony Simpson

This summer (2023) we have had a very active Hornet *Vespa crabro* nest in the roof of the house at Eastham SO66696850, just over the conservatory. There have been frequent incursions mainly at night as the Hornets seem to be very strongly attracted to light. They are very well-behaved insects, being highly unlikely to sting unless very strongly provoked, although at first they are quite intimidating at very close quarters. The main problem has been with large numbers sometimes getting into my moth trap, even when I place it as far as possible from the house, where they eat some of the moths. Many Hornets caught in the night are dead by the morning, possibly from dehydration or hypothermia. Do they fly at night? I suspect they do.

We keep some jugs in the conservatory for watering the house plants and on looking in one on the 23.09.23 I noticed a dead Staphilinid beetle (01 & 02) in the bottom of the dry jug. I knew of the existence of the Hornet Rove Beetle *Velleius dilatatus* which is a parasite in Hornet nests. It looked the right size at 19mm and resembled the photo in Brock (2019). Kevin McGee confirmed the identification for me and he noted that Chris Betts recorded one from his house near Monk Wood. There is also a record of three specimens found by Alan Brown at night at a sap run near Kidderminster (Brown 2014). It seems to be a rarely recorded species but may well be much more widespread than records suggest as not many people investigate active Hornet nests!



01. Dead Hornet Rove Beetle, Eastham 23.09.23. Tony Simpson.



02. Dead Hornet Rove Beetle, Eastham 23.09.23. Tony Simpson.

References

Brock, P. 2019. *A Comprehensive Guide to Insects of Britain and Ireland*. Pisces Publications, Berkshire.
Brown, A. 2014. Hornet Rove beetle *Velleius dilatatus* (F., 1787) (Col., Staphylinidae) at Kidderminster, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* 37: pages 15-16.
Steven Powles' Web Site. Available at: <https://www.stephenpowles.co.uk/hornets> [Accessed 04.11.23]

Images

01. Dead Hornet Rove Beetle, Eastham 23.09.23. Tony Simpson.
02. Dead Hornet Rove Beetle, Eastham 23.09.23. Tony Simpson.