

A Review of Worcestershire Recorders' Field Meetings 2023

Carol Taylor



01. Members of Worcestershire Recorders finding time for a spot of train spotting at Dropping Well Farm 20.05.23. Jean Young.

Worcestershire Recorders hold field recording days during the summer, when we visit a site to record all we can find on the day. Some sites are completely new to us with almost nothing known about what might be there: others are old favourites but we visit because there has been some change that needs records to help inform site management.

We arranged four recording sessions for 2023.

Dropping Well Farm 20th May 2023

21 attendees. Records totalled **268 species**.

Twenty-one recorders, including three new members turned out at Dropping Well Farm for our first meeting of the year. We met Andy Harris, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Reserve Manager at the barns (02) where he gave us an introduction to the site's heathland restoration project. We then spent a day exploring the reserve.



02. Recorders at Dropping Well Farm. Jean Young.

Although we have recorded at the site before, this visit was earlier in the season and Andy wanted to know how the change from farmland to heathland was progressing. Through the day we were entertained by the Severn Valley Railway's Spring Diesel Festival (01) which attracted photographers, armed with very long camera lenses and mono-pods. We observed them observing trains, and they stared at us staring at plants and invertebrates. Their highlights were a GWR HST and a Western class locomotive bearing the name "Western King" in honour of King Charles III: our highlights were somewhat smaller!

We started recording at Top Corner, an area of the original farm grazing land which had not been resown, and this area was also away from the photographers. There we found the longhorn beetle *Anaglyptus mysticus*, a notable B species that seems to be increasing this year. We returned to the barn for lunch, taking advantage of the chairs, shade and toilet. Last time we visited we needed the barn for shelter from the rain. The Portaloo yielded two records, a ground beetle and a weevil.

After lunch, we moved on to the fields that had been sown with various seed mixes. This gives some of the expected vegetation, but lacks the clumps and gaps of natural heathland. The lack of rabbits also means there are few bare areas or hillocks. In the East field, Kevin McGee pointed us to a single, isolated Field Maple *Acer campestre*, which was in full flower and covered in mating *Cantharis rustica* and also a single micro-moth *Pammene trauniana*. One *Cantharis rustica* was wrestling a weevil *Phyllobius* sp. (03) Kevin also recorded *Thereva plebeja*, a southern, chalkland species of stiletto fly, the Plum Longhorn Beetle *Tetrops praeustus*, a female *Andrena nigrospina* at her nest entrance and along the entrance road he found the sawfly *Tenthredo maculata*, which is associated with coarse grasses. We also disturbed a pair of Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*.



03. *Cantharis rustica* feeding on a *Phyllobius* weevil. Jean Young.

Bob Woodroffe recorded Lobe-spurred Furrow Bee *Lasioglossum pauxillum*.

John and Denise Bingham recorded two Notable B weevils, *Magdalis cerasi* and *Rhinocyllus conicus* and our highlight of the day, a single specimen of Sheppard's Nomad Bee *Nomada sheppardana* (04), only the second record for the county we believe.



04. Sheppard's Nomad Bee *Nomada sheppardana*. John Bingham.

Hallow Fields 17th June 2023

19 attendees. Records totalled **303 species**.

Arriving in Grimley to rain, we assembled in the car park of the Camp House Inn, whose tenants had kindly given us prior-permission to park. Malvern Hills District Council own the site, and their Biodiversity Project Officer Alistair Pounder gave us an introduction to the site and recent work which had taken place. The eastern field by the riverside and south fields had been harrowed and sprayed to combat thistles (05), and the northern field was in the process of being fenced for grazing.



05. John Cox searching for life in one of the sprayed fields.
Roger Plant.

We walked along the Severn Way to enter the site, being greeted by a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* calling and passed through into the eastern field, which having been recently harrowed and sprayed after being left fallow for a while, was rather poor for recording. Passing on to the wet, ornamentally planted but overgrown belt between the two fields into the northern field, we found semi-improved grazing pasture, with a wetter area in the centre. This field, and the riverside were where most of the recording was carried out. Tony Simpson found Box-Tree Moth *Cydalima perspectalis*, a recent and rapidly spreading species. The hedges throughout were planted with various *Rosa* species, which attracted various bees, hoverflies and beetles including Variable Longhorn Beetle *Stenocorus meridianus* (06).



06. Variable Longhorn Beetle *Stenocorus meridianus* Hallow Fields 17.07.23. Nicki Farmer.

Some recorders visited the Camp House Inn for lunch, while others stayed on the reserve.

After lunch, two tractors arrived to re-harrow the southern field accompanied by flocks of gulls, while work continued to put in fence posts around the northern field. Some insect families seemed much in evidence but are not in the list of records, as many of us were visited by biting midges and mosquitoes!

Mike Averill found Common Clubtail *Gomphus vulgatissimus* exuvia, a Near-Threatened species, and clouds of Beautiful

Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* by the river, and he also noted Mistletoe *Viscum album* in the riverside trees.

A line of ornamental trees along here caused some puzzlement, especially the flowering Chestnut/Buckeye, possibly Indian Horse Chestnut *Aesculus indica* (07).



07. The flowering Chestnut/Buckeye. Possibly Indian Horse Chestnut *Aesculus indica*. Nicki Farmer.

Gary Farmer found several different species of soldier beetles including the rarely recorded *Cantharis nigra* (08). Some attendees finished the afternoon in the pub garden which was in hot sunshine by then, accompanied by the resident Peacocks *Pavo cristatus* (09).



08. *Cantharis nigra* (note the red scutellum) Hallow Fields 17.07.23. Gary Farmer.



09. One of the resident Peacocks. Roger Plant.

Romsley Manor Fields 15th July 2023

This meeting had to be cancelled at short notice after recent contractor work had rendered the parking unsafe, and events in the area meant other parking was unavailable.

Yew View 2nd September 2023

14 attendees. Records totaled **344 species**.

Fourteen recorders attended this late season meeting at a private site on the west bank of the river Severn. After some juggling to fit cars into parking spaces around the site, we met the owners David and DJ for a tour of the gardens and riverside.

The Recorders previously visited the site in August 2015, since when the Top Field where the group parked for the last visit has been enhanced with the creation of a pond and wildflower meadow. There is a pollinator-friendly patch of cottage garden flowers (10).



10. The pollinator patch. Nicki Farmer.

We spent the morning recording in the gardens, which included a wide range of habitats and associated invertebrates including a good population of Southern Oak Bush-crickets *Meconema meridionale* (11). Will Watson, in waders explored the river edge, finding 11 species of river mussel, while various recorders remained on the bank to act as his safety support (12).



11. Southern Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema meridionale*. Female top, male below. Yew View 02.09.23. Gary Farmer.



12. Will Watson in his natural habitat. Jean Young.

A fly leaf mine found on site was identified by Barry Warrington as *Liriomyza congesta*, a first for the county and another species moving north. It is found in the leaves of various legumes including *Trifolium* and *Medicago*. Duckweeds *Lemnoideae* are abundant on the open water so we searched in vain for Duckweed Weevils *Tanysphyrus lemnae* (13) but did find Figwort Weevils *Cionus spp.* near the water.



13. Searching for weevils. Jean Young.

We moved into the Top Field for lunch, while the dogs were out in the gardens. After lunch we recorded in the field and around the pond (14), with more pond dipping for Will and the discovery of quite a few water beetles and bugs.



14. Recording in Top Field. Carol Taylor.

Back in the gardens, we continued with Ann Hill recording the bryophytes and Gary Farmer finding low hanging Mistletoe, which yielded the uncommon Mistle Weevil *Ixapion variegatum* and Mistletoe Flower bug *Anthocoris visci*. Southern Pill Woodlice *Armadillidium depressum* were found under plants overhanging the garden wall and Rosemary Beetles *Chrysolina americana* were discovered feeding on Rosemary *Salvia rosmarinus*. We all admired a large, well-camouflaged moth (15) hoping it might be Clifden Nonpareil *Catocala fraxini* but it flew off, displaying its red hindwings, so not a Clifden but a rather handsome specimen of Red Underwing *Catocala nupta*.



15. Red Underwing *Catocala nupta*. Jean Young.

We gathered on the sunny steps (16) at the end, to reflect on a good day had by all.



16. Resting at the end of the day. Nicki Farmer.

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