

Lesser-streaked Shieldbug *Odontoscelis lineola* at Blackstone Meadows: new to Worcestershire

Brett Westwood

On August 15th 2023 I was recording plants in a cultivated block of sandy pasture at the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Blackstone Meadows between Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. While searching along the edge where ploughing operations had created a small "cliff" not more than 20cm high, I found a couple of small brownish-grey, hairy shieldbugs. The bugs were c5mm long, squat, wingless and slow-moving. They looked rather nondescript, but on closer inspection were streaked with darker markings and had obscure bands of silvery-grey hairs along the pronotum and scutellum. I took both specimens home to photograph and key out and, although they seemed duller and less well-marked than the illustrations in Brock (2019), I could not make them anything other than *Odontoscelis lineola* (01). Tentatively I posted my photos on the Shieldbugs Facebook page and received confirmation, including a "wow" emoji from Joe Botting.



01. *Odontoscelis lineola*, Blackstone Meadows August 2023. Brett Westwood.

The nearest UK location to Worcestershire for this Nationally Scarce, sand-loving bug which feeds on the sap of storksbills *Erodium sp.* is over 100 miles away in Cambridgeshire. It is primarily a species of well-drained, warm sandy soils such as those in the East Anglian Breckland and some Surrey Heaths. It is also a local inhabitant of southern coastal dunes from Kent to Cornwall and other sandy places favoured by its food-plant. Its presence in Worcestershire is noteworthy, but not entirely unexpected as yet another species which reinforces the claim of the Kidderminster heaths to be Worcestershire's "mini-Breckland". The record was not

an isolated one: John and Denise Bingham visited the site a few days later and found seven individuals. Searching my notebooks, I found reference to a small brownish, hairy bug I failed to identify three years ago in a different part of the same field, but which I now believe was *O.lineola*.

Given that the species is flightless and that the field was, until recently, arable land, it seems likely that these bugs were original and overlooked inhabitants of the neighbouring heathland. Common Storksbill *Erodium cicutarium* thrives best on regularly disturbed, sandy soil, so the fresh availability of its food-plant, encouraged by the cultivation of plots within grassy heath may be benefiting *Odontoscelis*. It is worth looking for other storksbill associates including Fallen's Leather Bug *Arenocoris falleni* known only in the county from several specimens from dredged sand at Diglis in Worcester.

Another southern bug I found at the same site on the same day as *Odontoscelis* was *Aphanus rolandri* (02), not as far as I know, recorded at this site previously, though it has been seen at Hartlebury Common.



02. *Aphanus rolandri*, Blackstone Meadows, August 2023. Brett Westwood.

References

Brock, P.D. 2019. *A comprehensive guide to Insects of Britain and Ireland*, (2nd edition). Pisces Publications.
Jones, R. 2023. *Shieldbugs (Collins New Naturalist Library)*. William Collins.

Images

01 *Odontoscelis lineola*, Blackstone Meadows August 2023. Brett Westwood.
02. *Aphanus rolandri*, Blackstone Meadows, August 2023. Brett Westwood.