An aberrant female *Philonthus* (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae) from Birlingham, Worcestershire

Paul F. Whitehead
Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3EH.
Email: paulpfw@outlook.com

Aberrations in insects are not uncommon. In some lygaeid bugs for example, additional or over-elongate antennomeres are not infrequent (Whitehead, 1988, 2015) and occasionally elements of the appendicular skeleton may be duplicated. The aberration illustrated here is apparently less common as it has significantly modified the appearance of the insect which has retained bilateral symmetry. It was found amongst flood-assembled insects at the back of the river Avon floodplain at Birlingham, Worcestershire on 21 October 2023.

In this instance notable teratological features are:
a) the first antennomeres are both constricted basally and are then suddenly expanded (02)
b) the metafemora are bowed (01)
c) the scutellum is abnormally large in relation to the elytra (suggesting that the specimen may be smaller than normal) (03)
d) the elytra are expanded distally and the outer corners are conspicuously depressed (01, 03).

01. Female *Philonthus sp*., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Habitus. Paul Whitehead.

I discussed this matter with the world authority Dr Harald Schillhammer. He emphasised the risks involved in assuming that such specimens may convey particular taxonomic status, a matter that he himself had considered when reviewing Chinese *Philonthus* (Schillhammer & Smetana, 2000). In fact examples such as this from Birlingham are best considered indeterminate because parts of the beetle agree with *P. mannerheimi* Fauvel, 1869, a localised wetland species, while other parts do not!

A further matter is how this aberration arose. It cannot be a result of trauma and is presumed to be a developmental phenomenon probably of genetic origin within the embryo.

Simultaneously a more minor aberration involving the carabid beetle *Amara lunicollis* Schiödte, 1837 was observed in which the pronotum was expanded laterally much more so than is usual.

02. Female *Philonthus sp*., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Foreparts. Paul Whitehead.

03. Female *Philonthus sp*., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Elytra and abdominal dorsum. Paul Whitehead.

Acknowledgements
I thank Dr Harald Schillhammer (Vienna) for his informed observations.

Reference
Schillhammer, H. & Smetana, A. 2000. A remarkable teratology of Philonthus brevithorax (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae). Entomological Problems 31(2):179-180.
Whitehead, P. F. 1988. Further aberrations in Coleoptera. Coleopterist's Newsletter 31:3-4.
Whitehead, P. F. 2015. An unusual form of teratology in a Worcestershire carabid beetle Amara lunicollis Schiödte, 1837. Worcestershire Record 39:23.

Images
01. Female Philonthus sp., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Habitus. Paul Whitehead.
02. Female Philonthus sp., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Foreparts. Paul Whitehead.
03. Female *Philonthus sp*., Birlingham, Worcestershire, 21 October 2023. Elytra and abdominal dorsum. Paul Whitehead.