

## The first British example of *Tetrops starkii* Chevrolat, 1859 (Coleoptera, Cerambycidae) was from Worcestershire

P. F. Whitehead

Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3EH  
email: paulpfw@outlook.com

### Introduction

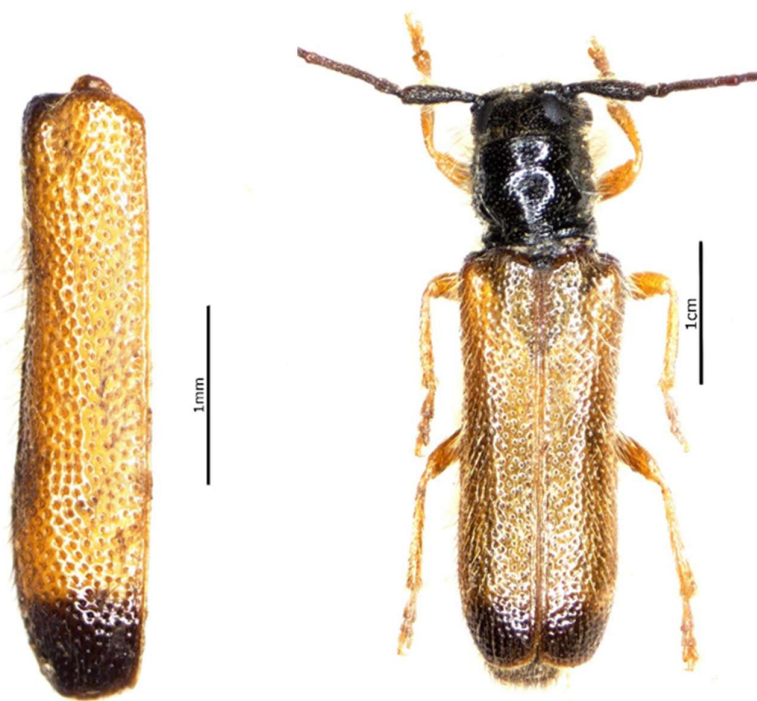
*Tetrops starkii* Chevrolat, 1859 is included amongst the rarest British beetles. According to NBN Atlas data (accessed 5 June 2024) 11 British examples are known, with only three documented during the past 27 years. Unlike its widespread congener *Tetrops praeustus* (Linnaeus, 1758) dominantly associated with woody Rosaceae, *T. starkii* is regarded as monophagous on Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* L. This account introduces *T. starkii* to the entomofauna of Worcestershire and comments on the status of the species.

### Discussion

*Tetrops starkii* is known from seven English vice-counties from Huntingdonshire to the south, demonstrating a scattered distribution

pattern mostly of single individuals. A 2000 Surrey record (NBN Atlas data) from Box Hill was either unavailable to, or omitted from Denton (2005). Available data suggests that *T. starkii* is a genuinely rare species noting especially that along the Cotswold Hill foot-slopes where, at least up to now, Ash is a widespread numerous tree, there is a single record (Alexander, 2018; Whitehead & Whitehead, 1998). It is difficult to explain the apparent scarcity of *T. starkii* in Britain. Some beetles use high tree crowns preferentially; others are limited by the presence or absence of peripheral twig fungi. It could be that *T. starkii* requires Ash wood in a precise condition which is rarely met or that it is weakly dispersive over a short span of time. Uncertainties about the British status of *T. starkii* have resulted in this generally being regarded as indeterminate but its absence from the beetle-based Index of Ecological Continuity (Alexander, 2004; 2024) should now be reviewed.

According to NBN Atlas data the single Gloucestershire record which is attributed to the writer is based on one elytron from under the bark of a fallen Ash log on Dumbleton Hill and is regarded as 'plausible'. The illustration provided here (01 left) should improve that perception.



01. *Tetrops starkii* Chevrolat, 1859, PFW leg. Left, left elytron, Ash log, Dumbleton Hill, Gloucestershire, VC33, 25 June 1988. Right, habitus, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire VC37, Ash tree, 14 July 1985. Note a) distinct regular close puncturation of elytra b) notably asymmetrical elytral apices c) infuscate elytral humeri and subhumeral areas and d) yellow legs, all of which combine to separate *T. starkii* from *T. praeustus*. P.F. Whitehead.

The intention here is to introduce *T. starkii* to the fauna of Worcestershire and to the internationally important site of Bredon Hill.

On 14 July 1985 the writer dislodged a single example (01 right) from the crown of an open-grown Ash tree in the parish of Elmley Castle thus underpinning the biological importance of this key site. *T. starkii* was introduced to the British fauna by Harrison (1992) who discovered a specimen at Swinbrook, Oxfordshire during June 1991. The Bredon Hill example therefore predates this by six years thus becoming the first British record.

Given the international importance of Ash-associated invertebrates on Bredon Hill and the scarcity of *T. starkii* nationally it would be

reasonable to upgrade its status from Insufficiently Known (Twinn & Harding 1999; Alexander, 2004) to Nationally Rare NR and to include it in the beetle-based Index of Ecological Continuity as a rare British resident. Certainly it is difficult to envisage its introduction to Bredon Hill. The accompanying illustrations highlight points of distinction between *T. praeustus* and *T. starkii* which were well stated by Harrison (1992). These are not always immediately apparent so that British field workers may wish to scrutinise their examples of *Tetrops* carefully and the elytral apices of *T. starkii* are not always markedly subangular.

### Conclusion

*Tetrops starkii* is regarded as a rare British native species despite an absence of fossil records; it is evidently rare and localised at its

known British sites. Its inclusion in the entomofauna of Bredon Hill adds further credence to the undoubted importance of that site as a biological refugium.

### References

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### Images

01. *Tetrops starkii* Chevrolat, 1859, PFW leg. Left, left elytron, ash log, Dumbleton Hill, Gloucestershire, VC33, 25 June 1988. Right, habitus, Elmley Castle, Worcestershire VC37, ash tree, 14 July 1985. P.F. Whitehead.