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HARES, NEWTS and ORCHIDS

Park Hill Golf Course is situated near the small, picturesque, village of Seagrave in a mixed farmland setting with open views across the Soar valley to the Charnwood hills: it is privately owned. Spreading across about 72 hectares of rolling countryside, the vast majority of the course actually lies within the parish of Sileby and a smaller section, near the Fosse Way, is in Cossington.

Construction took place mainly during the early 1990's on what was formerly arable farmland. Many of the original hedgerows and all field ponds were retained while more than 10,000 native broadleaved trees and shrubs were planted and new ponds created during the landscaping.

Among a number of plants and animals to benefit from the new habitats are notably the Brown Hare and Great Crested Newt, both of which have good populations here. The surrounding mixed farmland complements the course and wildlife like Badger, Fox and Buzzard move between the two. Initially, the quite open terrain with a lot of grassland suited birds like the Skylark and Grey Partridge but, as the trees have matured there is now more of a woodland flavour with Blackcap and Chiffchaff also breeding.

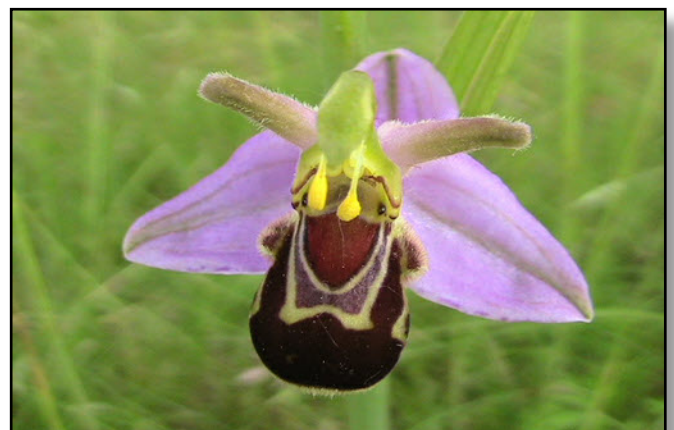
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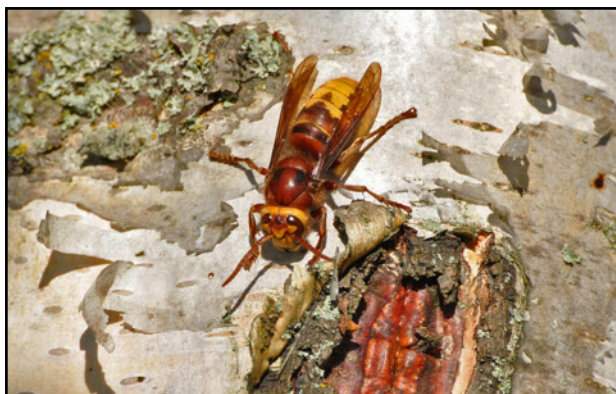
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As well as the widely planted Ash, Cherry, Oak and Silver Birch, there are areas of Alder, Sallow and interestingly Aspen, which isn't normally encountered as much; more rarely found are Alder, Buckthorn and Hornbeam.

The hedgerows in the region vary greatly, reflecting the different management techniques; some are clipped on a regular basis while others are tall and almost unmanaged. A few are still layered, though not finished off in the traditional manner, and the usual inclusion of a ditch adds to



Bee Orchid © Ralph Lockwood



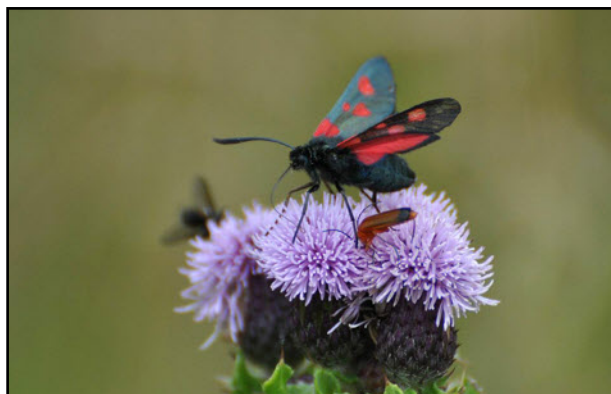
Hornet © Ralph Lockwood

the diversity. Shrubs include Buckthorn, Crab Apple, Field Maple, Midland Hawthorn and Wild Privet. Elm is frequent and survives well, usually in its younger stages of growth however, on neighbouring land, there are three fine English Elm trees and a smaller hollow stump, standing together in a line; they must be a resistant strain or variant. Some of those once familiar trees are still supporting wildlife: twice in recent years, I have found Hornets nests in rotting Elm stumps. Ash is now the main hedgerow tree and there are some impressive specimens with rotting timber, woodpecker holes and cavities, although for safety reasons, some have to be pruned.

Of the 20 or so ponds, Carp and Goldfish have been introduced into a few and the largest has been stocked with various coarse fish and is used for fishing, otherwise, most of them have either only Sticklebacks or no fish at all. Broad-leaved Pondweed, Curled Pondweed, Small Pondweed and occasionally Water-crowfoot occur with marginal Branched Bur-reed, Common Club-rush, Reed-mace and Yellow Iris. The four amphibians, one would expect to find, Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and the specially protected Great Crested Newt are all well represented and the dragonflies



Green-winged Orchid © Ralph Lockwood



Six-spot Burnet © Ralph Lockwood

include the Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor, Four-spotted Chaser and the Red-eyed Damselfly. In places, especially along the edges of the fairways, extensive areas of grassland are left uncut until the autumn, Red Fescue, Smooth Meadow-grass, Yorkshire-fog and other grasses with a mixture of Lesser Trefoil and White Clover provide habitat for small mammals and colonies of the Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Skipper.

More recently, Common Spotted-orchid, Green-winged and Bee Orchids have become established and this year a new colony of Southern Marsh-orchids has been discovered on an area of open scrub. There appears to be a variable degree of hybridism though, as some plants show characteristics towards Common Spotted such as paler flowers, a small central lobe on the lip and faint spotting on the leaves. Adder's-tongue is also a new addition to the plant list and has been found to be locally abundant.

Among the breeding birds are the Green Woodpecker, Grey Partridge, Sky Lark, Tree Sparrow, Whitethroat and Yellowhammer, though the numbers of some do fluctuate. During the winter, the plentiful supply of fruits and berries and the grassland prove attractive to flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings, and just like other places, migration times can be more exciting; Wheatears are regular passage visitors in small numbers and Ring Ouzels have occasionally been observed in the springtime, while the late summer and autumn usually brings a few Redstarts.

Ralph Lockwood

I would like to express my thanks to Messrs. Hutson, the owners of Park Hill Golf Course, for their kind permission to visit the site and have this article published in *Heritage*.

CLASSIFIED RECORDS

MAMMALS

Mammal records are rather sparse for this inclement quarter but ten members and friends have ventured out - or peered out of the window - and sent us their sightings.

In ATO's Shelthorpe garden, at least two **Hedgehogs** have been seen regularly throughout the quarter and DAP in Swithland has had one large adult visiting his garden to feed on a dish of cat food, also throughout the quarter. GF had one visiting his Scraftoft garden on 18 May and adults were seen in several gardens in Mountsorrel. JD found a small injured Hedgehog beside a road in Woodhouse Eaves. The other three sightings were road casualties from Dishley Estate in Loughborough, near The Gynsills at Glenfield and Seagrave where two were dead beside the road.

The only **Mole** record is from Swithland where they were active in gardens and paddocks.

No shrews were seen this time and the only **bat** records came again from Swithland where several **Pipistrelles** were seen on warm evenings in June.

Brown Hares were noted at Park Hill Golf Course near Seagrave and in the adjacent fields where RGL has seen courtship groups of up to seven individuals. On Sharpley Hill at Newtown Linford a Hare was crossing the road after dark one evening in mid-May.

Rabbits were common in the Dishley Pool area and up to six could be seen at any time in Swithland.

PHG reports up to six **Grey Squirrels** feeding on newly bursting oak shoots high in the canopy of Kaye's Plantation in Quorn. Several were seen in Fox Covert at Ulverscroft NR and one in Holly Hayes Wood at Whitwick.

The only other rodents seen were **Wood Mice** scavenging under bird feeders in Swithland.

A **Red Fox** was walking along the GCR Swithland mineral line extension at Mountsorrel at 3 pm on 15 April and HBH reports that they are frequently seen at Dishley Pool. A live Fox

was seen in Groby on 16 April and road kills noted near Long Whatton and near Cossington.

HB saw a **Stoat** crossing the Great Central Way in Leicester on 26 June and HS spotted one in Buddon Brook Meadows on 23 April.

A young **Badger** was killed on the road near Cropston Reservoir in late June and other road casualties were from Swithland, Thurstaston, Roecliffe and the road between Somerby and Cold Overton. A Badger skull was found in a recently cleared area of scrub at Breedon on the Hill and a live Badger was watched in the west of the county emerging from a sett before dark and collecting four bundles of bedding which it dragged backwards into its hole before being frightened away by noisy passers-by. A freshly used latrine was noted in the Ulverscroft area.

A **Muntjac** was calling loudly near Swithland Pumping Station on 9 June and live ones were seen by SFW in woodland at Charnwood Lodge NR on 6 May, a male in the Cademan area - tusks clearly seen, and one crossing the road in Market Bosworth town centre at 10.30 one night in mid May.

Helen Ikin

BIRDS

Mute Swans, mostly with cygnets, were found at a dozen localities. At Groby Pool, two nests were located but 17 adults were present on 19 April. The maximum number of **Canada Geese** was 29 at Hicks Lodge on 17 June together with 15 well-grown young. Of the other ten sites with Canadas, only Thornton Reservoir had double figures, 15 on 12 June. More unusual and proving their continued expansion across the country was a pair of **Egyptian Geese** around the Bradgate Ruins/Cropston Reservoir area. They probably tried to breed but there is no evidence of their success as yet. In late April up to three **Shelduck** were noted at three sites in the Soar Valley but were not seen after the 28th.

A good "garden tick" was had by DAP in May when there was a female **Mandarin** with six young in his garden at Swithland. Two sets of young were seen at Cropston Reservoir and other birds noted at five other sites - all suitable breeding habitats. The last and only **Wigeon** record of the winter was of two males at

Cropston Reservoir on 1 April. Most **Gadwall** reports were from Cropston Reservoir with 60 there on 1 April. Others were at Swithland Reservoir and Kelham Bridge. Most observations were of birds in pairs but there was no record of young birds. Twenty **Teal** were still at Wanlip on 20 April and four days later three were still at Cropston Reservoir. **Mallard**, as usual, were well reported with a maximum of 59 at Thornton Reservoir on 12 June. Most sites had young birds present and ducklings were still being seen at the end of the quarter. The only **Shoveler** record was at Kelham Bridge, where there was a pair in early April and early June but no suggestion of breeding. **Tufted Ducks** were present at five sites, mostly with double figure numbers up to 40. Most had probable breeding pairs but their success will not be proved until the next quarter. Forty **Goldeneye** were still at Swithland Reservoir on 10 April and three were displaying there on 9 June.

Red-legged Partridges were found at eight sites, never more than six but usually in pairs. Unfortunately, only one record of **Grey Partridge** was received, this was a pair at Cropston Reservoir on 24 April. **Pheasants** were probably under-recorded although they were widespread always in single figures.

Cormorants, never more than three, were found at Cropston and Thornton Reservoirs and Groby Pool where fledged birds were noted. In mid-May there were three **Little Egrets** at Cossington Meadows; one at Syston also in May and two at Watermead in mid-June. **Grey Herons** were found at only four sites, one of which was a garden in Quorn where one unsuccessfully attempted to land by the pond.

The breeding of **Little Grebes** was confirmed at Kelham Bridge with three young on 26 June. They were found at another six sites, all in pairs and either displaying or nest building. Juvenile **Great Crested Grebes** were at Nanpantan Reservoir at the end of May but nesting at Cropston Reservoir was later, probably due to the high water levels earlier in the quarter. Others in suitable breeding areas were at Lockington, Thornton Reservoir and Heather. A single **Black-necked Grebe** in breeding plumage put in an appearance at Swithland Reservoir on 7 April.

Of the 20 **Sparrowhawk** records, about half were hunting in or over members' gardens. The rest were widespread around the area. There were over 30 **Buzzard** reports, the maximum being five over Cropston Reservoir in early May and a similar number over Little Orton in mid-June. Nesting was confirmed at Appleby Parva and Bradgate Park. An **Osprey** was successfully fishing at Cropston Reservoir on 14 April and one flew north over Wanlip on 5 April.



Kestrel © Jim Graham

Kestrels were widespread with some birds obviously in pairs, breeding however was only proved at Heather where two juveniles were seen in late June. Unfortunately, there was only one **Hobby** record, this was a pair over Breedon Quarry on 9 June. Likewise there was only one **Peregrine** site noted, this being the usual one at Albert Village where birds were seen in May and June. There were no reported sightings at Bardon or Buddon.

A late (or breeding) **Water Rail** was still at Wanlip on the first day of the quarter. **Moorhen** were noted at all the reservoirs and smaller ponds with nests being found at the end of the quarter. Surprisingly the maximum count was two! **Coots** were found at similar sites but in far greater numbers, the maximum being 31 at Cropston Reservoir on 1 April. By the end of the quarter, young birds could be seen at most of the sites.

Pairs of **Oystercatchers** were located at Cossington Meadows, Lockington, Hicks Lodge and Swithland Reservoir but no young were noted. The same situation occurred with **Little Ringed Plovers** at Hicks Lodge and Albert Village. A flock of 65 **Golden Plovers**, some in summer plumage were feeding in a field at Sileby on 24 April. **Lapwing** were only found at four sites,

Cropston Reservoir, Hicks Lodge, Heather and Lockington. Fortunately in a year that has been horrendous for breeding waders, young birds were found at the two latter sites. A single **Snipe** was at Cropston Reservoir on 24 April and a pair of **Curlew** was in the Bawdon Hill area of Charnwood on 30 April.

The first passage **Common Sandpiper** was at Wanlip on 20 April, all other records came from Cropston Reservoir with four on 27 April. A **Green Sandpiper** was present at Swithland Reservoir on 7 April. Pairs of **Redshank** were at Cossington Meadows and Hicks Lodge but again there was no proof of breeding.

Black-headed and **Lesser Black-backed Gull** numbers were never more than three at any site. All **Common Tern** records apart from half a dozen at Watermead Park and Hicks Lodge came from Cropston Reservoir. Between 24 April and 15 May, they were regularly seen there with numbers usually in double figures with 50 on 24 April. On 27 April there were at least six **Arctic Terns** there with around 30 Commons.

Stock Doves were more common on Charnwood than other areas but the maximum number was at Appleby Parva with six on 5 May. There were regular sightings at Mountsorrel throughout the quarter. Appleby Parva also provided the maximum number of **Wood Pigeons** with 196 in early May. There were also numerous other sightings all over the area. **Collared Doves** seem to be reduced somewhat, the maximum number being only six, young birds did frequent members' gardens. The **Turtle Dove** demise continues with the only report coming from Rutland Water!

The demise of the **Cuckoo** also continues although they were heard in around 15 areas. They were nowhere near as common as a few years ago (I personally did not see one this year and only heard the odd one).

No **Barn Owls** were reported this quarter and Bradgate Park provided the only place where a **Little Owl** could be guaranteed, with at least one bird usually found in the same tree. **Tawny Owls** were calling in gardens at Cropston and Swithland as well as five other sites across the north of the county.

The first **Swifts** of the year were noted at Swithland Reservoir when 50 were feeding on

28 April. These were followed by two at Hugglescote on 3 May. Five hundred were feeding over Cropston Reservoir on 8 June. Generally, **Swifts** were well reported this quarter. **Kingfishers** were regularly found along Buddon Wood Brook but only at another two sites, Dishley Pool and Wanlip. **Green Woodpeckers** were widespread and found in around 20 areas including gardens at Cropston and Quorn. There were a similar number of **Great Spotted Woodpecker** records but slightly more garden observations.

The bird of the quarter was undoubtedly a **Golden Oriole** which was heard and eventually seen at Swithland Reservoir in mid-May.

The most **Magpies** seen together was ten and **Jays** were well reported with sightings all across the Charnwood area. The biggest number of **Jackdaws** was 24 at Swithland Hall on 13 May and there were 140 **Rooks** at Appleby Magna on 5 May. At the same site on the same date were 61 **Carion Crows**. **Ravens**, never more than two, were noted at Swithland Reservoir, Hicks Lodge, Ulverscroft and Swannymote Wood.

Goldcrests were widespread and reported from 15 different sites; six were seen at both Cropston Reservoir and Alistair's Wood, Lount. Singing **Blue Tits** were heard early in the season and by the end of the quarter many gardens held busy parents and noisy young. Similar comments could be made for **Great Tits** but not so many young birds were noted. **Coal Tits** were not as common but still widespread although no one reported young birds. **Marsh Tits** were only seen along the Buddon Brook Meadows, Shepshed and Cropston and **Willow Tits** were not mentioned at all.

Sky Larks in suitable breeding areas were found in a dozen different places. Seventeen, mostly in pairs and singing were at Appleby Parva on 5 May. A hundred **Sand Martins** were feeding over Cropston Reservoir on 14 April. Breeding banks or walls were being used at Lockington and Kelham Bridge. A **Swallow** over Bradgate Park on 10 April was the first of the year. By the end of the month they were all around the area which included 500 at Cropston Reservoir on 27th and 200 at Swithland Reservoir the following day. The first **House Martins** of the year were two at Swithland

Reservoir on 14 April and on 4 May 100 were over Cropston Reservoir with 200 on 8 June.

Long-tailed Tits were found at a dozen sites with double-figure counts at Lount, Appleby Parva and Swithland Hall. Family parties were about by mid-May. **Chiffchaffs** were, surprisingly, the most reported species with over 40 observations with singing birds heard all over the area. **Willow Warblers** were just as widespread but with only half the observations of the previous species. The first of the year was heard at Cademan Wood on 6 April. Four were heard at Ulverscroft ten days later. A **Blackcap** was singing at Cropston on the first day of the quarter and there was one at Quorn the following day. After that, there were another 40 records. A **Garden Warbler** was singing at Cademan Moor on 2 May and after that they were found in a dozen places. **Lesser Whitethroats** were present at only three areas Mountsorrel, Hugglescote and Moira where there were three in the area on 6 May. **Common Whitethroats** were heard at around 20 different sites with ten counted at Little Orton on 19 June. The only **Grasshopper Warbler** record came from Kelham Bridge where probably three were singing (I am using second hand information here as I cannot hear them nowadays but it was backed up by photographic evidence!). From 6 May, **Sedge Warblers** were found in the usual wetland habitats and **Reed Warblers** in similar situations from 20 April.

Nearly all **Nuthatch** reports were from Charnwood, three were seen at Ulverscroft Manor and one was carrying mud to a previous woodpecker hole at Bradgate Park. A few singing **Treecreepers** were heard around the area and a family party was seen at Bradgate Park on 26 June. Numerous singing **Wrens** were heard over a widespread area, at least 12 were heard in the Little Orton vicinity on 19 June. The maximum number of **Starlings** noted was 62 at Bradgate Park on 5 June.

One of the most reported species was the **Blackbird** with records of singing, nesting and feeding young. Numbers in the high teens were noted at Appleby Parva and Mountsorrel. Compared with the previous species the **Song Thrush** fared quite well with around two thirds of the number of records. Mountsorrel provided the maximum count with six on 23 April. There

were eight records of **Mistle Thrush** totaling nine birds. They were widespread enough to come from eight different sites. **Robins** were singing in all areas throughout the quarter with more than ten birds heard at Little Orton, Appleby Parva and Swithland Hall. A lonely **Whinchat** was at Sileby on 30 April together with two **Wheatears**. Other passage Wheatears were at Kelham Bridge, Mountsorrel and Seagrave where there were three on 28 April. Singing **Dunnocks** were widespread with fifteen singing and displaying at Mountsorrel on 2 April.

Fledged young or food-carrying adult **House Sparrows** were regularly noted in gardens and the wider countryside and **Tree Sparrows** were only found in a Cropston garden and Appleby Parva.



Yellow Wagtail © Jim Graham

A pair of **Yellow Wagtails** was feeding four young birds at Austrey on 19 June and on the same day, a pair was carrying food at Little Orton. The only other birds seen during the quarter were at Cropston Reservoir and Appleby Parva. **Grey Wagtails** have suffered recently and there were only two sightings, two birds at Buddon Wood Meadows on 2 April and a pair at Cropston Reservoir on 4 May. Young **Pied Wagtails** were noted at Cropston Reservoir, Bradgate Park and Hicks Lodge. Other adult birds were observed in single numbers from a few other locations. The only **White Wagtail** commented on was at Hugglescote on 1 April. **Tree Pipits**, no more than three at any site, were at the usual haunts of Bradgate Park, Ulverscroft Nature Reserve, and two areas of Charnwood Lodge. Singing **Meadow Pipits** were only heard at Copt Oak, Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir where there were at least six on 24 April.

In all three months, small flocks of **Chaffinches** were seen, the highest number being 21 at Appleby Parva in early May. Most of the twenty odd observations mentioned display, nest building or young birds. A late female **Brambling** fed on sunflower hearts in a Cropston garden on 5 and 6 May. Most **Greenfinch** records, of which there were few, came from garden feeders. **Goldfinches** were also regularly at garden feeders but also reported further afield although the most seen together was 14 at Oadby in late April. All **Siskin** records, maximum five, came from gardens at Cropston and Swithland! **Linnets** were reported from a dozen different sites with a maximum of 12 at Mountsorrel on 23 April. Most observers mentioned birds in pairs or nest building activity.

Not many sites held **Bullfinches** but six were seen together at Mountsorrel on 2 April. There were no young birds noted anywhere. Thirteen **Yellowhammers** were located in Bradgate Park in late June. Others were found in only seven other sites including feeding in gardens at Cropston and Hugglescote. **Reed Buntings** were even less widespread with records from only six sites (which, surprisingly, did not include Bradgate Park).

Bas Forgham

Once again, our thanks go to Ken Goodrich who co-ordinated the bird records for this report.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

As might be expected, with the warmer weather, and the advent of the breeding season, we have more sightings to report for this group.

Adder *Vipera berus*: HI reports a brief sighting of this reptile on 15 April, at Ketton Quarry. In the past, this quarry has had a reputation for being something of a hot-spot for this particular reptile.

Common or Viviparous Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*: HBH reports finding a single specimen of this reptile at Warren Hills on 25 May.

Common or Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*: We have several sightings for this amphibian, from a number of different locations, mainly around Quorn. PHG records finding one on 8 May, in a garden pool in Meeting Street, Quorn,

after it had been cleaned out and refilled. He also reports that during the same month there were many specimens present in the well-established ponds in the garden of his daughter and son-in-law on Warwick Avenue. RGL reports that on 14 May 15 specimens – 12 males and three females – were observed in one of the ponds on the Park Hill Golf Course. At the same time, in the same pond, a number of Great Crested Newts were also sighted (see below). HS reports that there were small numbers of this newt present in a pond in her garden in Chaveney Road in Quorn throughout May. On 8 May she observed a Blackbird take a newt from her pond, and eat it! Later in the month she observed two newts in her pond, and on 27 May she recorded eight specimens. A month earlier, on 27 April, SFW and HI discovered a single specimen at the Old John Watering, in Bradgate Park. Earlier in the month, on 19 April, SFW and HI found five specimens, both male and female, one night by torchlight, in Pond 2, on the Ulverscroft NR! Interestingly, they did not see any Toads or Frogs that night.



Palmate Newt © Stephen Woodward

Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*: The Palmate Newt is principally a species of acid uplands, and therefore one would not expect to find it over much of Leicestershire. However, there has traditionally been a population of this species on our local acid upland: Charnwood Forest. On the evening of 10 April, SFW and HI went looking for this species in some of its traditional haunts on Beacon Hill – and it appears that the species is still present, and probably doing relatively well. They found one specimen in the stream on Beacon Hill, where it goes under the footpath. At 9 pm in the evening they found six specimens – five females and one male – at Frank's Pit, and at the Frying Pan Pond, at 9.40 pm, they counted 15 specimens of both

sexes in the space of 40 minutes. All in all, a reassuring report!

Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*: RAL reports that on 14 May, seven males and three females of this species were observed, conducting courtship displays, in a pond at the Park Hill Golf Course, near Seagrave . These Newts were sharing this pond with specimens of the Common or Smooth Newt.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*: SFW and HI report sighting ten specimens, in the process of breeding, at the Frying Pan Pond on Beacon Hill, on 10 April. On the same day, they found several more specimens at Frank's Pit, on the same site. Similarly, HBH found evidence of breeding activity at Dishley Pool, near Loughborough, on 25 May. PHG reports that on 29 May, he found large numbers of toad tadpoles in the margins of Nanpantan Reservoir. On 26 June SFW found a single specimen in Grace Dieu Wood. The following day, PHG reports finding numerous tiny toadlets in the marshy margins at the north end of Puddledyeke.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*: We have a number of sightings of this amphibian from various locations. HI reports finding one specimen on the Charnwood Lodge NR on 6 May, and another single specimen at Grace Dieu on 8 May. JG reports finding two small specimens in a garden pond at Cropston on the 23 May. During the same month, HBH reports evidence of frogs breeding at Dishley Pool near Loughborough. Interestingly, this time round, we seem to have more sightings for toads than we do for frogs!

Tony Onions

FISH (including CRAYFISH)

Once again, we have few sightings to report, but there are one or two: so let us start with the *Cyprinids*.

HB reports sightings of the following species at various times at Aylestone Meadows, specifically near the Pack Horse Bridge:

Roach *Rutilus rutilus*: HB sighted a shoal in various sizes and stages of development on 23 May.

Chub *Leuciscus cephalus*: HB reports a shoal of fish in various sizes and stages of development on 20 June.

Eurasian Minnow *Phoxinus phoxinus*: HB reports sighting a shoal in a backwater at Aylestone Meadows on 23 May.

Perch *Perca fluviatilis*: Our final sighting comes from PHG who reports the sighting of a large shoal of small Perch in shallow water in the south-western section of Nanpantan Reservoir. Nanpantan Reservoir is, of course, a popular local fishery, best known for its Common or Mirror Carp *Cyprinus carpio*. However, it is also home to a large population of Common Bream *Abramis brama*, and Perch *Perca fluviatilis*. In the past, the reservoir has also yielded considerable numbers of the Eurasian Pike *Esox lucius*, and although I assume that they are still present, I cannot comment on the current status of their population in the reservoir. And that concludes our sightings for the second quarter of 2012.....

From time to time in these reports, I have chosen to add snippets of news and information which may not be of local interest, but which I feel will present to our readers a snapshot of the “bigger picture”, especially where I feel that the issue under discussion is one which may have slipped “under the radar” of the mainstream media. As I have said on previous occasions, I consider the conservation of marine environments and ocean life to be one of the most important and pressing issues of our time. And so, I make no apology for this next news item! Recently I received a leaflet from an agency called the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN) (website: www.ssacn.org), working with Scottish Natural Heritage, whose mission is to represent the interests of recreational fishermen (i.e. sea anglers), but more importantly to conserve and protect stocks of sea species, including sharks and rays. To this end, they have set up a shark-tagging programme, with the intention of monitoring and gathering data on the shark populations around the Scottish coasts. (I understand that there may be similar programmes being conducted in England and Wales, but I have no further information on this at the time of writing.) I thought that this item of news was worth mentioning, if only because it would make a change from all the doom and

gloom which we are accustomed to hearing – it is reassuring to know that there are people out there who are concerned about the future of our marine environments, and, more importantly, are taking action to do what they can to improve the situation!

Tony Onions

DRAGONFLIES and DAMSELFLIES

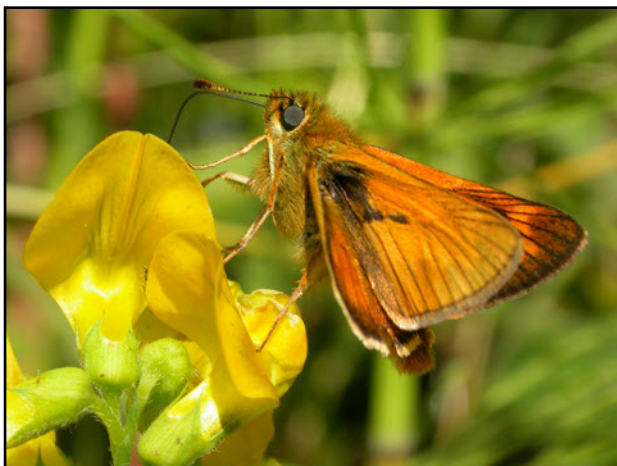
The report on **Dragonflies and Damselflies** is being held over until the next Heritage.

BUTTERFLIES

Following on several rather mediocre summers, the present one must surely constitute the worst for butterflies in living memory, with constant periods of heavy rain and no long sunny periods so necessary for the breeding success of these sun-loving creatures. A real problem for these insects today is the fragmented nature of their habitats in our much-changed countryside and this is particularly so in the case of open habitats such as herb-rich grassland where populations are especially vulnerable in such wet summers. The value of some bushes and tall plants such as Bracken in large open areas during periods of torrential rain is often overlooked.

Hesperiidae

Few **Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*** were reported. Several very active butterflies which appeared to be this species were observed in Swithland Wood pasture on 23 May - an exceptionally early date making the sighting doubtful. In June HB reported singletons at



Large Skipper © Jim Graham

Barkby Thorpe Road on the 19th, at Covert Lane, Scraftoft and Humberstone Park on the 25th and in the grounds of the City General Hospital at Leicester on the 30th.

The only **Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*** noted were about 20 at Newfield Colliery NR by HI and SFW on the 27 May and about 40 at Asfordby Hill by SFW the following day.

No **Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*** were reported.

Pieridae

The **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni***, which first appeared out of hibernation last quarter, continued to be seen, with the last sighting on 27 June, a late date for this species, and was reported seen in some 12 well-scattered localities, ten of which were during May. A female was observed laying eggs on an Alder Buckthorn in our Quorn garden on 8 May.

White butterflies, ***Pieris* spp.**, were exceptionally sparse this spring and most sightings reported referred to single specimens only. The **Large White *Pieris brassicae*** was reported seen in only ten localities and the **Small White *P. rapae***, first noted in HS's Quorn garden on 22 & 23 April, continued to be seen during May but went unreported during June. Altogether, it was reported from eight localities and larvae were noted on Garlic Mustard.

The **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*** appeared to fare better than many species and was a frequent visitor to some of our gardens during April and May though its numbers were well down on most recent years. Altogether it was reported seen in 28 well-spread localities but few sites produced double figures. It was last noted on 6 June, at Hamilton Park, Leicester.

Lycaenidae

The only **Green Hairstreaks *Callophrys rubi*** were 11 seen on and near Timberwood Hill, Charnwood Lodge NR on 23 May and one at Ketton Quarry on the 19 June. Whereas Bilberry constitutes the main larval food plant on the Chamwood Forest, the small populations occurring elsewhere in VC55 rely on certain leguminous plants such as Gorse and Bird's-foot Trefoil though several unrelated plants are sometimes used.

Records of the **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*** were particularly sparse with singletons only reported for Charnwood Lodge NR on 23 May followed by sightings at Ulverscroft NR on the 25th and Asfordby Hill Iron Works and Hamilton Ponds on the 28th.

A **Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*** was a welcome visitor to HS's Quorn garden on 10 June and was the only one reported this spring.

A male **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*** was active at Broad Hill, Mountsorrel on 22 May and between then and the last sighting on the 27 June it was noted in a further 13 localities. Most sightings consisted of ones and twos but about 15 were found at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 28 May.

The **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus***, which last spring was recorded at 35 localities, was only reported seen in 12 localities this spring. As usual, most sightings reported were for gardens and parks and it seemed to be most frequent towards the end of May. A female was observed egg laying on Holly blossom in my Quorn garden on 22 May and the last sighting reported was on 27 June.

Nymphalidae

Yet again this was another poor spring for the **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*** and only three sightings were reported, all during June: one in FTS's Barlestone garden on the 5th, one in Chapel Lane, Leicester and another in RF & MF's garden at Knighton on the 29th.

The **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae***, once so abundant, was only a little more widespread and only reported seen in six localities: at Breedon Hill and Watermead Country Park in April, Buddon Brook Meadows, Quorn; Little Stretton; Appleton Park, Leicester and Aylestone Meadows in May and at Aylestone Meadows again on 20 June.

Numbers of the colourful **Peacock *Inachis io*** have been low for some years now and this quarter particularly so with sightings reported for only 11 localities compared with 30 last spring.

Comma *Polygonia c-album* numbers were also disappointing with sightings being reported for only five localities as against 16 localities last spring. However, six were noted in one small

area along the Buddon Brook at Quorn on 1 April. Others were noted in two areas at Grace Dieu and along the Great Central Way and at St. Mary's Mills, Leicester, where the last sighting was reported on 23 May.

Satyridae

The now widespread **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*** was first noted on 14 April, compared with 1 April last year, on the Great Central Way in Leicester and on 27 June four were seen at Puddledyke. Altogether it was recorded at some 21 widely spread localities, 12 less than last year. Up to four were also seen at several sites during April and May.

The **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*** was, not surprisingly, late appearing this year and was only reported seen in eight localities. It was first observed on 19 June, at Humberstone Heights and towards the end of the month double-figure counts were reported for two sites. The open grassy habitats favoured by this and the following species suffer badly during prolonged wet weather.

Several **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*** were active at Newfield Colliery NR on 27 May and during June others were noted at Cademan Moor on the 4th and singletons at a Barkby Thorpe Road meadow on the 19th and at Bagworth Heath on the 24th.

The **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus***, as usual, appeared towards the end of June and noted first by HB on the 26th at Bede Island, Leicester, and later at Puddledyke, with six on the 27th and others at ATO's Loughborough garden on the 29th and 30th; also on the 30th, in our Quorn garden.

Finally, on behalf of the Club I would like to thank the 12 members and friends who submitted records for this quarter and may I take this opportunity to ask other members to consider reporting their butterfly sightings for future issues, if only for their own gardens, thereby increasing our coverage and giving a much better overall picture.

Peter Gamble

MOTHS

More cold weather including snow in early April set the scene, cold and miserable for the rest of the month even well into May, with June almost as bad with some days being horrendous. You would have done well to salvage barely a couple of nights out of the whole quarter which, were anything remotely suitable for putting out a moth trap. This prolonged cold spell seems to have had an effect of both numbers and species, with many members commenting on this outcome. The first two months are normally the start of the build up to one of the most productive months of the year, June. Sadly this has not happened and it can only leave us wondering (or worrying) what's to come. These dire circumstances have not been just local but nationwide causing a whole range of spring and early summer species hardly being seen - let us hope conditions improve for the rest of the year.

Members' Sightings

SFW and HI reported **Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae*** at Newfield Colliery NR, New Lount and Bagworth Heath. A single **Treble-bar *Aplocera plagiata*** and **Burnet Companion *Eulidia glyphica*** at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 28 May also several **Chimney Sweeper *Odezia atrata*** at Ulverscroft on 10 June.

HB commented on the relatively few suitable opportunities and scant observations this quarter allowed. An assortment of the usual late spring/early summer day fliers with **Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata*** at Barkby Thorpe, **Treble-bar *Aplocera plagiata*** at several sites and **Latticed Heath *Chiasmia clathrata*** at Appleton Park in Leicester. HB's only record of **Mother Shipton *Callistege mi*** was a singleton on Aylestone Meadows, but **Burnet Companion *Eulidia glyphica*** was at several sites including ten plus at Humberstone Heights. HB also commented that as well as being well down in numbers, larvae of **Six-spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendulae*** were noticeably underdeveloped compared to previous years. Also a single larva of **Drinker *Euthrix potatoria*** on Aylestone Meadows and two **Vapourer *Orgyia antiqua*** at Hamilton Park.

PHG noted ***Adela reaumurella*** reasonably abundant at both Swithland Wood and

Puddledye in May. A small longhorn moth was seen in his Quorn garden flying around and settling on Garlic Mustard appeared to be ***Adela rufimitrella***. This last species is a small version of ***A. reaumurella*** and has Garlic Mustard and Cuckoo Flower as its foodplants. A single **Forester *Adcites statices*** was noted at Puddledye on 27 June, two **Brown China-mark *Nymphula nymphaeata*** flying over the ponds at Park Hill Golf Course 23 June. Three each of **Blood-vein *Timandra griseata*** and **Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata***. **Treble-bar *Aplocera plagiata*** seems to be doing okay with sightings at three sites. The only report of **Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*** visiting Viola flowers and then later Rhododendron was from BH in Quorn.

Light trap results

PHG operated a Mercury Vapour light trap in his Quorn garden on three occasions for a total of 140 moths of just under 50 species and, amazingly, only one species made it into double figures that being **Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha*** with 37 individuals over two nights. 25 May produced 21 species including the only records of four **Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana***, where has it gone? A single **Wormwood Pug *Eupithecia absinthiata*** made a change from the usual Pug species. A solitary **Pine Beauty *Panolis flammea*** is always a nice moth to see and **White-pinion Spotted *Lomographa bimaculata*** continues to become a common sight. 21 June turned in 12 species, the list dominated by 16 **Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha*** the next most abundant species were **Heart and Dart *Agrotis exclamationis*** and **The Shears *Hadena plebeja*** both with six individuals each. **Silver Y *Autographa gamma*** managed two individuals but the rest of the night's catch were all singletons. Numbers of moths and species picked up a little on 28 June with 65 moths of 24 species. **Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha*** again held top position with 21 individuals **Heart and Dart *Agrotis exclamationis*** came in second with a mere five. Singles of **Twin-spot Carpet *Perizoma didymata*** and **Green Arches *Anaplectoides prasina*** were nice finds.

SFW managed to operate an Actinic trap in his Groby garden on three occasions with a total of 16 moths of ten species. **Bee Moth *Aphomia***

sociella put in an appearance on 22 May and 24 June plus a single **Poplar Hawk-moth** *Laothoe populi* on 22 May and a solitary **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* on 1 June were probably the highlights. This latter species has a very prolonged flight period, April all through the summer to early autumn and with the very few records received this year, it looks like it's going to need it!

Charnwood Forest Survey

May 24 was a little breezy but quite mild, so three hours with four lights at Charnwood Lodge, produced a total of 126 moths of 49 species. The only species to make it into double figures was 17 **Brown Silver-line** *Petrophora chlorosata*. Twelve species of micro moths included the second county record for *Pseudococcyx posticana* the other previous record was from Luffenham Heath Golf Course in May 2010. Although two extremely different habitats, the link being, it is a Scot's Pine feeder preferring conifer woods particularly on heathland. The other highlight amongst the catch, were nine **Orange Footman** *Eilema sorocula*.

SFW and HI continue their survey at Grace Dieu with several visits and recorded a few daytime fliers including *Eriocrania subpurpurella*, *Incurvaria masculella* the migrant **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella* and *Elachista canapennella* all singletons on 2 May. A return visit on 4 June produced a single **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*, then four **Forester Moths** *Adscita statipes* on 20 June.



Forester Moth © Stephen Woodward

Around the county

Launde Park Wood on 21 June was a cool and wet three hours with three light traps turned in just over 100 moths of 31 species and the only

two species to break into double figures were 18 **Common Swift** *Hepialus lupulinus* and 27 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica*. A single **Orange Footman** *Eilema sorocula*, two **Green Arches** *Anaplectoides prasina* and a solitary **Nutmeg** *Discestra trifolii* were the pick of the bunch.

Graham and Anona Finch

OTHER INSECTS

This quarter has had the worst weather ever recorded, particularly in June. This has caused massive losses in many of our invertebrates. Despite this, many interesting records have come in, so I will attempt to put this in perspective as best I can.

Hemiptera

Shield Bugs

Just a few **Green Shield Bugs**, *Palomina prasina* were recorded, an adult at Freemans Lock, still in hibernating colours on 14 April, other April records were at Quorn, with two in May - an adult and early instar at Appleton Park and a single at Ratby Burroughs in June.

The **Sloe Bug** *Dolycoris baccarum* fared somewhat better, with records from Newfield Colliery NR, Evington Park, New Lount NR, Wanlip, Barkby Thorpe Road, Aylestone Mill Lock, Humberstone Heights, with a maximum of five in rough herbage on 16 May at Great Central Way.

The only **Birch Shield Bug** *Elasmotethus interstinctus* record was of four attracted to PHG's MV light at Quorn on 25 May and the two **Gorse Shield Bugs** *Piezodorus lituratus* at Rough Hill on 22 May was the only record submitted for this species.

Four **Pied Shield Bugs** *Sehirus bicolor* were swept from low herbage at Great Central Way, Aylestone on 30 April and an early instar nymph of the **Forest Bug** *Pentatoma rufipes* was at Hamilton Park on 6 June.

The ground-loving bug **Bishops Mitre** *Aelia acuminata* was only seen at Bede Island on 4 June, Barkby Thorpe Road 19 June, both singles, with two at Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 28 May.

A mating pair of **Woundwort Bugs** *Esyarcoris fabricii* were sitting on a leaf in my Leicester garden at Abney Street on the 10 June and one was still present on the 24th, this is the first record I have had in my city garden for five years, none was recorded elsewhere this quarter.

An interesting record was a **Turtle Bug** *Podops inuncta* found in a sandy area of Appleton Park nature area in Leicester, on sparsely vegetated ground among trefoils. The last record I have for this species was five years ago not far from this site, recorded on 24 May, another species *Legnotus limbosus* was swept from low vegetation at the same site, a small shiny black species that apparently feeds on bedstraws.

Of the *Coreidae* bugs, **Dock Bugs** *Coreus marginatus* records were of four on the Great Central Way on 30 April and ten adults in a nature area of Humberstone Park. Despite being widespread over the county, no other records were received. The only other member of this group recorded was the **Spiky Bug** *Coreomaris denticulatus* - two adults on a sandy area of Appleton Park on the 24 May and one near Hamilton Pond margins on the 28 May.

The little *Rhopalus* bug, *Rhopalus subrufus* was observed resting on foliage in my garden on 6 May, a first for me in my city plot, another was observed at the same site in late June. The third record for this species was one swept from long grass at Grace Dieu on 20 June.

An interesting record was of two nymphs of the **Heath Assassin Bug** *Coreus subapterus* at Humberstone Heights on 19 June. They had the distinct neck and three-segmented rostrum and at this stage are covered in adpressed silver hairs. I would associate this species more with the Charnwood Forest area than here, but it may have been present in or around the old gypsum pit which formerly stood here, until much of it was bulldozed for industrial units as small areas still remain. Another species of this group was a stilt bug *Metatropis rufescens* reported from Ulverscroft NR on a woodland ride by SFW and verified by Dave Budworth, a first for the reserve.

Other members of this group were Froghoppers *Philaenus spumarius* at Grace Dieu in June, the one responsible for the cuckoo-spit



Metatropis rufescens © Stephen Woodward

many see in their gardens and *Cercopis vulnerata*, one also at Grace Dieu in June. And finally **Birch Catkin Bugs** *Kleidocerys resedae* were recorded from Charnwood Lodge NR and Newfield Colliery NR in May, with the growing pestilent **Horse Chestnut Scale** *Pulvinaria regalis* from Evington Park, also in May.

Hoverflies

This has been a very poor quarter for many of our hoverflies, particularly members of the *Syrphinae*. Few species were present in our gardens and then only in ones and twos generally. A good example of this was the spring harbinger *Epistrophe eligans*, just one or two along the Great Central Way on 30 April are all that were reported.

Marmalade Hoverflies *Episyrphus balteatus*, a resident and common migrant, was only noted in ones and twos in my patch, only PHG reported it as widespread in his Quorn garden from the 18 June and several *Syrphus ribesii* at Quorn and Puddledyeke in late June. Elsewhere odd ones were seen at Humberstone Park and Barkby in May.

Syrphus vitripennis singles at Barkby in May and City General Hospital grounds in June, with just a single record of *Sphaerophoria scripta* at Spinney Hill Park on 27 June.

Another spring species *Leucozona lucorum* was reported from Aylestone Meadows, a single on 20 April, another single at Quorn 5 May and two at Barkby on 12 May. SFW managed to find the distinctive *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* at Bagworth Heath on 24 June.

Platycheirus manicatus was recorded as a single off Barkby Lane on 11 May and two at Little Stretton on 22 May.

Many *Xylota segnis* were recorded from Ulverscroft NR on 25 June and of the *Cheilosini*, *Cheilisia albitarsis* another spring species, usually common on buttercups, was particularly scarce this year with just a single noted at Little Stretton and two at Aylestone Meadows both in May.

Two *Cheilisia pagana* were recorded at Great Central Way on 23 April, *Cheilisia illustrata*, another very common species, generally found on Hogweed, just two on hedgerow at City General Hospital on 30 June, as the only record I have. *Cheilisia nebulosa*, one was swept from a grass verge near the City General Hospital in June, a very small species with a scattered distribution over the country as a whole.

A single *Chrysogaster solstitialis* was recorded from Aylestone Meadows on 18 June.

Volucella pellucens appeared to have fared better with records from Ethel Road, Puddledyke and Grace Dieu (several) all in late June. *Volucella bombylans* had singles at Bede Island, Barkby Lane and several at Puddledyke, again in June.

The **Narcissus-fly** *Merodon equestris* has always been fairly common within the boundaries of the city and three were recorded at the City General Hospital grounds and the same number at Bede Island in June.

Myathropa florea a species of damp habitats, two were reported at Bede Island, on 4 June and several on Hogweed at Grace Dieu on the same date.

I have noted that *Helophilus pendulus*, another common species of wet meadows, is much reduced in numbers over the last year or two and only singles were seen off Barkby Lane, at Quorn and in Watermead Park in June.

To other matters, **St Mark's Fly** *Bibio marci* was widely recorded from Barkby, Quorn, Grace Dieu, Lea Meadows, Charnwood Lodge, Ulverscroft NR and Groby Pool all records during May.

Robber Flies

Several species of the *Dioctria* group were submitted, mainly by SFW, the **Common Red-legged Robber-fly** *Dioctria rufipes* was reported

from Wymeswold Meadows and Grace Dieu, the **Violet Black-legged Robber-fly** *Dioctria atricapilla* at Grace Dieu, swept from long grass on 20 June and the **Small Yellow-legged Robber-fly** *Dioctria linearis* near Charnwood Hall, at least six resting in long grass in cool weather. This species was also recorded from Hamilton Park, two swept from a hedgerow, one from a tall hedgerow in Barkby Lane in May and from Grace Dieu in June.

The **Downlooker Snipefly** *Rhagio scolopaceus* was noted at Grace Dieu and Osbaston in June, and a **Marsh Snipefly** *Rhagio tringarius* at Grace Dieu, also in June.

An interesting *Conopid* fly, *Myopa testacea* was taken at Rough Hill Newtown Linford on June 6th, in 'Flies of the British Isles' by Colyer and Hammond, it states that the hosts of this species includes *Vespa vulgaris*, *Andrena* mining bees as well as Humble bees.



Myopa testacea © Stephen Woodward

Soldier Flies

One or two records of this most colourful group were submitted. The **Broad Centurion** *Chloromyia formosa*, singles were found at Grace Dieu, on a roadside verge at Newbold and at Bagworth Heath in late June and eight on Hogweed in a hedgerow at the City General grounds on 30 June.

The bright green, **Green Gem** *Microchrysa flavicornis* was at Osbaston in tall herbs on 9 June, with the **Common Green Colonel** *Oplodontha viridula* at Bagworth Heath on the 24 June. I tend to think this species is less common than its name suggests and is probably quite local hearabouts.

A single specimen of the **Notch-horned Cleg** *Haematopota pluvialis* was swept from long

grass at Grace Dieu on 20 June. Normally this species queues up to bite me in summer but sadly none was recorded.



Notch-horned Cleg © Stephen Woodward

Hymenoptera

Aculeates

Social Bees and Wasps

This spring has been one of the most difficult for bumblebees with so much prolonged wet weather this quarter. Many ground-nesting species such as *Bombus terrestris* would have perished.

It is difficult to draw any picture because numbers of workers were not known. Numbers of **Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*** queens were well recorded, but workers less so, the first worker noted by me was at Aylestone Meadows on 16 May. *Bombus terrestris/lucorum* workers were recorded from Desford on 20 April and Ratby on 13 June but no numbers given. At Barlestone they were frequent during April, occasional in May and occasional during June. A young queen was observed on 19 June on Barkby Road and they were well recorded in the Charnwood Forest region.

Red-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lapidarius* were also widely recorded this quarter from 14 separate locations, with many queens. Four queens were observed on Great Central Way 30 April but again very few workers, my own records show small numbers of workers, not exceeding double figures at Aylestone Meadows in early June and only two at Bede Island on 4 June. In FTS's garden at Barlestone they were frequent in April but seen on only a few days in May and occasionally in June, probably workers. PHG also records occasional sightings in his

Quorn garden, Wanlip, Beacon Hill CP, Watermead, Birstall and Quorn Baptist Church.

The **Garden Bumblebee *Bombus hortorum*** was also widely recorded but not common. A queen was observed foraging White Deadnettle, on Great Central Way on 20 April a favourite plant with this species, and there were three workers at Castle Gardens on 13 May. At Barlestone, this species was scarce in April and not seen in May until the 29th when two were observed but was frequent during July. PHG records several in June but not common, at his Quorn garden. At Abney Street, a queen and odd workers observed in May and June but none observed on my Foxgloves this quarter, this species generally only produces small numbers of workers, probably even fewer this year.

White-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lucorum* had mixed fortunes, recorded at Barlestone as occasional during April, small numbers only, and seen on just one day in May and none at all in June. Other queens were recorded from Breedon on the Hill on 13 April and Ulverscroft NR on 6 May. At Spinney Hill Park, on 27 June, I counted 12 young queens foraging perennial Sage but they were the only bumblebees seen here on that date.

In my small garden, a queen **Early-nesting Bumblebee *Bombus pratorum*** was observed with full pollen baskets on 4 June and another young queen on 27 June but only a single worker in my garden from May to mid-June. In contrast, FTS at Barlestone records this species as occasional during April, a few in the second half of May and frequent in June. Other records in May are singles from Grace Dieu, Ulverscroft, Evington Park and from Ratby in June.

Common Carder Bees *Bombus pascuorum*, were as usual slow to build up, occasional queens and odd workers were observed at Aylestone Meadows and Barkby Lane in May/June. It was a similar picture at Barlestone but PHG had them commonly in his Quorn garden in May and June, attracted to flowers of the Bush Vetch.

Of all the bumblebees, I think the **Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*** fared the best. This may be one advantage of being an arboreal nester and also queens were out foraging in February and March and may have

built up sufficient pollen reserves, along with their habitat preferences to avoid the worst of the spring weather. Whatever the reason, they were recorded widely from Bede Island, Abney Street, Quorn, Barlestone, Desford, Grace Dieu and New Lount, foraging on *Berberis*, *Cotoneaster* and Alder Buckthorn among others.



Tree Bumblebee © Keith Allsopp

The cleptoparasite of *Bombus terrestris*, *Bombus vestalis*, was the most commonly recorded of the cuckoo bees, with records from the Great Central Way, Aylestone Meadows, Willesley Wood and Barlestone during April and Swannington, Ulverscroft NR and Barlestone during May.

Rather fewer *Bombus sylvestris* were reported, all males, in June, from Barlestone with one on the 14th, two on the 24th and three on the 27th. The only other record was one on a grass verge on Ethel Road Leicester.

Bombus rupestris, the cleptoparasite of *Bombus lapidarius*, has become more common in recent years and is slowly moving north. I have only recorded a single female this year, one foraging perennial Sage in Spinney Hill Park on the 29 May. Females were also recorded from Charnwood Lodge, Ratby and Ketton Quarry in May and June.

A female *Bombus campestris* was seen briefly off Barkby Road on 11 May, this specimen was all black except for the yellow tail. A parasite of the common *B. pascuorum*, females are rarely encountered. The only other record for this species is of a male at Barlestone on 18 June, foraging on Chives.

An interesting record from FTS is of a single female *Bombus bohemicus* at Barlestone on 10 April foraging on Muscari. He described the

specimen seen with *B. vestalis*, 'as size difference was quite clear and when tubed shaggy, uneven hair was obvious', similar to *Bombus vestalis*, but the yellow side patches are much reduced. A mainly northern species, I only know of one previous record: one was taken in MF's Knighton garden a few years ago.

Vespidae

Only a single record of **Hornet *Vespa crabro*** was received this quarter, one at Grace Dieu on 20 June.

Symphyla

Solomon's-seal Sawfly *Phymatocera alerrima* adults and larvae present as usual on Solomon's Seal plants at Quorn in May and June.

Rose Sawfly *Arge pagana*, adults of both sexes in a corner of Castle Gardens 10 June, noted at the same spot in 2011.

Coleoptera

Two **Green Tiger Beetles *Cicindela campestris*** were again observed at Newfield Colliery NR on 30 April.

Longhorns

The **Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietis*** was recorded off Barkby Lane 28 May, one at Quorn on the 18 June with many at Ulverscroft NR on 25 June. There were several of the **Black and yellow Longhorn, *Rutpela maculata*** in PHG's Quorn garden on 19 June. The **Common Grammoptera, *Grammoptera ruficornis*** was noted at New Lount NR, Bagworth Heath and Grace Dieu with many sighted on Umbellifers in June. A single **Two-banded Longhorn *Rhagium bifasciatum*** was recorded at New Lount NR on 20 June and **Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorns *Agapanthia villosoviridescens*** were recorded from Asfordby Hill Iron Works on 28 May and Grace Dieu on 4 June. And finally a **Rufous-shouldered Longhorn *Anaglyptus mysticus*** was swept from a hedgerow off Barkby Lane on the 28 May, a first for me in this area.

The **Flower beetle *Oedemera nobilis*** appears to be increasing in our area. SFW states it was unknown in our county a few years ago; records are for Quorn, Hugglescote, Ratby Burroughs, New Lount NR (many here), City General Hospital grounds, Hamilton Park, Glen Parva and over 20 counted in a small meadow at Bede

Island, predominantly males, feeding on flower heads of Mouse-ear Hawkweed in June.

Red-tipped Flower Beetles *Malachius bipustulatus* were recorded from a meadow off Barkby Lane 28 May, City General Hospital grounds on 1 June and one visiting flowers in PHG's garden 10 June. Other records from this most wide and diverse group include, ***Lagria hirta*** common in a meadow at Bede Island on 4 June.

A **Green Tortoise Beetle *Cassida viridis*** was swept from low herbage at Appleton Park on 25 May.

Large numbers of **Carpet Beetles *Anthrenus verbasci*** were visiting flowers of *Aruncus vulgaris* in Quorn in June, and a single specimen of the **Lily Beetle *Lilloceris lili*** was at Evington Park on 25 May.

Aruncus vulgaris also appeared to be popular with ***Ischnomera cyanea*** in PHG's Quorn garden many were visiting these flowers during June. The only other record for this species is for one on Hogweed at Grace Dieu also in late June.



Ischnomera cyanea © Stephen Woodward

A Click Beetle ***Athous haemorrhoidalis*** was resting on Hogweed in Aylestone Meadows on 18 June. Several **Pill Beetles *Byrrhus pilula*** were seen among a small scarcely vegetated area at Appleton Park on May 25th, determined by PHG. As many as 25 **Cockchafers *Melolontha melolontha*** were attracted to PHG's light trap on 25 May and the **Garden Chafer *Phyllopertha horticola*** was also frequently seen in his Quorn garden during June.

I only managed to find a single specimen of the larger Cardinal Beetles during this quarter, ***Pyrochroa serraticornis*** in a hedgerow at Glen Parva on 20 June. Normally many records of this

group are submitted by SFW and HI but none this quarter.

Ladybirds

Rather fewer recorded this quarter and numbers of **7-spot Ladybirds *Coccinella 7-punctata*** dropped away dramatically as this quarter progressed. It was still common in April at Quorn and recorded elsewhere at Ulverscroft, Evington Park, Loughborough, Shepshed and Mountsorrel.

14-spot Ladybirds *Propylea 14-punctata* were recorded from Abney Street, Appleton Park, Castle Gardens and Quorn in April and May. I found this Ladybird quite widespread during this period. Sadly, only a single **Two-spots *Adelia 2-punctata*** was seen, on Appleton Park on 24 May.

Other ladybirds - two **Orange Ladybirds *Halzia 16-guttata*** at Quorn on 28 June, a single **22-spot *Psyllobora 22-punctata*** at Aylestone Meadows on 20 June, a **Cream-spot *Calvia 14-guttata*** at Appleton Park on 24 May. **Harlequins *Harmonia axyridis*** were not much in evidence at all this quarter, with a single record from Evington Park in May and just a few in PHG's garden in Quorn in April and June.

Finally a single **24-spot *Subcoccinella 24-punctata*** swept from bushes in Appleton Park on 25 May and two or three in a meadow off Barkby Lane on 28 May.

Thanks to the few members who sent in records, for what has been a very difficult quarter for many species.

Howard Bradshaw

Solitary Bees and Wasps

The report on these insects is being held over until the next Heritage.

PLANTS and FERNS

A very strange quarter this time, the combination of extreme wet and then warm weather has produced some very unusual effects. I have never known plants to grow so lush and tall or weeds to grow so quickly. Examples of this are nettles eight-feet tall, sow thistles seven-foot six-inches and plantains up to two-feet tall. Some other plants also did well, Patches of the **Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*** which are usually eighteen inches across were four-feet but as with the **Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*** did not flower as well as usual. Brambles also capitalised on the good growing conditions and have grown amazingly, making some of the paths in Jubilee Wood difficult to get through.

SOME PLANTS OF INTEREST THIS QUARTER

Upright Chickweed *Moenchia erecta*: Appears to be abundant at the Croft Pasture NR.

Annual Knawel *Scleranthus annuus*: Also present at the Croft Pasture NR.

Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*: Found at Newfield Colliery NR and also frequent and in flower on bare ground on the hill at Castle Hill, Mountsorrel.

Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*: The pathside colony in the south-east of the Outwoods which had disappeared due to being overgrown by Nettles and Water-pepper has re-established itself on the opposite side of the path and also a single plant has appeared at the side of the path in the Plantation.

Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*: A colony in wet woodland near the south-east of the Outwoods near Pocket Gate is still present but much diminished due to shading from trees and increased other vegetation.

Sherard's Downy Rose *Rose sherardii*: Found in flower at Ulverscroft NR. This is a rare plant of the north of the county. This rose is common in Scotland and very rare in Southern England.

Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*: Many plants were on the south side of the hill and on rocky outcrops at Castle Hill, Mountsorrel. It would appear to be much more plentiful than in recent years.

Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus linifolius*: Many plants were in flower at Swithland Wood Pasture where it was much more plentiful than usual.

Subterranean Clover *Trifolium subterraneum*: Two plants were in flower at Castle Hill, Mountsorrel, several metres south of the pathside where PHG originally found it. Frequent searches in recent years had failed to find any.

Wood Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*: One plant was in flower at Lea Meadows NR, a site where it had not previously been recorded. Likewise, a single plant was in flower in the Outwoods Plantation where it had not previously recorded in this area.

Alexanders *Smyrniolobos olustratum*: A rare plant in Leicestershire, it was recorded near the top of the hill at Breedon Hill. This plant is most common near the coast particularly in East Anglia.

Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*: A single plant was in flower amongst briars and brambles at Lea Meadows NR. It had not previously been recorded here by SFW.

Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca*: Found at Croft NR and Croft Village where it is still present in this locality; one of only two sites in the county.

Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*: A colony of strong plants were in flower on an old wall in Butt Close Lane (near the Tax Office) in Leicester city. Also other odd plants in other shady places near the city centre.

Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*: Exceptionally plentiful at Swithland Wood Pasture with large colonies with hundreds of flowers.

Twayblade *Neottia ovata*: A single plant found by DBF at Ulverscroft NR was the first record for this reserve.

Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*: One plant was in flower and another in bud at Bagworth Heath.

Marsh Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia densiflora*: Found in flower at Ulverscroft NR.

Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*: 23 flowering spikes were found at Park Hill Golf Course.

Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*: 12 flowering spikes were found at Park Hill Golf Course.

Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*: 70 flowering spikes were found at Park Hill Golf Course, whilst 18 flowering spikes were located at Scraftoft Golf Course.

Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*: Flowering spikes were found at four locations: 25 at Park Hill Golf Course, nine at Ethel Road embankment and three at both Humberstone Heights and Barkby Thorpe Road Meadow.

FERNS

Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*: Locally abundant, plants were located at Park Hill Golf Course, New Lount NR and Ulverscroft NR where several plants were present.

Rustyback *Asplenium ceterach*: At least 11 plants were on a stone wall in Newtown Linford village.

Eric Webster

OTHER RECORDS

Records were also sent in for the following groups:

Algae, Fungi, Earthworms, Harvestman, Woodlice, Lichens, Liverworts, Mosses, Parasitic Wasps, Stoneflies and Gastropods.

Including:

The snail *Helicigona lapicida* at a new site at Ketton Quarry – only the second modern record in VC55.

The fungus *Exidia recisa* on a fallen hardwood twig at Grace Dieu. A first record for Leicestershire but it has been found in Rutland.

A microfungus found by SFW at Grace Dieu, *Periconia typhicola* - black dots on dead leaves of *Typha latifolia* which is a first vice-county record.

An uncommon lacewing *Dichochochrysa ventralis* which turned up at Hugglescote on the railway embankment and the millipede *Boreoiulus tenuis* under a stone at Grace Dieu Priory, found again by SFW.

WEATHER

April turned out to be the wettest in Leicestershire since records began in 1836. It was the coolest since April 2001 and the dullest since 2005. The entire month was dominated by areas of low pressure that stationed themselves over the British Isles and this gave us very large rainfall totals as bands of rain and showers rotated around these large depressions. In Mountsorrel I recorded 120 mm of rain - more than twice as much as usual - while many other places recorded 150 mm, nearly three times as much. The wettest place of all was the high ground around the Charnwood Forest where one station near Coalville recorded 175 mm or nearly seven inches of rain. There were four separate days where many places saw 25 mm and this is very unusual. Flooding became an issue at the end of the month as the run off went straight into the rivers due to the speed at which the rain was falling and indeed it was the first time our rivers have been in flood in two years. It is worth noting however that this was the first really wet month in two years and most recent months have seen only half the usual rainfall totals. Over this period we are still in rainfall deficit of about 200 mm so although the balance is being redressed we still have a long way to go to reach a normal water table level. Not surprisingly, it was a dull month with just 120 hours of sunshine being recorded, 20% below normal. Temperatures were also below par. Average afternoon maxima were 11.3°C and night-time figures were about 3°C. The mean temperature of 7.2°C was about 0.8°C below normal. There were five night-time frosts recorded with the lowest temperature falling to -3.6°C on the 6th. Snow fell on the 4th but did not settle substantially. The warmest and sunniest day of the month was on the final day when temperatures reached 17°C and the sun shone for nearly 12 hours. So a very wet month as the weather starts to redress the balance from very dry to our normal wetter conditions.

May was a month of huge contrasts weather wise. Average afternoon temperatures in Mountsorrel were 16.6°C about 0.5°C above normal while night-time temperatures of 7.8°C were 1°C above the long-term mean. The overall mean of 12.2°C was 0.8°C above normal but May last year was warmer than this. Rainfall at

Mountsorrel was recorded at 42 mm, about 20% below normal, while up in the Charnwood Forest, 52 mm were recorded, a figure close to normal. In the end it was a sunny month with 191 hours being recorded, about 5% above normal. Winds blew more frequently from the north and east than usual but they were rarely strong, with the maximum gust this month of 31 mph on the 10th.

The first three weeks of the month were fairly cool and showery with the wettest day being recorded on the 3rd when 10 mm fell in many places. On the 21st there was a dramatic change as a warm and humid air mass blew in and as high pressure established itself the sun returned. The period from the 22nd to the 28th saw temperatures rise to 25°C on most days. 103 hours of sunshine was recorded in this seven day period with 15 hours being recorded on the 27th. This was the warmest seven day period in May for 20 years. Interestingly, this period usually contains the late May bank holiday weekend and had it not been postponed a week it would have been the sunniest and hottest ever recorded! Alas as the Jubilee weekend approached the weather broke down with cooler and showery conditions to end the month. The first week of June historically sees unsettled weather as the Atlantic jet stream gains strength and the weather is cool and unsettled in nine out of ten years. Something to think about if you are planning a wedding next year!

It will be no surprise to any of us that June 2012 was the wettest on record nationally. Locally too, many stations broke their records, with Mountsorrel recording 155 mm and Jim Lofts at Nanpantan reaching 195 mm just short of the 200 mm he received in June 2007. The wettest place in Leicestershire was Coalville with a huge 236 mm or more than nine inches of rain. The wettest day in Mountsorrel was the 3rd when 31 mm was recorded and substantial rain fell on 20 days in the month. The southerly track of the Atlantic jet stream has been responsible for the downpours with low pressure areas crossing areas much further south than normal. The 28th saw the most spectacular storms for more than 30 years with 27 mm of rain falling in 15 minutes at Loughborough University. At times it was falling at a rate of 16 inches an hour.

Jim recorded 42 mm from both of the day's storms at Nanpantan. Flash flooding was widespread and as this water headed into the main rivers these flooded too. A TORNADO tracked eastwards in one of these super cell thunderstorms that also brought hail the size of golf balls to some areas. Some of these hailstones, including the ones that fell on Birstall, are some of the largest ever to have fallen in the UK. All the rain ensured it was also a very dull month with only 95 hours of sun being recorded or just half the expected figure. Temperatures were much lower than normal too, as we stayed on the cool side of the jet stream. The maximum temperature was recorded on the 28th at just 23°C and the coolest day was on the third when just 10°C was logged. Afternoon temperatures of 17°C were 2°C below normal but the cloudy and damp nights meant night-time values were 10°C or average for the time of year. Both April and June have broken national rainfall records and as we head into July there is no sign of a change. Indeed the weekend floods brought the most substantial flood yet to the Soar valley as another 27 mm fell in just 24 hours on the 6th. There is still no immediate prospect of a change as the schools break up this week. Roll on summer!!

Phil Morrish

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H Bradshaw (HB), J Davies, G Felstead, G L Finch, M A Finch, D B Forgham (DBF), M Frankum, P H Gamble, J Graham, B Hollingsworth (BH), H B Hope (HBH), H Ikin, R G Lockwood, M McClellan, A T Onions, D A Perry, H Shacklock, F T Smith, M Vincent, E Webster, D Webster, S F Woodward.

Records for the third quarter of 2012 should be sent to:

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