



Beetle News



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Editorial

Richard Wright

Thanks to all contributors to this issue. The response to my appeal for more contributions in the last issue has been excellent and I am particularly pleased to see articles from new people. I hope to return to the planned four issues per year in 2011 so please keep the articles coming.

Geotrupidae Guide - important correction

In the last issue (2.2 December 2010) Conrad Gillett and Aleš Sedláček produced an excellent introduction to the Geotrupidae. Unfortunately a transcription error was made which should be corrected

On page 6, the sentence directly preceding 'GENUS *Trypocopris*' should read: "*Base of pronotum with a marginal ridge **interrupted** on each side*"

rather than "*Base of pronotum with an entire marginal ridge across its whole length, **not interrupted** on each side*"

Northern Coleopterists' Meeting

The 4th Northern Coleopterists' Meeting will be held at Manchester Museum on Saturday 24th Sept 2011 from 10am.

For a copy of the agenda, please contact Tom Hubball at ukbeetles@blueyonder.co.uk or tel. 01535 678334 after 6pm

Tom Hubball

Beetles of Warwickshire - atlas for free download

Steve Lane and I produced an atlas of Warwickshire beetles in 2008, up to date to the end of 2007, which was distributed on CD ROM. I have now made this available as a free download (63 megabytes). The link is :

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/1708278/Beetles%20of%20Warwickshire.zip>

Note that this is in March 2011. If you are reading this at a later date, the link above may no longer work. In this case contact me at richardwrightuk@yahoo.co.uk for an update.

Unzip all the contained files and copy them to a suitable folder on your hard drive. Then run the programme "Beetles of Warwickshire"

While the data is obviously all from our county, information on habitat, method of capture etc., should prove of wider interest. Most species have phenology charts, showing their seasonal occurrence. Almost all of the more distinctive species are also illustrated by photos of museum specimens which should be of interest to the less experienced.

Richard Wright

The Leicestershire Museum Coleoptera Collection

Between September 2010 and March 2011 I have been engaged in a contract at Leicestershire Museum, re-organising the Coleoptera collection and adding store-box material to the main series. To date, I have checked the identification of around 41,400 specimens and transferred 22,300 from store-boxes into cabinet drawers.

The quantity of material amounting to around 97,000 British specimens, is really impressive and the range of species present is probably comparable to the BENHS collections at Dinton. It is certainly one of the largest public collections in the UK.

The history of collecting and of the collectors has been documented in Derek Lott's 2009 publication, a fascinating account entitled 'The Leicestershire Coleopterists: 200 Years of Beetle Hunting'.

Scattered throughout the collection are specimens that quicken the pulse – species long extinct in the British Isles. As is often the case with these very old vouchers, most are without collecting data, but it is believed that they are likely to be of UK origin. Examples are three specimens of the click beetle *Ampedus sanguineus* (Linnaeus, 1758) and single specimens of the ground beetle *Lebia scapularis* (Geoffroy in Fourcroy, 1785) and the dung beetle *Brindalus porcicollis* (Illiger, 1803). In most British Museums, these species are represented by spaces in drawers!



Ampedus sanguineus

The collection also contains significant data that has yet to come to the attention of the National Recording schemes. For example, the heathland species *Cryptocephalus biguttatus* (Scopoli, 1763) is represented by a single specimen, labelled 'Purley, Hants 17.7.1936, which probably originates from Parley, Dorset. This record escaped the attention of Mann & Barclay (2009), who detailed the 122 known specimens in UK collections.



Cryptocephalus biguttatus

The Tansy Leaf Beetle *Chrysolina graminis* (Linnaeus, 1758), a fast-declining UK BAP species, is represented by around 120 specimens. One of these, from Aylestone, Leicester in July 1951 is a significant addition to the number of sites from which it has been recorded.



Chrysolina graminis

During the course of the contract, I've identified 4,846 specimens that were previously unidentified and re-determined 1,633 that were previously misidentified.

The unidentified material has produced some interesting records of RDB and Nationally Scarce species and a handful of species that were hitherto not represented in the collections. Examples of the latter are a specimen of *Ischnomera caerulea* (Oedemeridae) from the New Forest, Hampshire and two specimens of *Bradycellus distinctus* (Carabidae) from Deal, East Kent. This highlights the importance of processing unidentified material rather than leaving it to languish in obscurity.

I posted on the beetles-britishisles@yahoo.co.uk a document of Red Data Book data for the groups that I have so far worked on. These are the Chrysomeloidea, Cerambycidae, Silphidae, Tenebrionoidea, Elateroidea, Scarabaeoidea, Buprestidae, Cantharoidea, Gyrinoidea, Haliplidae, Dytiscidae, Carabidae and the Hydrophiloidea (in part).

If anyone requires a copy of this, they can contact me on steve_lane@hotmail.com and I'll be happy to email it to them.

I hope to produce a second document detailing data for all other groups as and when I complete the work on the collection.

Steve Lane

Buglife oil beetle survey

This Spring Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust are launching a national oil beetle survey in partnership with the National Trust, Natural England and Oxford University Museum of Natural History. We need your help to improve our knowledge of these species ecology and distribution.

Four of our eight native oil beetles are now extinct in the UK. The four remaining species are: Black oil beetle *Meloe proscarabaeus*, Violet oil beetle *M. violaceus*, Rugged oil beetle *M. rugosus*, Short-necked oil beetle *M. brevicollis*.

All four species are in decline and consequently three of these have recently been added to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) list of Priority Species. At a national level species' ranges are contracting (as much as 60% for the *Meloe rugosus*) and at a local level populations are becoming weaker and more vulnerable to extinction. *M. brevicollis* was thought extinct until 2007 when it was rediscovered at Bolt Head in S Devon, and subsequently found on the Isle of Coll in Scotland.

The main factors responsible for oil beetle declines are changes in the management of the countryside, a lack of information on the habitat requirements of species, and

neglect. Without targeted conservation action these species will continue to decline, and their extinction from many parts of the country remains a possibility.

Oil beetle larvae are nest-parasites of solitary bees. The viability of oil beetle populations is therefore dependent on the health and diversity of wild bees. Oil beetles are often associated with wildflower-rich semi-natural grassland – a habitat that has declined in quantity and quality due to intensive management of the countryside.

This survey is part of a larger oil beetle species recovery project. Information on the distribution of oil beetles is limited. More data is needed to allow us to assess the conservation status of these species, and target effective conservation action.

How can I help?

Please send your oil beetle records to Andrew Whitehouse at Buglife (andrew.whitehouse@buglife.org.uk) or Darren Mann at Oxford University Museum of Natural History (darren.mann@oum.ox.ac.uk).

For more information and a copy of our new oil beetle identification guide please visit the Buglife website www.buglife.org.uk.

Andrew Whitehouse

A good year for 7-spots?

Saturday 19th March was the first really warm sunny day of the year so far. Walking round my small suburban garden, I noticed a number of 7-spot Ladybirds *Coccinella 7-punctata* emerging from among the new growth of various herbaceous plants. As the day warmed up, more and more ladybirds appeared. The photograph shows a typical, by no means exceptional, sample. It is difficult to give an accurate assessment of total numbers, but there could not have been less than a thousand individuals in total.

Later the same day, I noticed two ladies stopping outside my front garden, pointing at the privet hedge and talking about something. After they had moved on, I went out to discover the cause of their interest and again found very large numbers of 7-spots emerging from the hedge and basking in the sun.

Wondering whether it was simply the large numbers of aphids in my garden which was the cause of this phenomenon, I spoke to several other people and all reported that they too had noticed large numbers of this species. Clearly 2010 had been an exceptionally productive year and many individuals had overwintered. It remains to be seen whether this trend



continues through 2011. What is clear, however, is that the spread of the Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* appears to have had no effect on the number of 7-spots, at least. As I have noted before, this may be because the Harlequin appears to prefer trees and shrubs, while the 7-spot is mainly a species of herbaceous vegetation. Harlequins may have more impact on other arboreal species.

Richard Wright

***Paracorymbia fulva* in Leicestershire**

In 2006 I was asked by my village Heritage Group at Sapcote in Leicestershire, to record the flora and fauna of the Parish. So armed with a 'point and shoot' digital camera I have spent a good deal of time over the last 5 years photographing anything that crossed my path. I am not a beetle specialist and have never set up pit-fall traps or done any beating – I simply photograph whatever turns up. Despite my rather basic methods I have managed by perseverance, to put together an interesting list of beetles and weevils in the Parish. The prize record amongst these came on 24th July 2009 when I came across a quite large and handsome longhorn beetle. I had no idea at the time of the species, or even whether it was common or uncommon. The location was unspectacular, being a triangle of ground at the junction of the B4114 Leicester to Coventry road and a smaller road leading into the village of Sapcote. It was simply an area of long grass

with Creeping Thistle and Black Knapweed that gets cut back periodically by the Council mowing team as they do the roadside verges.

I sent my picture to our local VC55 beetle expert Derek Lott, who suspecting this to be *Paracorymbia fulva*, and previously unrecorded in VC55, took a second opinion from Martin Rejzek a longhorn specialist who confirmed the id. Derek thought this may well have been an odd individual carried off course, but I pointed out to him that I had seen two of them close together, and the following day I revisited with my wife and spotted another. Sadly I was unaware of the significance and didn't take a specimen, or a photograph that showed more than a single individual, but I was pleased to get a county first, and it seems quite a rare record of this species away from the south coast. I now carry a collecting pot on my trips around the Parish in the hope it turns up again!

Graham Calow

**Some phytophagous beetles from garden plants – an addendum**

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Richard Wright's article in a previous Beetle News (*Some Phytophagous Beetles from Garden Plants*, Vol. 2.2 p.2) will probably lead to my surreptitiously tapping my neighbours' hollyhocks over a beating tray this year. However one weevil not mentioned, which is worth looking out for in the garden, is *Otiorhynchus porcatus* (Herbst). This is a synanthropic species which is found in association with *Primula* and *Saxifraga* ssp. and hybrids. It is nocturnal and feeds at the roots of its host plants. Morris (1997) records it as occurring locally in 21 vice-counties, although there are very few records on the NBN Gateway and it is almost certainly under-recorded. My association with *O. porcatus* began on 11th April 2010 when I was weeding a flowerbed containing, among other things, established hybrid *Primula*, and working the weeds through a sieve. A single specimen was found which keyed out readily using the aforementioned reference. The identification was

kindly confirmed by Mike Morris at a subsequent BENHS workshop. Pending detailed investigation, it is possible that this is the first record of this species in Cheshire VC58 (Map reference SJ617842).

One point that may be useful to beginners concerns the sieving technique and equipment which I use. Many sieved insects will remain inert for some time after disturbance, and thus be very difficult to spot (the technical term for this behaviour is *thanatosis*). The normal solution is to examine the sample for some minutes before discarding it. Instead, I use four separate sieve bases (which are simply large plant saucers which fit my garden sieve) and sieve into them in sequence. By the time the last saucer is used, the insects in the first will have begun to be active again, and can be seen with relative ease. After removing any interesting specimens this saucer can be emptied and re-used, after which one continues to examine and re-use the others in a cyclic manner. All sieved samples thus get a useful 'resting time' before being finally discarded, without wasting collecting time.

Morris (1997) Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Vol 5 part 17a.

Interesting beetles found in Gloucestershire in 2010

Whilst the Coleoptera have not previously been a speciality of mine I have become increasingly interested in the group in recent years. Two particular instances of finding choice beetles in 2010 stand out. The first was whilst beating Cypress sp., principally for Heteroptera, at Longney (SO7612) on 22 August 2010 I found the Staphylinidae beetle *Staphylinus dimidiaticornis*. Although it is not listed as a rare species I would guess it is also not found all that frequently – but what an impressively handsome insect it is!

The second was on 30 September when my wife happened to spot a slow moving beetle crawling across a

minor road that we were walking along near Coln St. Dennis (SP1012). It was in imminent danger of meeting its demise by the occasional car so I immediately put it into one of my specimen tubes. On looking at it more closely I recognised it as an Oil Beetle but not being familiar with these did not know the species. However, I was aware that they are not common insects so I decided to release it on the adjacent roadside verge and photograph it in situ. Later, upon examining the photograph it was identified as the nationally scarce Oil Beetle, *Meloe rugosus*.

John Widgery,
Gloucestershire Recorder for Orthoptera & Heteroptera
(Email: johnwidgery@waitrose.com)



Staphylinus dimidiaticornis. Longney, Glos. 22 August 2010



Oil Beetle, *Meloe rugosus*. Near Coln St. Rogers, Glos. 30 September 2010

Photographs of *Geotrupes* mandibles

In their beginner's guide to Geotrupidae (*Beetle News* 2.2, Dec. 2010), Gillett and Sedáček drew attention to the mandible outline as a character for separating *Geotrupes stercorarius* and *spiniger*. Unfortunately, the mandibles were obscured in their photograph of *G. spiniger*, so here are photographs to clarify the difference; and for good measure, the mandible of the third common British (ex-) *Geotrupes*, *Anoplotrupes stercorosus*. On one *G. spiniger*, the mandible appears to have been partly worn away, perhaps during excavation of the burrow.

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G. spiniger



G. spiniger, worn



G. stercorarius



A. stercorosus

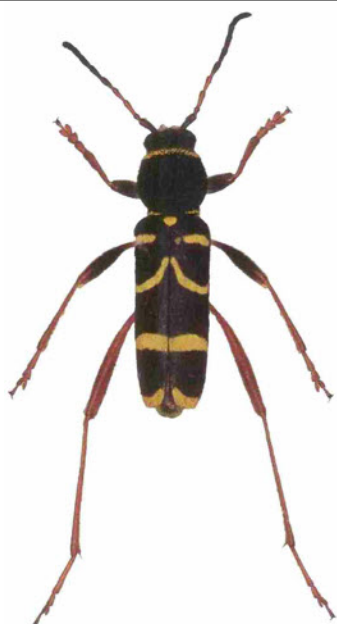
Beginners' Guide**Common longhorn beetles of England**

I have been unable to prepare a formal guide for this issue. However, with spring fast approaching, I felt it would be useful to provide a photographic guide to the commoner and more distinctive longhorn beetles which are among the beetles which beginners are often keen to identify. The species shown here are those most likely to be found in England (and Wales), away from coniferous trees. Other species may be found commonly among conifers, particularly in Scotland. Further species are more or less rare and much less likely to be found.

All of the British species were described by Andrew Duff and illustrated by Richard Lewington in "British Wildlife" 18:6 (August 2007) and 19:1 (October 2007). This is an excellent guide, but the number of species (60) may be confusing for the beginner for whom I have prepared this pictorial introduction to 21 commoner species.

I have included the English names given by Andrew Duff in British Wildlife, but it should be noted that most of these are not commonly used.

Richard Wright



Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietis*
Very distinctive and common

Black-and-yellow Longhorn *Rutpela maculata*.
Elytral pattern rather variable, but distinctive.
Front and middle legs yellow. Very common.



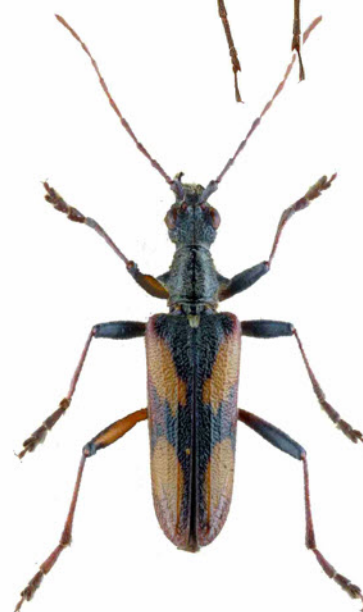
Plum Longhorn *Tetrops praeustus*
A very small species (3 - 6 mm).
Found on many rosaceous trees
and shrubs. Common.

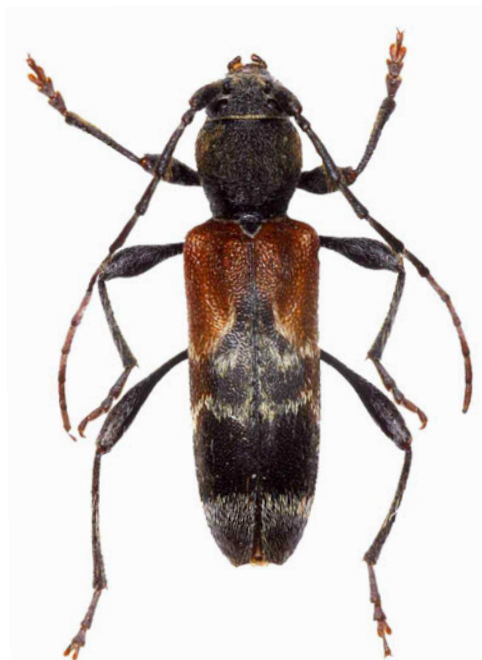


Black-spotted Longhorn
Rhagium mordax
A robust species with rather short
antennae. Distinctive.



Two-banded Longhorn *Rhagium bifasciatum*
Rather variable, but always very distinctive.
Most specimens resemble the one shown on the left.





Rufous-shouldered Longhorn
Anaglyptus mysticus
Variable, but normally distinctive.
Legs and antennae mainly dark.
8 - 15 mm
Commonly on hawthorn
flowers.



White-banded Longhorn
Poecilium alni
Colour similar to *Anaglyptus mysticus* but much smaller
(3 - 7 mm) with pale antennae
and tibiae.



Small Poplar Borer
Saperda populnea
Mottled elytra with yellowish spots.
Associated with Aspen and
usually found near this tree.



Black-clouded Longhorn
Leiopus nebulosus
This species has recently been split into
two, which are difficult to separate
without dissection of the genitalia.



Tanbark Borer *Phymatodes testaceus*
A very variable species in coloration.
Rather flattened species.
Pronotum with three raised shining areas.
A nocturnal species, often attracted to light
and more rarely found by day.





Common Grammotera

Grammotera ruficornis

The commonest longhorn, often very abundant on hawthorn and umbels.

A small (3 - 7 mm) species, only reliably separated from two much rarer *Grammotera* by the elongate second antennal segment.

Lime Longhorn *Stenostola dubia*

Black, with a bluish or greenish sheen and covered with short grey pubescence. Usually with lime *Tilia* in ancient woodlands.



Umbellifer Longhorn

Phytoecia cylindrica

Reddish front legs will separate it from any similar species. Southern but spreading northwards.



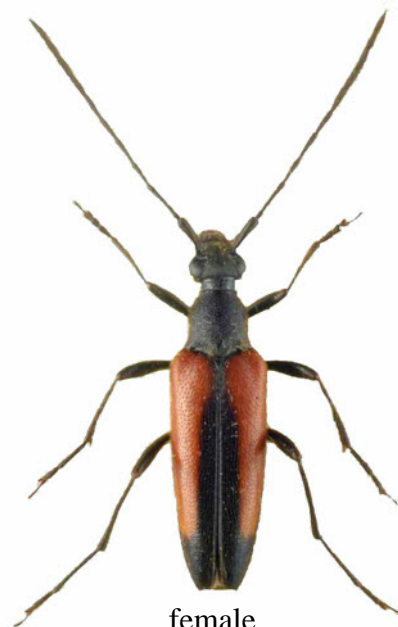
Tobacco-coloured Longhorn

Alosterna tabacicolor.

Largely reddish legs distinguish this common species from others with chestnut elytra.



male



female

Black-striped Longhorn *Stenurella melanura*

Males have a narrow dark line along the elytral suture. This line is wider in the female.

A common species. There are other scarcer species with chestnut elytra, but in these the suture is generally not darkened, though the apex of the elytra may be black.

Fairy-ring Longhorn *Pseudovadonia livida*

Elytra entirely chestnut, with neither suture nor apex darkened. Entirely dark femora distinguish it from *Alosterna tabacicolor*.

Mainly in southern and eastern England.



Four-banded Longhorn

Leptura quadrifasciata

Distinctive pattern.

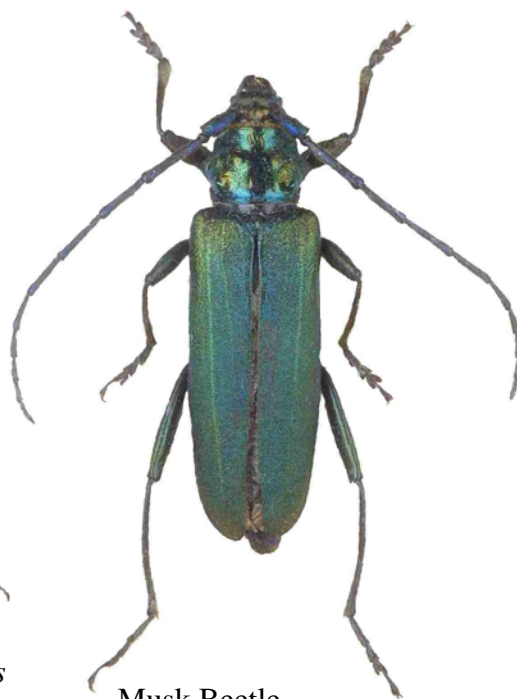
L. aurulenta is a similar, much rarer, species that has golden pubescence on the front and rear pronotal margins.



Speckled Longhorn

Pachytodes cerambyciformis

Broad orange elytra with dark spots. Common in some areas, absent from central and eastern England.



Musk Beetle

Aromia moschata

A very large and distinctive species. Quite common locally, but very scarce in many areas.



Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn

Agapanthia villosoviridescens

A distinctive species which develops in the stems of herbaceous plants and is rarely found on trees.

*P. hispidulus**P. hispidus*Greater Thorn-tipped Longhorn *Pogonocherus hispidulus*Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn *Pogonocherus hispidus*

Two small species which both have the **outer** margin of the elytra prolonged into a sharp spine. However, in *P. hispidulus* the **inner** margin also projects in a spine. This species additionally has a white mark on the scutellum.

In *P. hispidus* the inner elytral margin is not prolonged into an apical spine and the scutellum is entirely dark.

*P. hispidulus*

elytral apex

*P. hispidus*