



Beetle News



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Editorial

Richard Wright

Welcome to the third issue of *Beetle News*. First, I must apologise again for the late arrival of this issue, which was planned for the end of September. This is entirely due to my delay in completing the guide to British Silphidae which was started in Issue 1. This has finally been achieved and forms the larger part of this issue.

I would like to point out that I am **not** keeping a mailing list for Beetle News. Sending it as an email attachment is very time-consuming, particularly as the size is so large, too large for many people to accept as an attachment.

Each issue will be announced first on the *beetles-britishisles* Yahoo group

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/beetles-britishisles/>

Anyone with an interest in beetles would be well-advised to join this group where various interesting threads concerning British beetles can be found.

Each issue will also be sent to the Amateur Entomologists' Society where it can be found on their publications page <http://www.amentsoc.org/publications/>

I plan to work on the next issue over Christmas and would very much like to have it ready before the end of the year to keep up with the intended publishing schedule. This is only two months away and any articles would be appreciated as always.

Open-source biological recording programme

I am currently developing a free and open-source biological recording program and would be interested in hearing comments and suggestions from the readers of this newsletter.

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Colours in *Anisodactylus poeciloides*

In his RES Handbook to Carabidae, Martin Luff separates *Anisodactylus poeciloides* from the other members of the genus by colour, "upper surface metallic golden-green" as opposed to black. However, in a sample I received from the Thames estuary area of Kent, only 60% were this colour, the remainder being black with a variable degree of bluish metallic shading. They are clearly identifiable as *A. poeciloides* by the shape of the pronotum and the three-pointed anterior tibial spur, similar to that of *Amara plebeja*. These structural characters appear more reliable than colour in the recognition of this species

Richard Wright

Recent records of *Hylecoetus dermestoides* (Linnaeus, 1761) (Lymexylidae) in Surrey (VC 17).

Scotty Dodd, 1 Pine cottages, Harpers Road, Ash, Aldershot, Surrey. GU12 6BZ.

Hylecoetus dermestoides (Linnaeus, 1761) is a saproxylic species listed as Nationally Scarce B, with a widespread but localised distribution concentrated in the Midlands, northern England, Wales and Scotland (Hyman, 1992). Records in southern England appear to be scant. In Surrey (VC 17) *H.dermestoides* is regarded as rare. There are only two records cited in the Surrey Coleoptera checklist:

- Thursley Common, Pine Island (SU904413), v.1990, J.S.Denton
- Chilworth (TQ032475), 10.v.2001, R.D. Hawkins (Denton, 2005; Hawkins, 2009, pers. comm..).

There is also a later record, post-checklist publication, from Bookham Common arboretum (TQ126561), 23.v.2007, I.S.Menzies, beaten from *Populus tremula* (Linnaeus, 1753) (M.V.L.Barclay, 2009, pers. comm..). There is no Victoria County History record of this species for Surrey (Champion *et al*, 1902).

During April 2009 *H.dermestoides* was recorded on three occasions within a seven day period (16.iv – 22.iv) by independent recorders at sites in the west of Surrey.

- Mare Hill Common (SU9340). 16.iv.2009. R. Dickinson. Female netted in flight, warm afternoon sunshine.
- Chobham Common, Glovers Pond (SU977641). 21.iv.2009. S.G.Dodd. Female hand-caught in

flight, humid afternoon (ca.1600hrs), amongst moribund *Pinus sylvestris* (Linnaeus, 1753).

- Ash Ranges, Henley Park Butts (SU928536). 22.iv.2009. G.A.Collins. Female netted in flight, warm evening (ca. 1700hrs).

Acknowledgements.

Many thanks to Richard Dickinson and Graham Collins for allowing me to publish their records and Maxwell Barclay for supplying information on the record made by the late Ian Menzies. Also, to Surrey Wildlife Trust for supporting invertebrate survey work at Chobham Common NNR via a SITA funding bid.

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male female
(photographs by Richard Wright)

Aging of Small Carrion to collect Coleoptera in summer

Andrew Chick, 50 Thorneywood Road Long Eaton Nottingham NG10 2DY Andy.chick@gmail.com

In the 4th edition of the Coleopterists handbook (2006) Jon Cooter mentions that it is best to collect Coleoptera from carrion in the winter months as during summer the carrion will be colonised and consumed by Diptera before Coleoptera can get to it. While this is not entirely true, Chick *et al* (2008) recorded some Carabidae and Staphylinidae on rats during August, true carrion beetles such as Silphidae are often out competed. However a simple method for collecting carrion-frequenting beetles is to age the carrion so as to skip the first wave of decomposition and thus make it unattractive to most early Diptera. The carrion such as a dead rat is sealed in a reseal-able bag and placed in a cool spot for a week or two before it is placed in the field in a scavenger

resistance cage (such as mentioned in Chick, 2008). While this will still attract some Diptera, many Coleoptera will still be attracted to pitfalls surrounding the carrion, one such rat attracted both *Nicrophorus humator* and *N.vespilliodes* in numbers. A number of dead rats have been aged in such a way over this summer all of which yielded *Nicrophorus* as well as a few Nitulididae

References

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- Chick, A.I.R.**, 2008, Some novel suggestions for the collection and study of Diptera from carrion *Bulletin of the Dipterists forum* **65** 24-26
- Cooter, J and Barclay, M.V.L** (eds) (2006) *A Coleopterists Handbook* 4th ed

Recent records of *Ixapion variegatum* (Wencker) in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire

During September and October 2009, I carried out an extended phase 1 habitat survey in the area of Ripple near the Worcestershire/Gloucestershire border. Mistletoe was noted as being frequent on apple, poplar and hawthorn in hedgerows at the edges of pasture and in old plantations and relic orchards.

Ixapion variegatum was beaten off the host-plant at SO 875371 and SO 876376 on September 24th, at SO 882370 on September 29th, at SO 858359 on October 7th and at SO 878377 on October 8th. The third and fifth locations given are in Gloucestershire, the remaining three are in Worcestershire.

A brief trawl of literature and of the internet revealed single localities for this species in Herefordshire, West Gloucestershire and Worcestershire in 2000, two further Herefordshire sites in 2001, followed by two more in that county in 2003, an undated Monmouthshire record and three additional Worcestershire sites in 2004.

It seems likely that these records represent the tip of the iceberg and that this weevil is actually frequent throughout its range, though probably very much restricted in this distribution to the counties of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. Mistletoe is found throughout southern England, but by far and away the greatest concentration of the plant is in the region of the country occupied by these four counties.

Steve Lane

Otiorhynchus armadillo (Rossi) in Coventry, Warwickshire (VC 38)

Since its discovery in the UK in 1998, this beetle has been spreading and has reached pest proportions in some areas of London. The first record for Warwickshire (VC 38) involved a male and female beaten off ornamental willow on July 8th 2009 at an industrial estate at Puma Way in Coventry, SP 337784. A further seven specimens were obtained by beating ornamental *Viburnum* at the same location on July 11th 2009. It is likely that the species has been established in the area for some considerable time. Extensive feeding damage, evident on a variety of planted ornamental shrubs surrounding a new housing estate nearby indicates that a large population may be present.

Steve Lane



Atlas of the Coccinellidae of the British Isles.

If anyone has Coccinellidae records to contribute to our atlas, we would be very pleased to receive them before the end of this year.

If you would like to help us, please email files of data to ladybird-survey@ceh.ac.uk or post paper records to -

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Wallingford
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Peter Brown, Helen Roy & Remy Ware
UK Ladybird Survey

Ladybirds in Horncastle Lincolnshire

A quick half-hour foray on 13th October around Banovalum House gardens (TF2569) in Horncastle, North Lincolnshire (VC54), headquarters for the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, produced a sizeable number of ladybirds: 60 adult Seven-spots, 7 adult Harlequins, 4 pupal Harlequins, 5 prepupal Harlequins, 23 larval Harlequins and a single Ten-spot. Of the 60 Seven-spots encountered, 4 were found to be parasitized by *Dinocampus coccinellae* (Hymenoptera, Braconidae) all of which were found butting up against the straining wire on the middle rail of the perimeter post-and-rail fence. The fence was in full sunshine at the time and all the ladybirds on it were active.

Charlie Barnes
Biodiversity Services Assistant
Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership

Survey of stag beetle “larval incidents” in private gardens

For the last 10 years or so I have been collecting stag beetle “larval incidents” mostly via my website and local residents; some correspondents have proved very willing to answer my questions, unfortunately others vanish after the first email. Nevertheless this has given me an insight into what is happening to their habitat in people’s gardens and in the process I have come to the conclusion that the female stag beetles seem to be very quick at colonizing newly created habitats, see Figure 1 for an example, therefore they respond well to a dynamic management (Fremlin, 2009). At the same time they seem to have very eclectic tastes (Hawes, 2009). This helps explain why in the UK the majority of the stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* records come from people’s gardens (Bowdrey, 1997; Percy et al., 2000; Smith, 2003).

When I recently came across SurveyMonkey I jumped at the opportunity, shall I say the challenge, of setting up a more serious survey, its aim being to collect information regarding the interactions between people and stag beetles. It is to be found at

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=o_2f43u3KeynPyevuey0y6Cw_3d_3d

The main problem with a survey of this kind is the identification of the larvae. First, I have observed that sometimes *Lucanus cervus* and *Dorcus parellipipedus* share habitats with overlapping boundaries. Unfortunately I have not yet had the pleasure of coming across *Sinodendron cylindricum*, but the three species have been found together in one garden (Owen, 1992). Obviously, the fine distinctions between their larvae are difficult and even with a photo they may be indistinguishable.

Second, *Cetonia aurata* also shares the habitat with the stag beetles, mostly in compost heaps with *Lucanus cervus*; however their larvae are much easier to identify from a photo. Interestingly, in records collected over more than 10 years in Suffolk the frequency of *L. cervus* in compost heaps is about the same as in oak (Hawes, 2009); however, compost heaps are already a rather problematic habitat for rose chafers let alone for stag beetles which have a much longer larval development (Fremlin, 2008).

I have strong hopes that it will take much less than 10 years to reach my allowed 100 free entries. I do have a time line already: 70 larval records from the PTES Great Stag Hunt Survey III, <http://www.greatstaghunt.org/>, for the years 2006-7, that is about 1 larval record in each 100 adult records (M. Smith, pers. comm.). And plenty of evidence that these days when people find something odd they make a bee-line for their computers.

Please, if you ever come across any stag beetle larvae in private gardens do participate; your records will be Grade 1.

Maria Fremlin, 25 Ireton Road, Colchester CO3 3AT,
<http://maria.fremlin.org>

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Smith, M. N. (2003) *National Stag Beetle Survey 2002*. People’s Trust for Endangered Species. London, 14 pp.

Figure 1 – *Lucanus cervus* L3 larvae found in the roots of a healthy holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) tree felled late 2005. Photo taken by Maria Fremlin, 30 May 2007.

http://maria.fremlin.org/saproxyl-ic_conference/nests/images/picture2.jpg



**Beginner's Guide
Silphidae 2**

Continued from Beetle News Vol 1 : 1.

Key to species

- 1. Antennae with a clearly defined 4-jointed club (1) 2
- Antennae only gradually expanded towards the apex (2) 8

- 2. Elytra entirely black (3) 3
- Elytra with large orange markings (4) 4

- 3. Antennal club black. Elytral epipleura orange. *Nicrophorus germanicus*
(doubtfully established)
- Antennal club reddish-yellow. Epipleura black. *Nicrophorus humator*

- 4. Antennal club entirely black. *Nicrophorus vespilloides*
- Last 3 segments of club orange 5

- 5. Hind tibia distinctly bent.(5) *Nicrophorus vespillo*
- Hind tibia straight (6) 6

- 6. Pronotum with golden pubescence.(7) *Nicrophorus vestigator*
- Pronotum glabrous (8) 7

- 7. All tergites with golden pubescence. Anterior orange band on elytra normally
broadly interrupted at the suture. (9) *Nicrophorus interruptus*
- Only the last tergite with pubescence. Anterior orange band on elytra very
narrowly interrupted across the suture (10) *Nicrophorus investigator*

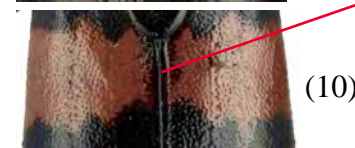
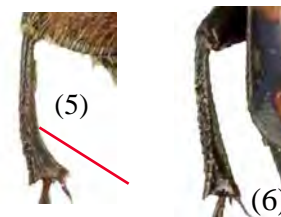
- 8. Elytra orange with 4 black spots (11) *Dendroxena quadrimaculata*
- Elytra dark, usually black, sometimes reddish. 9

- 9. Pronotum orange, contrasting with elytra.(12) *Oiceoptoma thoracicum*
- Pronotum and elytra both dark. 10

- 10.Last 3 antennal segments yellowish. *Nicrodes littoralis*
- Antennae completely dark. 11

- 11.Scutellum with some golden pubescence, remainder of upperside may also
have obvious golden pubescence or not (13, 14) 12
- Upperside, including scutellum, without golden pubescence (15) 15

- 12.Anterior margin of pronotum not emarginate. Normally covered with dense
pubescence. (13) *Aclypea opaca*
- Anterior margin of pronotum emarginate. Pubescence generally sparser and
more scattered, may be confined to scutellum (14) 13



13. Interstices of elytra with raised tubercles or ridges (16) *Thanatophilus rugosus* 14
 Interstices of elytra smooth (17)



(16)

14. Elytra with a small shoulder tooth. Normally with less dense pubescence. (18) *Thanatophilus sinuatus*
 Elytra rounded at the shoulders. Normally with much denser pubescence. (19) *Thanatophilus dispar*

15. Elytra without ridges or raised lines. (20) *Silpha laevigata*
 Elytra with prominent ridges, or at least distinct raised lines (21, 22) 16

16. Head, especially mandibles, elongate. Front of pronotum rounded. Shining species, black or reddish. (23) *Silpha atrata*
 Head quadrate or transverse. Front of pronotum flatter. Duller. (24) 17

17. Second antennal segment twice as long as third. (Very rare species) *Aclypea undata* 18
 Second antennal segment about as long as third. 18

18. 8th antennal segment much longer than 9th. Pronotum distinctly emarginate anteriorly. (Very rare species) *Silpha carinata*
 8th antennal segment not longer than the 9th. Pronotum more or less flat in front. 19

19. Puncturation of elytra irregular. Segment 5 of antennae roundish, segment 6 transverse. (25) *Silpha tyrolensis*
 Puncturation of elytra more regular. Segment 5 of antennae elongate, segment 6 roundish. 20

20. Longitudinal lines on elytra strong. (26). More shining. Each elytral puncture with a tiny shining tubercle in front of it. *Silpha tristis*
 Longitudinal lines on elytra weak. Dull species. Elytral punctures without tiny shining tubercles in front. *Silpha obscura*



(17)



(18)



(19)



(20)



(21)



(22)



(23)



(24)



(25)



(26)



(27)

On the following pages I give photographs of the remaining members of the Silphidae. Species of *Nicrophorus* were shown in Vol 1 : 1 of Beetle News.

I have no specimens of the two very rare species *Aclypea undata* and *Silpha carinata* and am thus unable to provide photographs.



Dendroxena quadrimaculata (Scopoli, 1772)

A very distinctive species which cannot easily be mistaken for any other British beetle.

Unlike most Silphidae, it is most often found on trees and bushes where it hunts caterpillars. It is also found in moss and litter where it passes the winter.

UK Status: Nationally Scarce "B".
Widespread, but appears to have declined.



Oiceoptoma thoracicum (Linnaeus, 1758)

Like the previous species, the colour pattern is distinctive and this beetle cannot easily be mistaken.

Associated with carrion and fungi, especially in woodland.

Widespread throughout, apparently common in some areas but scarce in others.



Necrodes littoralis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Superficially resembling a species of *Nicrophorus* but easily distinguished by the elongated orange antennal club.

Widespread throughout. Sometimes said to be commoner in coastal areas, but this does not appear to be the case.

Associated with carrion and often taken in light traps.



Aclypea opaca (Linnaeus, 1758)

UK Status: Nationally Scarce "A". Scattered throughout England and Wales at least.

Usually easily distinguished by the dense covering of yellowish pubescence.

Aclypea undata (Müller, O.F., 1776) (not illustrated)

UK Status: Provisional RDB1 Endangered. An extremely rare species with very few records. I have no specimen to photograph..



Thanatophilus rugosus (Linnaeus, 1758)

The commonest member of the genus.. Widespread throughout, perhaps scarcer in the south.

Easily distinguished form the other species by the tubercles or ridges on the elytral instertices.

Usually associated with carrion.



Thanatophilus sinuatus (Fabricius, 1775)

Possibly England and Wales only?

Locally common in some areas, apparently scarcer elsewhere.

The elytra have a small shoulder tooth, which may be difficult to see if covered by the pronotum. Normally much less pubescent than *T. dispar*, often a small amount of pubescence only on the scutellumn and head..



Thanatophilus dispar (Herbst, 1793)

UK Status: Provisional RDB1 Endangered

Very few recent records..

Distinguished from *T. sinutaus* normally by the denser pubescence and also by the absence of a shoulder tooth.



Silpha laevigata Fabricius, 1775

Easily distinguished by the absence of raised longitudinal lines on the elytra. The front of the pronotum is rounded and the head somewhat elongate.

Mainly in the southern half of England. May be abundant in some areas, particularly near the coast, but scarce or absent in others.

Silpha atrata Linnaeus, 1758



The commonest species of the genus, Widespread throughout and generally common.

Easily distinguished by the combination of the elongate head and prominent elytral ridges.

The black form is commoner, but the red form is by no means scarce.

A predator of snails, the elongated mandibles being adapted to enter the shell.

Silpha tristis Illiger, 1798



Widespread but local, apparently more abundant in coastal areas.

Distinguished by the combination of well-developed raised lines and regular puncturation on the elytra. The tiny shining tubercles in front of each elytral puncture are very distinctive under high magnification.

Silpha tyrolensis Laicharting, 1781



UK Status: Nationally Scarce "B". Widely scattered, at least in England and Wales.

Best distinguished by the irregular elytral puncturation, particularly adjacent to the suture.

Silpha obscura Linnaeus, 1758



UK Status: Provisional RDB2 Vulnerable.
Widely scattered records.

This species should be readily distinguished by the very indistinct elytral lines compared to the other species. Overall appearance dull.

Silpha carinata Herbst, 1783 (not illustrated)

UK Status: Provisional RDB1 Endangered

A very rare species of which I have no specimen to photograph.