

Wyre Forest Study Group

A New Beetle for Wyre Forest and Shropshire, *Epiphanis cornutus* (Escholtz, 1829)

JOHN BINGHAM

On a WFSG field meeting on 9th June 2012 held at Longdon Wood, Shropshire, I noticed several beetles crawling over a recently cut spruce stump. Their appearance was like a click beetle, but looked somewhat different from the norm. I photographed one and collected a specimen for identification. Several other specimens of the beetle were seen in the same area also on fresh conifer stumps.

Unfortunately I could not key out the specimen, but it seemed to be in the false click beetle group. I decided it must be something unusual or different as it had four atypical long antennae segments. Images were sent round to various people who might be able to help with the identification. At first identification proved difficult, but experts Paul Whitehead and Don Stenhouse both independently identified it as *Epiphanis cornutus*, an Eucnemid or false click beetle. Apparently there are seven British species of Eucnemid (Duff, 2008). They are known as the False Click Beetles to distinguish them from the 'True' Click Beetles of the family Elateridae, and many do in fact have the ability to flick themselves into the air. All six British species are very rare and elusive creatures of woodlands and are seldom come across casually. The larvae of Eucnemids are wood boring, favouring a range of tree species. (Elateridae of the British Isles).

Epiphanis cornutus is probably a North American import (where it is apparently only rarely found), originally discovered in the British Isles in decayed spruce logs in Gloucestershire in 1964. This is why it proved difficult to identify as it was not in the standard identification works, but a note by Steve Lane in 'Beetle News' May 2012 was very timely. In 2005 it was discovered in Hampton Wood in Warwickshire and in 2011 in Weetley Wood, also in Warwickshire, close to the Worcestershire border. (Lane 2012).

So this record in Wyre Forest is a new Shropshire record and a further extension of the beetles' range in England. The area where they were found is being cleared of conifer as part of the restoration of broadleaf woodland on this part of the Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve. Whether the beetles will be found once all the conifer is removed remains to be seen. They may have to disperse into other areas of the forest.

My thanks to Paul Whitehead and Don Stenhouse for their help in the identification.

REFERENCES

- Elateridae of the British Isles, Web Site. <http://elateridae.co.uk/>
Lane, S. 2012. Eucnemids in Warwickshire-A Summary Beetle News Vol 4.1 p.9.



Epiphanis cornutus, note the four long antennal segments that are diagnostic.

John Bingham