

Wyre Forest Study Group

Exochus gravipes (Gravenhorst, 1820).

Hymenoptera: Ichneumonidae: Metopiinae.

JOHN AND DENISE BINGHAM

Of the many insect groups found in the forest the Ichneumons (Darwin Wasps as they are now called) are perhaps the least recorded, given the number of species possibly present. Some 47 species are noted on our WFSG database for the forest, no doubt a few more have been added recently but this is out of a total for the British Isles of over 2,400 species.

The problem lies with identification of such a vast number of species and the difficulty in finding publications and keys for all our UK species. Even with the larger, more obvious Ichneumonids, so many appear similar and we can struggle to name even these correctly. On 24th August 2021 Denise caught a colourfully marked, quite large species in the Shropshire part of Wyre, we thought it might be easy to identify. However, it proved to be impossible for us to name and needed expert identification. The specimen was sent to Malcolm Storey (BioImages) who along with William Penigot, University of Burgundy, managed to narrow it down to two possible species, *Exochus gravipes* being the most likely. There are 26 species just in this genus found in the UK.

The NBN Gateway Atlas has only four other records and iRecord has six, most in South-east Yorkshire no doubt more to do with recorders than the true distribution of the species.

This is the tip of the iceberg for Ichneumonidae in Wyre, just how many species are present? Anyone who takes the time and has the necessary skills in identification could add greatly to our knowledge of our forest's Darwin Wasps. Meanwhile I will continue to photograph the more colourful larger species in the hope someone can provide names to the images.

Thanks to Malcolm Storey and William Penigot for the identification of the Ichneumon specimen.

Information/Reading

BioImages Virtual Field Guide (UK). <http://www.bioimages.org.uk/>

Online key; Broad, G. (2011) *Identification key to the subfamilies of Ichneumonidae (Hymenoptera)*. [On line] at <https://www.brc.ac.uk/sites/www.brc.ac.uk/files/pictures/resources/ichneumonidae-subfamily-key.pdf>

Broad, R. G., Shaw, M, R. & Fitton, M, G. 2018. *Ichneumonid Wasps (Hymenoptera: Ichneumonidae): their Classification and Biology*. RES Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Volume 7 part12. RES



Exochus gravipes

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