Conservatory Insects

ROSEMARY WINNALL

In April 2021 my husband and I moved to a property on the edge of Bewdley town close to the river. The house had a small conservatory (measuring 3m x 4m) on the southwest side of the house with double doors opening to the southeast. We spent much of the summer using this space, enjoying the open views and warmth, although it got too hot at times, and on 18th July when the garden temperature reached 31.5°C a temperature of 40°C was recorded.

But the wooden conservatory frame wasn't in the best condition. It needed painting and had warped leaving small gaps where the glass didn't fit properly. So, we decided to replace the wood with a metal frame and the glass with argon-filled 28mm double-glazing which was designed to cut down the glare, reduce heat build-up in summer and minimise heat loss in winter. This was completed on 28th July 2021; the size and shape were identical to the original conservatory, but the roof glass looked blue when viewed obliquely.

The wooden conservatory Rosemary Winnall

The blue Argon-filled roof Rosemary Winnall

During the following week of dry warm weather, I began to notice insects inside the conservatory and many were getting trapped up in the roof apex. I needed to wield my long-handled sweep net in order to catch and release them. I soon realised that where the roof and walls joined there was a narrow ledge and if I wasn't quick enough with the net some dehydrated and died on that shelf. So began two months of collecting which included clambering over table and along seating with pooter, tube and soft forceps. I moved my microscope and insect keys into the conservatory and this became my laboratory for the rest of the summer, and I had an ideal occupation during the Covid pandemic travel and social restrictions. During August and September 2021, I caught and tubed these insects, photographing them from various angles before releasing live ones into the garden, and pinning the dead ones. I identified as many as possible and submitted my records on iRecord. My list of insects in Table 1 shows those I was able to identify, although it gives no indication of the numbers involved which I should have noted. There were many I couldn't identify and I have saved Sarcophagids, Dolichopids, Phorids, grass flies, parasitoids, spider-hunting wasps, and sawflies for another occasion. Mick Blythe encouraged me in this project and generously provided me with some of his keys for the harder groups of flies. I am promised hours of fun!

The butterflies and bumble bees that flew in were easy to catch and identify, and I was able to release a Migrant Dragonfly, but the live Field Grasshopper seven feet up on the high ledge was a surprise. Most of the catch were flies and small wasps, a few of which I had not previously recorded. There were very few bugs, although the Andromeda Lacebug was of interest as it is a recent immigrant from Japan to the UK where it feeds on *Rhododendron*, *Azalea* and *Pieris*. This project also provided me with the opportunity to look closely at some of the insects and admire their anatomy and colouration.

After a few weeks, I realised that I wasn't the only creature collecting these insects. Several spiders had moved in including the Garden Spider *Araneus diadematus* and the Zebra Jumping Spider *Salticus scenicus* and I would often find little wrapped parcels left on the ledge like early Christmas presents. Common Wasps were visiting, capturing live insects and flying back out (when they could find the door) and up to their nest in the house soffits. I discovered that if I left out pinned specimens, I might return to find some of them headless, and I eventually saw a wasp trying to pull one of the dead flies off its pin! I very soon learned to keep them covered. I was never sure whether the several visiting Robber Flies were hunting or just lost.

I found an interesting variety of insects in just two months at the end of the summer and this made me

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consider habitats within 200m of our new home. There are flower-rich gardens (some long-established), the River Severn with its riverside vegetation, unimproved meadow, a small churchyard, a stream, several ponds, an arable field, high hedges and native deciduous woodland. This must be an area with high biodiversity. What am I going to find next spring and early summer?

I am writing this to alert others to the possibility that this blue glass might be attracting insects to their doom. Although the conservatory may be acting as an interception trap, I rescued no insects from the old wooden conservatory with the plain glass between May and July, even though we were using the room so much with the outer doors open. Could this new glass possibly be deceiving flying insects into thinking it is a garden pond or giant blue flower to be investigated? Is this a threat to our already diminished insect populations, and has anyone else experienced a similar concern?

Lindenius albilabris male 5mm Rosemary Winnall

Palloptera umbellatarum female 3mm Rosemary Winnall

Sargus bipunctatus female 12mm Rosemary Winnall

Pimpla rufipes male 15mm Rosemary Winnall

Palloptera umbellatarum female 8mm Rosemary Winnall

Bruchus rufimanus male 5mm Rosemary Winnall

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Microchrysa polita female 5mm Rosemary Winnall

Rhopalum coarctatum male 7mm Rosemary Winnall

Vespula vulgaris worker with prey Rosemary Winnall

Field Grasshopper Chorthippus brunneus Rosemary Winnall

Table 1. Species recorded in conservatory during August and September 2021 at Bewdley (SO 7891 7506)

TAXON	Latin name	English name
Coleoptera - leaf	*Bruchus rufimanus*	Bean Seed Beetle
Coleoptera - rove	*Aleochara* sp.	
Diptera - blowfly	*Lucilia* sp.	
Diptera - cranefly	*Nephrotoma cornicina*	
Diptera - cranefly	*Tipula paludosa*	
Diptera - empid	*Hilara* sp.	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Baccha elongata*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Cheilosia pagana*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Dasysyrphus albostriatus*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Episyrphus balteatus*	Marmalade Hoverfly
Diptera - hoverfly	*Eristalis pertinax*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Eumerus funeralis/ strigatus*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Eupeodes latifasciatus*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Eupeodes luniger*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Ferdinandea cuprea*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Helophilus pendulus*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Melanostoma mellinum*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Melanostoma scalare*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Meligramma trianguliferum*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Meliscaeva auricollis*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Meliscaeva cinctella*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Platycheirus albimanus*	

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TAXON	Latin name	English name
Diptera - hoverfly	*Platycheirus clypeatus* agg.	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Platycheirus* sp.	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Rhingia campestris*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Sphaerophoria scripta*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Syrphus ribesii*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Syrphus vitripennis/ rectus*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Volucella inanis*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Volucella pellucens*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Xanthogramma pedissequum*	
Diptera - hoverfly	*Xylota segnis*	
Diptera - muscid	*Mesembrina meridiana*	
Diptera - pallopterid	*Palloptera umbellatarum*	
Diptera - pallopterid	*Palloptera ustulata* agg.	
Diptera - robber fly	*Machimus atricapillus*	Kite-tailed Robberfly
Diptera - soldier fly	*Chorisops tibialis*	Dull 4-spined Legionnaire
Diptera - soldier fly	*Microchrysa polita*	Black-horned Gem
Diptera - soldier fly	*Pachygaster leachii*	Yellow-legged Black
Diptera - soldier fly	*Sargus bipunctatus*	
Diptera - soldier fly	*Sargus flavipes*	Yellow-legged Centurion
Diptera - stiletto fly	*Thereva nobilitata*	Common Stiletto
Diptera - tachinid	*Tachina fera*	
Diptera - tephritid	*Anomoia permunda*	a picture-winged fly
Diptera - tephritid	*Tephritis vespertina*	a picture-winged fly
Hermiptera - tingid	*Stephanitis takeyai*	Andromeda lacebug

TAXON	Latin name	English name
Hemiptera - mirid	*Liocoris tripustulatus*	
Hemiptera - mirid	*Plagiognathus arbustorum*	
Hymenoptera - ant	*Lasius flavus* (keyed to check)	Yellow Meadow Ant
Hymenoptera - bee	*Apis mellifera*	Honey Bee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Bombus hortorum*	Small Garden Bumblebee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Bombus hypnorum*	Tree Bumblebee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Bombus lapidarius*	Red-tailed Bumblebee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Bombus pascuorum*	Common Carder bee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Bombus terrestris/ lucorum*	a bumblebee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Hylaeus communis*	Common Yellow-faced Bee
Hymenoptera - bee	*Lasioglossum morio*	
Hymenoptera - bee	*Megachile willughbiella*	Willughby's Leafcutter Bee
Hymenoptera - sawfly	*Athelia* sp.	
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Lindenius albilabris*	
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Mellinus arvensis*	Field Digger-wasp
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Pimpla rufipes*	
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Rhopalum coactatum*	
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Trypoxylon clavicerum*	Club Horned Wood Borer
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Vespula germanica*	German Wasp
Hymenoptera - wasp	*Vespula vulgaris*	Common Wasp
Lepidoptera - butterfly	*Celastrina argiolus*	Holly Blue
Lepidoptera - butterfly	*Pieris rapae*	Small White
Odonata	*Aeshna mixta*	Migrant Hawker
Orthoptera	*Chorthippus brunneus*	Field Grasshopper