

Records of Note from Helen Mackaness Reserve, Wyre Forest, 2018

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During 2018 I visited the new Helen Mackaness Reserve in Wyre Forest on four occasions to contribute towards the site species-list. I found the area containing the seasonal wet flush to be the most significant from an entomological perspective and I have provided details of my most interesting records below.

Coleoptera

Agonum emarginatum (Col; Carabidae). One was collected from underneath a log alongside the seasonal wet flush on 21.04.2018. This was my first ever record for this species but I later collected another from beneath debris alongside the River Rea at the Shakenhurst Estate on 07.05.2018. Despite the fact that I have never previously encountered this species it is described as being widespread and occasionally abundant on marshy ground throughout England and Wales (Luff, 2007). *A. marginatum* does not appear on the coleoptera species-list for Wyre Forest.

Carabus nemoralis (Col; Carabidae). One was found underneath a silver birch log on 16.10.2018. I was surprised by this as I have never before encountered *C. nemoralis* in Wyre Forest although I have been recording beetles here for over twenty years. This large impressive ground beetle is considered widespread throughout Britain in a variety of habitats including gardens (Luff, 2007), but the majority of my records are from broad-leaved woodlands.



Carabus nemoralis, Shustoke, Warks.16.2.2014 Kevin McGee

Pterostichus diligens (Col; Carabidae). One was collected from wet ground alongside the seasonal wet flush on 19.05.2018. This is my first record from the Wyre Forest; all of my previous records are from Borth Bog (Cors Fochno) on the Welsh coast north of Aberystwyth. *P. diligens* does not appear on the coleoptera species-list for Wyre Forest. This is one of several black *Pterostichus* ground beetle species all very similar in appearance, it is associated with marshes, damp grassland and upland moors, and is described as widespread and often abundant (Luff, 2007). The national distribution map (NBN Atlas, 2018) shows a

somewhat northern and western bias which is often the case for several insect species in Wyre not found with particular frequency elsewhere in the midlands.

Pterostichus minor (Col; Carabidae). Two were collected from beneath a log alongside the seasonal wet flush on 29.04.2018. This is superficially similar to the previous species and occurs in the same habitats where it can often be abundant (Luff, 2007). However, I have only one other record from Worcestershire, I collected one from a poolside at Hartlebury Common in 2003. *P. minor* does not appear on the coleoptera species-list for Wyre Forest.

Helophorus aequalis (Col; Hydrophilidae). The seasonal wet flush was sampled for aquatic beetles on several occasions during spring 2018. The species composition was found to be poor overall but a high number of various *Helophorus* species were present. This genus of water beetles is strongly associated with seasonally dry water bodies (Foster et al, 2014) and all are similar in appearance requiring (often challenging) microscopic examination. *H. aequalis* is one of the most commonly found members of the genus; however, the two following species are less frequent.

Helophorus obscurus (Col; Hydrophilidae). Two were collected from the wet flush on 21.04.2018. *H. obscurus* does not appear on the coleoptera species-list for Wyre Forest.

Helophorus strigifrons (Col; Hydrophilidae). Notable B. Three were collected from the wet flush on 21.04.2018 and are my first records of this scarce species. *H. strigifrons* does not appear on the coleoptera species-list for Wyre Forest. This species and *H. obscurus* (above) can be found throughout the year, but records peak in April (Foster et al, 2014).

Diptera

Criorhina ranunculi (Dip; Syrphidae). Three were observed visiting Blackthorn flowers on 21.04.2018.



Criorhina ranunculi (female)
Drakes Broughton, Worcs.11.04.2009

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These large hoverflies appear superficially like small bumblebees in flight but are quite distinctive once familiarised. *C. ranunculi* is one of the earliest hoverflies of spring and can be found high up in flowering willows and blackthorns, but it is never common. I have several records from the Wyre Forest dating back to 2003. The larvae of *Criorhina* species develop in decaying heartwood of various tree species, especially in decaying roots just beneath the ground surface (Stubbs & Falk, 2002). I have on occasions observed females ovipositing in wet mosses at the bases of broad-leaved trees alongside woodland rides.

Xylota florum (Dip; Syrphidae). One was observed on low vegetation on 23.06.2018 during warm sunny conditions. All of my records for this localised species are from Wyre Forest only. The larvae develop in decaying wood near water (Stubbs & Falk, 2002)



Xylota florum, Wyre Forest, Shrops. 3.06.2017

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Hybomitra distinguenda (Dip; Tabanidae). One male was observed and photographed hovering approximately five feet above ground level alongside the wet flush during the morning of 23.06.2018. The weather was calm, warm and sunny at the time. This scarce horsefly species is most frequently associated with wet woodland rides in southern England where males can sometimes be captured while performing territorial hovering flights above boggy ground in hot weather (Stubbs & Drake, 2001). I have seen this behaviour on previous



Hybomitra distinguenda (male) at the Mackness Reserve on 23.06.2018

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Hybomitra distinguenda (male) near Dowles Brook at Wyre Forest on 05.06.2007

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occasions in Wyre Forest, including the capture of a male alongside Dowles Brook on 05.06.2007.

Hymenoptera

Nomada flavoguttata (Hym; Apidae). Although this small cleptoparasitic 'cuckoo' bee is quite common throughout much of England and Wales I have included this record as I have found this to be a scarce species in Wyre Forest. One female was collected on 19.05.2018, my only other Wyre record is of two collected on 23.04.2007. The scarcity of *N. flavoguttata* in Wyre is likely to be because its host, the mini-mining bee *Andrena minutula*, is also uncommon here. I have just one record of *A. minutula* from Wyre, on 31.03.2016. Another host species is the equally small *Andrena subopaca* (Falk & Lewington, 2015) which is also rare in Wyre; I have just a single record from 03.05.2008.



Nomada flavoguttata (female), Drakes Broughton, Worcs. 15.05.2009

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