Six-spotted Longhorn *Anoplodera sexguttata* in Wyre Forest

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A recent observation of *Anoplodera sexguttata* (Fabricius, 1775) (Figure 1) in Wyre Forest is reported. On 27/05/2024 a visit was made to part of the northern sector of Wyre within Shropshire (VC40). Weather conditions were predominately good with long periods of warm sunshine in between occasional cloud with light showers driven by a constant breeze. By midday the meadows along the northern side of Dowles Brook in the vicinity of Coopers Mill were particularly productive as they were in full sun and offered some shelter from the nagging breeze.

The main source of pollen and nectar for foraging insects during the visit was Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, with high numbers at the peak of their flowering season around the meadow boundaries and alongside woodland tracks attracting a wide variety of insects. Species of note included the conopid fly *Myopa buccata*, the jewel wasp *Chrysis viridula*, the mason wasp *Ancistrocerus trifasciatus*, and the longhorn beetles *Pachytodes cerambyciformis*, *Stenurella melanura, Alosterna tabacicolor,* and *Stenocorus meridianus.*

Photographing insects visiting the flowers was difficult in the sudden gusts of wind which soon became a dilemma when I observed a fairly small longhorn beetle I immediately knew to be important and one I had not seen previously. I also instinctively knew a decent photograph would enable correct identification and negate the need for collection. My normal approach on these occasions is to take a couple of photos immediately to obtain any sort of image on a 'just in case' basis. However, the beetle was very active and skittish on the flowers blowing around in the breeze and quite often in my experience they tend to be nervous in these situations and quickly fly away if approached too closely. It soon became apparent that I was not going to obtain reasonable images unless I risked holding the plant stem steady beneath the flowers with my left hand while taking photos as quickly as possible with my right hand only. Luckily, I managed three acceptable images before the beetle flew away never to be found again! The precise location of the record is SO 7590 7862.

This is possibly the first confirmed published record from Wyre Forest although a specimen was found by Harry Green and Rosemary Winnall during a Wyre Forest Study Group meeting at nearby Pound Green Common near Hurst Coppice on 07/05/2011 (Bingham, 2019). Rosemary photographed the beetle on oak foliage. That record does not appear on the NBN Atlas national distribution map, and



Figure 1. *Anoplodera sexguttata.* Kevin McGee

the map has very few records from the English midlands. The nearest are of one record from the Pershore/Tiddesley Wood area (Worcestershire) on 13/07/1999 supplied by Mr. P.F. Whitehead, and one from Downton Gorge NNR (Herefordshire) by Mr. B. Kemp on 24/06/2016. The species seems to have a thinly scattered but widespread distribution throughout England, Wales and Scotland, with a distinct concentration of records from the New Forest (NBN Atlas, 2024).

The most recent JNCC Taxon Designations database lists *A. sexguttata* as Nationally Threatened: (Taxa which do not qualify for Lower Risk, but which are close to qualifying for Vulnerable. In Britain, this category includes species which occur in 15 or fewer hectads but do not qualify as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable).

Bílý & Mehl (1989) describe the larval foodplants as *Quercus, Carpinus* and *Fagus* where larvae develop (sometimes together in large numbers) inside decaying branches of dry hard wood until they are almost reduced to frass before moving into the outer sapwood to pupate. Bense (1995) adds *Alnus* to the list of foodplants and describes how larvae have also been found in the dark brown heartwood of very old *Quercus* stumps. The UK Beetles website (2024) describes how adults are active between April and July and visit a wide range of flowering plants, but especially umbellifers and hawthorn blossom along edges of woodlands containing high quantities of dead wood.

Figure 2 shows the habitat where *A. sexguttatus* was photographed and Figure 3 shows the habitat immediately behind the trees seen in Figure 2. The woodland in Figure 3 is dominated by Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* with a shrub layer of coppiced Hazel *Corylus avellana*. It is possible that this small population of *A. sexguttatus* is breeding in the plentiful supply of fallen or standing dead branches of Sessile Oak in this locality.

The single specimen of *A. sexguttata* was photographed on Wood Spurge flowers which can be seen at the edge of the trees to the right of the image.



Figure 2. Habitat where *A. sexguttatus* was photographed. Kevin McGee

References

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NBN Atlas *Species search* [on-line] http://www.nbnatlas.org/ [Accessed 11.10.2024]

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Figure 3. Habitat behind trees in Figure 2. Kevin McGee