

Longhorn Beetles of Wyre Forest (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae)

JOHN BINGHAM

Longhorn beetles (Cerambycidae) are a distinctive group of Coleoptera characterised by having quite long legs and long antennae. They are agile species and some are colourful and very active by day feeding from flowers, which make them noticeable to the naturalist. In Britain it is generally accepted that there are 61 native or naturalised species but if accidental species introduced with imported timber are added then over 100 have been recorded. This article is a summary of the longhorn beetles I have recorded, and normally photographed in the forest over the last 15 years. It is not an exhaustive list of all the species present in the forest, systematic sampling has not been undertaken to that extent. There is much to discover and 'new' native or naturalised species await finding. No doubt climate change or global warming will bring new species into the forest and occasionally introductions may appear even if they do not naturalise themselves.

Wyre Forest was once considered to be poor for saproxylic invertebrates (species that need wood in part of their life cycle) because of the lack of old mature trees. The places for such species were old parklands and ancient wood pasture such as Moccas Park or the New Forest. But this overlooks the fact that Wyre is an ancient forest, even if the more recent history of some 300 years of coppicing has removed most of the original ancient trees. The coppice stools are old themselves and provide a good habitat. The surrounding traditional orchards have a role to play in having old mature trees. Some ancient trees do still exist in Wyre Forest although they are scarce in the main block of woodland. Perhaps it is the continuity of ancient woodland at the site that is more important than the presence of large veteran trees, although this is clearly important for some highly specialist species.

This woodland continuity has been borne out by research into saproxylic beetles and methods have been devised to rank the sites where they occur. Various indexes have been used for this and it would be interesting to collate the invertebrate data for the Wyre Forest and to try and rank the saproxylic interest that we have.

The Saproxylic Quality Index (Fowles et al 1999) is a scoring system designed to assist with the evaluation of the conservation significance of wooded habitats in Great Britain for saproxylic Coleoptera. Using the work done at Bowcastle Farm Orchards by the WFSG in 2004 this site is ranked 75 in order (SQI score 358). (In Central England it was ranked the 21st best site). This is of course a tiny part of the Wyre Forest, just three orchards near the woodland and ranked against sites such the New Forest and Windsor Great Park. My guess is that Wyre Forest could make it

into the top 30 sites if assessed as the whole forest! We need a full checklist of Wyre beetles!

The Longhorn Species

An excellent article in *British Wildlife* (Duff 2007) with illustrations by Lewington has made the identification of longhorn beetles much easier. Other good guides are *Beetles* by Harde (Harde 1984) with excellent illustrations of many species and Dr Norman Hickin's book on wood decay has notes and illustrations of all the British longhorns (Hickin 1975), also his Shire Publications booklet covers most common longhorns (Hickin 1987).

Species Found in Wyre Forest

Tetropium gabrieli Weise, 1905

Larch Longhorn Beetle Size 8-18mm



This introduced species is widely distributed in Great Britain and is not uncommon. It can be common within mature larch plantation woods, so there is plenty of suitable habitat in the forest. The larvae feed under or in the bark of diseased or dying trees, in standing or fallen trunks and in thick branches. There are very few records for the forest and all are from log piles in the evening. The adult beetle does not visit flowers and appears to be crepuscular in habit, so because of this it is probably under recorded. The eyes of this genus are unusual as they are divided into two parts.

Tetropium castaneum (Linnaeus, 1758)

Black Spruce Longhorn Beetle Size 10-18mm



This is very rare in the UK with only five records on NBN Gateway database. This is another introduced

species along with the other member of the genus found in Britain. It is widely scattered over Britain but nowhere common and the larvae feed in various conifer trees. The beetle was photographed on a felled Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) towards evening. It does not appear to visit flowers for nectar and is only noted from two locations in the west of Wyre Forest. This does appear to be a rare species and may not be well established in the forest. But it's not the easiest of species to find and could be under recorded, so we need to monitor Norway Spruce log piles towards dusk in June and July!

***Pyrrhidium sanguineum* (Linnaeus, 1758)**
Welsh Oak Longhorn Beetle Size 6-16mm



Pyrrhidium sanguineum John Bingham

This bright red beetle is typically found in mid-South Wales and the Marches but has expanding outwards in recent year. It is a Red Data Book Category 2 species. It is polyphagous on deciduous trees but it strongly prefers oak (*Quercus* spp.). Larvae feed under bark of dead branches and trunks. The main concentration lies in south Wales and the Marches area. It may have been more common in the past and there are old records scattered over England but nearly all are cited as introductions from imported timber. In recent years it has expanded its range considerably; in 1970 it was only recorded from Moccas Park in Herefordshire but has spread out into the Marches area in the last 40 years.

The beetle in the picture was found on an oak log pile at Uncllys Farm and another was found under bark of the dead oak trunk. It is another crepuscular or nocturnal species and appears not to visit flowers. Nearly all the recent records come from log piles being stored for wood burning stoves. This would appear to be the best way to find new records; searching over log piles in June, the beetle can be quite numerous in such locations. But of course we need to know exactly where the wood has come from. It appears to be well established in Wyre Forest, certainly in the oaks around Lords Yard Coppice.

***Anaglyptus mysticus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**
Rufous-shouldered Longhorn Beetle Size 8-15mm
Nationally Scarce B



Anaglyptus mysticus John Bingham

This species is very common over most of southern England becoming scarce in the north and rare in most of Wales. It is not particularly common in Wyre Forest's woodlands but more often seen on the hedgerows surrounding the forest area. The colourful beetles are often seen on blossoming hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) in the spring. This beetle has the unofficial name of the 'mystic wallpaper beetle', so at least we know that coleopterists have a sense of humour at times!

***Clytus arietis* (Linnaeus, 1758)**
Wasp Beetle Size 6-16mm



Clytus arietis John Bingham

This is one of the most common European longhorn beetles and is abundant over England and Wales but rare in Scotland. It frequently visits flowers and fallen timber or log piles, especially towards dusk. With its bright coloration this is an easy species to see and it is quite common within the forest. It is a broadly polyphagous species in deciduous trees and occasionally found in conifers. The beetle has erratic movements similar to a true wasp.

***Molorchus minor* (Linnaeus, 1767)**

Spruce Shortwing Beetle Size 6-16mm



Molorchus minor

John Bingham

This introduced species is very common in coniferous trees. It is found over most of England and Wales but is scarcer in the west with no records from Scotland. There are few records for Wyre but they are probably quite common in most conifer areas. The adults frequently visit flowers especially hawthorn; they look quite spider-like in appearance with thin bodies and very long antennae; they also have obvious swollen femora. The larvae are found in various coniferous trees such as spruce (*Picea*) and fir (*Abies*).

***Leptura quadrifasciata* Linnaeus, 1758**

Four-banded Longhorn Beetle Size 10-20mm



Leptura quadrifasciata

John Bingham

This is widely scattered in Britain and quite common. It is an introduced species that appeared with conifer plantations. It is polyphagous in deciduous trees (*Alnus*, *Fagus*, *Salix*, *Populus*, *Quercus*, *Betula*, *Corylus*), although birch is considered to be the preferred host tree. Wyre has plenty of birch although most is young. It is found on flowers and herbage but is uncommon in the forest. Perhaps we need older birch trees in Wyre Forest. It is not likely to be missed due to its black and yellow coloration so this species must be thinly scattered over the forest.

***Pachytodes cerambyciformis* (Schrank, 1781)**

Speckled Longhorn Beetle Size 7-12mm



Pachytodes cerambyciformis

John Bingham

The distribution is strongly western where it is common, but it is absent from much of the Midlands and east of England. Adults are found from May to August and the larvae are polyphagous in deciduous and coniferous trees, especially on roots. This small but attractive species is very common over the forest and can be found on various flowers especially bramble. Its numbers peak in late June to early July.

***Rutpela maculata* (Poda, 1761)**

Black-and-yellow Longhorn Beetle Size 13-20mm



Rutpela maculata

John Bingham

This wasp mimic is common over England and Wales but rare in Scotland. This elegant species, a typical flower visitor, is one from the most common longhorn beetles. It is polyphagous in deciduous trees especially those that are rotting. The adult can emerge in May but July is the peak time and this beetle can be frequent on bramble and umbellifer flowers all over the forest. The wasp-like mimicry clearly works, as many people are very wary of it, considering that it must have a bite or sting, especially true as it can be attracted to light coloured clothing and may suddenly appear unexpectedly! No doubt birds consider it unpalatable also. The marking can be variable which can sometimes confuse the identification. This is perhaps one of the

most typical longhorns found in Wyre Forest and the first one that I can recall seeing many years ago. In those days it was called *Strangalia quadrifasciata* and later on *Strangalia maculata*.

***Stenurella melanura* (Fabricius, 1792)**

Black-striped Longhorn Beetle Size 6-10mm



Stenurella melanura

John Bingham

This is a more southern species, becoming very scarce from the midlands northwards. The larvae develop in small branches of dead wood and sometimes roots in deciduous and coniferous trees. The adult beetles visit flowers frequently. The contest for being the commonest longhorn in Wyre Forest could nearly go to this species, but in my view *Grammoptera ruficornis* must win the title! In *S. melanura* there is sexual dimorphism with the male having a black tip to the brown elytra and black on the inside edges that form a central band, but both sexes can be variable. There are several look-alike species and in Wyre mistakes can be made with *Alosterna tabacicolor*.

***Grammoptera ruficornis* (Fabricius, 1781)**

Common Grammoptera Size 3-7mm



Grammoptera ruficornis

John Bingham

This is a very common beetle over England and Wales but rare in Scotland. The larvae develop in rotten, fungus-infested branches of deciduous trees. It is a small, black species that would be difficult to spot in the wild but for its liking for flowers, especially hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.). It can be abundant and is widespread

across the whole forest. This is perhaps our most frequent longhorn in Wyre Forest and can become very numerous on suitable nectar plants with dozens recorded in a matter of minutes. There are look-alike species but they are rather rare and so far not recorded from Wyre, but who knows? It might be worthwhile checking any small black longhorn beetle carefully.

***Rhagium bifasciatum* Fabricius, 1775**

Two-banded Longhorn Beetle. Size 12-22mm



Rhagium bifasciatum

John Bingham

This species is very common over the whole of Britain. The larvae are polyphagous in coniferous and deciduous trees. Adult beetles can often be seen on stumps of freshly felled Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) from May onwards and often land on clothing or herbage. This species is not as frequent as *R. mordax* in Wyre Forest but still quite common over the woodland area, but unlike *R. mordax* it seems to prefer conifer stumps.

***Rhagium mordax* (De Geer, 1775)**

Black-spotted Longhorn Beetle Size 13-23mm



Rhagium mordax

John Bingham

A very common longhorn species over the whole of Britain. Larvae are polyphagous in deciduous trees (*Fagus*, *Quercus*, *Castanea*, *Betula*, *Populus*, *Acer*). It is very common in Wyre and perhaps the most approachable of the longhorn beetles as it appears inquisitive and not prone to flight. A beetle with attitude! It is often seen early in the year on warm days in May wandering over stumps of trees and across logs,

especially oak but it's not that particular as long as it's wood. The shorter antennae are noticeable features of this particular longhorn and as with other *Rhagium* species, it has spines on the thorax.

***Stenocorus meridianus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Variable Longhorn Beetle Size 15-27mm



Stenocorus meridianus

John Bingham

This species is common over most of England and Wales, less so in the north. The larvae are polyphagous in deciduous trees on the dead roots (*Quercus*, *Ulmus*, *Acer*) and the larvae feed for three years before the adult beetle emerges. I have found this species in conifer woods and Scots Pine appears to be another suitable larvae food host. This is a large and impressive black beetle with reddish tints and some specimens can look very reddish in colour. It can also vary in size but large specimens are quite impressive insects. It can be found on flowers or in herbage but also can be searched for on tree trunks in early June where it is easier to find as it shows up better in conifer plantations. It is widespread in the forest but not abundant. Perhaps the dark coloration makes it harder to spot and it may be much commoner than records suggest.

***Leiopus nebulosus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Black-clouded Longhorn Beetle Size 5-10mm



Leiopus nebulosus

John Bingham

This is another common indigenous species over England and Wales but scarce in Scotland. It is polyphagous in deciduous trees (*Fagus*, *Quercus*, *Acer*,

Ulmus, *Betula*, *Salix*, *Prunus*). The beetle was found on oak logs in Longdon Wood but very few records are known for Wyre Forest. It may be overlooked due to the cryptic coloration.

***Mesosa nebulosa* (Fabricius, 1781)**

White-clouded Longhorn Beetle Size 9-16mm RDB3



Mesosa nebulosa

John Bingham

A very rare and southern species that is found only in England. It is scarce in Wyre Forest with only two records to date. The larvae are polyphagous in deciduous trees but usually prefer oak but it uses a wide range of species and may use some conifer species also! The beetle is short bodied and has very rustic markings of brown, yellow and white referred to as lichen camouflage. So far in Wyre Forest it has been seen in Ribbesford Woods and in Withybed Woods but both records were just on herbage or wooded material not flowers. It is probably crepuscular or nocturnal so not recorded very often.

***Pogonocherus hispidulus* (Piller et Mitterpacher, 1783)**

Greater Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle Size 5-8mm



Pogonocherus hispidulus

John Bingham

This is widely scattered over England and Wales but absent in Scotland. The larvae feed in deciduous trees, often oaks. There are very few records from Wyre Forest but all were found on smaller oak twigs and branches especially when damaged or broken off. The cryptic colour makes finding the beetle difficult and it appears not to visit flowers.

***Pogonocherus hispidus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle Size 4-6mm



Pogonocherus hispidus

John Bingham

This species is widely scattered over Britain but rarely recorded from Wyre Forest. Typically it has been found on the smaller dead twiggy branches of various species of broadleaf tree. It also uses Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and apple (*Malus* sp.) as breeding sites. It does not appear to visit flowers. Both of the *Pogonocherus* species are better found by beating small trees and bushes and must be under recorded.

***Saperda populnea* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Small Poplar Borer Size 9-15mm

This species is scattered over England but scarce in Wales and Scotland. The larvae develop in living branches of Aspen (*Populus tremula*). Not common in Wyre Forest but the scarcity of aspen may be the main factor. Worth looking for in any area where aspen is more frequent.

***Tetrops praeustus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Plum Longhorn Beetle Size 3-6mm

This is generally common over most of England, but becoming scarce in western and northern areas. The larvae are polyphagous in deciduous trees but normally occur in Rosaceae species such as plum (*Prunus* sp.) and apple (*Malus*). It is a small somewhat hairy species but not often seen because of its small size. There are few records from Wyre Forest but possibly more frequent around the edges of the forest in hedgerows and orchards. It is normally found by beating trees and bushes.

***Alosterna tabacicolor* (Degeer 1775)**

Tobacco-coloured Longhorn Beetle Size 6-10mm



Alosterna tabacicolor

John Bingham

The larvae occur in both broadleaf and conifer trees but typically in small twigs or rotten stumps. It is rarely recorded in Wyre and overlooked or mistaken for the commoner *Stenurella melanura*. The adult beetles visit flowers but it appears that this species is scarce in the forest or perhaps localised. Most records come from the Dowles Brook valley where there are more abundant nectar plants.

***Phymatodes testaceus* (Linnaeus 1758)**

Tanbark Beetle Size 6-18mm



Phymatodes testaceus

John Bingham

This is a local and more southern species in Britain, not occurring in Scotland. The only record of this species that I have for Wyre Forest was bred out of an oak log taken from a woodpile at Uncllys Farm. The logs were cut from the nearby woodland. The larvae feed in oak and the adult is said to come to light and even sugar. This species prefers more open wood pasture or parkland habitats so Wyre Forest is not that suitable for it.

***Aromia moschata* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Musk Beetle. 13-35mm Nationally Scarce B



Aromia moschata

Rosemary Winnall

Only recorded from the Roxel Site at Kinlet, Shropshire by the Study Group on 12th August 2005. It is widely distributed over England and Wales, more so to the east and appears absent from Scotland. The larvae feed for several years in broadleaf trees especially willow (*Salix* sp.). The adults appear over the summer months. It is said to have an agreeable odour resembling that of attar of roses! It may be largely nocturnal and under recorded or benefiting from the warmer climate and becoming more common.

Missing Species – could they be within the forest, awaiting discovery?

***Aseum striatum* (Linnaeus 1758)**
Pine-stump Borer Size 8-23mm



This is recorded from SO77 in the Provisional Atlas (Twinn and Duffy 1999) but I have not seen it in Wyre Forest. It is a large black species that feeds in conifers. It would be hard to miss so I assume it may be restricted within the area and not found in the main forest block. It is crepuscular so may have gone unnoticed; another one to look for at dusk time on conifer log piles!

***Prionus coriarius* (Linnaeus 1758)**
Tanner Beetle or Sawyer Beetle Size 18-45mm
Nationally Scarce A

This could well occur in Wyre but I have not seen it yet. The large size would make it obvious but for the fact it is largely nocturnal, but can be attracted to light but has not been reported from moth traps despite numerous moth-recording sessions in the forest.

***Stenurella (Leptula) nigra* (Linnaeus 1758)**
Small Black Longhorn Beetle Size 6-9mm
Nationally Scarce A

This is very rare and recorded mainly from southern England. The larvae may be found within small branches of oak or similar trees. Norman Hickin first recorded this beetle from the Wyre Forest in the 1970's. He noted the adult feeding on Wood Spurge flowers near Brand Wood. Unfortunately, despite searches it has not been re-found and is assumed to be extinct. Given the small size and blackish coloration it could easily be overlooked, so there's a challenge for someone to find it again.

***Stenostola dubia* (Laicharting 1784)**
Lime Longhorn Beetle Size 8-14mm
Nationally Scarce B

Here's another species with records around this area. The larvae feed in lime (*Tilia* sp.) so it will be localised and perhaps restricted to a single tree or group of trees. Lime is scattered in Wyre Forest but generally quite uncommon in the main woodland area. Perhaps parts of Ribbesford Woods may be the best place to look where ancient lime pollards are found.

***Agapanthia villosoviridescens* (De Geer, 1775)**
Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle Size 10-22mm



This is common in the east Midlands and northern parts of East Anglia but is spreading westwards with a few records for Worcestershire. It is not a tree or shrub feeding species but develops in various herbaceous plants (eg. *Cardus*, *Urtica*, *Angelica*, *Chaerophyllum*). In all *Agapanthia* species the larvae develop in the above ground plant tissues (stalks). They cut off the plant stalk before pupation, create the pupal cells near ground level and the adults leave via an exit hole in the side. It is not yet recorded from Wyre Forest but found nearby at Blackstone along the margins of a hedgerow of an arable field. Around Wyre the larval food plants are more commonly found near the River Severn or Dowles Brook, and along the edges of Ribbesford Woods which may be good locations to search for this species.

Please report any longhorn beetle records especially any new species to the Biological Records Centre in the new Forestry Commission's Community Discovery Centre at Callow Hill.

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