

Spermodea lamellata found in Wyre Forest (Worcestershire)

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On a visit to the Wyre Forest on 15th June 2013, a sample of rush litter was taken from a hanging bog surrounded by oak trees in order to look for very small mollusca. The other species found on the drier areas at the site where trees had been removed to conserve the bog included *Goniodiscus rotundatus* in a log pile, *Nesovitrea hammonis*, *Arion ater* egg, *Cepaea nemoralis*, *Oxychilus alliarius*, *Zonitoides excavatus* and *Columella aspera*. Nothing exceptional was expected in the leaf litter, but when the dry sample was sieved some weeks later, six further species came to light. These were *Oxychilus cellarius*, a common woodland species, *Euconulus alderi* and *Carychium minimum*, common species of marshy areas, *Punctum pygmaeum* which is found in both deciduous woods and marshy areas, and two species which are considered indicators of ancient semi-natural woodland. These are *Leiostyla anglica*, which is already known from Wyre, but usually only found as single specimens and generally not alive. In this sample one adult and three juveniles were found alive. This species is local in its occurrence with a bias towards western and northern parts of Great Britain. The big surprise was to find eight juvenile or subadult *Spermodea lamellata*, which has not been recorded before. There is only one other record in the same 100km square, this being in central North Wales. This is a new Vice-County record for Worcestershire. There are no recent records in the 100km squares east of the 100km square which includes the Wyre Forest and only one recent record in the 100km square below, this being in southern Wales. The bulk of records for this species, apart from four in relict sites approximately on or below a line from the Thames estuary to the Bristol Channel, are in Coastal West Wales or north of Leeds. This indicates that the find in Wyre is very special, emphasising the quality and ancient origin of the site. *S. lamellata* is known to be intolerant of disturbance and is a declining species in Great Britain, with a clear preference for wetter areas. It took some time to make sense of the find in Wyre until reading the information in Dr Michael Kerney's 1999 atlas which gives boggy ground overhung by trees as a habitat. The important factor is probably the permanent wetness and it would be interesting to see if the species is distributed across the whole boggy area or whether it is a fringe species found only under the trees, but reliant on the availability of permanent wetness. In other parts of its range this species is found in very deep leaf litter, which would be likely to remain consistently damp in areas of the species' range with higher rainfall.

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References

- Kerney, M. P. (1999). Atlas of the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Great Britain and Ireland. Harley Books, Colchester.
- Wardhaugh, A. A. (2011). The Scarborough Snail and what it has to tell us about ancient semi-natural woodland. *British Wildlife* 22: 176-183.



Figs 1 and 2. Two views of *Spermodea lamellata* (diameter 1.6mm) showing the projecting lamellae characteristic of the species.



Fig 3. *Leiostyla anglica* (length 2.8mm) showing the characteristic pattern of teeth in the mouth.