



# NBRC Newsletter 02

November 2009

## NBRC News

### First dataset on the NBN Gateway

We have now created an account for the NBRC on the NBN Gateway and uploaded our first dataset: Northamptonshire Local Wildlife Site Species Records up to 2002. The NBN Gateway is an online facility for sharing records. For more information on the Gateway please visit <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>.

The NBN Gateway allows NBN users to share species records that they hold in a flexible but controlled way with the public and other NBN partners. Anyone can use the Gateway to find out what records are being shared across the whole NBN. It is free to register a user account which will allow you to request enhanced access to any restricted data.

As of 7th December 2009, the Gateway was sharing 47,957,941 species records in 400 datasets from 122 data providers.

Currently only groups or organisations can submit datasets to the NBN Gateway. Both Local Record Centres and Recording Schemes provide a useful route through which individuals can submit records.

Please contact the NBRC if you would like your dataset to be uploaded to the NBN Gateway via the NBRC account.



Nathalie Hueber

Abington Meadows, July 2009.

## Recorder 6 Uptake Project

We are going to update our Recorder 2002 software to Recorder 6 over the winter months thanks to the Defra Fund for Local Biodiversity Recording.

Once all the records have been transferred to the new database, we will be able to get access to more up to date species dictionaries.

## Local News

NBRC organised a BioBlitz event on the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> July 2009 at Abington Meadows (SP790606). We would like to thank everyone who participated and contributed to this very successful event.

We had 777 records on the day representing 639 species. With the wet weather on Saturday some of you decided to come back later in the summer. Including further visits, the grand total of records for the site in 2009 is 912!

The group with the most species recorded were vascular plants (138 species), followed by butterflies and moths (92 species), bugs and froghoppers (80 species), beetles (75 species), true flies (75 species) and algae (45 species).

The most recorded species was the hoverfly *Helophilus pendulus*, followed by Blue-tailed damselfly and Seven-spot ladybird.

Quite a few interesting species were found too. The Flat-stalked pondweed, *Potamogeton friesii*, was found in one of the ponds. This pondweed has been recorded at various locations along the Grand Union Canal since 1877. It has not been seen in the county since 1948.

***Archanara sparganii*** (Webb's Wainscot) This is a species that was only found in coastal localities a few years ago and seems to have spread along the country's river network.

***Eupeodes latifasciatus*** (a hoverfly), is described in the National Hoverfly Recording Scheme as widespread but scarce. It is associated with lush damp meadows with *Juncus* Spp. Its numbers fluctuate from year to year so may be a migrant.

***Trigonometopus frontalis*** (a Lauxaniid fly), may be a first for Northants. The nearest records shown

on the NBN Gateway are in the Great Fen area and south of Bedford. It is confined to an area south of a line between the Wash and Severn and in Wales. It, too, is a damp meadow specialist.

***Pachygaster leachii*** (a soldier fly) is associated with *Quercus* and *Ulmus* trees and occurs in the southern half of England.

***Lophomma punctata*** (a Linyphiid spider)

There are three new records for the county:

- the charaphyte ***Nitella flexilis***
- the micro-moth ***Phalonidia manniana***
- the dragonfly Black Darter ***Sympetrum danae***

The Algae ***Cosmarium dickii*** is a new record for the UK. This has been confirmed by the UK desmid expert, David Williamson. This species occurs in quite a few of the gravel pits along the Nene and should be in the new edition of the Algal Flora, due later next year.

Other Nationally Scarce or Local species include:

<i>Nanogona polydesmoides</i>	Diplopoda (Millipedes)	BAP
<i>Adelphocoris lineolatus</i>	Heteroptera: Miridae (Plantbugs)	L
<i>Aelia acuminata</i>	Heteroptera: Pentatomidae	L
<i>Aphrophora salicina</i>	Homoptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Cercopidae (Froghoppers)	L
<i>Chartascirta cocksi</i>	Heteroptera: Saldidae (Shorebugs)	L
<i>Chilacis typhae</i>	Heteroptera: Lygaeidae (Groundbugs)	L
<i>Conocephalus discolor</i>	Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae (Bush-crickets)	L
<i>Conocephalus dorsalis</i>	Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae (Bush-crickets)	L
<i>Cyrtorhinus caricis</i>	Heteroptera: Lygaeidae (Groundbugs)	L
<i>Haplophthalmus mengei</i>	Crustacea: Isopoda (Woodlice & water-slaters)	L
<i>Oplodontha viridula</i>	Diptera: Stratiomyidae (Soldierflies)	L
<i>Peritrechus lundii</i>	Heteroptera: Lygaeidae	L
<i>Picromerus bidens</i>	Heteroptera: Pentatomidae	L
<i>Pyrrhalta viburni</i>	Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae (Leaf-beetles)	L
<i>Tetrix subulata</i>	Orthoptera: Tetrigidae (Groundhoppers)	L
<i>Tibellus maritimus</i>	Arachnida: Araneae: Thomisidae (Crab spiders)	L
<i>Trachelipus rathkei</i>	Crustacea: Isopoda (Woodlice & water-slaters)	L
<i>Zicrona caerulea</i>	Heteroptera: Pentatomidae	L
<i>Gymnetron beccabungae</i>	Coleoptera: Curculionidae (weevils)	Na
<i>Athysanus argentarius</i>	Homoptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Cicadellidae (Leafhoppers)	Nb
<i>Cassida nobilis</i>	Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae (Leaf-beetles)	Nb
<i>Chloriona vasconica</i>	Homoptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Delphacidae (leafhoppers)	Nb
<i>Longitarsus dorsalis</i>	Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae (Leaf-beetles)	Nb
<i>Rhopalus maculatus</i>	Heteroptera: Rhopalidae	Nb
<i>Silis ruficollis</i>	Coleoptera: Cantharidae (soldier-beetles)	Nb
<i>Tetragnatha striata</i>	Arachnida: Araneae: Tetragnathidae	Nb



John Showers and Nathalie Hueber entering records at the BioBlitz event, Abington Meadows – July 2009.

## Interesting Records for the year

### Diptera Records – John Showers

This season has been an improvement over the past two years and a number of interesting records have been made. The most exciting concern two BAP species.

In June Jolyon Alderman found a Phoenix Fly ***Dorycera graminum*** at Bradlaugh Hills and Holes. This was part of a visit by the Northants and Peterborough Diptera Group to search for this fly, which had been recorded there once before some years ago. It was pleasing to note its presence but we were unable to locate any other individuals. Little is known of the ecology of this fly, which is on the wing in May/early June, so it was frustrating not to be able to make field observations. Still there is always next year...

The second BAP species was the Hornet Robberfly ***Asilus crabroniformis***. This is Britain's largest fly and is quite a spectacular insect. The record came from the south-west of the county, close to the Oxfordshire border and was an individual inside a conservatory. A few visits have been made to the surrounding area but no other individuals have been found. There is suitable habitat - rough grassland with large mammal grazing - in the area so further visits will be made next year in August/September.

Apart from these there have been some good records from a number of fly families. The hoverflies included several records of *Criorhina* species in the Spring: *C. asilica*, *C. berberina* and *C. floccosa*. Large numbers of the attractive Foxy-red furry *Cheilosia chrysocoma* were reported from a wood in the Kettering area. *Xanthogramma citrofasciatum* was found at Twywell. This species is associated with yellow meadow ants. Sap-run specialists *Brachyopa insensilis*, *B. scutellaris* and

*Volucella inflata* have been noted. "Hoverwatch", an Ecology Group monitoring project in Old Sulehay Forest was launched and turned up some interesting records including the large *Volucella inanis* and *Cheilisia vulpina*.

Picture-winged flies have featured more than in previous years, possibly because Dipterists Forum ran a course on their identification in the Spring. Two members of the group attended. Apart from the Phoenix Fly mentioned above, others rarely recorded in Northants were: *Urophora quadrifasciata*, *Herina longistyla*, *Merzomyia westermanni*, *Orellia fasciata*, *Tephritis hyoscyani* and *T. matricariae*. Some of these may be first records for Northants.

The parasitic flies, Tachinidae, are not well recorded apart from two common species, but we have had some interesting records this year. Early in the season the bright green *Gymnochaeta viridis* was found at Twywel. *Sturmia bella* was recorded near Yardley Hastings. This is a recent arrival in Britain. It parasitises Vanessa butterfly larvae and may be a factor in the decline of Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*. Several records of the spectacular *Phasia hemiptera* have been made. This fly parasitises shieldbugs.



Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*), Abington Meadows – July 2009

## Moth Records – John Ward

Generally an unexceptional year with lower than average numbers being recorded and to date less migratory activity than in recent years. The most significant record so far is of a single Small *Ranunculus* moth *Hecatera dysodea* recorded at m.v. light at Woodnewton TL09 by Nick Smith. This is a moth that was formerly resident in Northamptonshire in Victorian times. After declining to the point of considered extinction nationally for some 60 years it is now known to be spreading in England from the southeast. In Northamptonshire a moth was taken in the Peterborough area in 2006 after an absence of records in the county for well over a century.

## Galloping Galls - Seán Karley

Most galls go unrecorded most of the time. They are often inconspicuous growths and we simply do not notice them! But the last twelve months have seen two more visible sorts of gall galloping through Northants.

The Ramshorn Gall is caused by a small wasp called *Andricus aries*. This lays its eggs in buds on the twigs of Oak trees; usually *Quercus robur* in our county, but it can also live on *Quercus petraea*. The egg causes the bud to swell up and grow a long often forked "horn", about 2 to 5 cms long or maybe more. No leaves develop from the bud. The egg hatches inside, and the grub eats part of the gall. When mature the grub burrows its way out and develops into a mature female wasp, which flies away to start it all over again. No-one has yet discovered any males of this species! (Sorry chaps, we seem to be superfluous here!). The first record for Britain was in Maidenhead Berkshire, in 1997. Our first record for Northants was in Castle Ashby in August 2008 (Tony Richardson). Since then it has turned up in :- Harlestone Firs; Hanging Houghton; Hazelborough Wood; Salcey Forest; Yardley Hastings; Lings Wood; Wellingborough, and probably elsewhere.

The wasp *Andricus grossulariae* lays its eggs in the flowers of Oaks, between the calyx and the ovary. As the acorn develops so does the gall, bursting out of the cup underneath the acorn, and usually inhibiting it. It grows more or less spherically but covered in thick contorted spines, sometimes tipped with a small rounded knob; the whole gall is usually 1½ to 3 cms across, and often bright shiny red, but may remain pale green. The galls fall from the tree and lie on the ground until the occupants burrow out. The wasps developing from this gall are always females. They lay eggs on the catkins of the Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) the next Spring, where they develop to look like little gooseberries 3-6mm diameter. Male and female wasps emerge from these and then infect the next season's acorns. First recorded in Britain in Berkshire in 2000; I found the first gall in Harlestone Firs in October 2009. Since then it has turned up in:- Harlestone Firs; Borough Hill, Daventry; Salcey Forest; Yardley Hastings; Lings Wood; Wellingborough, and probably also elsewhere.

So watch out! Your patch may be next!!

If you find any galls and wish to record them, or you would like some assistance with naming them, please let us know and we'll pass your contact details to Seán L.M. Karley.

More information and pictures on the website of the British Plant Gall Society: [www.british-galls.org.uk](http://www.british-galls.org.uk)



Nitella Flexilis, found in Abington Meadows - July 2009

## Getting Involved

### Northants and Peterborough (VC32) Diptera Group – John Shower

This informal group was formed a couple of years ago to bring together anyone interested in flies in the vice-county. Its aims are to record flies and help each other with identification. We hold weekly field meetings from the end of April to mid-September and try to hold a couple of indoor meetings out of the collecting season to help with identification or plan field work. We also produce a newsletter twice a year. Anyone is welcome to join us, no experience is necessary. For more information please visit <http://northantsdiptera.blogspot.co.uk/>

I am also interested in any records of flies in the vice-county. These can be sent to the Northants Biological Records Centre and they will be passed to John Showers and the relevant national recording scheme. Records should give as a minimum species, date, location name, grid reference to 6 digits and recorder name. Other useful details are number, sex, plant or substrate on which observed and any behaviour.

I am willing to try to identify photos or specimens. However photos often will not show critical identification features. If you do photograph flies for identification the following points will improve the chances of being able to identify the insect:

- Try to get a top, side and head-on shot
- Try to get all one side's legs in focus
- Try to get a shot with wings open

This is very difficult, I know, but I have been impressed by the quality of some photos I have received.

## Meet your fellow recorders

My name is John Ward, my interest in moths extends to well over sixty years when as a boy I used to watch the father of a friend catching moths at flowers in his garden by torch light. I have been acting as the Northamptonshire Macro Moth recorder pretty well since the inception of the county recorder scheme in the mid 1970's. At that time the last county list covering the moths was some 70 years old, having been compiled around the turn of the twentieth century. Over the years with a great deal of help from many people the Northamptonshire Moth Group was formed and extended to include a web site with a photographic database of the county's larger moths. The web site has been running for some seven years now and is widely used by recorders and researchers, also as an aid to identification. My wife Brenda and myself update the data annually when the years records are received and the pictures are continuously improved and added to.

Although specialising in moths and travelling all over the country to find them I have tried to broaden my knowledge to cover other orders. In achieving a fair degree of all round competence I owe much to the expertise of many of the older Northants naturalists who I have been with and learnt from. This diversification has been very useful in recording at Barford Meadows Wildlife Trust Reserve where my wife and I are voluntary wardens. Being one of the Trusts largest wildlife reserves, with woodland, wetland, parkland and a SSSI ancient hay meadow it contains a good range of habitats. To date we have been able to compile an extensive and varied species list for the reserve. Currently this is still ongoing.

John Ward

## Contact Details

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## Thank you for your contributions

Nathalie Hueber