

# Cumbria Wildlife Report 2023

## BEETLES

J READ



*Agapanthia villosoviridescens* - Golden – bloomed Grey Longhorn

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**2023 proved to be yet another year of extreme weather and followed a similar pattern to last year with record high temperatures and above average rainfall. However, despite the somewhat daunting conditions quite a large number of records were generated and a number of interesting beetles were recorded and observed. One beetle was added to the County list for the first time and several new hectad records were established.**

As in previous reports the arrangement and nomenclature for the species dealt with in this report is according to Duff (2018).

New hectad records are indicated by an asterisk \*

**\**Acupalpus dubius* CARABIDAE Ground Beetles - County Scarce**

Two specimens of this small, yellowish brown, 3mm long carabid beetle were extracted from moss and humus in an area of hawthorn scrub on the edge of the Howe, Workington NX987286 12th October (JR). This beetle was first discovered in Cumbria by David Atty who found several specimens at Little Bampton Moss NY275567 in October 1989.

**\**Calathus cinctus* CARABIDAE Ground Beetles - County Scarce**

This brownish – red, medium sized ground beetle is scarce and locally distributed in Britain and restricted mainly to sandy, coastal localities. It was first recorded from Cumbria in 1996 when David Atty found it at Maryport Dock NY03, he also discovered it in 1998 along the shore line at Fothergill near Flimby NY03. One specimen was discovered at the base of a sand dune at Haverigg Haws SD15017810 15th October (NG).

***Neicrophorus humator* SILPHIDAE Burying and Sexton Beetles**

This very large 18 - 26mm long all black burying beetle is widely distributed in the British Isles and is associated with a variety of dead animal carcasses, mainly birds and small mammals which the adult beetles bury for their larvae to feed and develop on. The beetle is widely distributed in Cumbria, though tends to be local, and has been recorded from a number of localities, mainly in the north and west of the county. Several live and body fragments of dead adults were found in a pipe with dead mice at the Animal Park, Bassenthwaite NY2033 9th June (RM).

**\**Bisnius parvus* STAPHYLINIDAE Rove Beetles – County Scarce**

One male specimen was found crawling low down on a stone wall near the Lakes Garden centre, Cockermouth NY113308 8th August (JR). This black, elongate 7 – 9mm long rove beetle is an exotic immigrant from East Asia and was first recorded in Britain in 1961. It is locally distributed, mainly in England, and has been recorded from Perthshire, Scotland. The beetle is associated mainly with heaps of rotting vegetation, often with a high dung or carrion content. This is a new record for Cumbria and the first for VC70 Cumberland.

***Bisnius nigriventris* STAPHYLIDAE Rove Beetles – County Scarce**

One male specimen was extracted from a small heap of grass cuttings in the Hensingham Community Garden NX99 (JR). This small dark coloured rove beetle is found mainly in rotting vegetation, decaying fungi and occasionally in underground mammal nests. It is an uncommon species nationally, and is scarce and very locally distributed in Cumbria.

***Typhaeus typhoeus* SCARABAEIDAE Chafer Beetles – Minotaur Beetle – County Scarce**

The males of this large 20mm long, all black dor beetle are very impressive and are characterised by having two long pointed horns on the pronotum which are situated between the head. The beetle is associated with herbivore dung, especially that of sheep and rabbit, and to a lesser extent cow. The larvae develop in burrows which the adult beetles excavate usually in sandy or chalky soils and provision with dung for the developing larvae to feed on. The beetle is widely distributed in Britain and Ireland, though sadly is now declining in many areas, which is due in part to modern farming practises and the use of ivermectins to control internal parasites in cattle and sheep. *T. typhaeus* is uncommon in Cumbria and has previously been recorded from a few sites mainly Drigg dunes SD09, Wanfell NY53 and Foulshaw Moss SD48. One dead individual was discovered on a path at Bracken House, Irton in Eskdale NY1201 12th June (DM).

**\**Calyptomerus dubius* CLAMBIDAE Fringed – winged Beetles - County Rare**

At just over a millimetre long the beetles contained in the family Clambidae are amongst the smallest in Britain. The ten species which occur in this country are usually found in decaying vegetation, also the majority of species are thought to be mycophagous and are probably associated with a range of fungi. *C. dubius* is a widespread species in Britain, and has been recorded from decaying grass and straw. One individual was discovered on a pile of logs in the back garden of a house in Wigton NY241478 24th October (D S-L). The beetle is rare in Cumbria and has not been recorded since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was discovered at Great Salkeld and Langwathby.

**\**Ptinus fur* PTINIDAE Anobiid and Spider Beetles - County Rare**

This brown and yellowish coloured long – legged spider beetle is uncommon and locally distributed in Britain and is associated mainly with decaying plant and animal matter. Adults occur mainly in stored products in buildings, and they can also occur outdoors in old birds' nests. One specimen was found dead under a stair carpet 31st August and one live male and female were found in a house in Wigton NY241478 9th October (D S-L). *P. fur* is rare in Cumbria and has previously been recorded from the Carlisle area NY35, Petteiril Valley NY45, Durdar NY45, Great Salkeld NY53 and Kendal SD59.

***Anthrenus fuscus* DERMESTIDAE Larder Beetles and allies - County Rare**

Most members of this large family of small, variegated beetles occur mainly in buildings and many have become serious household pests. The adults and larvae can be very destructive and cause considerable damage to material items such as carpets and various other natural woollen fabrics. They can also be found in stored vegetable products, dried animal material and general organic detritus. Certain species do occur outdoors in wild situations where they feed mainly on the pollen of a variety of herbaceous plants. One adult was discovered on the flower head of sweet william growing in a garden at Acorn Bank near Temple Sowerby NY6128) 14th June (DM). The beetle is widely distributed in Britain, but tends to be localised in many areas. It is a rare beetle in Cumbria and has previously been recorded from Cottage Wood, Bassenthwaite NY22 and Drumburgh Moss NY25.

**\**Trox scaber* TROGIDAE Hide Beetles – County Rare**

One live specimen was collected after falling through a kitchen extractor fan from an old bird's nest in a house in Wigton NY241478 22nd April, and one individual was found dead under a door sill in the same property 12th June (D S- L). This 5 – 8mm long dark, black and brown hide beetle is associated with dry decayed animal material, particularly old bones, and is often found in birds'

nests, especially owls, in hollow tree trunks. Adults can be active throughout the year, especially at dusk in the summer time and are attracted to artificial light. *T. scaber* is widely distributed in Britain, but now declining in many areas. The beetle is rare in Cumbria and has previously been recorded from only two sites, Drigg SD09 and Talkin Village NY55.

**\**Cryptolestes ferrugineus* LAEMOPHILIDAE Lined Flat Bark Beetles - County Rare**

Laemophilids are minute to very small, brown coloured beetles and have flat shaped subcylindrical bodies and long antennae. The adults and larvae are found mainly under the bark of a range of broadleaved trees, but their ecology and biology are poorly known. *C. ferruginus* is a mainly synanthropic species and found in imported grain and vegetable foodstuff in warehouses, but can occasionally be found in wild situations under bark and in decaying refuse. It is an uncommon species and very locally distributed in Britain and Ireland. The beetle is very rare in Cumbria and was recorded from a woodland site near Moresby NY01 in 2009 and there is one old record for Silloth NY15 in 1913. One male individual was found on the carcass of a deer which was stored overnight in a back garden shed of a house in Wigton NY241478 6th October (D S-L).

**\**Tribolium castaneum* TRENEBRIONIDAE Darkling Beetles – The Confused Flour Beetle**

This small, 2 – 4mm long dark, brownish - red tenebrionid beetle is a synanthropic species and found mainly in flour mills and warehouses where it often occurs in large numbers in stored grain and cereal products. It is locally distributed in Britain, but due to modern hygiene practises is now declining in many areas. One adult was found on a chimney pot on a house in Wigton 27th August, and one individual was observed on a patio table umbrella at the same property NY241478 19th June (D S- L). *T. confusum* has previously been recorded from Cumbria and there are old records for the Carlisle area NY35. *T. confusum* has the common name of confused flour beetle on account of it being very similar and closely related to *T. castaneum* which is another synanthropic tenebrionid which is also associated with stored food products.

***Harmonia axyridis* COCCINELLIDAE Ladybirds – Harlequin Ladybird**

The harlequin ladybird continues to be recorded from Cumbria and is now spreading rapidly into new areas, especially in the north – west of the county. One adult was observed in the newly created Beck Bottom Community Garden, Hensingham NX98591691 21st October (DT).

**\**Agapanthia villosoviridescens* CERAMBYCIDAE Longhorn Beetles - Golden – bloomed Grey Longhorn**

This impressive 22mm long, grey and golden yellow coloured longhorn beetle is unusual, because unlike other members of this family, which mainly attack the dead and decaying wood of deciduous and coniferous trees, the adults and larvae are associated with perennial herbaceous vegetation, and in particular thistles, mainly species of *Carduus* and *Cirsium*, and also to a lesser extent common hogweed. The larvae develop in the stems of the hostplants and can take up to two years to complete their development. Surprisingly there were six records of the beetle from Cumbria in 20023 - one individual was observed on a plant of spear thistle at the Heugh Forest, Lanercost NY53896538 18th July (ST) (this is the most northerly record to date); one specimen was recorded on the summit of Ill Bell at 2,300 ft. NY40 in July (IB); and there were sightings at Graythwaite SD39 31st May; The Derby Arms, Grange – over- Sands 4th June; Haile Milnthorpe SD48 11th June and Brothers Water, Penrith NY41 4th June (ZH). To date the beetle has now been recorded from the following hectads in Cumbria - NY35, NY40, NY41, NY45, NY55, NY56, SD47 and SD48.

**\**Grammoptera ruficornis* CERAMBYCIDAE Longhorn Beetles**

One adult of this slender grey – black coloured, 3 – 7mm long longhorn beetle was tapped from Hawthorn blossom on the edge of the Beck bottom Community Garden Hensingham NX98631701 28th May (JR). This is a common and widely distributed longhorn beetle in Britain and Ireland, and is frequent and widely distributed in Cumbria. It is associated with various trees and shrubs and the adult beetles regularly visits the blossom of hawthorn, and the flower heads of various umbellifers in the spring and early summer.

***Tournotarsis bimaculatus* ERIRHINIDAE Eirrhinid Weevils - County Scarce**

One female specimen of this 5 – 8 mm long, dark - reddish brown and yellow coloured weevil with two distinct spots on the wing cases was found under a stone lying on mud by a rocky cliff along the River Eden, Rockcliffe NY3554561822 19th April (JO). This long – nosed weevil is associated mainly with species of sedges, *Carex* and various other grasses, which include species of *Phalaris*, *Typha* and *Phragmites*. It is a locally distributed species nationally and found mainly in marshes, including brackish ones, coastal estuaries, and on the banks of rivers. This species has previously been recorded from a few sites in Cumbria, mainly in the west and north of the county. There are several records from the saltmarshes around the Ravenglass estuary SD09, and from sandy banks by the River Eden near Rickerby Park, Carlisle (NY45). It has also been recorded from several localities along the Solway coast from Burgh Marshes NY36, Kirkbride NY25 and Silloth NY15.

**\**Kykliaocalles roboris* CURCULIONIDAE True Weevils and Bark Beetles – County Scarce**

One specimen was found in High Hall Wood near Wigton NY271436 5th July (D S-L). This 3 – 5mm long cryptically coloured weevil is found mainly in broadleaved woodland and to a lesser extent conifer plantations. The adults and larvae are associated mainly with the dead and decaying wood of oak branches. Adults have also been found in litter and humus in woodland, and in old ivy growing on mature deciduous trees. The weevil is very locally distributed in Britain and Ireland, and in Cumbria has been recorded from Knotts Wood, Geltsdale NY55 and Cunswick Scar SD49 near Kendal.

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**Recorders**

(IB) Irene Boston, (NG) Nigel Gilligan, (ZH). Zoe Hicks, (DS-L) David Scott -Langley, (DM) Deborah Muscat, (RM) Robert Muscat, (JR) John Read, (DT) Dave Todhunter, (ST) Seth Tuttin.

**Acknowledgements**

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**The following beetles were observed and recorded on the 26th May during a visit to the Crosscanonby Carr Nature Reserve (NY03) near Maryport by the author and Deborah Muscat.**

New hectad records are indicated by an asterisk \*

**GYRINIDAE – Whirligig Beetles**

***Gyrinus substriatus*** Stephens

Several individuals were observed on the water of a shallow, slow – flowing ditch pool by the edge of a wooded area NY0647949. A common and widely distributed Whirligig beetle and found on a variety of slow – flowing water bodies. Common and widespread nationally, and very common and widely distributed in Cumbria.

**DYTISCIDAE – Predaceous Diving Water Beetles**

***Hydroporus planus*** (Fabricius)

Three individuals were netted amongst algae growing in shallow water by the edge of a sparsely vegetated man – made pond NY06493955. This small all brown water beetle is quite widely distributed nationally and is found mainly in ponds, rivers and streams. It is quite common in Cumbria and widely distributed.

**STAPHYLINIDAE – Rove Beetles**

***Stenus similis*** Herbst

Several male and female adults were swept from mixed herbage in a small marshy area at NY06453961. This elongate, all black rove beetle with yellow and black banded legs is associated with grassland and heathland and is a common beetle throughout much of Britain and Ireland. A widespread species in Cumbria.

**SCRAPTIDAE – Tumbling Flower Beetles**

***Anaspis frontalis*** (Linnaeus)

Several individuals were tapped from hawthorn blossom *Crateagus monogyna* on trees along the western boundary hedge at NY06443959. A common and widely distributed tumbling beetle in Britain occurring mainly on the blossom of flowering trees and shrubs, particularly hawthorn. Quite widely distributed nationally and widespread in Cumbria.

***Anaspis maculata*** (Geoffroy in Fourcroy)

Several tapped with the above species from Hawthorn blossom NY06443959. This small yellowish – brown spotted tumbling beetle is also associated with tree blossom and can occur in quite large numbers in the spring and early summer. Common and widespread nationally, and widely distributed in Cumbria.

## ELATERIDAE – *Click Beetles*

### ***Agriotes pallidulus*** (Illiger)

One specimen was swept from mixed herbage in a small damp marshy area at NY06503959. This small yellowish – brown click beetle is found on a variety of trees and bushes, mainly in wooded areas and is widely distributed nationally. Widespread and common in Cumbria.

## CANTHARIDAE – *Solider and Sailor Beetles*

### ***Cantharis cryptica*** Ashe

Two males? and one male were tapped from Hawthorn blossom on trees along the western boundary hedge at NY06443959. This 14mm long yellowish - red coloured soldier beetle is common and widely distributed nationally and is associated with various trees and shrubs. A widespread species in Cumbria.

### ***Cantharis flavilabris***

One specimen of this all - black solider beetle was swept from mixed herbage in a damp, boggy area NY00653959. A common and widespread species nationally and found mainly on mixed vegetation in damp meadows and marshes, and in woodland. Widespread in Cumbria.

### ***Cantharis livida***

One adult was observed resting on a grass stem on the bank of a slow – flowing ditch by the edge of a wooded area NY06473949. This large yellowish - red soldier beetle has a large black spot on the head between the eyes which is useful when making a field identification. The beetle is widely distributed in Britain and found mainly in wooded areas on mixed herbage. Quite common and widely distributed in Cumbria.

### ***Cantharis nigricans***

Two specimens were swept from mixed herbage in small marshy area NY06443950. This large red and black solider beetle is associated with mixed vegetation and occurs mainly in scrubby areas and rough grassland, and also in open woodland. A widespread and frequent species in Britain; locally distributed in Cumbria.

### ***Rhagonycha nigriventris***

One individual was swept from mixed vegetation in a small marshy area NY06443950. This medium sized reddish – yellow soldier beetle is associated with grassland vegetation and is widespread in Britain and Ireland. It is locally distributed in Cumbria.

## BYTURIDAE – *Raspberry and Bramble Beetles*

### ***Byturus tomentosus***

One tapped from Hawthorn blossom on trees along the western boundary hedge NY06443959. This nationally common and widespread species is associated mainly with Bramble *Rubus* and can occur in large numbers, especially on bramble blossom and leaves. It is also a serious pest of cultivated raspberries and can cause serious damage to the fruit. The familiar pinky - white (grubs) of this beetle, which often appear when washing and preparing gathered blackberries,

develop inside the fruits, and when mature, emerge and fall to the ground where they eventually pupate. A common and widely distributed species in Cumbria.

#### NITITULIDAE – *Pollen Beetles*

##### ***Meligethes aeneus***

One specimen was beaten from Hawthorn foliage on trees along the western boundary hedge NY06443959. This blue-black, 3mm long, pollen beetle is very common and widely distributed nationally. It is found mainly on species of yellowing flowering Brassicaceae, and often occurs in extremely large numbers, especially on Oilseed rape, and can cause considerable damage to cultivated crops. Very common and widely distributed in Cumbria.

#### COCCINELLIDAE – *Ladybirds*

##### ***Propylea 14 – punctata***

One individual was tapped from mixed herbage in a small marshy area NY06463961. This yellowish-brown and black spotted ladybird is associated mainly with mixed, low herbage in woodland, and areas of rough grassland where the adults and larvae feed mainly on aphids. A widespread species in Britain and Ireland, and widely distributed in Cumbria.

##### ***Psyllobora 22 – punctata***

One individual was swept from mixed herbage in marshy area NY06443950. This small yellow and black-spotted ladybird feeds mainly on mildew on the leaves of a wide range of herbaceous plants, in particular hogweed and other umbellifers. It is widely distributed nationally and quite common and widespread in Cumbria.

#### CHRYSOMELIDAE – *Leaf Beetles*

##### ***\*Apthona nonstriata***

Several adults were observed feeding on the leaves of yellow iris by the edge of a man-made pond NY06493955. The adults of this small 3mm long, deep blue leaf beetle feed exclusively on the leaves of yellow flowering Iris and eat narrow longitudinal strips by removing the upper epidermis between the leaf veins. The larvae mine the leaves causing distinctive, long white feeding marks. The beetle is widespread in Britain and Ireland and is widely distributed in Cumbria.

##### ***Gastrophysa viridula***

Eggs only were observed on the under surface of leaves of Broad-leaved dock by the edge of a small boggy area NY06493961. This large, bright green leaf beetle is very common and widespread nationally, and both the adults and larvae feed extensively on the leaves of Broad-leaved dock. A very common and widely distributed species in Cumbria.



### ***Lochmaea crateagi***

Several adults were beaten from the foliage on Hawthorn trees along the western boundary hedge NY06443959. This is a common and widespread species in Britain and Ireland. The adults feed mainly on the leaves of hawthorn, and to a lesser extent on blackthorn. The larvae mine the pith of hawthorn fruits, causing them to become brown and soft, which prevents them from seeding. Quite widespread in Cumbria, mainly in the west of the county.

### ***Phaedon tumidulus***

Young instar larvae only were observed feeding on the leaves of Common Hogweed by the edge of a small boggy area NY06503959. The adults and larvae of this dark, bluish – green leaf beetle feed externally, mainly on the leaves of common Hogweed and Angelica growing in a range of habitats. It is widely distributed nationally and common and widespread in Cumbria.

## **CURCULIONIDAE – True Weevils and Bark Beetles**

### **\**Otiorhynchus desertus***

One individual was tapped from young foliage and blossom on Hawthorn trees along the western boundary hedge row NY006443959. This medium size reddish – brown, broad – nosed weevil is locally distributed in Britain and occurs on a wide range of herbaceous plants in various habitats. The white, legless larvae feed and develop on plant roots and pupate in the soil. It is a scarce beetle in Cumbria and locally distributed.

### ***Otiorhynchus singularis***

Several adults were beaten from hawthorn foliage on trees along the western boundary hedge row with the above. This is a very common and very widely distributed weevil in Britain and is found in a variety of habitats. The adults feed on a variety of vegetation, and the larvae feed on the roots of wild and cultivated plants, particularly strawberries which can result in considerable damage to commercial crops. A common and widespread species in Cumbria.

## **David Brian Atty 1930 - 2023**

One particular sad event in 2023 was the passing of the amateur naturalist and expert coleopterist David Brian Atty M. A from Embleton who died in November(?) at the age of 93. David was born in 1930 in Wigan where he grew up and attended Wigan Grammar school before going on to Oxford University, where he completed his education. During his early life living and growing up in Wigan David developed a keen interest in beetles and started to observe and record the coleoptera around his hometown and other parts of Lancashire. While living in the north of England David published a number of notes and articles on beetles which were published in *The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* (for a list of these publications see bibliography).

David married and in 1955 went to live in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire where he worked at GCHQ, Britain's largest intelligence security and cyber agency. While living in Gloucestershire David continued his interest in coleoptera and started to record and study the beetle fauna of the county in great detail and by 1983 he had accumulated approximately 25,000 records. This represented 1610 species of which 250 were new additions to the Gloucestershire list. These records formed

the basis of his now well - known work *The Coleoptera of Gloucestershire* which he self - published in 1983. This publication which runs to 136 pages provides records and detailed information for all the 2049 species known to be present in the county at that time. Also, during his residency in Cheltenham David eventually became the county beetle recorder for the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

David retired from GCHQ and in 1988 he and his wife Margaret moved to Cumbria to Beck House Mill, an old, converted, former water mill at Embleton near Cockermouth where they lived for over 25 years. On arriving in Cumbria David began to explore the area around Embleton and the Bassenthwaite area in general, and having spent several holidays in the lake district with his wife, David was very familiar with the lake district and the national park in general. He never owned a car and got around by using public transport and walking, although later on he did purchase a motor scooter which enabled him to gain greater access to more remote areas of the county, both inland and coastal. While on his walks and rambles David started to record and observe the beetle fauna of the county in great detail and eventually accumulated over 20,000 records. As he did not own a computer he entered all his records and collecting information onto large cards which were arranged in alphabetical order by species and maintained as a card index reference system. Over the years David built up a large collection of local beetles, and the specimens which he collected were prepared and mounted and stored in a wooden entomological cabinet. He also owned a collection of beetles which were given to him by two quite well - known Gloucestershire coleopterists Ernest G. Neal, and H. K. Airy – Shaw while he was living in Cheltenham. During his residency in Cumbria David published a large number of notes and articles on Cumbrian beetles, mainly in *The Carlisle Naturalist* and the *Lakeland Naturalist*. In 1996 he published an extensive and very detailed list of the more noteworthy and interesting beetles he had discovered in Cumbria since he moved to the county from Gloucestershire. In this publication David states that in six years he had recorded 1,060 species which included over 40 species that were new to the county, and vice counties Cumberland and Westmorland. He later published a checklist of Cumbrian beetles which was updated five times, the last version of which was published in 2016 and contained 2,313 species. Another very interesting article which David published a few years ago dealt with all the beetles he had encountered and observed while walking and climbing the 'Wainwright' Fells. Apart from beetles David took a keen interest in other insects, and wildlife in general and regularly submitted his observations and records to the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre in Carlisle. He was a member of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and also the Carlisle Natural History Society.

David will be greatly missed, and it is so sad that we now have to say goodbye to a truly dedicated naturalist, and above all a much respected and extremely knowledgeable coleopterist.

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