



# *The* **SENTINEL**

*The newsletter for biological recorders in  
Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral*



***'Capturing Cheshire'... and the winners are...***

***On the hop: Orthoptera news  
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*Cardinal Beetle: Ian Meir*

**WELCOME** to the eighth edition of the The Sentinel.

With summer in full swing and with warmer weather on the way it's a good time to be out and about in the gardens, woodlands and wilderness of Cheshire: taking photos and collecting records – maybe even a previously unrecorded species!

Why not write and tell us about your observations and be published?

Please submit your articles and images to Jeff Clarke by email to [birderjeff@sky.com](mailto:birderjeff@sky.com). All text should be submitted, un-formatted in Word or richtext format, with any images – to illustrate your article – as jpegs or gifs of at least 1Mb.

The maximum length of articles should be 1100 words... there is no minimum!

Editor: Jeff Clarke

Graphic design: Moira Rae Carter

## On golden pond

Prof. Margaret Litterer

Spawning this year may have been later than average but that didn't stop David Potts – a previous editor of The Sentinel – finding this unusual specimen in his Manchester garden. Perhaps some of you have also had similarly aberrant frogs in your pond this spring?

Please post all your frog sightings... golden or not... to RECORD, at [info@RECORD-LRC.co.uk](mailto:info@RECORD-LRC.co.uk)

## Altrincham & District Natural History Society

Altrincham & District Natural History Society celebrated its centenary in 2008. The Society's minutes record the meeting of seven gentlemen, on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1908, to create a society promoting "Education, Observation and Recording of all forms of the natural world". Between 1914 and 1915 the Society was disbanded, eventually reforming in 1920, it gained in membership and widened its sphere of interest to include 'Literary' in the title.



Mike Pettipher ADNHS: bee orchid

Our books of Proceedings date from this time. Observations noted include the first Grey Squirrel in Dunham Park, and species such as Corncrake, Nightjar, Spoonbill, Adderstongue Fern and Grass of Parnassus, which were all recorded within a short distance of Altrincham. These records were compiled by A.K. Lawson for many years, then P. Newton, both of whom held the office of Secretary.

A notable member of the Society was T. A. Coward who was one of the foremost practical field naturalists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was President of the Society for many years and, as a memorial to him, our Society instigated the purchase by subscription of Cotterill Clough Reserve and Marbury Reedbed. A.W. Boyd was also an active member, author and speaker. He wrote 'The Diary of a Country Parish', set around Frandley in Cheshire, where he lived.

The Society currently provides a focus for natural history activities with fortnightly



Margaret Hickson

meetings, talks, walks, practical studies and socials, covering a wide range of subjects and interests. Over the years we have completed several in-depth surveys of various sites, made donations to county or local natural history projects and continued to record our observations. All the records of the Society are held at Sale Local Studies Centre and at Liverpool Museum and are now being included in the on-line repository of RECORD, the local biological record centre for Cheshire, and subsequently in the National Biodiversity Network.

Further information and membership enquiries please contact :

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[www.altnats.org.uk](http://www.altnats.org.uk)

Margaret Hickson & Michael Pettipher

# 'Capturing Cheshire'... and the winners are...

**First prize:**  
**'Cardinal Beetle' by Ian Meir**



**Second prize:**  
**'Brown Hare' by Richard Steel**



**Joint third prize:**  
**'Duck in Flight' by John McNally**

This year RECORD held its first ever photographic competition and the response was outstanding. We received over 60 entries, all of which had their own take on 'Capturing Cheshire'; everything from bees to trees!

There was no argument, among the judges, that the superb image of a 'Cardinal Beetle' by Ian Meir should win first prize. However choosing Second, 'Brown Hare' by Richard Steel, and Third, which was jointly awarded for 'Tufted Duck' by John McNally and another Richard Steel photograph of a 'Grasshopper Warbler', was much trickier.

The entries will be on show, and the prizes will be presented, at an event sponsored by Natural England and URENCO, at Eaton Park on the 22 June 2010.



**Joint third Prize:**  
**'Grasshopper Warbler' by Richard Steel**



**Highly commended:**  
**'Gull on rail' by Stephen White**



**Highly commended:**  
**'Speckled Wood' by Bill Hardwick**



**Commended:**  
**'Brimstone and Hoverfly' by Ken Matthews**

**RECORD**

If you are interested in wildlife and want to know more about RECORD explore our website at [www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk](http://www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk).  
The biodiversity information system for Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral.

# On the hop: Orthoptera news



Paul Hill: Slender Ground-hopper

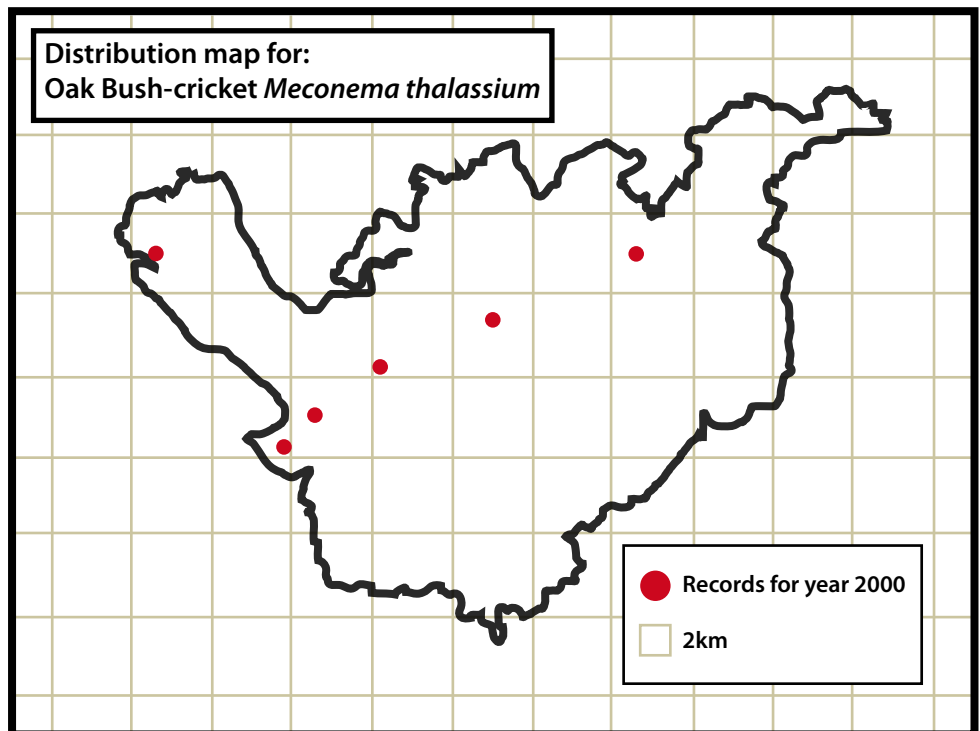
no systematic searches for it, so there is no reason to suspect that it is not still present at its previously known haunts.

As with most recording in the county, the south-west of our region is poorly represented. It is my intention to get out and about and fill in some of the blanks. If you would like to join me please come to a CMI! event - 'Anyone for crickets, ladybirds and grasshoppers' - on the 15 August. For information & booking contact Karen Lawson on 01244 383749 or email CountMeIn@RECORD-LRC.co.uk.

Paul Hill

The last few years have seen a few additions to our knowledge of Orthoptera in Cheshire, namely the discovery of Slender Ground-hopper *Tetrix subulata* and Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum* at a number of sites in the County. This has increased the number of species of Orthoptera recorded in the Cheshire region to seven. Both of these discoveries have been incidental and not the result of systematic or targeted surveying.

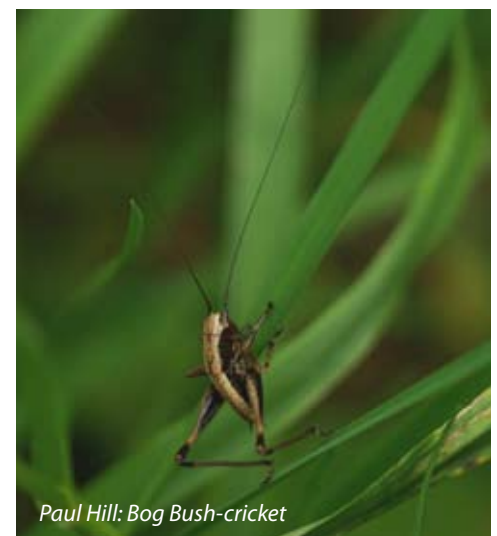
Slender Ground-hopper has been found at Lindow Moss, Sound Common, Crewe Business Park, Poynton Brickworks, and Henbury Lee Meadows. Common Ground-hopper *T. undulata* occurs at two former sites and closer examination of this species at other sites may also reveal further colonies of Slender Ground-hopper. I have found all three species of ground-hopper together at sites in Cornwall, so there is no reason why both the Cheshire species shouldn't be at the same sites. If you find Cepero's Ground-hopper *T. ceperoi* though, let me know!



The distribution of Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum* is more difficult to explain, the records we have at the moment seem to form a line across the county. All of them were found whilst beating vegetation.

Another rare species in Cheshire is the Mottled Grasshopper *Myrmeleotettix maculatus* which can be found at a few sites on the Wirral and Delamere Forest (Abbot's Moss and Newchurch Common). Searching and checking of Orthoptera at other lowland heath sites in the county (such as Brereton Country Park, Shakerley Mere, and Sound Common may extend the known range of this species.

The Bog Bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera*, recorded from the moss lands in the north of the county and also in the Delamere complex, has not been recorded this century. However there have been



Paul Hill: Bog Bush-cricket



Paul Hill: Common Green Grasshopper

For distribution maps of other Orthoptera please refer to the RECORD website URL: [www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=25&p=499](http://www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=25&p=499) or contact Paul Hill on t: 01565 722938

# Count Me In! : Events reviewed

Count Me In!

## 1st February: The Tide is High...

Under the guidance of Jeff Clarke we almost immediately spotted a rare Hen Harrier being mobbed by a Crow. This was followed by sightings of : Spoonbill, Little Egret, Teal, Dunlin and Lesser Black-backed Gull, a hunting Kestrel and Short-eared Owl, and perching Peregrine Falcon and Grey Heron. As the tide came in, we began to see Shelduck, Merlin and Oyster Catcher and heard Skylark, Reed Bunting and Redshank.

Pink-footed Goose flew over our heads and a Water Rail flew down into the reeds below us. By noon the water was rapidly filling the creeks and we could see small mammals – Water, Pygmy and Common shrews, and Short-tailed Vole – swimming to the safety of the harbour wall.

Every minute another arrived and we cheered and encouraged them!

Helen Holyoak



Jeff Clarke: Short-tailed Vole

## 10th April: How does your garden grow?

On a gloriously sunny day at Chester Zoo, while the younger participants made bug and bee habitats from recycled materials, botanist Dr Hilary Ash talked to us about: the importance of gardens for wildlife, the benefits of wild flower meadows and alternatives to the use of slug pellets, pesticides and peat.

Later Paul Oldfield, from the Cheshire Bluebell Action Group, introduced us to the Spanish and native English Bluebells.

After lunch we walked along nearby lanes recording a total of over 50 plants and 38 birds, beasts and bees including: Fox, Rabbit, Short-tailed Field Vole, Toad and a Black Cap.

Helen Holyoak



Maira Rae Carter: Lesser Celandine

## 18th April: Snakes in the grass

On arriving at Risley Moss Nature Reserve, consultant ecologist Rob Smith gave a presentation on amphibians before we headed outdoors for a pond-dipping session. We spotted both male and female Smooth Newts, Backswimmers, Water Boatmen, Pondskaters and a variety of water beetles. On the route back to the visitor centre we rummaged in the undergrowth and lifted logs, to uncover additional species to add to our eventual total of 52.

After a presentation on reptiles, Rob led the group onto the 'moss', normally a restricted access area. We approached cautiously and quietly, two by two, our patience was soon rewarded with the sighting of a contentedly basking male Adder. On our return we spotted several Slow Worms – male, female and juvenile – and rounded off the day beautifully with a Great Crested Newt, which happily posed for our cameras.

Karen Lawson



Rob Smith: Grass Snake

## 9th May: Pond-life

We were introduced to the new OPAL Water Survey by Andy Harmer and visited three ponds in close proximity, each with different characteristics. Armed with survey packs, nets, trays, plastic bottles and magnifiers, we headed to the first pond, divided into groups and spread out around the banks. We assessed water clarity, measured pH and began dipping.

From amidst a mass of Common Spike Rush and Bogbean emerged Damselfly and Mayfly larvae, Water Skaters, Sticklebacks, Shrimps, Snails and a Smooth Newt. At the next we found Water Boatmen, Snail eggs, Backswimmer, Caddis and Saucer Bug. Moving on to a former marl pit we discovered: Water Scorpions, Whirligig Beetles and a family of Moorhens.

Helen Holyoak



Andy Harmer: Squeak Beetle



For reviews in full and details of forthcoming CMI! events please see : [www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk](http://www.RECORD-LRC.co.uk) or contact Karen Lawson on 01244383749 or [CountMeIn@RECORD-LRC.CO.UK](mailto:CountMeIn@RECORD-LRC.CO.UK). CMI! and RECORD are raising awareness of biodiversity as partners in IYB-UK.

# Wine Roping for Invertebrates

Lepidopterists have known for several centuries that sweet smelling solutions have a magnetic attraction for many species of moth and butterfly. One only has to look at fermenting windfall apples in the autumn to see just how many invertebrates are lured by the aromatic cocktail created by the natural process of decay. The effect of the alcohol often leads to clearly inebriated butterflies wandering around in a stupor, incapable of flight and readily picked up, or more likely predated.

Before the widespread use of artificial light-traps many lepidopterists would wrap a mush of fermenting fruit in a muslin bag and hang it in a tree. For most however, this simply doesn't fit with demands on time and so a number of easier alternatives have been developed. These alternatives are variants on the practice of 'sugaring'; the name indicating one of the primary ingredients of the resultant solution.

## The when, where and how of using 'wine-ropes'

Having made your solution and soaked your cotton strings the 'wine ropes' are ready to use. If your quarry are night-flying moths here are a few tips and suggestions that might save you time, pain and aggravation!

**When?** Success varies throughout the year depending on the alternative natural attractions. Sallow blossom in particular is very good at keeping the moths away from your ropes. Autumn is often the most successful time for wine roping.

**Where?** Dense woodland generally produces poor results but big woodland rides, clearings, field boundaries and fence lines through grassland can often be very productive.

**How?** Always try to set up your 'beat' in daylight. Watching out for, and removing or marking, potential hazards. Place all your ropes, preferably on one side of a track or path, making sure that you hang them where they are easily accessible and vegetation such as Nettles and Brambles won't impede your ability to pot specimens. Remember you'll be doing this in the dark! Try – where possible – to set your ropes on a line where the scent carries it across the habitat to be sampled. Humid, warm nights in Autumn with a slight breeze can often bring more moths to 'wine ropes' than light traps.

**Potting up:** Make sure you wear a head torch as this leaves both hands free for potting the moths and has the

In its basic form, the technique consists of applying a sugary solution to the surface of a large flat leaf, the trunk of a tree or a fence post. Over the years other ingredients were added, these include volatiles which are now only possible to obtain illegally, unless you are skilled at distilling them from nail polish! Other additives include banana essence and, my particular favourite, honey. The viscosity and contents of the solutions vary, depending on individual preference, but most 'sugars' applied in this way usually contain a stout type beer and dark treacle as the primary ingredients. Reduced, by heat, to a highly viscous state that will stick readily to tree trunks when daubed on with a paintbrush.

A refinement of this technique is 'wine roping'. This particular method has many advantages as it is a particularly efficient and recyclable method of delivery.

*See right for my favoured recipe.*

added bonus of focussing a beam of light where you're actually looking.



The eye-shine from moths is often the first thing you see as you approach your wine rope.

## 'Wine-roping' solution

### Ingredients:

1/2 a bottle of red wine  
0.5 kilo of dark molasses/treacle  
2 large tablespoons of honey

The ropes are made from natural fibres and, for me, the best are simple cotton strings extracted from the head of an inexpensive unbleached cotton mop-head!

A 'lunch-box' style container, in which the solution and the ropes can be stored.

### Method:

Bring wine to the boil and simmer for five minutes to remove much of the alcohol.

Take off the heat and stir in the molasses/treacle and bring back to simmer for a minute or so, stir continuously.

Take off the heat again and add the honey. Back on the heat and again stir and simmer for a further minute.

Pour the solution into a container and leave to cool.

Tie off the ends of your cotton strings and add them to the solution ensuring they are thoroughly soaked.

To pot a specimen on a rope, carefully place the pot below the moth and bring the lid down from the top. Almost invariably moths 'free-drop' off, as if responding to potential danger from a predator, hopefully straight into the waiting pot.

**How long does it take?** Typically, I put out between 10 and 25 ropes at roughly five metre intervals and I check them approximately every half an hour from dusk onwards. The second round of the traps is often the most successful.

Moths are seldom attracted much beyond midnight, unless there is an obvious inward migration taking place when exhausted moths quickly lap up much needed fuel.

At the end of the recording session simply shake off any remaining moths and return your wine ropes to the container and solution, ready for next time.

## What can you expect to see?

The species of moths attracted varies through the seasons, but the majority belong to the Noctuidae. These moths are characterised by stout bodies and a dart-like shape. In the Autumn you can typically expect to attract species like the spectacular Red Underwing *Catocala nupta*, Copper Underwing *Amphipyra pyramidea*, the closely related Svensson's Copper Underwing *A. berbera svenssoni*, and the Herald *Scoliopteryx libatrix*. This latter species is far more frequently encountered at 'sugar' than it is in a light-trap.

'Wine ropes' are not just attractive to moths; many species of butterfly are also strongly attracted to them including, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, Comma *Polygonia c-album*, Peacock *Inachis io*, Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* and perhaps more surprisingly, White-letter Hairstreak *Strymonidia w-album*!

*This White-letter Hairstreak was attracted to wine ropes at the 'Hairstreaks on High' event held at Wigg Island, Runcorn on 6th July 2008. This is possibly the first published picture of such behaviour.*

Other invertebrates can also be attracted including various Molluscs, Dipterous Flies, Earwigs and some Coleoptera. Wasps are also strongly attracted and the ropes can be usefully employed when having a barbeque because they can draw the pesky blighters away from the food and drink.

Roping is worth trying for a number of reasons, not least because it is a

relatively inexpensive way of attracting and recording invertebrates. Unlike a powerful light trap it won't annoy the neighbours and so is ideal for gardens. We are all keen to see youngsters being encouraged to take an active interest in the natural environment and this is a very interactive way of involving whole families in the process, right from the cooking of the solution to the potting and identifying of the specimens. Most importantly, from the biological recording perspective, it attracts a whole suite of moths that are hard to survey by light trapping alone, which gives a much more rounded picture of the species composition of any surveyed area. As such, 'wine roping' is a powerful biological recording tool and one that I would thoroughly recommend to everyone.

Jeff Clarke



Ged Lloyd



Jeff Clarke

*Two Old Lady on wine rope. This large moth very rarely comes to light but can readily be attracted to wine ropes, from late June to August.*

### References:

The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland; Thomas & Lewington; Dorling Kindersley 1991; ISBN 0-86318-591-6  
Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland; Waring, Townsend and Lewington; British Wildlife Publishing 2003; ISBN 0-9531399-1-3

### Recommended Further Reading:

Enjoying Moths; Roy Leverton; Poyser 2000; ISBN 10 0856611247

## Dromius angustus: identified!



Dave Skingsley

On 12 May 2009, as part of a ladybird survey at Daresbury Firs LNR, Runcorn, Jeff Clarke was beating a Scot's Pine when a Carabid Beetle, he couldn't identify, dropped on to his beating tray.

Since very few carabid beetles are

habitually found in trees, most are primarily ground hunters, Jeff sent the beetle to Rachel Hacking, the county Carabid Beetle recorder. She identified it as *Dromius angustus* and this was confirmed by Mike Denton. After consultation with Don Stenhouse, the Coleoptera recorder for Cheshire, it was found to be a first for the county.

During the same session Jeff also beat several examples of another carabid, *Calodromius spilotus*. With just a handful of previous records, this is also considered rare in Cheshire and proved a fine compensation for not being able to find his target ladybird!

## What is it?

If you've found a bird, mammal, plant or even an insect that you can't identify – please send us an image or detailed description, including where and when it was found – and our team of experts will put a name to it!

**RECORD**, Oakfield House  
Chester Zoological Gardens  
Upton, Chester,  
Cheshire CH2 1LH  
e: info@RECORD-LRC.co.uk

## Losing your marbles?



Andy Harmer

pools. The surprise is that the Alpine Newt appear to be thriving, numbering 40 at a count in May, in two small pools. The large glossy white eggs in the submerged Honeysuckle suggest that the Marbled Newt, though numbering only three are also breeding. The newts have spread to other gardens within a well defined block but are probably contained by the

tarmac and concrete world that central Macclesfield offers beyond this haven.

Elsewhere in the county, Jim Hollingshead reports that he netted a single male Alpine Newt at a seasonal pond whilst carrying out surveys at the Cholmondeley estate in 2007.

Andy Harmer

Jim Grundy, a herpetologist from Congleton and author of '*Newts in Your Garden*', was contacted by a gentleman regarding some unusual species of newts that he'd seen in his garden in the centre of Macclesfield. Jim was amazed when he visited and encountered not only the Alpine Newt *Ichthyosaura alpestris* but also the magnificent Marbled Newt *Triturus marmoratus* too.

It all made sense when the owner explained that a herpetologist had resided at the property over six years ago, and kept alien species captive in a series of



Andy Harmer: Marbled Newt

## The Nice and the Not-so-nice

Of the two closely related encrusting fungi, *Serpula himantoides* is to be found on the undersides of rotten logs of coniferous trees. It is far from being commonly encountered but is quickly recognisable by the colour and 'scrambled egg' appearance of the hymenial surface. Technically this is known as a 'meruloid' arrangement of pseudopores. At first lilaceous it becomes umber brown at maturity with a white, silky margin. It can be found throughout the year but chiefly in autumn.

See: (<http://www.rogersmushrooms.com/gallery/DisplayBlock~bid~6779~gid~source~gallerydefault.asp>)

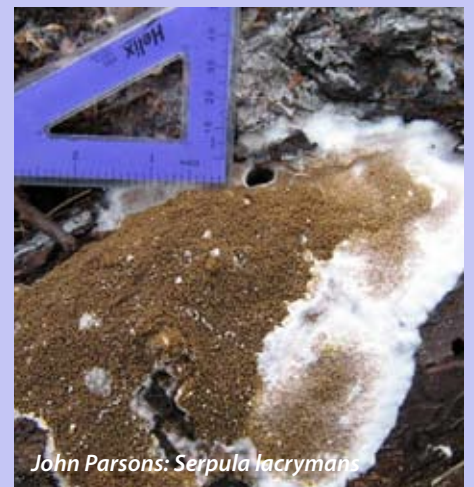
*Serpula lacrymans* is the economically destructive fungus that also favours coniferous wood but chiefly infects worked timbers and, as in the photo, also forms its distinctive rust-brown crusts on old damp brickwork. This species causes extensive structural damage in poorly ventilated parts of buildings and is more commonly known as 'Dry Rot'. It develops the same meruloid appearance as its more benign country cousin.

See: (<http://www.rogersmushrooms.com/gallery/DisplayBlock~bid~6778~gid~source~gallerydefault.asp>)

Michael Jordan



John Parsons: *Serpula Himantoides*



John Parsons: *Serpula lacrymans*



John Parsons: *Serpula lacrymans*