

## A myrmecophilous rove beetle *Lomechusa emarginata* in Wyre Forest

Gary Farmer

*Lomechusa emarginata* is a small species of myrmecophilous rove beetle which is widespread but very local across Southern and Central England and Wales, with scattered records further north to Cumbria (UK Beetles web site). This species is known to inhabit the nests of *Myrmica* ants through winter, dispersing in spring to find the nests of *Formica* ants in which the beetle lays its eggs. The resulting larvae remain in these nests through summer, emerging as adults in time to find the nests of *Myrmica* ants where they overwinter. So there needs to be a thriving population of both *Myrmica* and *Formica* ants in an area for the beetles to survive.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023 during a Wyre Forest Study Group (WFSG) meeting to Longdon Orchard Deer Hide in Shropshire (VC40), I turned a small, flat stone and noticed several *Myrmica* ants (01) on the undersurface. Amongst them was a small reddish beetle (02), so I collected the beetle and two of the ants to identify later.



01. *Myrmica ruginodis* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.



02. *Lomechusa emarginata* Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.

I identified the ants as *Myrmica ruginodis* (03) (confirmed by Rosemary Winnall) and the beetle as *Lomechusa emarginata* (04), representing the first record of this beetle in Wyre since its discovery by W. G. Blatch on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1889 (WFSG web site) - or so I thought.



03. Detail of *Myrmica ruginodis* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.



04. *Lomechusa emarginata* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.

John Bingham informed me that on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2017 Denise Bingham had found *L. emarginata* near to Wyre Forest at Dudmaston in Shropshire. John also directed me to an article written for the Wyre Forest Review (Bloxxham 2018). In this article Mike Bloxxham records part of his work sorting through collections held in Birmingham Museums Trust. He had been able to find two further specimens of *L. emarginata*; one from Ted Hammond labelled 'in small red ant nest' from Wyre on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1944, and one from Stuart Carlier on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1950 after visiting Button Oak in Wyre Carlier had carded up specimens of *Formica fusca* together with two myrmecophilous beetles. One turned out to be *Lomechusa emarginata* and the other, *Pella humeralis*.

We now have four records of this rare little beetle for Wyre Forest:  
 W. G. Blatch on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1889  
 T. Hammond 10<sup>th</sup> April 1944  
 S. Carlier 21<sup>st</sup> May 1950 (associated with *Formica fusca*)  
 G. Farmer 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (associated with *Myrmica ruginodis*)

This is certainly a species worth looking for in spring, searching under rocks and debris in the vicinity of *Myrmica* and *Fusca* ant

nests. At this time of year the adults may be found active among the ants or near to their runs. Adults also come to light traps through the spring and summer and the recent popularity of trapping for all types of insects, rather than just Lepidoptera, is producing more records (UK Beetles web site).

My thanks to Rosemary Winnall for confirming the identification of *Myrmica ruginodis* and for highlighting the W. G. Blatch record. Also thanks to John Bingham for the information about the Dudmaston record and for directing me to the article by Mike Bloxham.

### References

UK Beetles web site. Available at:  
<https://www.ukbeetles.co.uk/lomechusa-spp> [Accessed 23.04.23]  
Bloxham M. 2018. Notes on two Myrmecophilous Beetle Species in the Collections. *Wyre Forest Study Group Annual Review 2018*. Available at:  
[https://wyreforest.net/wp-content/uploads/Insect\\_Articles/Two-Myrmecophilous-Beetle-species-in-the-Collections-Copy.pdf](https://wyreforest.net/wp-content/uploads/Insect_Articles/Two-Myrmecophilous-Beetle-species-in-the-Collections-Copy.pdf) [Accessed 23.04.23].

### Images

01. *Myrmica ruginodis* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.
02. *Lomechusa emarginata* Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.
03. Detail of *Myrmica ruginodis* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.
04. *Lomechusa emarginata* from Longdon Orchard, Wyre Forest 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Gary Farmer.