

Notes on two Myrmecophilous Beetle Species in the Collections

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The Wyre Forest Study Group Review (2013) contains extensive reprints of a report by the notable midlands naturalist William Gabriel Blatch which summarise some collecting experiences in Wyre Forest in considerable detail. It also contains Mick Blythe's useful analysis of species found by Blatch enabling us to see which ones have been re-discovered in more recent times and appear on the Wyre Forest Database and those which have not.

In the article previously mentioned, it can be seen that investigations to discover historic insect specimens from Wyre in the collections of Birmingham Museums Trust have already enabled us to find Blatch Stag Beetle specimens gathered during his visits. Here we focus on two small beetle species nearly always found in association with ants and receiving a mention in the Blythe lists.

On review of museum specimens, we discovered that two notable midland naturalists Stuart Carlier and Ted Hammond had found myrmecophilous beetles (associated with ants) in more recent times. A card holding four un-named Hammond beetle specimens 'in small red ant nest' from Wyre on 10th April 1944 awakened interest. The insects were photographed and Mark Telfer identified them as *Lomechusa emarginata*, one of the most spectacular aleocharines and a Nationally Scarce species. Blythe's list mentioned *Atemeles emarginatus* (now *Lomechusa emarginata*) as a beetle with no post Blatch records, so we are now able to add Hammond's record to the Wyre lists as an update from the Blatch observations. However, uncertainty over the identity of the 'red' ants remains. Hammond would probably have been familiar with wood ants (*Formica rufa*) with their familiar conical nests of collected vegetable fragments such as pine needles, so it is likely that he was referring here to a *Myrmica*

species. Several species of the genus are commonly known as red ants and *L. emarginata* is known to be associated with them.

Carlier may have known of Hammond's discovery. He searched for Myrmecophiles on May 21st 1950 and after visiting Button Oak in Wyre, carded up specimens of *Formica fusca* (large Black Ant) together with two myrmecophilous beetles. One turned out to be *Lomechusa emarginata* (giving us a second post-Blatch record plus a confirmed association) and the other, *Pella humeralis*.

It may be that the association of *P. humeralis* with *F. fusca* is unusual, so that is a potentially interesting addition to the database. There was no caption giving species names over these cards and it is possible they appeared in exhibitions accompanied by explanatory notes concerning the lifestyles of the species involved.

Thanks go to Mark Telfer for identification of *Lomechusa emarginata* and Peter Shirley for general research on the myrmecophilous specimens known to be held in the collections. Our final thanks go to Birmingham Museums Trust and its Curator of Natural Sciences, Lucas Large, who also took the photographs.

Reference

Reade, P. and Blythe, M. (2013) Bewdley Forest by W.G. Blatch 1879. Pages 28-35. Wyre Forest Study Group Review.



Lomechusa emarginata specimen collected by Hammond Lucas Large



Lomechusa emarginata specimen carded by Carlier – this time with the associated ant *Formica fusca* Lucas Large