

**LEICESTERSHIRE
ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**The status of Diptera
in VC55**

Sciomyzidae



Pherbellia schoenherri (David Gould, NatureSpot)

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LESOPS 44 (November 2021)

ISSN 0957 - 1019

Introduction

The biology of snail-killing flies (Diptera: Sciomyzidae) has been studied intensively over the past half-century as they are being evaluated as a means of biologically controlling disease-carrying or agriculturally-important snails and slugs. Most Sciomyzidae larvae are obligate natural enemies of slugs and snails (Mollusca) which lack an operculum, the "lid" protecting the soft parts of the snail from the outside world; some are known to prefer snails without an operculum. The closely related Phaeomyiidae has now been added to the Sciomyzidae family although the larvae of these flies seem to prefer millipedes over snails. The biology of the family has received much attention and it is worth reading some of the publications available online so get a better understanding of these flies (e.g. Murphy, 2012).

In Britain the emphasis has been more in understanding the occurrence and distribution of the Sciomyzidae as a group of flies that would benefit from increased interest by the enthusiastic entomologist (professional or amateur). The British Sciomyzidae (now including the Phaeomyiidae) consists of 72 species in 23 genera.

A short history of Sciomyzidae recording in Britain

The well-known Victoria dipterist GH Verrall visited the north-east area of Scotland to record flies in the company of Leicestershire's William Armiston Vice (who at the time was studying medicine at Aberdeen). Among the flies collected were several sciomyzids (Verrall, 1873-4). Vice then published a comprehensive list of the flies that he collected in the north of Scotland 1872-5 including several sciomyzids (Vice, 1883-4) with these records being referred to in a study of Aberdeen diptera by Bloomfield (1901). Indeed, Vice, when he had returned to Leicester to practice dentistry in the city, continued his interest in the Diptera and contributed records of Sciomyzidae for inclusion in the Victoria County History volumes for Leicester (VCH-L, 1907).

It would seem that the first attempt at producing usable keys to help identification of the Sciomyzidae appeared when WJ Wingate published his overview of diptera in Durham (Wingate, 1906). His keys were annotated with specific records from the county made 1889-1904. Hamm (1915-29) noted thirty sciomyzid species in the Oxford area while a note on the diptera in Shropshire recorded four species at Meole Brace (Bury, 1920).

In the meantime, much of the interest in the sciomyzids seemed to be centred in mainland Europe, and, to a certain extent, North America, with developed keys being used by British dipterists. The French entomologist Eugene Seguy produced keys to the Sciomyzidae in 1926 which were useful as it allowed British workers to identify the flies but being in French it was not available to all. In 1965 keys were produced for the Danish Sciomyzidae (Knutson & Lyneborg, 1965) which, being in English and well-illustrated, was a boon to British recorders if they could get a copy (now available online). Knutson had, apparently, outlined the possibility of a Sciomyzidae addition to the Royal Entomological Society Handbook Series (Kidd, 1967) but it never materialised. Parmenter (1966) summarised much of the history of the development of keys and also updated the British list with the latest taxonomic changes. The "bible" for identification of Sciomyzidae appeared when Roskosny (1984) produced a volume in the Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica series which can be obtained as used copies at the present time but is now somewhat expensive! Using this publication Steve Falk produced a provisional list for Warwickshire also including records from outside the county (Falk, 1992). Roy Crossley produced lists from Yorkshire (Crossley, 1993, 1997), Hewitt listed Sciomyzidae in a Cumbrian provisional dipteran listing (Hewitt, 2014), while Phil Withers (Withers, 2016) described the sciomyzid fauna of Suffolk based on the Claude Morley (1874-1951) collection at Ipswich Museum with records covering the period 1894-1945.

The national Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme came about in the late 1960s resulting in the publication by Stephenson & Knutson (1970) of an updated distribution status for the flies in Britain. In June 1983 the first Newsletter of the Recording Scheme was published and included an updated British list as well as notes that aimed to aid identification using the Roskosny and Danish keys. The issue also asked the question “*Chippenhams Fen NNR: Britain's best site for Sciomyzidae?*” listing 40 species (SRS, 1983). Since then the Newsletter has appeared on an irregular basis but has always included hints on identification and records of new or unusual species. Stuart Ball produced test keys for the family for use in training sessions which is available to members of the Dipterists Forum. These keys are probably the best available at this time for identification of these flies. The work of the Recording Scheme culminated in 2021 with a review of the status of Sciomyzidae in Britain being presented (Sumner, Harrow & Falk, 2021). This included photographs and national distribution maps for ten species and, most importantly, an up-to-date checklist of British species with an indication of their national status.

Acknowledgements

Maps have been prepared using MapMate® with data gleaned from local and national archives as well as entomological publications and local collections. National distribution notes are based on the NBN Atlas accessed October 2021. Photographs originate from NatureSpot with permission. VC55 distribution maps of some of the snail host are courtesy of LRERC.

Particular thanks go to Darwyn Sumner who encouraged the production of this LESOPS and for reviewing the text.

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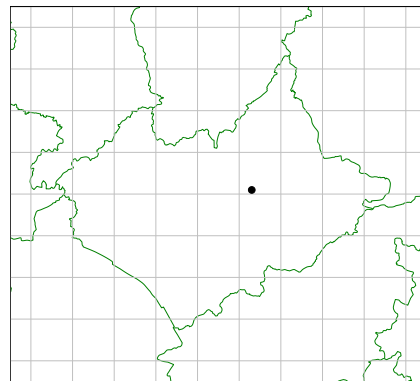
Annotated listing of VC55 Sciomyzidae

This listing is arranged alphabetically of species found in VC55 at the end of 2020. Notes are based on Stuart Ball's draft test keys (Ball, 2017) and national status as per Sumner, Harrow & Falk (2021).

Anticheta brevipennis Zetterstedt (1 record)

Vulnerable

Nationally well scattered in England & Wales but record numbers are low. The fly frequents damp habitats with the larvae developing from eggs laid on the egg masses of the Dwarf Pond Snail (*Galba truncata*) feeding on the eggs and embryos. The sole VC55 record came in 2006 when taken at a passive trap at Thorpe Satchville Sewage Treatment Works by Ian Merrill and identified by Richard Wright – the reedbeds at the site are a suitable habitat for the snail.



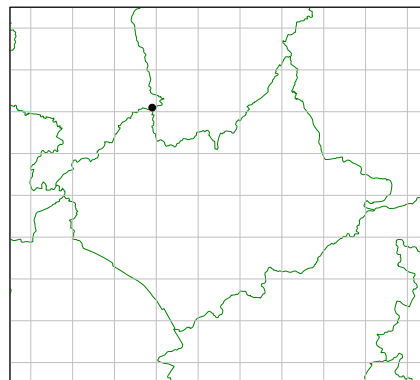
Galba truncata, Stonesby Quarry 2014
(Dave Nicholls, NatureSpot)

Colobaea bifasciella Fallén (2 records)

Notable

An uncommon fly of damp woods and waterway margins in England & Wales. Eggs are laid (usually singularly) on the adults of *Lymnaea* snails where the larvae develop inside the snail itself.

The only records of this fly came from the Lockington Marshes area in the north of the county in 1991.

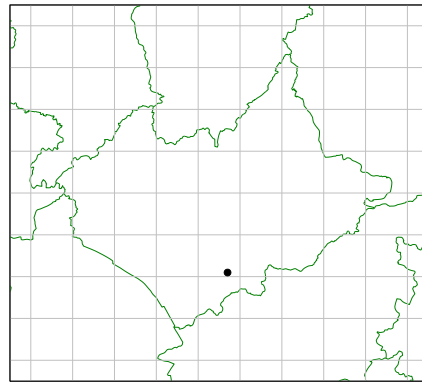


Colobaea pectoralis Zetterstedt (1 record)

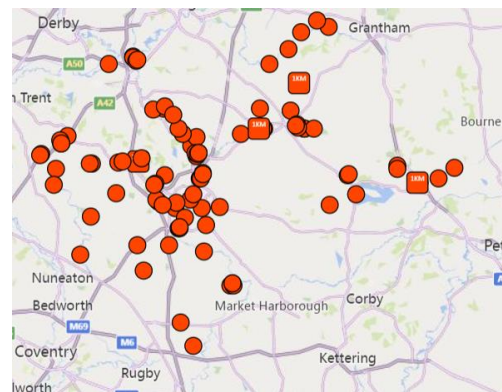
An internal parasitoid of the Ramshorn snail (*Anisus vortex*). Scattered in England.

The only VC55 record came from Saddington Reservoir in 2006 when found by Derek Lott and identified by Martin Drake. The host occurs in suitable habitats throughout VC55 (map ex LRERC) and is also widespread in England & Wales but the fly has relatively few records nationally (NBN Atlas).

Vulnerable



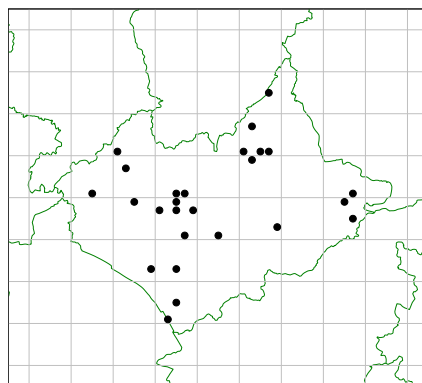
Anisus vortex, Cossington Meadows 2013
(Dave Nicholls NatureSpot)



Coremacera marginata Fabricius (42 records)

A relatively well-recorded species in England & Wales and NE Scotland. The larvae are predators of terrestrial snails even in drier conditions.

Widely recorded in VC55 from meadows, woods, nature reserves and even gardens in the summer months.



Empingham 2018
(Andrew Dejardin, NatureSpot)

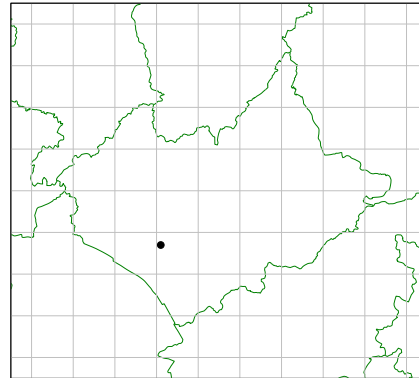
Spearwort Fields 2020
(David Gould, NatureSpot)

Note: The *Dichetophora* need to be critically examined particularly as they seem to have similar behaviour and occur in the same type of habitat. The identification notes on NatureSpot do not mention the presence of post-alar setae which is a key diagnostic character for separation of the two species. Accordingly the VC55 species need to be regarded with caution particularly as nationally *D. finlandica* (1 seta) is much less recorded than *D. obliterata* (2 setae). Nearly all the photographs on NatureSpot do not allow clear views of the post-alar setae. Accordingly, pending confirmation some of the records may have to be considered presumptive.

Dichetophora finlandica Verbecke (2 records)

Rare

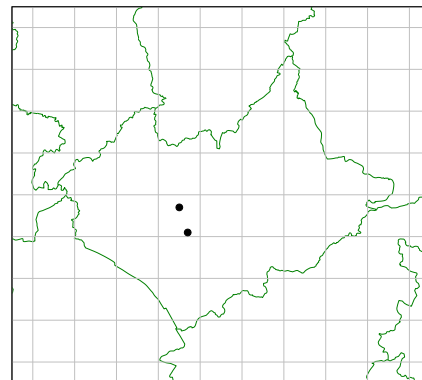
A species seemingly being recorded mainly from eastern England and the Midlands flying in late summer. A few records from South Wales. According to Ball (2017) the larval behaviour is, as yet, unknown but it is thought that they may be predators of pulmonate aquatic snails. Has one post-alar seta on each side of the thorax.



Recorded at Croft Hill (Graham Calow identified by Stephane Lebrun) in 2014.

Dichetophora obliterata Fabricius (2 records)

More commonly recorded in England & Wales than *D. finlandica*. The fly has two post-alar setae on each side to the thorax. Eggs are laid on the surface of adult snails and the larvae are predatory or sarcophagous. The two VC55 records came from Aylestone Meadows 2008 and County Hall (Glenfield) 2016.



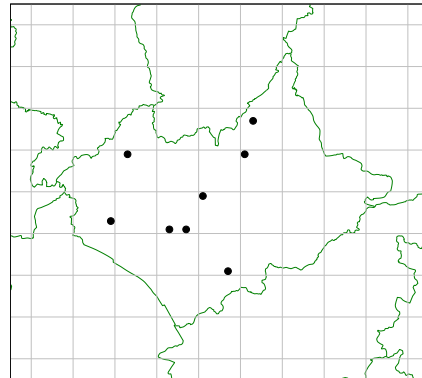
David Gould, Aylestone Meadows 2008

(post-alar setae indicated)

***Elgiva cucularia* L. (9 records)**

Regularly recorded throughout England & Wales, less so elsewhere, this fly is usually encountered in marshy areas and the like. The larvae are predators of aquatic snails such as Lymnaeidae, Planorbidae & Physidae.

The VC55 records are scattered in Leicestershire with none from Rutland so far; usually associated with damp areas.



Barbara Cooper, Long Clawson 2017

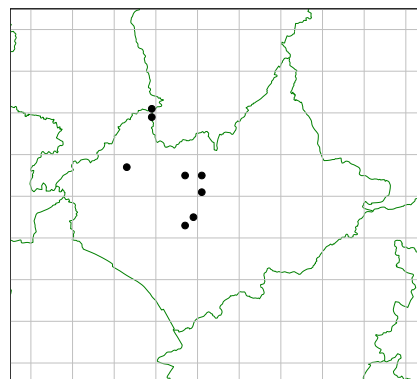


Lymnaea stagnalis, Grantham Canal 2016
Steve Mathers, NatureSpot)

***Elgiva solicita* Harris (10 records)**

A fairly widespread fly in England & Wales associated with a wide range of open freshwater situations. Parasites of the same snails as *E. cucularia*.

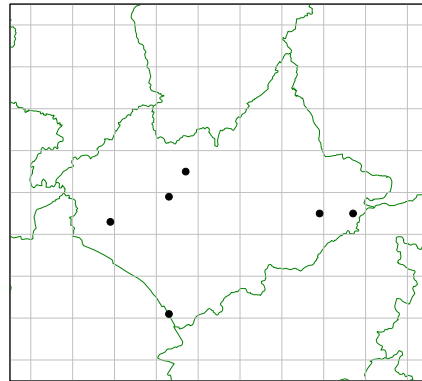
The fly was first noted by PAH Muschamp in the canal at Leicester in 1932 (specimen in county collections) but not since 2013. VC55 records come from suitable habitats e.g. Lockington Marshes and Cossington Meadows.



Euthycera fumigata Scopoli (6 records)

Found throughout mainland Britain, the adults favouring dry unimproved grasslands; the habits of the larvae are currently unknown.

Scattered in VC55 with records from woods and quarries.

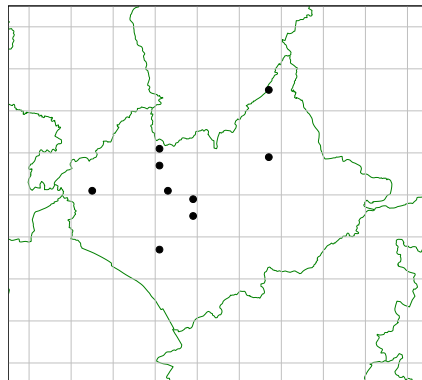


Rutland Water 2014 (Paul Ruddoch, NatureSpot)

Hydromya dorsalis Fabricius (11 records)

Throughout Britain, usually found in freshwater situations often besides slow moving waters. The larvae can be found in aquatic snails but may also survive on dead molluscs.

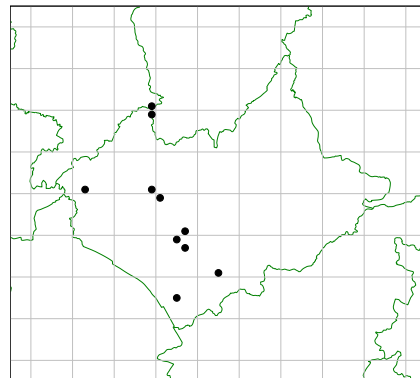
WA Vice recorded the fly at Bradgate Park in 1887 (VCH-L, 1907) while PAH Muschamp noted it at Leicester in 1928 (specimen in county collections). More recent records originate from a variety of habitats but none since 2008.



***Ilione albiseta* Scopoli (15 records)**

Found throughout England & Wales and scattered in Scotland. Adults seem to prefer water margins with *Phragmites* while the larvae are predators of aquatic snails.

All VC55 records seem to come from the preferred habitats. The VCH-L reports records from the 19th century from the Blaby district, Aylestone and Saddington (presumably WA Vice). PAH Muschamp deposited a specimen into the county collections which came from Narborough Bog NR but with no capture details. More recent records (1989-2020) come from a variety of locations in Leicestershire with suitable habitats.

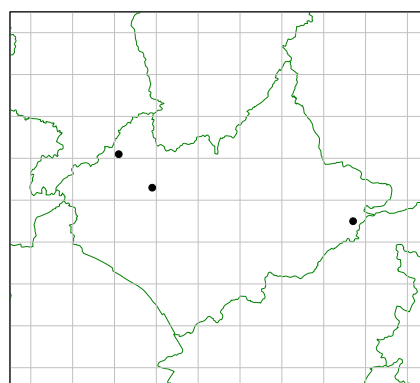


David Gould (NatureSpot), Spearwort Fields 2020

***Limnia paludicola* Elberg (3 records)**

A species that needs careful examination to be sure of identity. Occurs in a range of watery situations including calcareous flushes from bogs throughout Britain

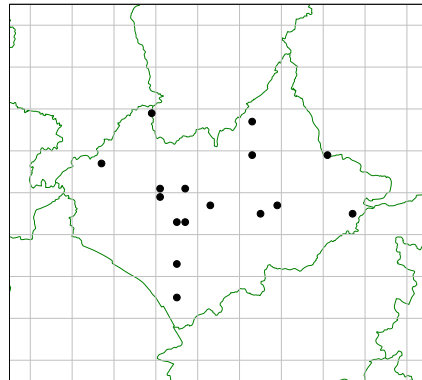
The three VC55 records all came from Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust nature reserves being collected by Darwyn Sumner (2002 Ulverscroft & Cloud Wood) and Jonathan Cole (Ketton Quarry, 2006), both experienced entomologists.



***Limnia unguicornis* Scopoli (22 records)**

Nationally a much more commonly recorded species than *L. paludicola* with a similar distribution. There seems to be little information about larval habits.

The VCH-L recorded the fly at Braunston (Leicester) and Tilton while PAH Muschamp took it in 1943 at the canal in Leicester (specimen in county collections). Regularly recorded in VC55 since 2006.

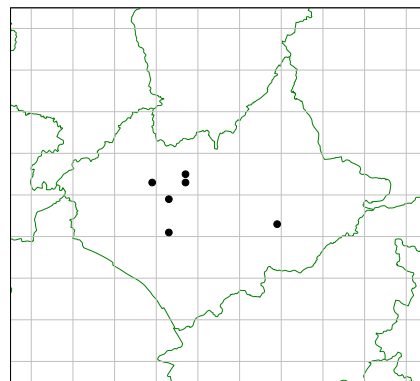


Graham Calow, Dunton Gorse 2017

***Pelidnoptera fuscipennis* Meigen (7 records)**

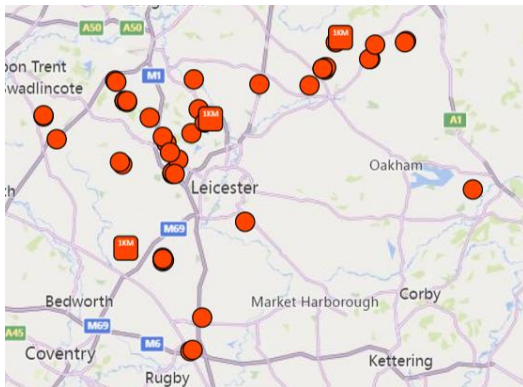
A parasite of the millipede genus *Ommatoiulus* apparently restricted to damp woodlands. Widely scattered throughout Britain. The adults are unmistakable with the almost black wings.

First noted in 1987 during a Natural England survey and from a variety of habitats up to 2011. No recent records despite the millipede being found across the area (map ex LRERC).





Mating pair, Ulverscroft 2010 (Dave Nicholls, NatureSpot)

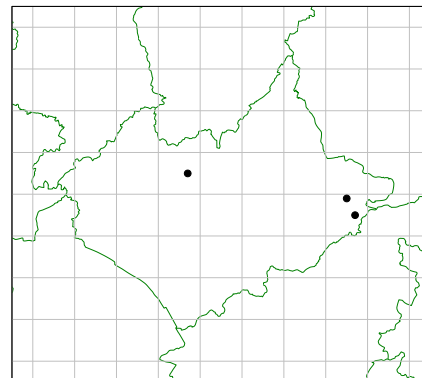


Ommatoiulus sabulosus, Sapcote 2014
(Graham Calow, NatureSpot)

Pherbellia albocostata Fallén (5 records)

A species inhabiting damp woodlands of all types with the larvae being parasitoids of a range of terrestrial gastropods. Seems to be widespread in Britain.

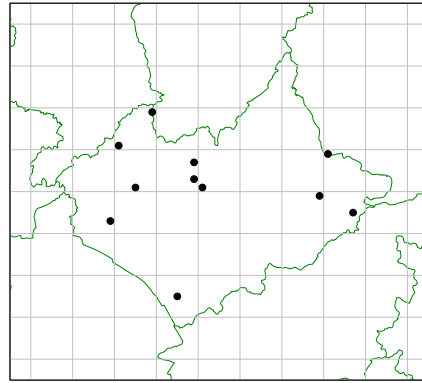
First VC55 records came in 1998 from Empingham with the most recent being 2013 from the Buddon Wood area.



Pherbellia cinerella Fallén (17 records)

Occurs in a wide range of freshwater and terrestrial habitats and it is assumed the larvae thrive on a range of molluscs. Widespread in England & Wales but scattered elsewhere.

The VC55 records come from damp woodlands (e.g. Cloud Wood), marshy areas (e.g. Cossington Meadows, Lockington marshes) and drier area (e.g. Ketton Quarry).

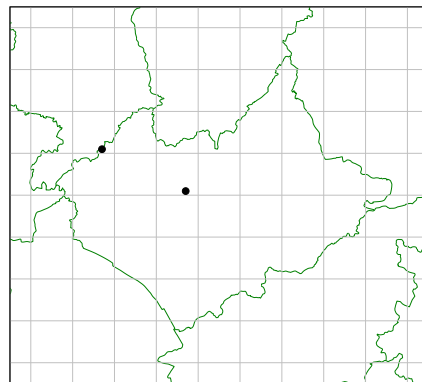


***Pherbellia dorsata* Zetterstedt (2 records)**

Prefers fen-type habitats although whether this is the case in VC55 is unclear. Its national distribution favours East Anglia with records also coming from scattered locations elsewhere. The larvae seem to favour *Planorbis planorbis* in the wild but seems happy with other snails under controlled conditions.

The two VC55 records came from Dimmingsdale NR (2015, Martin Drake) and agricultural land north of Leicester (Andy Jukes, 2018).

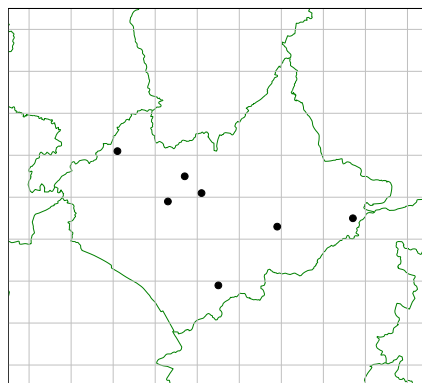
Notable



***Pherbellia dubia* Fallén (10 records)**

A widespread British species being found in a wide range of damp habitats with the larvae having been bred from a range of snail species.

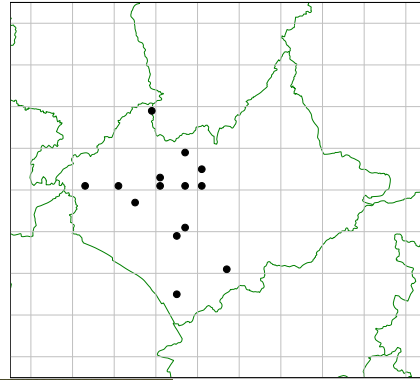
Most of the VC55 records come from woods and quarries by experienced entomologists.



***Pherbellia schoenherri* Fallén (19 records)**

This well-marked fly occurs throughout much of Britain although seemingly scattered. Adults are frequent near water especially reed beds etc. Larvae can be found in *Succinea* and *Oxyoma* snails where an individual will be fed on by one fly larva.

VC55 records are from the western half of the area with suitable habitats.

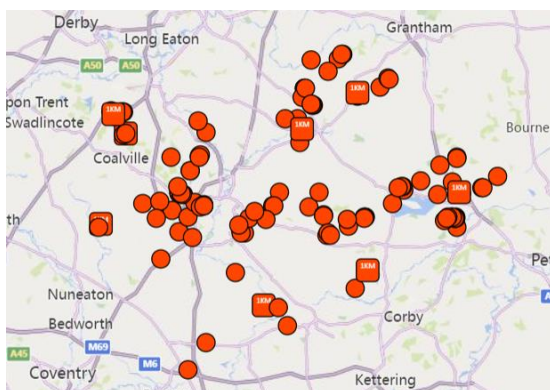


David Gould, Spearwort Fields, Aylestone 2019

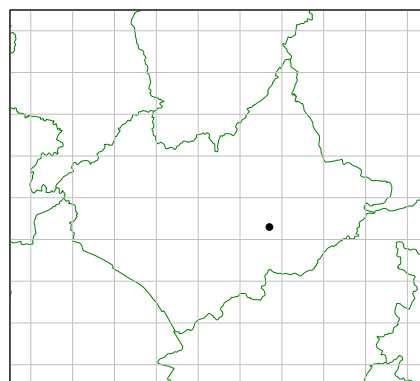
Pherbellia scutellaris von Roser (1 record)

Found through England & Wales in a range of woods where it may be locally common. Larvae feed in small terrestrial pulmonate snails (*Clausilia* spp). Possibly an under-recorded species because of problems separating from similar species of *Pherbellia*.

The host snail genus occurs throughout VC55 (map ex LRERC). The sole VC55 record came from Loddington Reddish in 1996 when found by Darwyn Sumner.



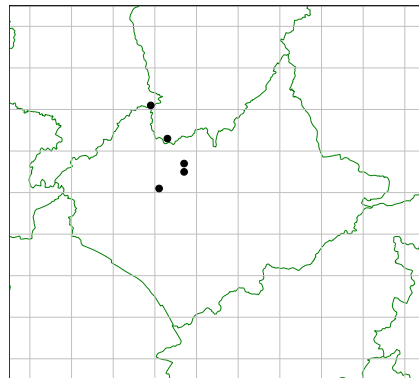
Clausilia snails in VC55 (LRERC)



Pherbellia ventralis Fallén (6 records)

A widespread, if scattered, species in Britain. Found in a range of wet habits with the larvae assumed to be able to feed on a range of snail species.

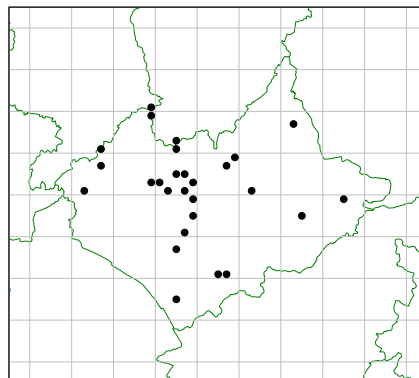
All but one of the VC55 records came from suitable habitats. The other record was as a result of a survey at a range of sites in the Mountsorrel Quarry and Buddon/Rowhele Woods area in 2012 (Andy Godfrey).



Pherbina coryleti Scopoli (38 records)

A widespread species in Britain usually associating with margins of standing waters of all types. The larvae attack and kill a range of terrestrial and aquatic gastropods.

One of the commonest of the Sciomyzidae in VC55 being found throughout in the preferred habitats in the summer months. PAH Muschamp took the fly in 1932 at Narborough Bog with examples being deposited in the county collections.





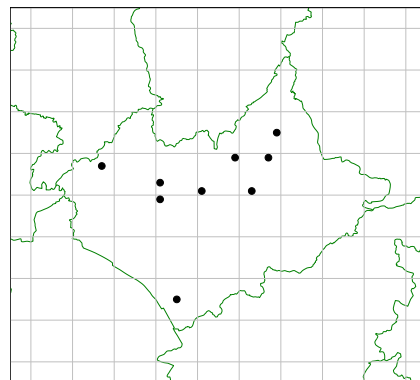
Spearwort Fields, 2021 (David Gould, NatureSpot)

Psacadina verbekei Rozkosný (9 records)

Prefers wet habitats and has been recorded throughout England & Wales. The larvae are aquatic predators.

Records are widespread in VC55 all from suitable habitats. No records prior to 1989.

Notable

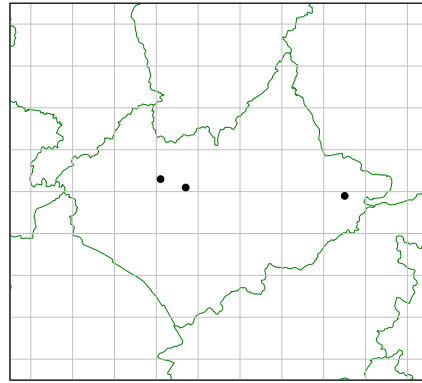


Psacadina zernyi Mayer (4 records)

Vulnerable

Nationally, the fly is regarded as Vulnerable with records few and far between with the wetter areas of Norfolk (The Broads & Fens) seeming to be a stronghold. Elsewhere only scattered records.

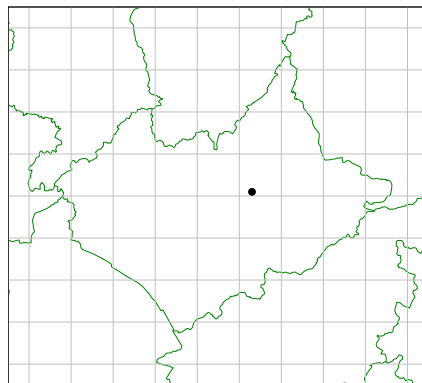
VC55 records come from 1998-9 and then not again until 2018 with identification by experienced entomologists.



***Pteromicra angustipennis* Staeger (1 record)**

A widespread species in England being particularly coastal in Wales, occasionally elsewhere. The larva is a parasite of a range of snail species usually killing the host within two days before consuming. Associated with still or slowly-moving waters.

The single record for VC55 came from a study of reedbeds at Thorpe Satchville sewage works in 1966 conducted by Ian Merrill with identification by Richard Wright.

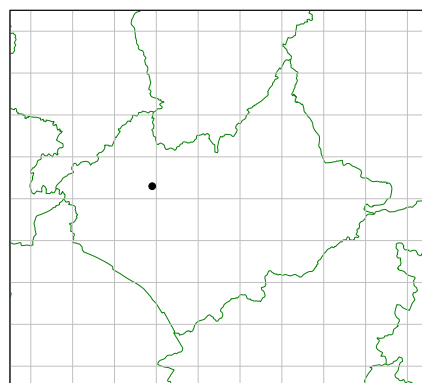


***Pteromicra leucopeza* Meigen (2 records)**

Nationally few records from the southern half of Britain. The larvae feed on decaying snails in moist habitats. Regarded as being Vulnerable.

Only recorded from the Ulverscroft NR by Derek Lott on two occasions in June 2006 with identifications by Martin Drake.

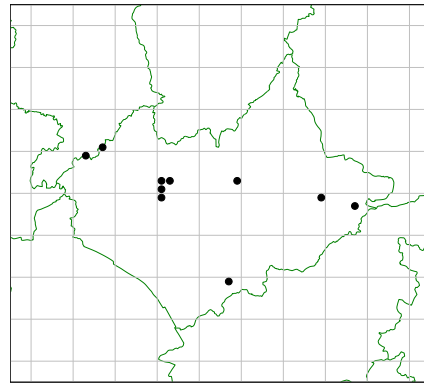
Vulnerable



***Renocera pallida* Fallén (13 records)**

A widespread species throughout Britain the larvae frequently being found at water margins and water-logged ground where the hosts occur. Appears to be a bivoltine species which may be the case in VC55 although the low number of records cannot confirm this.

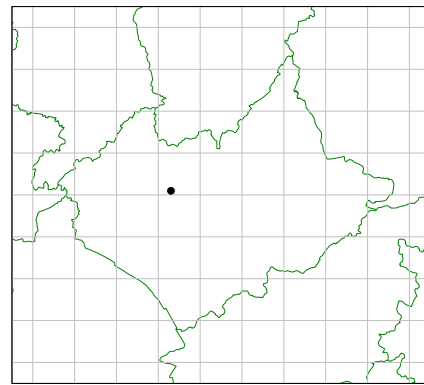
First recorded in 1989 from Burley Wood (Alan Stubbs & John Mousley) and most recently at Dimmingsdale NR in 2015 during a visit by members of the Dipterists Forum.



Renocera strobili Hendel (1 record)

A summer species of northern England and Scotland with the East Midlands and to the south having few records. Adults are found at the margins of water bodies but, at this time, the habits of the larvae are unknown.

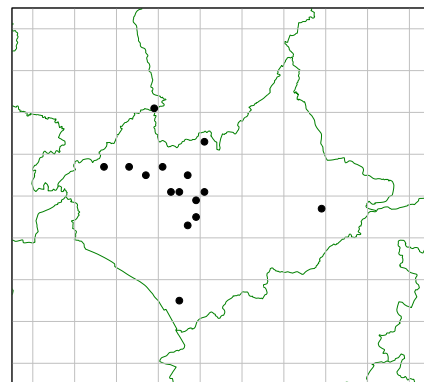
The sole VC55 record came from near a wall separating Cropston Reservoir from Bradgate Park discovered by Darwyn Sumner in July 2000.

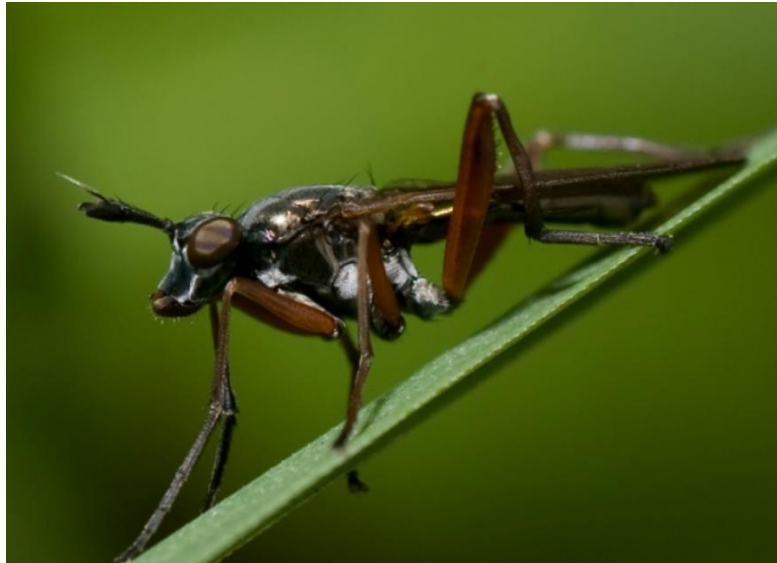


Sepedon sphegea Fabricius (23 records)

As with so many sciomyzids, the adults tend to be found near still or slow-moving water. The larvae are aquatic predators. Found in England & Wales, scarce elsewhere.

John Saunt, a visiting dipterist from Coventry, reported the species at Bradgate Park in 1922 while PAH Muchamp found it on two occasions at Leicester locations 1931--2. Not recorded again until 1997 when Darwyn Summer took it at Birstall Lock. Since then it has been found to the west of Leicestershire to the present day.



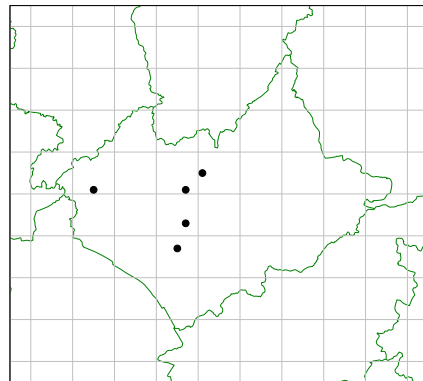


Cropston 2012 (Steve Ford, NatureSpot)

Sepedon spinipes Scopoli (6 records)

Distribution and habits similar to the previous species.

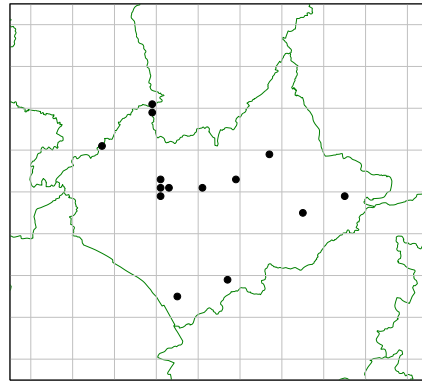
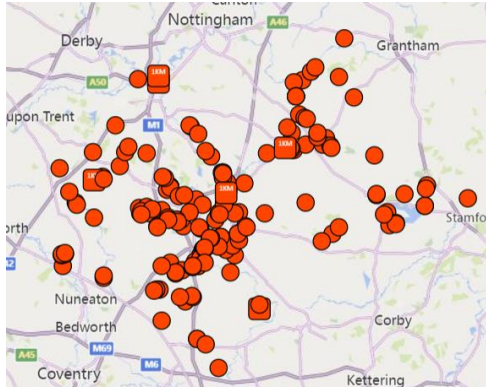
PAH Muschamp took the first for VC55 from the Leicester canal in 1931. Since found on a few occasions from suitable habitats.



Tetanocera arrogans Meigen (28 records)

Widely occurring in Britain associated with wet woodlands and vegetated water margins. The larvae are terrestrial predators/parasitoids of Succineidae snails which widely occur in VC55 (map ex LRERC).

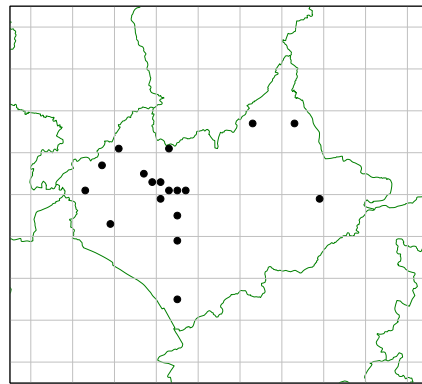
Nearly all VC55 records come from suitably marshy locations during the summer months.



Tetanocera elata Fabricius (27 records)

One of the commoner of this genus in Britain being found amongst vegetation in wet/damp locations. The larvae are predators of a range of slug species.

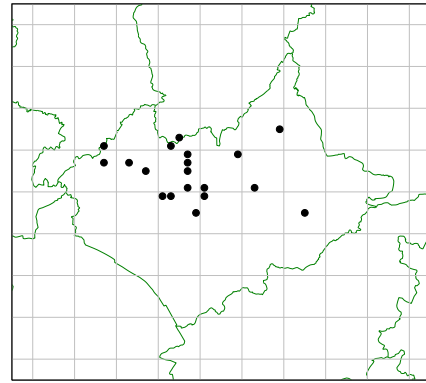
First recorded from Bradgate Park in 1885 (and again in 1895) by WA Vice and by PAH Muschamp in the 1930s from Narborough Bog NR. Noted intermittently from around VC55 predominantly towards the west.



Long Clawson 2017 (Barbara Cooper, NatureSpot)

Tetanocera ferruginea Fallén (21 records)

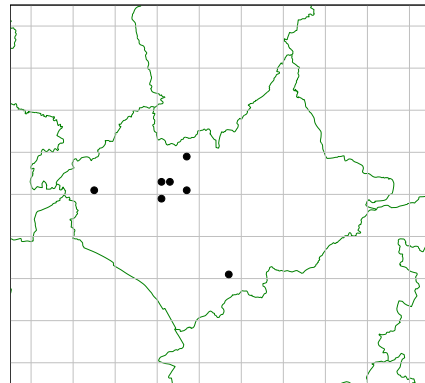
A widely distributed species in Britain associated with any freshwater habitat. Larvae predate a range of snail including members of the *Stagnicola* genus (map ex LRERC). Nearly all VC55 records come from the favoured habitats. First recorded in 1993 from Loughborough Big Meadow NR it has been seen regularly to date although all records come from the northern half of VC55. This is probably due to lack of recording effort in the blank areas,



Tetanocera fuscinervis Zetterstedt (7 records)

A widespread but scattered distribution in Britain preferring open wetlands. The larva is a water-edge predator of several species of snails as well as terrestrial species.

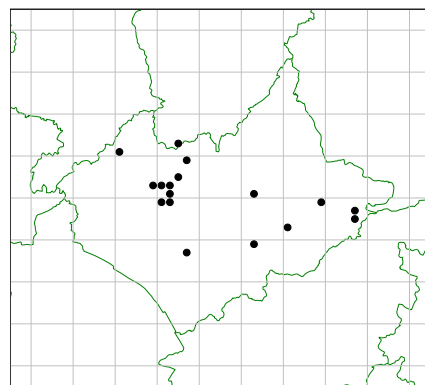
Records in VC55 come, in the main, from suitable sites.



Tetanocera hyalipennis von Roser (18 records)

The fly can be found in the open or in damp woodlands near to flushes and pools and occur throughout Britain. The larvae are predators of aquatic gastropods. Throughout England & Wales, occasional elsewhere.

WA Vice (VCH-L) noted the species in the Blaby and Bradgate areas in the 19th century and John Saunt saw it at Quorn in 1923. It was 1989 before a further record came (Burley Wood) and it had been reported fairly regularly to 2006 but not since.

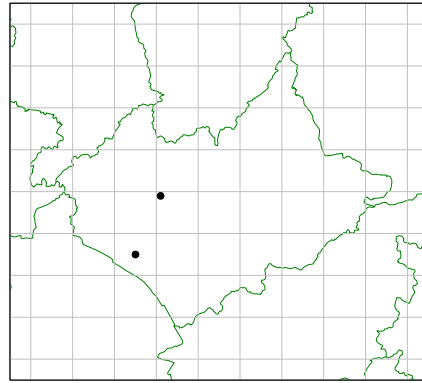


Tetanocera phyllophora Melander (2 records)

Notable

This species is usually associated with wet woodlands. The larva is a predator of a range of terrestrial gastropods feeding on the host until the latter dies before moving on to a fresh host. Scattered records from across Britain.

The initial record for this species in VC55 came from grassland at Groby Pool in 1989 and then in 2020 from The Burbage Common & Woods complex by Graham Calow with identification by Tony Irwin of Norwich Museum.



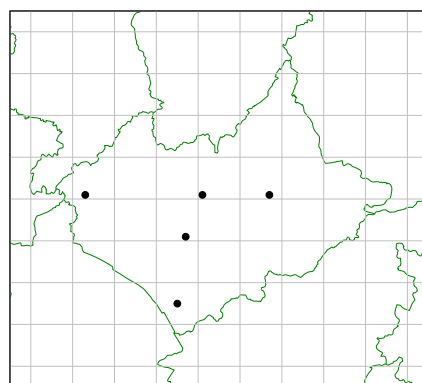
Graham Calow, Burbage Common 2020

***Tetanocera punctifrons* Rondani (5 records)**

A fairly widespread distribution in England & Wales but not so much in eastern England. Found in a variety of wet situations ranging from woods to fens. The larva is a predator of aquatic snails.

The VCH-L (1907) notes its presence at Aylestone (Leicester) and Somerby (WA Vice) but not again until 1999, 2006 and 2018 by experienced dipterists.

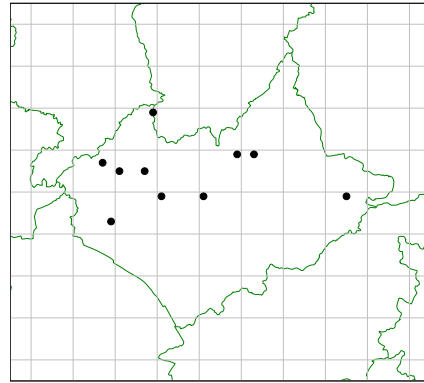
Notable



***Tetanocera robusta* Loew (12 records)**

Scattered throughout Britain usually on the margins of wet areas. The larvae are predators of aquatic pulmonate snails.

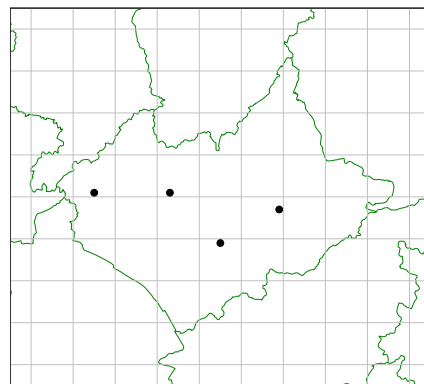
First recorded from Thurmaston in 1908 By Edwin Lowe and not again until 1989 when found in the Groby Pool environs followed by sporadic reports to 2019.



***Tetanocera sylvatica* Meigen (4 records)**

Another widely scattered species in Britain mostly found in damp woodlands and carrs. The larvae when young feed gregariously on a range of snail species but later they become solitary feeders.

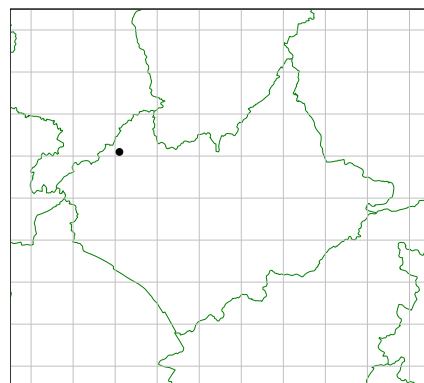
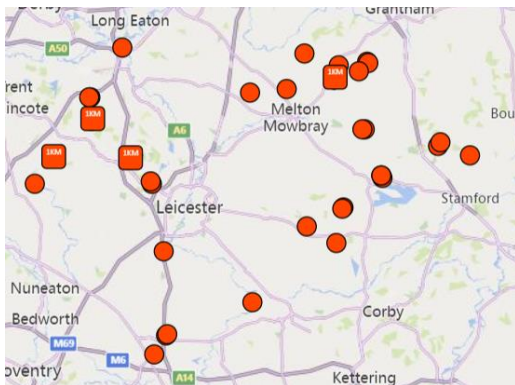
Three of the located records for VC55 come from VCH-L (1907) when Vice noted the fly at Great Glen, Owston Wood and Bradgate Park. Since that time the only other record came from fields near Measham by Keith Alexander, a national entomologist, in 2008.



***Tetanura pallidiventris* Fallén (1 record)**

A rather small species of wet areas in woodlands towards the west of England and into Wales. The larvae are internal parasitoids of, amongst other snails, *Aegopineta pura* (Clear Glass Snail) which is found across VC55 (map ex LRERC).

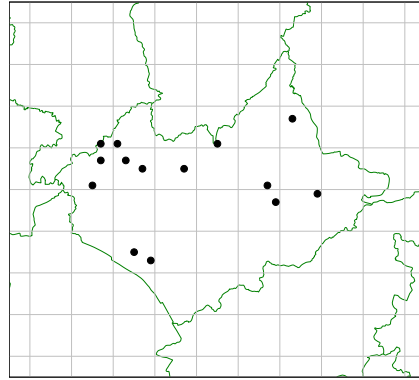
Martin Drake discovered this fly at Cloud Wood in 2015 which is still the only VC55 record.



***Trypetoptera punctulata* Scopoli (18 records)**

Adults found throughout Britain in dry and damp grasslands seeming to have a preference for calcareous habitats. Wings are well-patterned. Larvae feed on terrestrial gastropods. Found throughout Britain.

VC55 records are scattered across the area with no preference obvious for alkaline habitats. Noted in the VCH-L (1907) from Somerby and Owston Wood but not again until 1989 when seen at Burley Wood (Alan Stubbs & John Mousley). The most recent record came from Dimminsdale NR in 2015.



Sapcote 2013 (Graham Calow, NatureSpot)

Leicestershire Entomological Society Occasional Publications Series (LESOPS) covering

(a) detailed studies of insects and other invertebrates carried out by Society members and

(b) matters of historical entomological interest to VC55 Leicestershire & Rutland

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