

A Planthopper in Wyre Forest

Issus coleoptratus (Schrank, 1781). (Hemiptera, Issidae)

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Issus coleoptratus adult

John Bingham

As a Study Group we are still recording the various members of the Hemiptera in Wyre Forest and many are still to be found; but for a 'prehistoric-look' *Issus coleoptratus* must rank as one of the most amazing.

It appears to be quite common over the forest but as yet records are still sketchy and many gaps occur, so there is a challenge here for recorders. It's a very distinctive species that is fairly common in southern England, especially in the southeast, but much rarer in Scotland and Wales. It is found on a range of woody plants, including most common deciduous trees, and has an association with ivy.

Identification is easy but confused by instar stages. It is a large 3-4 mm brown frog-hopper-looking insect. The huge number of cross-veins in the wings is very characteristic and instars have tufts of white hairs at the rear. There is only one similar species, *Issus muscaeformis*, but this is much rarer and not yet recorded in Wyre Forest.

The life cycle is somewhat complex and *Issus* has instar nymphs that can occur at various times of year, not simply growing in instars from spring to autumn in one year. (Whitehead and Key 2010). Adults can occur from May to September and even November. Both nymphs in various instars and adults can overwinter. In Britain, periodicity is 'disorganised' or randomised so it is possible that prevailing conditions of climate determine whether nymphs overwinter at different instars. This is a complex life cycle and it is best to refer to Paul Whitehead and

Roger Key's article for the full picture. In Wyre so far, the nymphs have appeared in spring and been mature by October, but we have scant data.

Issus has an association with ivy *Hedera* spp. that it uses as a shelter-plant, but also for breeding and this is based on numerous repeated observations of early instars and adults on that plant (Whitehead and Key 2012). I have found *Issus* instars on a wooden fence under an ivy-covered oak tree in spring (20th April 2012, near Dowles Brook). On 9th June 2012 I saw it under oak coppice at Hitterhill with some ivy nearby, but not on the tree where it was found. But on 27th October 2012 several adults were found in a beech plantation at Earnwood, resting on the beech trunks in an area with no sign of ivy. On 10th November an early instar was found by Denise Bingham at Rock on Hazel coppice under oak.

An interesting project for Study Group recorders would be to record any sighting of *Issus* and note whether it is a nymph (and which instar) or an adult, and if ivy is present or not. Date, map reference, stage and habitat is needed and a photograph if possible. Perhaps we can shed some light onto this prehistoric bug and discover if ivy is needed for its lifecycle.

REFERENCES

P.F. Whitehead & R.S. Key (2010) Observations on British *Issus* (Hemiptera, Issidae) with reference to development, periodicity and ecology. *Worcestershire Record* 29, November 2010, p.23-27

Auchenorrhyncha Recording Scheme Web Page http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/homoptera/Issidae/Issus_coleoptratus.htm



Issus coleoptratus instar 2

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Issus coleoptratus adult

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Issus coleoptratus instar 4

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