

# Staffordshire Invertebrate Group

## Newsletter: December 2012

Welcome to the Staffordshire Invertebrate Group's (SIG) newsletter. This newsletter isn't so much a publication of news and information, more an illustration of some of the wonderful things our members have seen and recorded in the past 12 months.

Each year in December SIG holds a show and tell. Essentially this is an excuse to sit, eat and share photographs of bugs we have seen over the last 12 months. These are sometimes species requiring determination or charismatic and interesting things we have observed. This year, we decided to vote for our favourite photos. So, in no particular order, here are our top five. I hope you find them as interesting as we did.

### **Green tiger beetle (*Cicindela campestris*) photographed by Morgan Bowers**

We found the beetles this year on Barr Beacon in areas of ground that we had cleared to encourage solitary bees. They have never been recorded on site before. Other new records for the site included the Nationally Scarce mining bee *Andrena humilis* and the bumblebee *Bombus rupestris*.



## Southern Iron Blue (*Baetis niger*) photographed by Nick Mott

The Southern iron blue *Baetis niger* is perhaps one of the best known of the upwing flies occurring in rivers throughout mainland England, Wales and Scotland. It has however suffered a dramatic decline in numbers. The streamlined nymphs are found in clean streams and rivers, often amongst weed in riffles, at the river margins, or swimming in short bursts amongst stones. The nymphs feed on algae and small organic material. Adults emerge during the day and swarms can be seen throughout the day until dusk.

I photographed this male subimago on the River Churnet at Tittesworth where we had recently carried out a woody debris introduction project to help increase the complexity of the in-channel habitats. It was perched on a bankside, sunlit butterbur. This species is a UK BAP mayfly that has suffered major population declines in recent years. Most Staffordshire records are from the Upper Dove and White Peak areas.



**Wolf spider (*Pardosa amentata*) and babies photographed by Dave Skingsley**

I took the picture of this spider because it looked a bit different and it was only when I got back and looked at it on the big screen did I realise it was covered in spiderlings. Taken on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July this year on the Staffordshire University nature reserve.



**Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*) photographed by Dave Skingsley**

I was following the Trent by the Staffordshire University nature reserve when I became aware of 6 or 7 large brown dragonflies patrolling the long grass and rough herbage. It was a sun/cloud day and I tracked this one to a landing site in the long grass when the it clouded over. When the sun came out again I was in position to get the wings and body colouration before it flew off. Taken 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2012.



**Lunar Hornet Clearwing (*Sesia bembeciformis*) photographed  
by Bex Cartwright**

This Summer I did some work collecting bee samples for researchers working on the Insect Pollinators Initiative. One the sample sites was the army training grounds at Cold Meece, nr Stone, Staffordshire, a really interesting site to work on, large areas of meadows and track verges thick with self heal, eyebright, birds-foot trefoil and orchids. I came across this mating pair of lunar hornets in early July, around midday on a track-side willow tree about 2m up the trunk. To be honest I was a bit startled when I first saw them and had to take a moment to register what they were. I realised they were clearwing hornet moths but I was told how to differentiate these lunar hornet moths *Sesia bembeciformis* from the similar hornet moth *Sesia apiformis*. *S. bembeciformis* has a black head and tegulae whereas in *S. apiformis* these features are yellow. After watching them for a couple of minutes they separated, the male went on his way and the female stayed around enabling me to take some pictures. I imagine it will be a long time before I get to see such a sight again. Ace!



If you think you can do better, or would simply like to join in, come along to SIG events in 2013! Contact [chair@staffs-inverts.org.uk](mailto:chair@staffs-inverts.org.uk)

<http://www.staffs-ecology.org.uk/sig/>

**DIARY NOTE: SIG AGM is on 12th February where Dave Skingsley will be talking on “working industrial premises as a source of entomological material” and Andy Jukes will be talking on “the lowland heathland specialists of Dorset”.**

**Happy Christmas**