

Notable British barkfly (Psocoptera) observations in 2008 and 2009

What constitutes a notable barkfly observation? All of my previous articles have focused on the distribution of rare species, but there is another category of notable observation. Little is known about the life histories and habitat requirements of many species and any observations that extend this knowledge are of note. Consequently this article is divided into two sections: 1) distribution observations and 2) behavioural observations.

Distribution observations

Embidopsocus enderleini (Ribaga) (Liposcelididae)

On 11.v.2009 Michael Talbot loaded a photograph of a Liposcelid onto the barkfly group section of the flickr website at www.flickr.com/groups/barkflies. This specimen was found under the bark of a sycamore at Boultham Park, Lincoln. Following a request by RS the site was revisited by Michael to collect a specimen for identification. On 29.v.2009 he photographed and collected a similar looking adult female at the same site (at O. S. grid reference SK 963688). The specimen was sent to Charles Lienhard who identified it as *E. enderleini*. Few records of this species are known but, in southern England at least, this may be the result of under-recording.

Liposcelis decolor (Pearman) (Liposcelididae)

One female specimen was collected by RS under the bark of a plane tree at Aldwych, London (TQ 306808) on 27.vii.2009 (determined by C. Lienhard). This species had been previously recorded on a plane near the Victoria & Albert Museum (*Ent. Rec.* **120**: 19-20), a location 4.5 kms away from Aldwych. These records suggest that *L. decolor* is likely to be widespread on plane trees in London.

Pseudopsocus rostocki Kolbe (Elipsocidae)

While checking for invertebrates on seasoned oak logs destined for his wood burner David Jones (Aldershot) found one female *P. rostocki*. He followed the activity of the specimen on the log from 8 to 10.xi.2008 taking photographs including ones showing it feeding on the brown foliose lichen *Melanelia subaurifera* (determined from a photograph by Brian Coppins). The original location of the oak tree is not known but was within five miles of Farnborough. On 18.ix.2009 DJ checked another batch of oak *Quercus robur* logs (fresh timber) and found five *P. rostocki* specimens on two of them. On this occasion the location of the felled tree was known – it had been situated in a garden in Mytchett, near Aldershot (SU 889550).

Protopsocus pulchripennis (Perkins) (Elipsocidae)

On 23.vii.2009 Jonty Denton found one female at the base of plants growing on the edge of a saltmarsh at Dell Quay, West Sussex (SU 836026). This record was

previously published in *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* 22: 187 (2009). Marcus Oldfield has found a second site in Sussex for this species. He recorded one specimen from Sea Wormwood on the upper, drier banks of the River Cuckmere, Cuckmere Haven, East Sussex (TV 512998) on 23.viii.2009.

***Blaste quadrimaculata* (Latreille) (Psocidae)**

One female was recorded by RS on the trunk of an oak standard in the centre of Stirling (NS 795933) on 9.vii.2008. Among the specimens of *Hyalopsocus morio* found on 23.vi.2009 in Lechlade (see behavioural observations, below) David Scott-Langley also recorded one specimen of *B. quadrimaculata*. From 23 to 25.vi.2009 Jason Green observed and photographed three specimens of *B. quadrimaculata* in his garden in Eltham, London (TQ 4275). Specimens were found on a garden fence, on a disused, painted shelfback constructed of 'medium density fibreboard (MDF) and the third was rescued from a small body of water.

***Hyalopsocus morio* (Latreille) (Psocidae)**

On 23.vi.2009 David Scott-Langley made the remarkable discovery of approximately 40 specimens of this shiny black species (Plate 20) while removing Virginia creeper from the wall of a house in Lechlade, Gloucestershire (SU 214995). This is the first record of *H. morio* in Britain since 1867. Further details of this exciting find will shortly be published (Scott-Langley, D. 2010. *Hyalopsocus morio* (Psocoptera: Psocidae) rediscovered in Britain. *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* in press).



Plate 20. *Hyalopsocus morio* (Latreille) (Psocidae)

Photograph © Brian Valentine

Behavioural observations

***Peripsocus milleri* (Tillyard) (Peripsocidae)**

While searching for barkflies beneath the bark of an avenue of London plane trees in the Lincoln area Michael Talbot noticed a possible habitat preference for *P. milleri*. He found that they appear to favour the exposed south-facing side of the

trunk, but only if the tree catches a full day's sunshine. If this tendency holds true in other parts of the country this provides a useful guide to finding specimens.

***Reuterella helvimacula* (Enderlein) (Elipsocidae)**

In Britain this species has almost exclusively been recorded associated with trees and particularly deciduous tree trunks. An interesting additional habitat for it was found by lichenologist Brian Coppins on 11.ix.2009 during a survey of Culbin Forest, Moray (NJ 0264). The habitat in the area visited consisted of an open woodland of stunted pines with a well-developed lichen carpet ground layer (the main constituent was the nationally vulnerable lichen *Cladonia uncialis uncialis*). A female specimen of *R. helvimacula* was found on a specimen of this lichen at least one metre away from the nearest pine.

***Pseudopsocus rostocki* Kolbe (Elipsocidae)**

After discovering specimens of this rare species on cut logs (see distribution observations above) David Jones was keen to find out about the day-to-day life of *P. rostocki*. To achieve this he set up a CCTV camera to monitor the activity of one of the specimens on its log. The specimen was continuously monitored for 44 days from 12 October to 25 November 2009, before it disappeared and the fascinatingly detailed findings are contained in DJ's online diary (see the Barkfly Notes section at <http://www.mybitoftheplanet.com/>).

I would like to thank Brian Coppins, Jonty Denton, Jason Green, David Jones, Marcus Oldfield, David Scott-Langley and Michael Talbot for informing me of their observations and to Charles Lienhard for identifying critical psocid species and to Brian Coppins for identifying the lichen associated with *P. rostocki*. — R. (BOB) E. SAVILLE, 20 Downfield Place, Edinburgh EH11 2EL (Email: bob.saville@blueyonder.co.uk).

***Calybites phasianipennella* (Hb.) (Lep.: Gracillaridae) larvae in Berkshire**

I have searched for the characteristic larval feeding 'cones' of *Calybites phasianipennella* (Hb.) at suitable sites in Berkshire for several years now, with no success until the autumn of 2008. On 27 September 2008, while walking the edge of a freshly harvested corn field to the north of Bear Wood near Wokingham, Berkshire I chanced upon some large plants of redshank *Polygonum persicaria* with their characteristic spikes of pale pink flowers and dark green leaves with dark purplish central blotches. On examining these plants I noticed some inflated phyllonoricid-like blister mines in the upper surface of several leaves. The lower surfaces of these mines were distinctly brown and creased, and closer examination of the affected plants revealed some leaves near the mines from which longitudinal strips had been cut. The underside of these leaves revealed that the