

Mark Telfer's Website

Beetles, birds, general natural history. Britain, Ireland and abroad.

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About this blog

This blog is going to be a miscellany covering anything and everything to do with my personal natural history quest which has so far resulted in me seeing [5,962 species](#) in Britain and Ireland.

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[Dungeness, 28th-29th August 2010](#)

Fourteen coleopterists converged on the Dungeness RSPB reserve for this field meeting on the August Bank Holiday weekend. During a period of unsettled weather, the field meeting fortunately coincided with some dry and bright conditions. The impetus for this field meeting came from the results of monitoring the beetles of the pit margins in 2009: pitfall traps which caught 977 specimens of *Omophron limbatum* (Carabidae) in 2006, caught none in 2009. So would we find *Omophron* in 2010? Well our first sampling site at [the best silty bit of the New Excavations](#) was worked by almost everyone and yielded *Augyles hispidulus* (Heteroceridae) and *Cercyon bifenestratus* (Hydrophilidae) amongst others but no *Omophron*. We soon relocated *en masse* to a more extensive area of silty margins at [the south end of ARC pit](#), the spot where Howard Mendel found a single *Bracteon argenteolum* (Carabidae) in 1987. We soon started to find *Omophron*, albeit in small numbers, by pouring water over bare silty ground, often several metres from the water's edge. Amazingly, after seeing the technique Bill Urwin returned to the first spot in the New Excavations and found a few *Omophron* there, where the whole mob of us had drawn a blank earlier in the day!



L to R: Andrew Duff, Eric Philp, Pete Akers, Tony Allen, Mark Gurney, James McGill, Graeme Lyons, Roger Booth, Bill Urwin and Grant Hazlehurst. John Paul and Martin & Julie Collier turned up later on.

For the remainder of the weekend, our party dispersed more widely over the area, depending upon personal interests, reconvening for dinner in the Britannia Inn. There were a couple of [Icky's](#) in the gorse between the Bird Observatory (where most of us were staying) and the Inn. The find of the day on Saturday was John Paul's single teneral specimen of *Polistichus connexus* (Carabidae) found at [this spot in the Trapping Area](#). A five man search of the area on the Sunday morning failed to locate any others, though we did find *Ponera* ants which may be *P. testacea*, recently added to the British list.

Although *Omophron* and other beetles of the silt margins can be easily found by splashing in daytime, it is not until you head out onto the margins at night that you realise just how many there really are. In the past, I have seen the margins literally crawling with thousands of *Omophron* to the extent that it becomes impossible, no matter how slowly and carefully you walk, not to crush them underfoot with every step. Bill Urwin and James McGill returned to the south end of ARC pit by torchlight and saw about 80 *Omophron*, far more than we'd seen by day.

John Paul and Grant Hazlehurst joined me on a bit of a wild goose chase: nocturnal sweeping of roadside carrot and other flowers in the hope of *Ophonus parallelus*, a BAP carabid which

has been recorded from Dungeness. I got a new moth out of it, sweeping two very attractive caterpillars from toadflax which turned out to be the Toadflax Brocade. However, the evening was most memorable for an encounter with a passing motorist: rather than the familiar “Do you mind if I ask what you’re up to?” we got “Are any of you interested in buying an entomological cabinet?” As JP said, it’s quite a surrealist marketing strategy for a cabinet-maker! After that, when armed police approached us, torch into the eyes, as we swept along the perimeter of the nuclear power-station, it all seemed perfectly normal.

Bill and James also torched the old railway sleepers near the Obs, after I’d said they were a good place for *Helops caeruleus*, a stonking big bluish tenebrionid. At breakfast, we learned they had seen loads and kept a few to show round. This was even a new species for alpha-coleopterists Roger Booth and Tony Allen, who duly went out on the Sunday night and saw them for themselves.

For Dungeness virgins there was much to see but for veterans, the pit margins were disappointing by the high standards of years past. Most people, including myself, have yet to finish identifying their specimens, or send in their records, but as far as I know there were no sightings of any of these carabids: *Acupalpus maculatus*, *Dyschirius obscurus*, *Bradycellus distinctus*, *Bembidion caeruleum*, *Bembidion decorum*, *Bembidion pallidipenne* or *Bembidion semipunctatum*. But once all the samples are identified, and the records are in, what’s the betting that Dungeness will surprise us and yield yet another first for Britain?

Beetles apart, I really enjoyed the meeting just for the chance to socialise with other coleopterists towards the end of a long field season of solitarily pooting my way round various brownfield sites! It would be great to make an annual tradition of having a weekend coleopterists’ meeting somewhere in the country ... please step forward if you want to organise the next one!

I have received records so far from James McGill, Andrew Duff and Martin & Julie Collier, plus Bill Urwin has posted some of his photos [here](#), and Graeme Lyons has blogged about the meeting [here](#). I’ll collate a full report on the meeting once I have everyone else’s records, and when I’ve detted my own samples!

Last but not least, big thank you to Pete Akers at Dungeness for hosting the meeting and making the visitor centre facilities available to us, to Mark Gurney from The Lodge for some exceptionally fine catering, and to Dave Walker for letting us take over the Obs.

Friday, September 24th, 2010, by markgtelfer

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One Response “Dungeness, 28th-29th August 2010”

1.  Greg says:

[September 24, 2010 at 11:07 am](#)

Sounds like a great trip, sorry I couldn’t make it!

2.

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What's new?

2nd Mar 2011: Good tip from Clive Washington for [holding beetles under the microscope](#) (see Comments).

13th Feb 2011: Carabid crib updated to [version 8](#) with minor corrections.

13th Feb 2011: Sarah Patton joins the [pan-species list rankings](#).

7th Feb 2011: Josh Jenkins-Shaw joins the [pan-species list rankings](#).

22nd Jan 2011: Water-beetle ([Gyrinidae](#), [Noteridae](#) and [Paelobiidae](#)) test keys added.

22nd Jan 2011: [Dermestidae](#) (hide, larder and carpet beetles) page added

22nd Jan 2011: Carabid crib updated to [version 7](#) with additions on *Patrobus*, *Oxypselaphus*, *Paranichus* and *Harpalus*.

22nd Jan 2011:... .. [read the rest](#)

White Prominent Moth

Seeing a White Prominent on the morning of 8th June 2008 was an unforgettable high – I was the first person to set eyes on one in the British Isles since 1938!



The gen is now published in a paper in [Atropos](#) number 40 (pp. 16-24) “Further research on the White Prominent in Ireland”.

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