

THE MINI-BEAST SAFARI

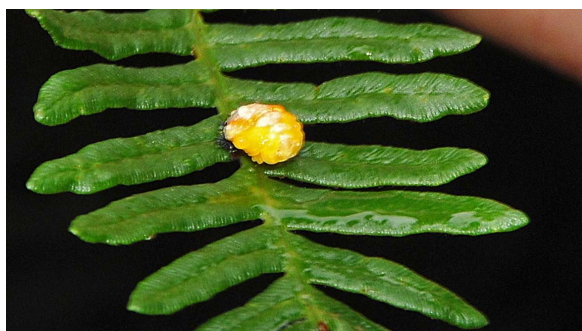
Sunday 17th July

Report by Trevor Hussey
Photographs by Davis Talbot

On a wet Sunday afternoon seventeen people, including six children, set out on safari from the Village Hall on to the Common, led by the entomologist John Tyler. This intrepid band of explorers, armed only with magnifying glasses and enthusiasm, discovered a wide range of invertebrates. John showed us how to collect insects by knocking branches and undergrowth over a white collecting sheet. The children had plastic cups in which to keep their captives long enough for John to identify them.



The intermittent rain meant that there were few butterflies – just a few gatekeepers (or hedge browns) and a speckled wood. Insects included numerous ladybirds, both our common 7-spot and the “foreign” harlequin, together with their larvae and pupae, numerous hoverflies (mainly “marmalade” flies), forest shield bugs, green shield bugs and bush crickets, including a female with a terrifying looking, but harmless, ovipositor. There were soldier beetles and various flies on the hog weed and minute parasitic wasps and honey bees on thistles. A beautiful female grass spider was found alongside her babies, all snug in a nest of web. Lifting dead logs revealed yet more riches: springtails, wood louse (sow bugs) and pill bugs, together millipedes and centipedes. Black dung beetles (or dor beetles) wandered over the paths in their usual suicidal manner and someone found a violet ground beetle.



Harlequin ladybird and pupa



Common Footman Moth



Soldier beetle

No great rarities were discovered but that was more than compensated for by the enormous enjoyment had by all, despite the weather. John showed great skill, not only in being so informative about the insects but also in interacting with the children. We hope he will come back and do a similar safari next year.



Field Cricket