

To turn to the Garden Tiger: traditionally one of our commonest and best-known moths, it has never in my time and experience been anything but very scarce, and the number of sightings I have had can be “counted on the fingers of one hand” – far fewer than those of its congener *A. villica* (though none of those were near here). I did meet with an *A. caja* flying in the street (Charlton Road) some years ago, and two larvae at different times since, but that is all.

From the above, I conclude that a population explosion bodes no good for a species; a gradual increase, if any, seems far healthier.— A. A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

Two uncommon ants (Hym.: Formicidae) in urban London

On 8 June 2002, whilst taking some school children on a bug-hunt through Nunhead Cemetery, Surrey (VC 17, O.S. grid reference TQ 3575), I was presented with a plastic tube containing the characteristic workers of *Lasius fuliginosus* (Latreille). A large number of the ants were crawling over several low sycamore branches and although there were a few aphids for them to attend, many more appear to have been on higher branches and seem to have been collecting the spilled honeydew which had dropped down.

About thirty minutes later, one of the children asked me help him collect some tiny ants, which were running up and down a small elm trunk; they were *Lasius brunneus* (Latreille).

Despite having visited Nunhead Cemetery often during the last 17 years, I have never seen either of these species there before. Although *L. fuliginosus* is generally widespread in southern England (Edwards, R. 1997, *Provisional atlas of the aculeate Hymenoptera of Britain and Ireland*, part 1, pp. 22-23) it is a very local species with a complex biology. As a semi-social parasite of a semi-social parasite, it only establishes its colonies in the nests of another ant, *Lasius umbratus* (Nylander) and its near relatives, which in turn establishes its colonies in the nests of the black pavement ant *Lasius niger* (Lin.) or the yellow meadow ant *Lasius flavus* (Fab.). Successful founding of nests is therefore a complex procedure and nests are usually highly localised in the field. I have only previously found it in one London locality – Morden Cemetery (TQ 2367, VC17 – Surrey), where there were several nests in the large black (Italian) poplar trees, on 14.v.1998 and 10.ix.1998.

The nationally scarce (Nationally Notable category A) *L. brunneus* is very localised in the Thames and Severn Valley areas (Edwards, R. 1998, *Provisional atlas of the aculeate Hymenoptera of Britain and Ireland*, part 2, pp. 40-41) but is proving to be widespread in south London. I have found it in considerable numbers in Sydenham Hill and Dulwich Woods (TQ 3372, TQ 3472, VC17 – Surrey) and in Battersea Park (TQ 2876, TQ 2877, also Surrey) and occasionally in Beckenham Place Park (TQ 3870), Mayow Park (TQ 3571) and Downham (TQ 3971 and TQ 3872) all in VC16 – West Kent). Its discovery at Nunhead is not, therefore, altogether unexpected.— RICHARD A. JONES, 135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ (E-mail: bugmanjones@hotmail.com).



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