

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group 7.4.16

Rosemary Winnall: Introduction to Insects

The Malvern Group were enthralled by an amazing overview of the vast insect world on Thursday, complete with stunning close-up photos of over 400 species. Did you know there are about 24,000 insect species in the UK alone, including 34 different grasshoppers and crickets (Orthoptera), 157 dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata), 2506 butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera) and 4075 beetles (Coleoptera)? Rosemary Winnall, an expert naturalist from the Wyre Forest, had something interesting to say about every species she had time to mention. For example we were shown the unusual mating habits of the speckled bush cricket, we were told what excellent protective parents shieldbugs are, waterscorpions breathe through hairs on their tails, lacewings lay their eggs on stalks in little clusters, and quite a lot of hoverflies migrate in the winter. The strange and fascinating life cycles of many species were mentioned, but one of the most extraordinary is that of the mayfly, which lays eggs under water. When they hatch the larvae spend a year or more in the water, emerging as non-feeding adults (duns) which then moult a few hours later. The mature adults, known as spinners, fly around in mating dances for just a day, and then their lives are over. Sometimes you see thousands of them dancing over our rivers.

The insect world is one many of us barely notice, except perhaps for admiring the occasional butterfly, or cursing a mosquito. It is an amazingly beautiful world, full of colour, extraordinary shapes and unbelievable methods of survival. To a large extent, we depend on their success, and they deserve our attention and protection.

The next Indoor Meeting is on Thursday May 5th at 7.30 pm in the Lyttelton Rooms, Church Street. Roger Pannell will talk about Birdwatching in Britain.

Alison Uren



Chalcid wasp, *Megastigmus dorsalis*, photo by Rosemary Winnall



Picromerus bidens with sawfly larva, photo by Rosemary Winnall