



## Common froghopper

*Philaenus spumarius*

Being able to jump up to 70cm vertically, if a flea and froghopper were to enter a jumping competition, the froghopper would take the gold medal. A 5mm long solid looking little bug, shaped a little like a Brazil nut, which come in a variety of colours and patterns, some all black, others tawny brown with fawn spots or dark mahogany with olive dapples. More familiar though is the white lather known as cuckoo spit, found blobbed on grass stems, this froth is where young froghoppers, known as nymphs, hide from predators, this foam also acts as insulation against both heat and the cold.

### find me

In summer inside bubbly globs of white slippery foam, on various plant and grass stems in meadows and woodland edges.

all zones

©Sean Browne

zone 1, 2, 4, 6



©Mike Vickers

## Brown hawker dragonfly

*Aeshna grandis*

A large dragonfly found fizzing around reed beds and woodland clearings, hunting for other flying insects and explosively attacking any trespassers who stray into a taken territory. With gleaming bronze wings and a body the deep rusty colour of oxidised steel, and diagonal yellow slashes across the thorax beneath each wing. Males can be identified by azure dots located at the base of each wing.

### find me

From July to October, hawking up and down woodland rides and pond edges, often pausing from my effervescent flight to briefly glide.

## Cinnabar moth

*Tyria jacobaeae*

Bursts of short fluttering flight, the vivid scarlet underwings clashing against the luscious summer foliage, once it has landed, with wings folded, we find a coal black moth resplendent with intense red stripes along the forewing accompanied by twin red spots. Easier to find is the caterpillar of this moth, candy like with bold yellow and black bands running its full length.

### find me

Flying from May to August close to ragwort, a plant that grows up to 2m high topped with clusters of mustard yellow flowers, the stems beneath the flowers are where you will find the caterpillar from July to September.

These colours are nature's way of warning predators that it is foul tasting and poisonous.



zone 2

©Michael Walker



zone 1

# Common red soldier beetle

*Rhagonycha fulva*  
Posing no threat to humans, the inaccurate alternative name 'bloodsucker beetle' refers to its waxy cardinal colouration, rather than any fictitious eating habits. The tips of the soft wing casing, the ends of each leg and the long curved antenna, are all dipped in black, making this a very striking and recognisable beetle.

### find me

In summer mating and feeding on pollen and aphids on the open heads of flowers such as cow parsley and ragwort.

insects

hard to find

Skylarks Nature Reserve

# Meadow grasshopper

*Chorthippus parallelus*



zone 1, 3, 6, 7

©Margaret Holland

Looking both sinuous and mechanical, a waxy lime green with a pale straw brown stripe running the length of its back beginning above the eyes and antenna. Its wedge shaped body, with long muscular back legs always looks poised to spring at the first sign of danger. Through the summer months the male grasshoppers will sing to attract females, this is achieved using tooth like structures along the inside of the back legs being rubbed across a hard vein on the forewings. Running a fingernail along a comb creates a very good imitation of this sound.

### find me

On hot summer days where grassy verges and meadows fizzle and hiss with the sound of males singing. Wander through these places and grasshoppers will spring up in a tiddly wink fashion.

# Common stretch spider

*Tetragnatha extensa*

The word 'stretch' perfectly describes the physical nature of this curious and immaculate spider, its front and back legs noticeably longer than the other four, the body, roughly 10mm long with a barley seed shaped abdomen, ranges in colour from a creamy lime to a straw brown hue, contrasting against a dark burnt chocolate central stripe. When threatened, the stretch spider really embraces its name by thrusting its front four legs forward and the rear four backwards, becoming perfectly camouflaged as a blade of grass or the vein along the centre of a leaf.

### find me

Between May and September snaring insects in webs spun between reeds and low lying pond vegetation.



zone 1

© Les Binns

©Al Greer

# insects

a **real** find

Skylarks Nature Reserve



zone  
1, 3, 5, 7

## Elephant hawk moth

*Deilephila elpenor*

Medium sized with a wing span of 4.5 – 6cm, its chunky fur covered body and arrow flight wings are exquisitely illustrated with khaki olive and hot pink washes and stripes. The caterpillar is tan brown to army green in colour and grows up to 7.5cm long with striking eye spot markings close to the head. When threatened the eye spot area can swell up and along with a rearing up action gives the overall appearance of a snake ready to strike, a defence which puts off all but the most determined of predators.

*find me*

From May to July flying around honeysuckle to feed on nectar or as a caterpillar feeding, or resting, on the stems of rosebay willow-herb between July and September.

©Margaret Holland

Favouring the shallow edges of ponds and lakes, where fallen dead leaves litter the bottom providing perfect cover for this super stealthy aquatic predator, superbly resembling a muddy brown dead leaf, and bearing more than a passing resemblance to a scorpion (it is in fact in no way related). This aquatic insect wields what appears to be a sting in the tale, but is actually two half lengths of a tube that, utilising fine hairs, can be zipped together to create a snorkel like breathing tube. This tube, pierces the water surface to provide a constant air supply whilst it lurks amongst plants, sinisterly waiting, pincers agape, then with lightning speed snatching any passing small fish or tadpoles.

*find me*

All year round above and below water crawling amongst pond plants or over mud, or in winter refreshing oxygen supplies by visiting air bubbles trapped under the surface ice of a pond.



zone  
1, 2

## Water scorpion

*Nepa cinerea*

## Banded damoiselle

*Calopteryx splendens*



zone  
2, 4, 7

©Tim Sexton

Every time, without fail, one of these delicate jewels flutters across your path, it simply takes your breath away. A large damselfly, reaching over 5cm in length, the male is a sublime metallic blue with clear wings daubed with a large iridescent Prussian blue band towards the tips. The female is equally spectacular, a lustrous emerald green with wings that shimmer with a pale jade sparkle. Males are extremely territorial and often engage in the pursuit of one another, and sometimes many can be seen absorbed in this chase over dominion.

*find me*

Fluttering with a gambling docile flight along streams and gentle flowing water lined with lush vegetation. When mating, the male and female join flying in tandem to form a classic heart shape.

Nottinghamshire

Wildlife Trust

