



## French Bee Chafer (*Trichius gallicus*)

A stunning new beetle for Notts (and most of the rest of the country) found by Sean Browne.

This is Seans story (edited).

On Monday 14th June I paid a visit to Wilford Brick pit to look for flowers and insects. I spent a couple of hours there, but didn't find anything out of the ordinary. It was just a nice day to be out, there was a good show of orchids, and I had the place to myself. As the heat increased, I decided to head for home. I was just passing the Tennis Centre on University Boulevard when I suddenly remembered about Beeston Sidings NR. It was just in time and I managed to slow down enough to make the left turn.

The reserve is a small, thin, wooded strip at the back of the playing fields, with some cleared areas and a well vegetated edge along the narrow path that runs parallel to the sidings. You would never guess there's a nature reserve there and it is easily overlooked (anyone can visit it). I hadn't been there for years, even though it's only 3 miles from my house, and the last time I visited, I found a male Golden Pheasant strutting around under the trees. A most unexpected find. It wasn't tame and soon disappeared as I tried to get a picture. The reserve was used for the relocation of Slow Worms from a site near Victoria Centre, but I don't think any have been seen for a number of years.

I started to make my way along the path by the fence and found a nice leaf beetle *Cryptocephalus moraei*, that is only known from three other sites in Nottinghamshire. I had only seen this once before, so the visit had been well worth it. I took a few photos and moved on to check out the flowering Hogweed. On the first clump of flowers I noticed a striking hairy, pale yellow and black spotted beetle, and one I had never seen before. About 10mm long, it was obviously a Chafer of some kind, but I had no idea which one. I took a lot of photos as a breeze had sprung up, as it always does when you point your macro lens at anything. Realising that this was something quite rare, I left it in peace and headed home to try and identify it.

Looking in Brocks "Insects of Britain and Ireland" there were two candidates. The **Bee Chafer** *Trichius fasciatus* that occurs in areas of Wales and central North Scotland, and the **French Bee Chafer**, *Trichius gallicus*, that is present in most of Europe and is expanding its range northwards. They are separated by looking at the black spots on the base of the wing cases. *Fasciatus* has two spots that form a band, whereas *gallicus* has two isolated spots. Looking at my pictures, it was obvious that this was the **French Bee Chafer**. The distribution map shows a small area around the Thames and an area in Norfolk. I searched online for any records and there were hardly any. A handful from the Thames area at Rainham Marshes, but nothing from Norfolk (there are a few records for the London area only - and an one old record from Norfolk, this is an extreme rarity).

I sent the record and photos to Trevor Pendelton who couldn't quite believe it, and he forwarded them on to Adrian Dutton, the Notts Coleoptera recorder, and he probably felt the same.

The following day I went back to the reserve and re-found the Chafer straight away. I ran back down the path to a woman who was doing a Slow Worm survey and she got to see it. I managed to get some better photos, then it flew a short distance and tucked itself under a flower head. It remained motionless for a good ten minutes, before flying off down the path. I was surprised how strong a flier it was. Despite searching for well over an hour, I could not relocate it.

Finding such a rarity close to home was a great experience and shows that anything can turn up anywhere!

*Sean is an active naturalist who never stops looking at his surroundings and proves you don't have to travel long distances. He looks at everything living - insects, flowers, birds... and doesn't rest until he has tried to identify what he has seen. It isn't always possible to identify everything, but when he does he'll do his research and find out all he can about his new finds. It goes to show how much life is out there, we just have to look that bit harder.*

*Well done to Sean for a fantastic find. Hopefully we will soon be out there and doing our best to show you some wildlife once again. Let's hope Sean joins us!*

