

Inspired by the account of Hoof Fungus *Fomes fomentarius* in Norfolk's Wonderful 150 and knowing that the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society is studying the new Broadland Country Park, when I found Hoof Fungus in the country park I emailed Tony Leech to check that it was known from there. I also mentioned that Sarah Burston, the park's manager, had told me about a rare fungus gnat recently found there. It was no surprise to learn from Tony that Hoof Fungus was already known from Broadland CP, and he also kindly sent me his text and Milly Kenward's photo of *Sciophila rufa* cocoons that later appeared in the November 2021 *Natterjack*, noted there as the second record for Norfolk and the third for England.

Armed with this pre-publication reference, I returned to Broadland Country Park on 23 September, leading a small group from Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays. We found Hoof Fungi on three standing stumps of birches *Betula* and on one of these, with about 30 'hooves' showing, we quickly found the distinctive fungus gnat cocoons shown in Milly's photo. It may be worth adding that there is both Silver Birch *B. pendula* and Downy Birch *B. pubescens* in the country park and the Hoof Fungi were all on Silver Birches.

On 5 November 2021, I was at Foxley Wood Norfolk Wildlife Trust nature reserve, again with a small Honeyguide group. I re-found a Silver Birch stump with *Fomes* that I remembered from a previous visit and, hey presto, there were identical cocoons. Could these be the third record of *S. rufa* for Norfolk and the fourth for England?

On 17 November, I returned to Broadland Country Park, this time with different Honeyguiders. We found more *S. rufa* cocoons and they were certainly on a different birch. Not only was it in a different place in the wood, this stump was long-fallen, not standing.



Sciophila rufa cocoons on Hoof Fungus, Foxley Wood, November 2021 / Chris Durdin

Finally, walking on Mousehold Heath, Norwich, on 28 November 2021 with my wife Julie, I returned to where I'd previously seen Hoof Fungi, close to Zaks



Hoof Fungus, close to Zaks, Mousehold Heath, on a fallen birch, with a single *S. rufa* cocoon. The fungus growth's change of direction shows that the stump fell off the main trunk several years ago. / *Chris Durdin*

Mousehold Diner. There were no cocoons by the fungi on the standing stump, though when I examined a fallen stump at the same spot there was a single cocoon under the overhang of a Hoof Fungus.

Given that *S. rufa* cocoons are distinctive once you've seen a photo, I wondered if they had been found several times in Norfolk once the *Natterjack* article had appeared. Not so, says Tony Irwin, at least from his inbox. I contacted national fungus gnat expert Peter Chandler, who confirmed the IDs, noting that: "There are similar species on other fungi but it's only likely to be *S. rufa* on *Fomes*."

From the above and Peter Chandler's information we have the following sequence of records for *S. rufa* in England.

1/ 23 September 2017, Flitwick Moor, Bedfordshire.

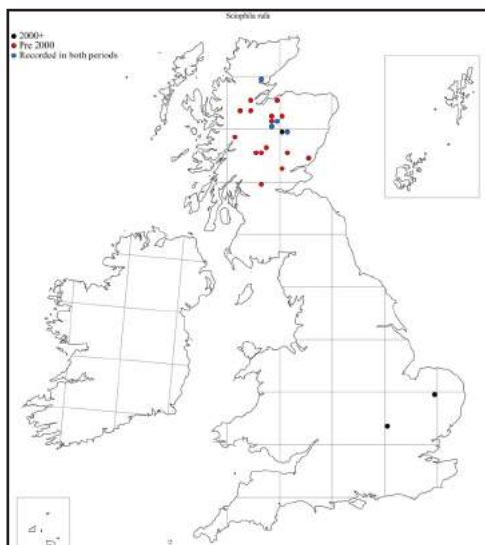
2/ 19 May 2019, between Stow Bedon and Thompson Common, Norfolk.

3/ 12 September 2021, Broadland Country Park, Norfolk.

4/ 5 November 2021, Foxley Wood, Norfolk.

5/ 17 November 2021, Broadland Country Park, Norfolk.

6/ 28 November 2021, Mousehold Heath, Norfolk.



Sciophila rufa 2020 distribution map, before these 2021 Norfolk records / *Peter Chandler*

My various photos show that the cocoons can be above, to the side of or below Hoof Fungi, sometimes touching, sometimes not, and on occasions a few centimetres from the fungus. They are usually by paler, younger *Fomes*, or at least *Fomes* showing recent growth, and are evidently comfortable close to the ground. It's also interesting to see how long the cocoons survive into the autumn. At Mousehold Heath, I had the impression that the cocoon had survived autumn rain and wind by being protected by the natural overhang of a Hoof Fungus.

I suggest that for anyone who has photos of Hoof Fungus, it could be worth checking them and more records of *S. rufa* may well come to light.

In any event, as Peter Chandler observes of *S. rufa*: "*It seems that it is now well established in Norfolk.*"

The next challenge is to return from May onwards and look for the larval webs, larvae or orange-coloured adult fungus gnats.

References:

Leech, T, A chance observation and a third English record. *The Norfolk Natterjack*, Nov. 2021.
Webb, Judy, A second English record of *Sciophila rufa*. *Dipterists Digest* 2019, Vol 26.

A few nice finds from Earlham Cemetery

Vanna Bartlett.

Earlham Cemetery, Norwich is my nearest green space and has served as my local patch for a good number of years. During the warmer months my recording efforts centre around solitary bees while the winter is a focus for hibernating ladybirds. Visually searching gravestones for these attractive beetles regularly results in some interesting new additions to the Cemetery invertebrate list of which these are a few of the highlights from 2021.

Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle *Pogonocherus hispidus*

One of the smaller Longhorn Beetles, this species is common and widespread but easily overlooked. They are well camouflaged at rest, resembling a bird dropping but are actually very attractive when examined closely. I first found them in the Cemetery in February 2021 with two on a gravestone under Beech trees. Searching the same area in November, I found two beetles on the 18th and six on the 19th, including a mating pair. Up to three were seen on various dates in December. It was interesting to find them on exactly the same gravestone as earlier in the year.



Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle tucked into an incised letter on a gravestone.