

SHERWOOD CRANE FLIES OF FOREST



Every Autumn, the familiar, long-legged and unmistakable shape of a crane fly, will appear round the kitchen light. Flies are probably not the most likeable of all our insects and after meat flies, crane flies probably come a very close second. To the gardener, the larvae of crane flies (called leatherjackets) can be a severe lawn pest and to anyone with a general phobia of flies or insects, crane flies must be a nightmare! It would perhaps surprise many people then, that there are some impressively and strikingly coloured crane flies.

Three such crane flies are currently found in Sherwood Forest, but until fairly recently, just two species were known from historical records dating to 1910. It was approximately 100 years later in 2010, that both *Ctenophora pectinicornis* and *Tanyptera nigricornis*, were both recorded again, yet remarkably and quite by chance, an even more spectacular crane fly was found at Sherwood Forest.

During some invertebrate survey work in July 2009, a large and beautifully coloured crane fly was found resting on a long dead Oak trunk. It was taken home and photographed, but its identity was not officially confirmed until two years later.

It turned out to be *Ctenophora ornata*, one of the UK's rarest insects. Known from only a handful of UK sites and from nowhere else at all since 2008, this was by far the most northerly record ever.

Sherwood Forest is becoming increasingly well known for its impressive list of rare insects and still with only the one record, it is amazing that this wonderful crane fly, is perhaps the most rarest species of all.



Species illustrated

1 *Ctenophora pectinicornis*

2 *Ctenophora ornata*

3 *Tanyptera nigricornis*