

Cranefly Recording Scheme Newsletter

Newsletter 19

Autumn 2009



BRITISH CRANEFLIES:

progress report

A draft text has been sitting in the wings since Spring 2005. In May 2009 a subgroup of the BENHS Publications Committee came to Peterborough to discuss how to shift the project forward. In particular it was necessary to define how much of the draft could be accommodated within the book at an affordable price.

The main decisions are as follows:-

On checking with the likely printer, it emerges that costs are reasonable (at present) so there is no need to drastically trim the content (as had been advocated earlier).

The 'British Soldierflies' book is the model, with separate chapters for the main family/subfamily groups: total page length may be a bit higher. Keys will be to adults only.

An allocation of 30 colour plates gives scope for wing photos, whole set specimens and field photos.

It is intended to include whole male genitalia drawings (reason for the book needing more pages). Whilst the ideal was to redraw all in the same style, it is now accepted that the aim should be uniformity within each family/subfamily by culling from existing literature.

Little action is likely during the current field season but progress needs to kick in this autumn.

A publication date is not yet definable. Autumn 2011 is the earliest possible but that may prove over-optimistic.

Tasks.

Keys have been in circulation for some years now. If there are any comments on utility/errors, then this is the time to report in. Edited versions are to go on the web to allow everyone to check whether their point has been accommodated.

Chris Spilling is master-minding photos of representative wings. Required coverage/needs will need re-evaluating.

Photos of whole set specimens will be representative rather than comprehensive (many look similar at casual glance). That is a task yet to begin: it could be shared between several people to make the task less daunting.

Photos of live craneflies. Various dipterists have some good shots and anyone with a camera is welcome to have a go. Two objectives merge, both the need for a nice selection in the book and also the longer term goal of a photo gallery on a Cranefly Recording Scheme website (under discussion with BRC/or within DF).

There are 10 paper copies of the 2005 draft that were circulated by very little feedback has been forthcoming. Also, some people have the E-version. It will be very useful to hear of any bits that

need further attention.

Fine editing, both general and technical, is covered but further independent attention may be called upon.

Alan Stubbs

FIELD WORK REPORTS –

Spring Field Meeting – North York Moors

29 -31 May 2009

Beautiful wooded valleys with streams flowing through were a major focus of our attention on this meeting in North Yorkshire. The weather was good and a reasonable list was obtained.

Our first visit on 29 May 2009, was to Forge Valley (SE9886) where I first collected from the banks of the River Derwent as it flowed through Scarwell Wood. The sample included a good variety of woodland seepage/stream species, including *Eloeophila verralli* (Nb) *Antocha vitripennis*, *Erioptera verralli* (RDB3) and *Limnophila schranki*.

The second site of the day was Scar and Castlebeck Wood NR. (SE9597). I followed the stream through the wooded valley recording *Dolichocheza albipes*, *Erioptera griseipennis*, and *Eloeophila trimaculata* (Nb). *Dicranomyia mitis* and *Dicranota pavidata* were also commonly taken among a total of 19 species.

On the way back to Scarborough we visited a Sphagnum bog, –Staintondale Bog –(SE9599) where *Phylidorea squalens* was abundant. *Eriocnopa trivialis* was also netted here.

On Saturday 30th May we first visited Chafer Wood in Netherby Dale (SE8983). *Tipula maxima* and *Dicranota subtilis* were recorded, with 16 other species. Then on to Ellerbeck on Goatland Moor, (SE8598) near Fen Bog, where *Dicranota guerini* (Nb), *Limonia dilutior* and *Molophilus propinquus* (Nb) were found. I finally explored another wooded river valley, that of Little Beck (SE8804). This proved to be another interesting site where *Lipsothrix errans*, (Nb) along with *L. remota* was swept from around the many natural dams formed by fallen branches. *Erioptera verralli* (Nb), *Rhabdomastix edwardsii*, and *Achyrolimonia decemmaculata*, were also recorded with a total for the site of 25 species of craneflies.

John Kramer

Dipterists Forum Summer Field Meeting – Swansea, 4 – 11 July 2009.

Being based at the University of Wales, Swansea gave us access to

a good variety of habitats, and therefore of crane fly communities. Gower itself can provide enough variety for a week's work, but there are also Kenfig Burrows, Merthyr Mawr, Cymlyn Bog and the southern edge of Brecon well within range.

The most interesting crane fly record of the week was made by Chris Spilling at Merthyr-mawr (SS8677) where he recorded *Tipula livida* (Nb), a first for Wales. *Erioptera mejerei* was also recorded by Ivan Perry at Mill Woods, Penrice (SS4988) on the 9th of July.

Along the southern edge of Gower there are outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone with deep wooded valleys. Some of these are dry where the rivers go underground, but others, such as Bishopston, (SS8757) are damp, with rivers running through. In these damp wooded valleys there is the

usual spectrum of common species with *Limonia nubeculosa* and *Austrolimnophila ochracea* heading the list. Also found there were *Limonia trivittata*, *Dicranomyia fusca* and *Atypophthalmus inustus*, the larvae of which are fungus feeders. The river margin had *Dolichopeza albipes*, *Dicranota bimaculata* and *Dicranota pavida*.

Clyne Valley Country Park (SS6191) provided a good seepage just to the west of the small lake (SS6127.9122) where *Dolichopeza albipes*, *Tipula* (*Schummelia*) *yerbury*, and *Dicranomyia aquosa* were swept from beneath vegetation overhanging a vertical wall of *Pellia* liverwort. *Tasiocera robusta* was recorded with *Dicranota pavida* from the margin of a small stream which fed the lake from its northern end.



The long stiletto-like tapering ventral process of the aedeagus is visible with good light and x40 magnification protruding through the posterior aperture, without dissecting.

The northern edge of Gower, adjacent to the Burry Estuary, provides a very large area of salt marsh dominated by sea lavender. Access to suitable damp parts is very difficult, and good local knowledge would be necessary to save time exploring. The north-west corner is formed by the Whiteford Burrows NNR and here dunes, dune grassland and dune scrub are accessible. *Nephrotoma scurra*, *Symplecta stictica*, *Molophilus pleuralis*, and *Dicranomyia sera* were recorded here.

The western coast at Rhossilli (SS4188) contains a section of exposed Old Red Sandstone. A stream flows down near the old rectory and near the top, its source is surrounded by an acid bog with *Sphagnum* moss, bog asphodel, sundew and tussocks of tufted hair grass.

The boggy margin of the stream yielded plenty of *Tipula lateralis*, as well as *Gonomyia tenella*, *Phylidorea squalens*, *Euphylidorea meigenii*, and *Pedicia* (*Crunobia*) *littoralis*.

Other areas of *Sphagnum* were found on the boulder clay which caps Gower's hill – Cefn Bryn. Broad Pool (SS5191) is a lake which contains the bog bean and the fringed water-lily. The mar-

gin was inhabited by *Prionocera turcica*, *Erioptera flavata* and other marsh species. Higher up there are some excellent seepages which yielded *Helius flavus* in abundance, *Dicranota* (*Ludicia*) *claripennis*, and about 10 other marsh species. It was good to see so many small heath butterflies here.

My final day was spent exploring some calcareous seepages near Merthyr Tydfil, with Mike Howe and Richard Underwood. The list of species includes *Nephrotoma analis*, *Antocha vitripennis*, and *Dicranomyia lucida*.

John Kramer

Some Interesting Records.

a) **Judy Webb** – *Triogma trisulcata*. This was recorded from the Lye Valley Fen, Oxon, (SP5405) on 22/4/09.

b) **Ian Rabart**, *Dictenidia bimaculata*. Seen at Cranwich, Norfolk TL7894

a. 13.vi.2007 at 14:55 ovipositing in a fallen rotten beech *Fagus sylvatica* trunk

b. 9.vi.2008 at 13:48 feeding at a sap run on Oak *Quercus robur* about 30m from the previous year's oviposition site.

c. 30.vi.2008 the same fly (b, right hind leg missing as on 9.vi) appeared at the rotten beech, questing along the length for an oviposition site. The trunk was pretty dry and after two passes along it the fly flew off.

2. *Nephrotoma crocata*. Seen at Cranwich, Norfolk. This appeared in the garden and meadow at TL7894:

a. 12.vi.2007 at 10:04, resting on a bramble *Rubus fruticosus* leaf in the Walled Garden

b. 15.vi.2007 at 15:30 seen in the Wildflower meadow flying an erratic path along the mown strip edging the grassland, dipping its abdomen into the herbage, presumably ovipositing. When rain started she stopped ovipositing and disappeared into the long grass. (The heathland asilid *Eutolmus rufibarbis* is also resident here.)

Ian writes, 'I have seen neither of these species this year. We had a disastrous crop spraydrift last year which appears to have resulted in the total destruction of one of the only two sap run populations here (including *Brachyopa bicolor*) and I suspect the spray carried on another 8-10m to contaminate the rotted fallen beech.'

c) **Geoff Hancock** *Tipula luridirostris*

I collected a male and female of *Tipula luridirostris* by sweeping along bankside vegetation. This was on the River Carron at Ach-nashellach, 19 May 2008 (NH0248), Wester Ross.

d) **Alan Phillips** - *Nephrotoma crocata*.

A female was captured on the Whisby Nature Park, near Lincoln, on 24 May 2009. This is 0.5 hectares of sand up to 3 m deep, washed from a gravel pit, and abandoned in the 1970's, which has formed a heath-like biotope, colonised by some coastal species.

(*N. crocata* seems to be getting scarcer. Records would be especially appreciated. Ed)

Notes on collecting adult *Dicranota robusta* Lundstroem

Dicranota robusta Lundstroem is a characteristic vernal species of upland streams, usually first or second order streams (if one uses the classification of Strahler; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strahler_number). Apart from being fast-flowing these streams are low in nutrient levels and have exposed margins of shingle or small stones (see figure 1).



Figure 1

When turning over larger stones that are partly submerged or close to the water margin several invertebrates can often be seen. These include Ephemeroptera and Plecoptera with their exuviae, numerous chironomids and other dipterans and spiders (principally lycosids). *Dicranota* species are part of this population of invertebrates sheltering from the wind. Adults of *Dicranota* will have just emerged from their aquatic predatory juvenile stages. *Dicranota robusta* in particular can most easily be recorded by this method. This is mainly due to their usually shortened and narrow wings which have only a minimal function for flight. Although some may have longer wings these individuals are still reluctant to fly (figure 2)..

Other species of *Dicranota* take flight immediately and cannot immediately be identified so that sweeping along the stream margins is necessary. Some simple behavioural experiments I conducted a few years ago at a site in Lancashire showed that individuals will not readily abandon the rock surfaces. If forced, they will only manage to flutter down at an angle unless the wind blows them further. (See 1990, Notes on the biology of *Dicranota robusta* Lundstroem (Diptera; Tipulidae). *Dipterists' Digest* 6: 20-22.)



Figure 2

On an afternoon in late April, 2009, along the local moorland edges near where I now live in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, I found *D. robusta* in every such stream visited over a distance of several miles (Lambhill, NS70-39-; Kype NS71-40-; Glengavel, NS74-40-; Wedder Hill, NS70-39-). Both sexes were seen. The best stones are the flatter ones that are lodged at an angle creating a small overhang. The stones may be partly in the water but no more than a few feet away from the margin. As it was a cold and windy day on this occasion none were exposed to view but under better conditions they will move out from their shelter and sit on the sunny surfaces sometimes in some numbers. It was under these conditions that, in 1959 John Coulson found serendipitously the second GB site for *D. robusta*, having got a closer view of things after stumbling on the bed of a stream (Observations on the Tipulidae (Diptera) of the Moor House Nature Reserve, Westmorland. *Trans. R. ent. Soc. Lond.* **111**: 157-174). In warm weather these flies are likely to scuttle away when approached resulting in a game of 'hide and seek' if one wants to collect a sample.

E Geoffrey Hancock
(Hunterian Museum, Zoology, University of Glasgow)

5. Wingate's Craneflies – Part II, Limoniidae

This is the second item to draw attention to the sites visited by the Rev. W.J Wingate between 1896 and 1902, and the craneflies that he recorded there. In the Spring Edition of Cranefly News I listed details of Wingate's sites, and his records of Tipulidae and Pediciidae.

Thirty-eight species of Limoniidae were recorded by Wingate from the region. As with the Tipulidae many of these are common and ubiquitous species but one or two are worthy of special attention. *Dactylolabis transversa* (Mg) (as *gracilipes* Loew 1869) was recorded at Harperley (NZ 17463 53017) on the wooded banks of the Wear, in June 1900, with *Euphylidorea dispar* Mg. *Tricyphona unicolor* (Pediciidae) is also listed from here in June 1902.

>From 'South Durham' *Molophilus propinquus* Egg and *Euphylidorea lineola* Mg were recorded in June 1902. This is defined rather vaguely as 'an interrupted strip about 4-12 miles broad along the southern border'.

All of these sites would be worth putting on your field work schedule for 2010.

John Kramer

The copy deadline for the next edition of the Cranefly News is December 20th 2009.