



Cranefly News

Dipterists Forum Cranefly Recording Scheme
For Superfamily Tipuloidea & Families Ptychopteridae & Trichoceridae

Newsletter No 30

Autumn
2015

Editor: John Kramer



Ctenophora pectinicornis (Rory Morrissey)

Field Work

I have had a few field trips this year with one or two interesting finds. Derek Bateson with the Sorby Natural History Society is doing a Survey of Loxley Brook and the surrounding Gilfield Wood, (SK3078) on the south-west edge of Sheffield. It lies on top of the sandstone, mudstone and siltstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures. I visited the site in mid-June and added a good list of about 40 species. The most interesting of these was *Dactylolabis transversa*. (See map, p4.) It seems to be a Pennine species but had not previously been recorded from so far east. *D. transversa* was recorded in Derbyshire along with *D. sexmaculata*, by Leonard Kidd on the limestone in Monks Dale NNR (SK1374) on 29 May 1954.

A fuller report of the Summer Field Meeting, by Alan Stubbs, based at Nottingham University is to be found in the Bulletin, but the most interesting record for me was that of *Tipula helvola* at Dimminsdale. This is an LRWT Reserve, a first record for Leicestershire, and one of the most northerly sites for this species. (See map, p4.)

John Kramer

Possible variation in the diagnostic character used in the identification of *Nephrotoma aculeata*.

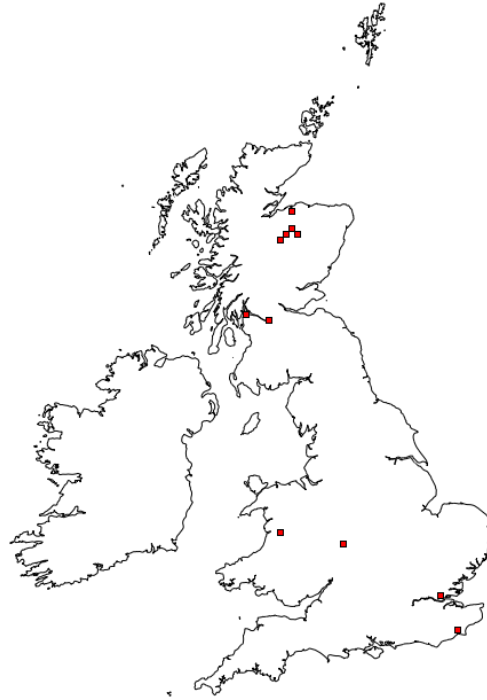
Pete Boardman



Fig 1.

During mid-June I was sent a photograph by Edward Andrews of a mating pair of *Nephrotoma* sp. craneflies from an ex sand and gravel quarry, now a local nature reserve in south Shropshire. Identification should have been straight-forward as they exhibited the features of *N. flavescens*, the commonest summer tiger cranefly with the typical “ace of spades” head marking and light wing stigmas. However I looked a little more critically and noticed an usual feature so I turned to the draft key to *Nephrotoma* circulated by the Cranefly Recording Scheme and the draft text of British Craneflies (Stubbs *in prep*). The sides of the

prescutum (side of thorax) clearly display an isolated spot below the anterior end of the sub-lateral stripe on both male and female (see Fig 1). This is supposedly only the case with *N. aculeata* (Loew, 1871), a species seemingly restricted to a small area within the Scottish Highlands, so never having seen this species I was keen to have a look at a specimen. I contacted John Kramer who kindly updated me of the distribution of this species with a sighting by Alan Stubbs in Montgomeryshire and the next best thing to a specimen in the form of Pjotr Oosterbroek's paper on *Nephrotoma* species from 1978. Given that I was working from a photograph only, the most obvious comparison feature was the head marking which Oosterbroek illustrates as narrow, almost looking like a bowling skittle in shape, compared to the 'ace of spades' marking of the specimens in Edward's photograph above. A photograph of the head marking on Pjotr's Catalogue of Crane-flies of the World (CCW) website shows the shape to be more Christmas tree like and the stigma is definitely dark. On reflection the photograph still looks to be a pair of mating *N. flavescens* but with a notable variation of the more usual solid prescutal markings.



Nephrotoma aculeata



N. aculeata male. Post-abdomen showing spine. (Oosterbroek 1978)

References

Oosterbroek, P. 1978. The western Palaearctic species of *Nephrotoma* Meigen, 1803 (Diptera, Tipulidae), part 1. *Beaufortia* 27: 1-137.
 Website – Catalogue of the Crane-flies of the World
<http://ccw.naturalis.nl/index.php>

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Edward Andrews for allowing me to use his photo and to John Kramer for suggesting Oosterbroek's 1978 paper.

Peter Boardman

Triogma trisulcata (Schummel, 1829) new to Shropshire VC40

Mike Shurmer sent me a photograph of a mystery crane-fly that had settled on the wall of his house near the Long Mynd, Shropshire on May 10th. Mike regularly light traps for moths and has sent me several photographs of crane-flies attracted to light over the past couple of years. Upon looking at the photograph I was delighted to note that it was clearly *T. trisulcata* and as such new to Shropshire VC 40. The crane-fly is associated with aquatic or sub-aquatic bryophytes on *Sphagnum* bogs, mire seepages, eutrophic fens, and the margins of water bodies. Presumably the insect had travelled from one such wetland area on the Long Mynd and it would be interesting to locate the breeding location of this fly. The upper reaches of the Mynd are often two weeks to a month behind lowland Shropshire in acquiring summer vegetation so gets little attention from entomologists until the proper summer months.

Fortunately this sighting is just in time to be included in the forthcoming Shropshire Crane-flies book which is back on schedule after a six month hiatus and should be published by the end of 2015. (See map, p4.)

Acknowledgements

Many thanks for Mike Shurmer for sending me the photo and thus prompting this article.
 Pete Boardman

A Tribe of *Tanyptera* ? An aggregation of *atrata* ?

Helen Rowe



Two of three pairs of *Tanyptera atrata* on small pine saplings
Photo: Helen Rowe

What's the collective noun for a group of *Tanyptera atrata* ? Helen Rowe, Countryside Ranger in the Cairngorms National Park sent me some striking photographs, one of which is shown below. She was lucky to be present at an emergence of *Tanyptera atrata* when she observed six of these beautiful insects all together. She has written about it below.

I visited the Cambus O' May Forestry Commission woods (near Ballater) on Deeside, Aberdeenshire on 22nd May 2015 with Scottish & Southern Energy environmental team staff to show them habitat requirements for Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and to look for the butterflies themselves. This is one of the best and most easily accessible sites on Deeside for this priority species for conservation. We also found a few other invertebrates of interest, including what I initially thought was 3 mating pairs of large ichneumons (females of which also have long ovipositors) that parasitize wood wasps, but hadn't looked closely enough and was at first fooled by their colouration. I realised later that they were actually craneflies in disguise and identified them from my photos as probably being *Tanyptera atrata* (confirmed by John Kramer). The female lacks black trochanters compared with *T. nigricornis*, the only other British *Tanyptera* species. The craneflies were on a pine sapling next to an old birch stump that they may have emerged from.

Females lay their eggs in decaying wood - *T. atrata* reported from birch and alder - in which the larvae feed and develop, and so share habitat requirements with wood wasps and their associated ichneumons, which may explain the mimicry of warning colouration? – craneflies being quite harmless of course. Both *Tanyptera* species are locally distributed in Britain, being reliant on deadwood, an important habitat for many invertebrates, but missing from some newer woodlands or where wood has been removed to 'tidy up' sites. There is now, thankfully, much more awareness of the role of deadwood in woodland ecosystems to advise on suitable habitat management. NBN Gateway maps show a few records of *T. atrata* from further west in the Cairngorms, mostly Speyside, but also one from the Braemar area, (see map, p4) though no previous records are held by the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre, so this is at least a new 10km square record, but they are probably also under-recorded – I will certainly be on the look-out for them again!

Helen Rowe, Aberdeenshire Council Ranger.

CRANEFLY REFERENCES

Please note that the indispensable website for the Catalogue of Craneflies of the World (CCW) is now located at : <http://ccw.naturalis.nl> Pjotr Oosterbroek who founded and built this site has now retired but the site remains as functional and useful as ever. Not only can you search for details on any cranefly species, but much of the literature is available to download. Can I recommend Starý and Reusch 2009, 'European species of the Genus *Brachylimnophila* (Diptera, Limoniidae)' in *Entomologica Fennica* 19, 207-217.

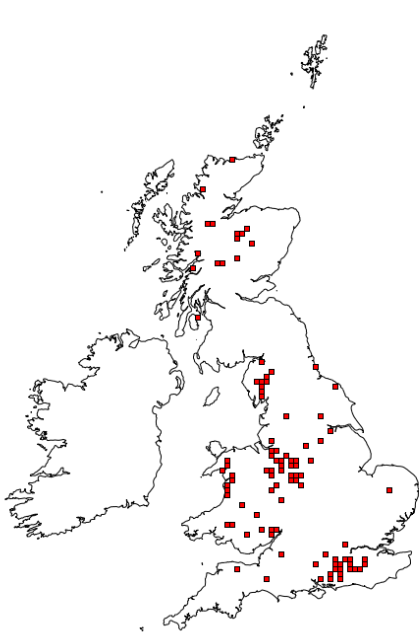
PEOPLE and HISTORICAL NOTES

Johann Wilhelm Meigen, 3 May 1764 - 11 July 1845

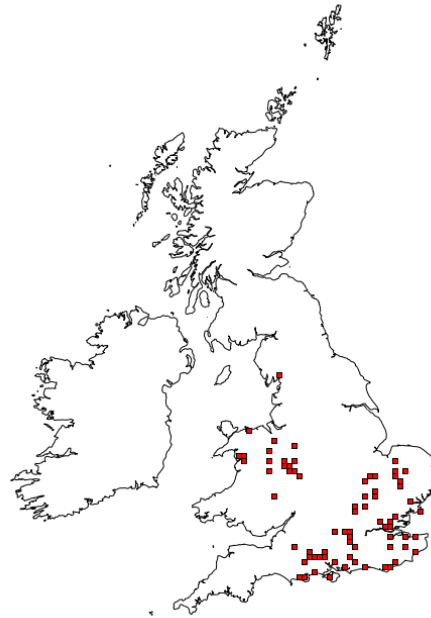
I have not counted, but many of the names of the genera and species on our current Checklist of Craneflies have the name Meigen as the authority and this year, dipterists mark the 250th year of the birth of this remarkable man. He has been celebrated in the latest issue of *Studia Dipterologica* in a paper by Adrian Pont, 'When it all began - Johann Wilhelm Meigen and the birth of Dipterology' [*Studia Dipterologica* 21 (1) 2014.81-90]. This is also the text of an address given by Adrian at the 8th International Congress of Dipterology. For those who want to know about the origins of Dipterology I can thoroughly recommend this paper.

John Kramer

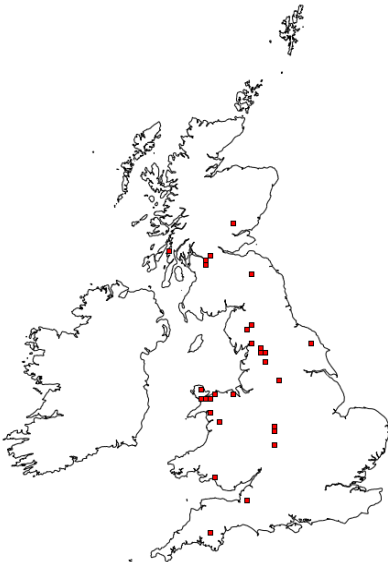
Distribution Maps. (Thanks to the NBN Gateway)



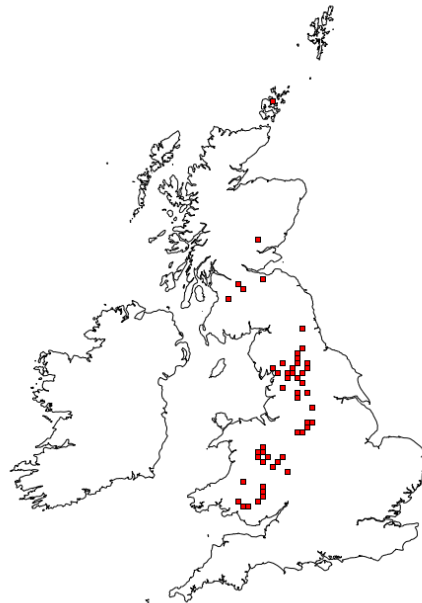
Tanyptera atrata



Tipula helvola



Nephrotoma aculeata



Dactylolabis transversa

Thanks to Rory Morrisey and Lol Carman for the banner photo of *Ctenophora pectinicornis* at King's Wood Heath, near Tring.

The next copy deadline is Dec 31st 2015.
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