



BULLETIN OF THE **Dipterists** FORUM

Affiliated to the British Entomological and Natural History Society

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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Yes, you've guessed correctly, subscription time is here again! If you want to renew your membership for 1996 for the Forum and the Digest please send me a cheque (made out to Dipterists Forum) for the appropriate amount:

Dipterists Forum	£5 UK, £6 abroad
Dipterists Digest	£7 UK, £8 abroad

If you enclose a stamped addressed envelope, I will send you our new membership card. If you haven't subscribed by the end of March 1996, you will be invoiced individually. If we have sent you no subscription form with this Bulletin, you have already paid! Here is a reminder of my difficult address (prizes for the worst efforts!):

Liz Howe, Membership Secretary, Ger-y-Parc, Tynyngogl, Benllech, Gwynedd, LL74 8NS

INDOOR MEETINGS

Dipterists Day, A.G.M. and Dipterists Supper - 2 November 1996

The cost of hiring the Flett theatre, our old haunt, has now become so high that it is well outside our budget. We

will therefore have to use the palaeontology room all day, as in the previous two years. David Henshaw is making plans to hold the Dipterists Supper in the Natural History Museum. Further details will be given in the August Bulletin.

Cranefly Workshop & Introduction to Flies, Preston Montford, 8-10 March 1996

There are still places for the introductory course but the master class of craneflies is full. Anyone wishing to book for the beginner's course should contact Roger Morris with a £30 deposit (made out to Roger), at 3 Lindale Mount, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, WF2 0BH.

Hoverfly workshop, Summer 1996

This proposed course has had to be postponed until next year. More details in a later Bulletin.

FIELD MEETINGS

Summer Meeting, York, 13-20 July 1996

At the time of writing (24 January), a few places are still available for this meeting (see Bulletin No 40, p4, for details).

Will participants please note that an instalment of £80 should be sent to me before 13 May; it will be of considerable help if I do not have to send out reminders! Final notice regarding the arrangements will be sent out by mid June. Please direct enquiries to Roy Crossley, 1 The Cloisters, Wilberfoss, York, YO4 5RF enclosing s.a.e. (phone 01759 388809). Cheques to be made payable to 'Roy Crossley re York'.

BENHS Field Meetings

A list of day-time events is attached. Unless someone makes the effort, there will be no dipterists leader at these events.

REPORTS

Report of A.G.M. held on 11 November 1995

Roy Crossley in the Chair: about 80 members present.

In memoriam: The Chairman announced the death of Dr Kathleen Goldie-Smith and invited Dr Henry Disney to speak of her life and work on Dixidae. Members observed a moment reflection as a mark of respect.

Apologies were received from Philip Entwistle, Tom Mawdsley, Joan Morgan, Graham Rotheray and Derek Whiteley.

The Chairman explained that there were no formal minutes for the previous annual meeting, which was an inaugural meeting of the Forum and therefore not technically an AGM. An account of that meeting had been published in the March 1995 Dipterists Bulletin.

1. Secretary's Report (Alan Stubbs)

The Dipterists Forum was voted into being on 12 November 1994, with a draft Constitution, an elected committee, and a remit to seek affiliation with the British Entomological and Natural History Society.

Although inheriting many on-going functions from the Central Panel, and despite advance preparation in 1994,

inevitably the first year has been dominated by bringing into effect a series of new administrative measures involved in setting up a society. The General Committee has met twice, at Dinton Pastures on 21 January and at the Natural History Museum on 10 November, 1995. An Executive Committee (comprising Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Bulletin Editor and Stuart Ball) has also met twice, at Peterborough in April and at the Ayr field meeting in July.

The Constitution has been edited and is tabled at this AGM for approval. We have completed negotiation with BENHS for affiliation, now approved by their Council, and have third party insurance at a very favourable rate via their insurers. We are currently applying to the Charities Commissioners for an extension of BENHS charitable status to apply to the Forum. Martin Drake has joined BENHS Council as Forum representative. Peter Chandler represents BENHS on our committee. We are most appreciative of the Society's good will in advancing these arrangements and already the aculeate hymenopterists are following in our footsteps with a similar arrangement.

There have been two issues of the Bulletin, totalling 23 pages plus an address list of subscribers. Newsletters have been issued for Larger Brachycera (2 issues), Hoverflies (1) and Conopids, including a key to all species (1). We would like to encourage editors and authors now that we have the financial base to publish more or larger newsletters per year. The Bulletin and three Newsletters now have ISSN numbers (back dated) as recognised publications. The Bulletin Editor has given the Secretary much support.

Events have been well attended. A workshop on Larger Brachycera and Conopids was held at Preston Montford in March. The summer field meeting was at Ayr in July and the autumn field meeting near Llandeilo in October. There will be a Crane-fly workshop at Dinton Pastures on 25 November. Arrangements for forward events in 1996 include a Dinton Pastures workshop on Bluebottles and Fleshflies in February, a Preston Montford workshop on Crane-flies/Introduction to Families of Flies (alternative parallel courses) in March and the main summer meeting at York in July.

A starter pack is being prepared, designed for new comers to Diptera and the Forum but hopefully with useful information for those wanting to branch out within Diptera. A working party is to look at the disposal of collections and related issues. A revised check list of British Diptera, compiled by Peter Chandler, is under the aegis of the Forum now that publication options are being investigated. An account of the Dipterists Forum and its relevance has been published in the BENHS journal (*Br. J. Ent. nat. Hist. Soc.* 8:121-124).

The Committee is now largely over the hump as regards setting up the basic administration. Membership, finance, Bulletin and events are in a healthy state. Newsletter production could be more vigorous, and it is up to the membership to write the notes required. The main shortfall has been the delay in producing *Dipterists Digest*, but the General Committee is confident that the exceptional difficulties have been overcome and that production should be back on track in 1996.

2. Treasurers Report (Jon Cole)

The first accounting year will cover the period from the inauguration of the Forum on 12 November 1994 to 31 December 1995, so that only an interim statement can be given, pending production of the audited accounts for this period which will be presented for the secretary at the next AGM. In future, the financial year will be the calendar year. In June, £2000 was transferred from Girobank to an Alliance and Leicester Instant Access Account yielding 4.3%.

<u>Subscriptions</u>	Income	Expenditure
Forum	1175.00	
Dipterists Digest	1473.00	
Giro charges for foreign credits		5.00
<u>Donations</u>	10.43	
<u>Dipterists Day 1994</u>		
Door receipts	255.00	
Hire of NHM room		155.00

<u>Admin expenses</u>		125.38
	<u>£2913.43</u>	<u>£285.38</u>
Credit Balance	<u>£2648.05</u>	
Approximate liabilities (accounts not yet received)		
August Bulletin		£83.00
Dipterists Digest 1995		£1000.00

3. Membership Secretary's Report (Liz Howe)

Membership figures are as follows.

Dipterists Forum	213 UK	18 overseas (including Ireland)
Dipterists Digest	176 UK	29 overseas
Both	185	
Total no. people	252	

4. Dipterists Digest Editor's Report (Graham Rotheray)

This item was not on the agenda. In the absence of the Dipterists Digest Editor, the Chairman read out the Editor's written statement as follows.

Andy Whittington has recently begun giving editorial assistance which should made things easier in the future. We aim to publish the two issues of volume 2 [= 1995] at the same time, or one before and one after Christmas. In any case volume 2 should be published by the end of January. A few stylistic changes will be noticed in the next issue and we hope these will improve the appearance of the journal. Twenty reprints are now being offered to authors of full papers.

The backlog of papers that built up during the change-over in editorship are the priority. Volume 1 made a start on publishing them and volume 2 should see the remainder dealt with plus some recent papers that we are able to include. By volume 3 [1996] the turn-around time from receipt to publication should have dropped dramatically to our target of 7-9 months. Currently, we have 34 papers and notes in process of publication - enough for three issues. I am now wanting manuscripts for volume 3 (2).

5. Confirmation of the Constitution.

Copies of the Constitution, as amended by the General Committee the previous day, were issued to everyone before the meeting started. The Chairman said that considerable effort had been made to prepare an acceptable Constitution and he hoped, subject to any minor amendments from the floor, to get a speedy vote of endorsement.

Several points were raised which evoked lengthy discussion, with no quick agreement in sight. Hence the Chairman asked for comments and suggested amendments to be sent in writing to himself or the Secretary within four weeks so that the Executive Committee could prepare a revised version for submission and approval at the 1996 A.G.M..

6. Election of Officers

The Chairman sought and received unanimous approval for the election of officers:

Chairman	Roy Crossley
Secretary	Alan Stubbs
Treasurer	Jon Cole
Membership secretary	Liz Howe
Bulletin Editor	Martin Drake
Publicity officer	Patrick Roper

Forum representation on the Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates (JCCBI)

JCCBI is a long-standing liaison group of national entomological societies together with observers from such organisations as the nature conservation agencies, BRC, National Trust etc. A few years ago, it expanded its remit to encompassed invertebrates as a whole, with enlarged specialist society representation. It is best known for codes, such as the one on insect collecting. After a near-death experience, JCCBI is re-invigorating itself.

At the Forum AGM a request was made for a volunteer to represent the Forum on the JCCBI. Two people were keen to do so and they are of such different backgrounds that JCCBI has agreed that both may attend.

John Dobson has been studying Diptera since 1985. He is interested in all families, with particular emphasis on their biology, behaviour and conservation. He has served as entomologist on a number of site-based conservation committees and is currently participating in the development of the BENHS Conservation Working Group.

Jan Woodward is a professional entomologist based at Newcastle University. She works with colleagues who have long experience of the relationship between agriculture and conservation, and has a personal interest in calypterates.

Alan Stubbs

New check list of British Diptera

The General Committee, at its meeting on 10 November, decided that the new check list of British Diptera being co-ordinated by Peter Chandler, should come under the aegis of the Forum. The basis for this list was described in Bulletin No 39.

Having also taken into account all changes listed in *Antenna* and trawled through the European literature, family parts were distributed to specialists for comments. Most of them have now responded, many of them pointing out numerous further corrections of detail. A late effort is being made to ensure that as much input as possible from foreign specialists is incorporated. The *Zoological Record* for the past 20 years is being checked for references that have inevitably been overlooked by all who looked at the lists. It is hoped that the text will be fully amended by early summer.

This has been a complex task because of the different views of specialists about the application of names and especially the recognition of subfamilies and tribes. After seeking the views of Forum members, it has been decided that all genera and species within higher categories will be listed in alphabetical order. In several of the larger families (including the Syrphidae) where there is little agreement about the composition of suprageneric taxa, these categories will be ignored and all genera listed alphabetically within the family. The view that this approach should be consistent throughout has been rejected as there are many families where the subdivision is well supported; in these cases, however, subfamilies and tribes will be listed alphabetically too. The arrangement of families will follow that in the Nearctic Manual as this is likely to be similar to that in the Palaearctic Manual at present under preparation. All changes from the Kloet & Hinks second edition lists are indicated by marginal notes, relating to references which follow each family.

All species for which there is a published record from Ireland are to be indicated by a symbol (duplicated for those species found in Ireland but not in Britain). Species which are not yet published as British, but which are positively identified, will be included with the recorder's name followed by "in press" or "pers. comm." as appropriate. Doubtful species or those designated as species or forms A etc will be excluded.

The discussion at the Committee meeting centred on the options for publication. It was felt desirable for the check list to become a Forum document, thus formalising the backing of British dipterists for such a venture. Since then, Mark Shaw has been developing proposals for a database of British insects which he has made known in the latest issue of *Antenna*. As he has suggested, this could be a future means of continually updating the list and disseminating it on disc at regular intervals.

The possibility that the list may be published by the Royal Entomological Society is now being considered. This

does not, of course, preclude it being incorporated into any database that is set up. The final details of format and presentation of the list have yet to be agreed but it is still hoped that it may be submitted for publication this year.

Will anyone who has any further comments or wishes to see particular familiar parts, please let Peter Chandler know.

Peter Chandler, 43 Eastfield Road, Burnham, Slough, Berks SL1 7EL

Development of Forum activities

Now that the Forum is established, and the time-consuming hassles of setting up the admin structures largely resolved, what do you want the Forum to do?

We can simply carry on doing what we already do, just adapting here and there as circumstances demand. Or we can consider some new initiatives. We have the financial capacity to publish more pages in the Bulletin, newsletters and associated keys. We could run more meetings, in the field or indoors. We don't necessarily have to think small, although an idea without a leader or resources is a non-starter.

At the last General Committee meeting we discussed sponsorship (as a very loose term). Some on the committee felt that sponsorship money is a possibility, even in this difficult age. But sponsorship for what? It could be for publication, such as particular items (including partnership publication where others have the money). It could subsidise field meetings in areas that are otherwise too expensive. It could be a contract for a survey, as undertaken by the Malloch Society. Another possibility is sponsorship for promoting the Forum by advertising and other means.

That leads on to whether we keep a low profile, catering for those who find us, or whether we actively canvass more participation. By better advertising we could probably fill a workshop on Introduction to Diptera (and hence Diptera Recording Schemes) many times over. We need a constant inflow of new blood but if the scale of active membership were to significantly increase so would the work-load in servicing membership, recording schemes and meetings, and larger venues for meetings would be needed. Perchance, the Forum is presently a comfortable size, although it still takes efforts to maintain this size. For instance, there are no takers for field or indoor secretary posts, jobs which fall by default on other committee members.

Do we want to project a more active image in conservation? We are presumably the people most concerned about the future of our fauna, and have the most knowledge. In these biodiversity-conscious days, there is something of an open door, and plenty of on-the-ground issues that need addressing.

The prime focus must remain on supporting the needs of amateurs for whom the recording schemes and study groups are largely of greatest practical relevance. But do we need to support proactively dipterists branching out beyond groups included in the schemes?

The Forum committees are going to find themselves discussing such issues this coming year. Anyone wishing to submit views is welcome to do so.

Alan Stubbs

Projects for Dipterists P. S. to Alan's article

Among the Forum's aims listed in its draft constitution are to promote recording of the natural history of flies and their conservation. One way of furthering these objectives is to set up a series of projects that individuals or groups of dipterists could tackle. The Malloch Society has been singularly successful using this approach, so we should be able to match their productivity with our much larger membership. I envisage this proposal not as an excuse to begin a new recording scheme but rather as tackling some specific aspect of natural history or a conservation issue (e.g. survey of threatened sites). Perhaps by having a focus beyond routine recording, the one-day field meetings may become more popular. These meetings have been rather poorly attended by dipterists, yet Paul Waring gets good attendance at meetings of his moth group, probably because each visit has a clear purpose. If anyone has ideas, please send them in. To kick off, here is my idea.

Carr woodland. This is a scarce habitat in Britain outside Broadland (where it is nuisance!) and is included (as relict alluvial woodland) in the EC Habitats and Species Directive as a habitat in need of special conservation. We know that it is good for craneflies and fungus gnats, but what else? And how should carr be managed for its entomological interest? I would like to set up Malaise traps at, say, half a dozen top quality carr woodlands, running from April to October. These would need servicing, and the catch will need sorting and identifying - a long programme. I'm prepared to do the donkey work of gaining access permissions, and supplying traps and equipment, as well as doing some of the tedious elements of sorting and distributing specimens to others to identify. Any supporters?

Martin Drake

Bulletin news

The next Bulletin & Newsletters will be posted in August. If anyone has articles, advertisements of meetings, etc., please let me or the relevant editors have them by:

21 June and 9 December for articles to reach newsletter editors
22 July and 6 January 1997 for articles to reach me for the Bulletin

I obtained the ISSN for the Bulletin and newsletters (the same number for all) so that anyone wanting to trace articles should find it easier by applying through inter-library loans. However, all newsletters issued before our number was allocated in 1995 would not have been traceable. So I have asked for retrospective numbers for the more frequent newsletters, as follows:

Diptera Recording Schemes Bulletin	ISSN 0963-2182
Newsletter - Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme	ISSN 0962-5569
Hoverfly Newsletter	ISSN 1360-3949
Newsheet - Empid and Dolichopodid Study Group	ISSN 1360-3957

Martin Drake

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES

Cranefly Recording Scheme

Nineteen people attended the Dinton Pastures Workshop on craneflies in November. All were new or fairly inexperienced in identification of these flies and it is good to find such interest. Some people brought boxes of material, which included *Prionocera subserricornis* from Cheshire (the third West Midlands record; rare in Europe).

A new illustrated key to *Tipula* has been prepared. It has been circulated with this Bulletin to those registered with the scheme (i.e. to those of you who ticked the box on the Forum membership form).

Alan Stubbs

Dixidae Recording Scheme

Following the sad death of Kathleen Goldie-Smith, the scheme is back again with Henry Disney. Kathleen's material and records have been passed to Henry who hopes to announce a new organiser in the next Bulletin.

Empid & Doli Study Group

A news sheet is enclosed together with this Bulletin.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

At the time of writing Roger has completed inputting the backlog of records from cards and there are 281,133 records on computer file. We hope to be able to keep up with processing your cards as they arrive in future - although if the current "call-in" of records is as successful as the last we may be overwhelmed!

A second set of working maps was produced for Dipterists Day at the beginning of November and a limited number of copies were distributed to regional advisors and to the most active workers, who were asked to send comments back to us. Unlike the first set of working maps produced two years ago, this version included species accounts and also a histogram for each species showing the number of records of adults falling in each fortnightly period from March to October. We are aiming to turn this into a provisional atlas for publication by BRC in 1996/97 and are currently working on the text with the intention of submitting a draft to BRC around March/April. The maps and histograms will be finalised as late as possible in the process, **but we need to receive any outstanding records by 31 March 1996** if they are to stand any chance of appearing in the atlas.

Please send completed cards to Roger (English Nature, Bullring House, Northgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 3BJ) who also has supplies of blank cards. If you have already put your records on to computer, or are willing to do so, please contact Stuart (office tel. 01733 62626) for information about submitting them on disk since this can save us a great deal of time. Records which are already in Recorder are especially easy to submit! If you have substantial numbers of records which are in some *well organised* paper form, other than hoverfly recording cards, then please get in touch. It may well be possible for us to extract them directly without you needing to transcribe them to cards:

British Hoverflies and a *Second Supplement* are now available. See 'New publications'.

Stuart Ball & Roger Morris

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

In November, I began computerising records received since the call-in for the provisional atlas. I have input over 9000 recent records. This may sound a puny number compared to the size of the hoverfly database but it is approaching half the number of records upon which the provisional atlas was based. If anyone feels moved to submit more records, please send them in.

Thank you to those who have sent records as I requested in Newsletter 12. There I asked for just the ten km square and date, for the forthcoming book. Having now experienced the tedium of inputting records, I would like to change that request to asking for full data - the thought of inputting the extra details at a later date just doesn't appeal. Please include the vice county because this is an essential part of a short-cut to putting data into Recorder. If you already have data on a machine, don't bother filling out cards but send the data as printouts (which will be kept for the archives along with the cards). Better still, send a 3½" disc (plus a paper copy for back-up and archive) - see the third paragraph under Hoverfly Recording Scheme and contact Stuart for instructions.

I have not received enough copy to produce a newsletter this spring.

Martin Drake

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Weinberg, M. & Bächli, G., 1995. *Diptera Asilidae*. *Insecta Helvetica* 11. 124 pp., 87 figs. Price Swiss Fr.30 (about £17).

This is a key to the robberfly fauna of Switzerland (101 species), including 52 further species from nearby countries and all British species. There are plenty of illustrations, including genitalia where needed, and there is brief mention of size and distribution. The study of European robberflies has been fraught so this usable work to the fauna of middle Europe should open up the study of these insects. The main limitations are the absence of information on habitat and flight period and, for most of us, the language - the text is in German.

Dioctria baumhaueri of the British list keys to *D. hyalipennis* (Fabricius, 1794). Paul Beuk had previously advised us of this correction.

Alan Stubbs

Checklist delle Specie della Fauna Italiana

Parts 66-78 were published as one volume in 1995, covering the Diptera other than Nematocera.

At a time when we are agonising over the production of a new generation of check lists for the British insect fauna and, especially as far as the Forum is concerned, the new Diptera list, it is interesting to note that the Italian checklist has three names as publishers:- Commission of European Communities, Ministero dell' Ambiente Servizio Conservazione della Natura and Comitato Scientifico per la Fauna d'Italia. The implication is that EC finance has been tapped.

As regards format, by means of a letter in front of a name, one can clearly see which species are endemic and, in the case of strats, which species are endangered. The latter include *Sargus flavipes* and *Odontomyia argentata*.

Alan Stubbs

Announcing publication of the *Second Supplement to British Hoverflies*

The new *Second Supplement* will be available for distribution near the end of April. So that it can be in use when the season really gets going in May, BENHS is inviting advance orders for speedy dispatch. It will be issued as a separate book of about 64-80 pages. It absorbs the information given in the *Appendix* (compiled in 1986) and gives a single source for advances in knowledge since the parent book was originally published in 1983. The main components are:-

- A review of some advances in the study of the biology of hoverflies.
- Advances in conservation studies and methods.
- The identification of the 15 species added to the British list since 1983. This includes new keys to *Platycheirus*, *Sphaerophoria* and female *Neocnemodon* (which could not be identified before), and better means to identify females of *Paragus* and *Parhelophilus*.
- Notes on all the extra species and new information on the distribution and biology of many more species.
- A further bibliography of about 300 titles.

British Hoverflies has just been reprinted and has the 1986 *Appendix* bound in. When stocks run out, the reprint will have the *Appendix* replaced by the *Second Supplement*, with a price adjustment for the increased page length.

Under the new affiliation arrangements with BENHS, paid up members of the Dipterists Forum (and BEWARS, the affiliated aculeate group) may purchase the parent book and the separate *Second Supplement* at BENHS members' price providing they state their membership.

Copies may be obtained from BENHS Distribution Secretary, Gavin Boyd, 17 Gainsborough Close, Cambridgeshire, CB4 1SY, tel. 01223 501245 (cheques payable to the British Entomological and Natural History Society; overseas purchasers please note that cheques must be in £ UK Sterling). The price of the *Second Supplement* is not known yet but it will be advertised in the next *Br. J. Ent. nat. Hist. Soc.* and the Amateur Entomologists Society bulletin. Or you can phone Gavin Boyd (but he will not know the price for a while because the text has only just gone to the printers).

British Hoverflies at £18 + £2.80 UK p & p for single copies. Members Rate.

British Hoverflies at £26 + £2.80 UK p & p for single copies. Non-Members.

Post & package for outside the United Kingdom is £3.50 for single copies. For multiple copies, please contact Gavin Boyd.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Two related recently published items may be useful to those wanting information on hydrological and soil minerals.

Map of stream acidity

In the *Report of the British Geological Survey, 1994/5* (pp. 12-13), there is an item on the Geochemical Survey of the Environment (G-BASE). Multi-element analysis of stream sediments, stream waters and soils is being undertaken. This should prove of considerable relevance to ecological interpretation. An example map of Wales and the West Midlands shows the acidity (pH) of stream water, revealing that base rich waters are more widespread than one might have expected.

Hydrological Data United Kingdom : 1994 Handbook

This is the latest of the annual reports jointly published by the Institute of Hydrology and the British Geological Survey. It gives an account of rainfall, river flows, groundwater levels and river water quality. It is especially useful for the annual rainfall map, which has a companion map showing the percentage of the 1961-1990 average, and from these the local pattern of relative drought or excess rainfall is revealed. A table gives a regional summary with monthly figures which gives a broad indication of the seasonality of the rainfall. A hydrological diary discusses the weather and hydrology month by month. Data are provided from river gauging stations and on ground water levels. These annual reports are thus useful if one wishes to look back over rainfall or hydrological patterns for a district.

REQUESTS

Information on the ecology of *Villa modesta*

I have recently been investigating the ecology of *Villa circumdata*, a bee-fly last positively seen in Britain in the 1950s. Virtually nothing is recorded on habitat or habits in the literature, and the same is true of *V. cingulata*.

This leads me to consider the habitat needs of the widespread dune species, *Villa modesta* (= *paniscus* of GB list). Whilst I have not searched the literature with much diligence, to my embarrassment I am unaware of any flower-visiting records (there are solitary records at wild parsnip for the other two species). Also, although I have found *V. modesta* on a few occasions, I am still having difficulty defining the dune habitat that it requires.

I recall seeing *V. modesta* sitting on bare sand, mainly on the landward side of marram dunes, possibly within the definition of grey (= lichen) zone dunes. It is not present on all dunes, for instance, being absent from Studland (where there is a fairly abrupt division between marram dunes and leached heather dunes). There are a few inland records and, although I have not seen it in such circumstances, I assume these sites had bare sand on lichen grass heath.

Hence I request information on the ecology of *V. modesta* for two reasons. Firstly, because the text for the forthcoming larger Brachycera book is so imprecise and, secondly, to try to get more of a handle on how one might search for the possibly extinct species. As far as I am aware, there is only one rearing record in Britain, that of *V. modesta* from a snail shell occupied by cells of an *Osmia* bee (yet the host should be caterpillars).

As Martin Drake is always keen to have items for the Larger Brachycera Newsletter, any observations can be submitted in a form suitable for the newsletter, either to stand on their own or as part of a compilation of responses.

Alan Stubbs

Abstraction of literature and collection records

Most of the recording schemes have been making good progress inputting recently collected records. These data are by far the most important, certainly from a conservation view point. However, old data are important for two reasons. Firstly there can be all sorts of accompanying snippets of information that no one really knows about. This has proved to be the case with literature on larger Brachycera where much of our knowledge of species builds up from casual observations that individually may not seem particularly important. Even data labels can have invaluable extra words, such as a flower association, a rearing note, or ecological annotation.

The second reason is that there is a growing emphasis on the importance of changes in status, with the rate of decline (or increase) becoming part of the equation. Sometimes old data provide the only evidence of overall range, giving a reason to check the presence of a species in areas where it has not recently been found. In some cases, recent recording has been on such a vigorous scale that a species may have many more records than in the past, masking the fact that there has been a considerable decline in real status. This is where statements on frequency given in the literature or representation in past collections can help in arriving at a balanced picture when combined with current experience of ease of discovery and assessment of the fate of required habitats. Assembling the facts has to be the starting point for assessing status.

Although the occasional plea has been made in the past, as far as I am aware no one has started systematic abstraction of literature data for recording schemes. It would only take a few people to work gently through a journal, or part of a journal each, to make real headway.

This is a job that needs doing only once to clear the historic backlog. I have had cause recently to look into information on some Red Data Book bee-flies. It has been quite a performance tracking down museum and literature data for these inevitably little-known species, but what a difference it makes once lots of tiny snippets of information are drawn together. Even more snippets of value can be found for many commoner species.

So can we try the plea for help again please. The priority is to cover the recording scheme families and get those data into the schemes (including useful associated information on habits, habitat etc). So far, a few museum collections have had data abstracted, usually only for scarce species or for selected genera or small families (e.g. by Steven Falk for his national review). Several collection need re-visiting with better keys to some groups (e.g. tabanids and therevids). It will not be a quick job because the identities given on labels may not be correct.

Are there any willing dipterists prepared to undertake this task? If so, please contact me before starting so I can let you know how much has already been extracted from the museum or journal you wish to investigate - we have this information for the larger Brachycera and hoverfly schemes. If you have already covered a task, let me know so that others can avoid duplicating effort. I'd be glad to hear from museum curators who know what information has been extracted for Diptera in their collections.

Alan Stubbs

Assistant book distributor

BENHS have a Distribution Secretary to distribute their publications that include *British Hoverflies*. More dipterological publications are due (hoverfly *Second Supplement*, larger Brachycera book) so the workload will increase. The Forum could show support for BENHS by offering to help with the distribution of these publications. The present incumbent lives in Cambridge. Is there anyone within the county of Cambridgeshire who would be willing to help? If so, please contact Alan Stubbs.

Identification of Swiss Diptera

We have received the following letter (slightly shortened here) from a researcher in Switzerland. If anyone would like to help, please write to Karin Schiegg.

During my PhD dissertation I'm studying saproxylic Diptera and Coleoptera. They will be collected in a large forest (mainly beech and spruce) in Switzerland between April 1996 and November 1997. In 14 sites we will use 56 eclectors [emergence traps] and 60 trunk window traps. The insects will be determined to family level and preserved in 70% alcohol. For further identification we need the help of specialists. Our research group will be able to pay them from a pool of limited funds. If you or a member of your group is interested in identifying some of our insects, could you please let us know which groups you could cover and any conditions you may attach. You can keep specimens you are interested in for your own collection.

Karin Schiegg, WSL, Zürcherstrasse 111, Postfach, CH-8903 Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Wanted - important records from field meetings

I am compiling a complete list of field meetings as from 1973. In fact there is a draft that some of you have seen but it is long out of date. It seems useful to keep track of where we have been and at the same time note the most important records. As far as I am aware, we have had about 50 species new to Britain (first GB records or at least first recognised through discovering these species on a field meeting) and a few other selected goodies such as second or third GB records, first GB record for many years or way outside previous known range.

I propose publishing this list in the *Bulletin* or *Dipterists Digest* as an archive review covering the period up to the formation of the Forum (ie to the close of the 1994 field season). I shall be consulting some of the people most likely to have kept track of special records on field meetings (Jon Cole, Peter Chandler, Ivan Perry, Andrew Godfrey and John Ismay) but shall be pleased to hear from anyone else who can help ensure the review is as complete as possible.

Alan Stubbs

Flies in UV light

For several years I have been trying to find someone who is interested in testing the concept that flies look different in wave lengths that we cannot see, especially ultra-violet. I know someone who may be able to look at hoverflies but the issue goes wider.

My contention is that if flowers have UV honey guide patterns that bees can see, and flies, according to some reports, are able to see UV, then it is possible that UV can be used for other purposes. Hence the grey shining markings in the hoverflies *Platycyberus albimanus* and some *Cheilosia* (eg *paganus*) which seem obscure may well reflect UV strongly. The same may be true of some calypterates, such as *Pollenia vespillio* and those with tessellate markings such as *Sarcophaga*. My interest in this matter has become focused whilst preparing the Larger Brachycera book because various species have obscure dusting that goes grey or white at some angles of view, notably some tabanids when seen from behind. Such species hover in mating territories, and parallel the strat *Odontomyia argentata* whose male's abdomen has silvery hairs that reflect strongly silver from behind. If male horseflies were to reflect like beacons in the sky, this would be of great adaptive advantage (although birds may be pleased at the advertisement also).

I am no technician but the solution may lie in taking pictures under a UV lamp using UV sensitive film. Since the angle of reflection may be critical, the process may need to be more refined. Apart from the interest in understanding something further about hovering / mating strategies, there may be useful taxonomic characters. Some characters can be clearly seen but others are only ghost-like features. Horsefly taxonomy being rather awkward, there may be UV patterns that help sort out the near impossible species splits, or at least give another means of judging whether some splits are justified.

If anyone is able to follow up on this I shall be pleased to hear from them, especially if the position with horseflies can be resolved before the book goes to press, hopefully next winter.

Alan Stubbs

OTHER NEWS

Vice-county maps

Vice-counties are still very much alive in recording. Staff at the Biological Records Centre find them useful for quickly checking that grid references are not wildly inaccurate, and for sorting records into counties to send to county recorders, local records centres and museums. VCs are also the quick route to entering data to Recorder (e.g. hoverfly and larger Brachycera data). The boundaries of VCs are shown on two maps published by the Ray Society in 1969.

The maps can be obtained from two sources. BRC can provide recording scheme contributors with "unfolded"

maps, at no charge, on receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope (minimum size 10" x 12", postage for 186 g which is currently 57p first class, 43p second class). They can be collected by prior arrangement from Monks Wood (address at end of Bulletin). Alternatively, a folded, boxed set with an explanatory booklet is available at £3.00 plus postage and package from the Ray Society (c/o the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, London SE7 5BD).

Update on action plans and related issues

Bulletin No 39 (pp.9-10) outlined the selection of species for conservation action.

On 13 December the government published *Biodiversity: the UK Steering Group Report* at a conference titled 'UK Biodiversity: meeting the Rio Challenge'. Mr Gummer, Secretary of State for Environment, assured the audience of his personal commitment, and that the whole Cabinet was in support (actions will speak louder than words!).

The government has said it will give its response in the spring. If it really is willing to adopt the targets for habitats and species, and all the wider countryside measures, including redirecting government countryside subsidies (eg farmers should not simply be paid for doing nothing of tangible benefit), then we are seemingly at one of the great turning points in conservation. For one thing, the report proposes substantial habitat re-creation such as re-establishing 6000 ha of heathland by the year 2010 at an estimated cost of £300 per ha. This will include reversing the habitat fragmentation of recent decades. The present report gives partial coverage of habitats and one must hope that all habitat plans, when written, will be equally advantageous.

For globally threatened and declining species, the report gives three lists, called short, middle and long lists. Altogether, about 1200 taxa across all biological groups are included. We now await news of the means and timing of putting into effect the action plans included in the report. These lists were seemingly cobbled together in a hurry to meet last minute decisions to publish, and as far as the Diptera are concerned, they are a bit of a hotch potch.

The short list includes species of highest priority and action plans, to be implemented soon, are given for these. Two flies, *Callicera spinolae* and *Asilus crabroniformis*, are in the short list. For *Asilus*, any further news of good populations for research studies may be needed soon. Since the *Bulletin* article in early 1995, new possible study sites have been located in East Dorset and the south Chilterns.

On the middle list are those species for which action plans will be written and implemented within 3-5 years. Flies on this lists are *Bombylius discolor* (declining bee-fly), *B. minor* (very vulnerable populations), *Dorycera graminum* (declining otitid), *Lipsothrix remota* (endemic Notable crane-fly), *Metasyrphus lapponicus* (hoverfly with no recent records), *Myolepta potens* (rare European hoverfly, last seen in GB in 1940s), *Rhabdomastix hilaris* (sandy river crane-fly) and *Tipula serrulifera* (little known crane-fly).

Flies on the long list, for which action plans are needed within 5-10 years, are *Atrichops crassipes*, *Atylotus plebejus*, *A. rusticus*, *Blera fallax*, *Bombylius canescens*, *Chrysopilus laetus*, *Chrysops sepulcralis*, *Clorismia* (ex *Psilocephala*) *rustica*, *Ctenophora flaveolata*, *Dasyhelia lithotelmatica*, *Didea alneti*, *Doros conopseus*, *Erioptera bivittata*, *Eristalis cryptarum*, *Eumerus ornata*, *Geranomyia bezzia*, *Gonomyia bradleyi*, *Hammerschmidtia ferruginea*, *Laphria flava*, *Lejops vittata*, *Limonia goritiensis*, *Machimus coweni*, *Microdon devius*, *Molophilus pusillus* (endemic), *Nephrotoma quadristriata*, *Odontomyia angulata*, *O. argentata*, *O. hydroleon*, *O. ornata*, *Oxycera anilis*, *O. leonina*, *O. terminata*, *O. varipes*, *Pamponerus germanicus*, *Pandivirillia melaleuca*, *Parasyrphus nigratarsis*, *Pherbellia knutsoni*, *Pocota personata*, *Poecilobothrus ducalis*, *Spilogona alpica*, *Stratiomys chamaeleon*, *Thyridanthrax fenestratus*, *Trichocera maculipennis*, *Urophora quadrifasciata*, *Xylomia maculata*.

The long list includes some species that are better candidates for the middle list and some whose inclusion is difficult to justify. The list is highly skewed to larger Brachycera and hoverflies, indeed the selection as a whole is biased towards recording scheme groups. If you feel there are alternative species that are better priorities for action plans to ensure their survival, then now is a useful time to say.

Such lists are rather inclined to take on a momentum of their own beyond their immediate purpose. They not only

set the agenda for the government, including the statutory nature conservation agencies, but they also affect the way the voluntary conservation movement views its priorities. Species on these lists gain an extra Brownie Point that comes in handy in arguing for habitat management action or site defence.

The habitat re-establishment programme (and the positive management implications for Natura 2000 sites that are not part of the report) give opportunities for entomologists to give local advice on measures which will assist invertebrate biodiversity. The Agenda 21 committees are the way to plug into this process (local conservation agency staff or county wildlife trusts can advise you on how to help).

Alan Stubbs

More on English names - *Beris* versus the Murky-Legged Legionnaire - A reply from an Entomologist who can pronounce Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerwchwrndrobwl-llantisiliogogoch

I have always agreed with Alan on the need for more English names for insects. I've heard the arguments from Latin Luddites that gardeners are happy with Chrysanthemums and Cotoneasters but they believe that these names are genuinely English. I too have come across people cringing from Latin names of insects even from committed naturalists who are quite at home with *Rorripa nasturtium-aquaticum* etc providing that they have an English name as well.

More English names for species are dribbling into entomology. A few of Derek Whiteley's English names for hoverflies seem to have stuck and there has also been a slow development of dragonfly and grasshopper English names into their current forms and wide usage.

The point is that just about all of these are common big and pretty things, ones that the non-entomologist tends to notice and admire when in the field. They are *not* 3 mm long black species that only a specialist can either find or identify, nor ones that are so rare that they only occur in a handful of top sites. These aren't the ones that attract other naturalists to study insects - they only come into contact with them once they're hooked and then the odd snippet from a 2000-year-old dead language isn't going to put them off again. To get down to the Brachycera, it is species like *Bombylius major* and *Philonicus albiceps* that bring the uncommitted to study these flies, not *Acrocera orbicula* or *Pachygaster atra*.

There's a definite need for English names for all families, or all *distinctive* subfamilies or genera. There's room too for good English names for the *Bombylius major*'s, *Chloromyia formosa*'s etc. Good English names need to be short and sweet to be remembered and names with eight syllables ('west-²ern-³sil-⁴ver-⁵still-⁶ett-⁷o-⁸fly) are really asking to be either forgotten or made rude jokes about.

So let's have some more English names. But let's keep them for the common, conspicuous species, ones that will actually attract our next generation of entos and let's keep them short and relevant. I especially like the flea bee-fly (despite its size), and the green gem (provided it's the green gem *soldier fly*). Wherry-flies for athericids appeals to me as a reader of Anne McCaffrey's "Dragonrider" sci-fi novels, but the murky-legged black legionnaire, (a native French West African Beau Geste wading through a swamp?) leaves me cold. And while I'd quite like to live in a dune villa, I would be dubious about having one in my sweep net! As for the suggestion that we actually *change* the established English name of snipe-flies to sentinels, this makes us as bad as the taxonomists.

However - Alan's note has got us talking. And that's what's important.

Roger Key

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Andy Godfrey (membership secretary of BENHS) would like mail sent to 90 Bence Lane, Darton, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S75 5DA.

John Dobson (newly elected Forum representative for JCCBI) has moved to 46 Elmwood Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx, HA3 8AH.

AND NOW 22 CARAT HABITAT

No, this is nothing to do with *Psila rosae* attacking 22 carrots. We are here concerned with one of those covert conservation problems that is destroying prime habitat for crane-fly larvae, and there can be no more serious conservation problem than that!

Yes, gold lust is alive and kicking in the streams of Britain. On the way back from the Ayr field meeting (1995), the map showed a wooded stream in a 10 km square that involved only a slight detour. The locality proved to be a fairly precipitous ravine where only someone desperate for crane-fly records would go. Or so I thought, for I had only been sweeping for a few yards when I came across a chap well camouflaged in the dappled shaded. He just carried on digging up and sifting sediment at the edge of the large stream. My first reaction was that he might be from the water authority. But conversation about our respective reasons for being in such a crazy remote spot soon revealed that I was speaking to a real gold prospector (worth at least 50 points in an Eye-Spy book so Big Chief Eye-Spy should be really impressed).

To actually watch gold panning live (its bad enough on TV) brought home to me just how destructive this activity can be. In this upland stream the water was fairly fast so the main bed load was boulders, plus varied sizes of other stones and pebbles. Fine sediment was highly localised to small sheltered niches at the stream edge where deposition rather than scour took place. The gold prospector was systematically digging out and panning this sediment, and making a pretty tough job of it. He spent much of his time doing this and had worked the entire catchment up-stream by the sound of it and only had about a mile to go before reaching the main more lowland valley.

I just wonder how many other catchments have been systematically impoverished of fine sediment in this fashion. Clearly the geological conditions have to be right, but that leaves a fair number of options and one can be sure that there is more than one gold prospector in Britain.

Alan Stubbs

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