BULLETIN OF THE Dipterists Forum

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New subscription rates have come into effect

It is now possible to opt to receive the Bulletin as a pdf

Please see the Membership section for full details

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Please use the Booking Form downloadable from our website

Field Meetings

Now organised by several different contributors, contact the Secretary.

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Please refer to guide notes online (or in Bulletins) for details of how to contribute. Send your material to **both** of the following, with the word "Bulletin" in the title.

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Images selected from our Dipterists Forum Flickr group. Other photographs as supplied by the authors or the editorial panel who would be pleased to receive illustrations for general purposes - many thanks for those already sent. Front cover must be upright (portrait) and have an aspect ratio of 6:7 (or be croppable to that ratio)

BULLETIN OF THE
Dipterists
Forum



Machaerium maritimae [Sam Thomas]

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Record

Pick any legitimate method. Recording Schemes are best placed to advise on methodology, in particular the latest identification keys which are to be found in their newsletters or on the Dipterists Forum website

Contribute

If you're inspired to contribute to our magazine & journal, be that as feature, newsletter or other writer, reviewer, production artist or photographer, then do please get in touch with our editorial team.

Many topics such as conservation, collections, recording and microscopy are common to a wide range of wildlife interests. Other naturalists are welcome to share such relevant topics & tips with us too.

Subscribe

This Bulletin is supported by Dipterists Forum members. To subscribe contact the Membership Secretary. Full details in the Membership section.

Recording Schemes Brochure free pdf regardless of membership status

Desktop Publishing & Production, Darwyn Sumner; Editorial, Darwyn Sumner & Judy Webb; Printing & distribution, Jane Hewitt; Mail costs, Biological Records Centre

Forum News

Editorial

Memories

It's not often we naturalist draw upon the tools of psychologists but they do have some that are valuable. Memory, they assert, follows the sequence of encoding, storage then retrieval. The encoding is via cues that are either visual, acoustic or semantic. As a supply teacher I used to get landed with subjects I knew nothing about (Spanish!), so that sequence would help devise an impromptu lesson plan, or opening topic if you found yourself at a party filled with lecturers and psychologists. Dipterists too, we've plenty of folk with different patterns of emphasis (diversity) in this arena. We've more than the average number with a high level of eidetic memories for example. I'm pretty low down that scale, having to relearn the handful of hoverflies I should know at the start of every season. The principle coding system for short-term memory (STM) is acoustic (the man in the pub) but for long-term memory (LTM) it's semantic coding aided by visual.

Teachers in particular will be familiar with those concepts, it will probably have formed part of their teacher training, but to be honest I've now forgotten mine. Do give teaching/lecturing a shot if you've never tried it, it's immensely satisfying to watch their little eyes light up with comprehension. Dipterists Forum fortunately encounters quite a few good teachers, Stuart Ball still on the road lecturing on Sciomyzidae this time. All those amazing Scottish speakers at the last Annual Meeting. They crop up too in the written accounts, John Kramer for example drawing upon the skills and experience of his teaching career to assemble the Cranefly Newsletter.

Here begins lesson plan 98 …

Digital legacies

One good solar flare and its all gone or another Microsoft Apocalypse like we saw in July. In the meantime just how secure is all our digital data? The following brief outline of some methods you can use to safeguard your digital material may help guide your choices:

Permanently:

- DOI (e.g. anything on Researchgate)
  many of our Recording Scheme newsletters
- GBIF (international consortium)
- NBN Atlas (UK consortium)

Indefinitely:

- BRC
  includes Dipterists Forum materials, your iRecord records & photographs
- iNaturalist
  your photographic records & communications

Apocalypse-free (fire, war etc.)

- Museums
  Collections: accessioned sets of objects
  Biological records: via their recent DISCCO project or museum-based LERCs
- Local Environmental Records Centres
  all have digital security & archiving as part of their business plan

Your lifetime:

- Flickr (which then drops to 1000 images)
- Your website (disappears when you stop paying)
- Recording Scheme datasets (except Open Data on NBN Atlas)
  responsible schemes will have archival systems in place
- Your mobile phone contents
  (subject to unscrupulous phone companies once you're gone)
  investigate options to upload archival stuff to other devices
- Your personal PC/laptop work (unless you archive + make other legacy arrangements)
  museums may have options to archive hard drives and such

Already gone:

- Fauna Europaea
- Scratchpads (legacy sites remain but are frequently inaccessible)
- Forum posts (FSC's Biodiversity Forum, clearouts by others)

As for corporate media sites, both Observer's John Naughton and Amateur Photographer's Nigel Atherton are indicating deep disappointment with the way these sites are regressing. Change tactics if you share their views; stay safe.

Diptera celebrated

In most photography competitions which specify "wildlife" invariably mammals and birds come way ahead of invertebrates. iNaturalist's international **Observation of the Day** has only ever featured 60 Dipterans. In August one of our Recording Schemes got this international attention thanks to Rupert Lees winning shot.

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/micropezids-tanypezids-uk



Micropeza lateralis in Sussex. Congratulations to Rupert Lees (Instagram @macrocordycept)

Every day iNaturalist features a great observation on our social media outlets - Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram - to highlight the incredible scope and quality of our community's contributions.

These observations are also added to the iNat Observation of the Day project, so explore some of the coolest finds, photos, and records on iNaturalist!

Dipterists Forum objectives

a. To foster the study of Diptera, including linking with other disciplines where there is a relationship with other animals and plants.

b. To promote the recording of all aspects of the natural history of Diptera, including the advancement of distribution mapping.

c. To promote the conservation of Diptera.

d. To encourage and support amateurs in harmony with professionals in museums, institutes and universities.

e. To organise indoor meetings, workshops, field meetings and other relevant events.

f. To disseminate information through newsletters and publications.

g. To focus on the Diptera of the British Isles whilst maintaining an interest in those of continental Europe and elsewhere.

Crossley, R. Dipterists Forum - the early years. Bulletin 88, p4

Hyperlinks

The electronic version of this Bulletin contains interactive hyperlinks shown in blue. Test it on this link to connect to the Dipterists Forum website

Feedback

As I begin to compile this issue in mid July, turning all my OneNote scribbles into something coherent, I'm conscious of the fact that others must be doing the same just now, trying to meet the deadline with their newsletters, articles, reports and features.

I'll begin with some nice things said by readers about the last one, uplifting incentive for me to forge my way through:

Just finished reading my first-ever bulletin, enjoyed every minute of it. Many thanks for all your hard work!.

Nice work

I enjoyed reading the Bulletin

Thank you both for all your efforts on this and past issues of the bulletin

Our thanks to all the contributors, we're always on the lookout for more articles; topics we'd like to see include anything iRecordy, Recorder & MapMate, techniques, collections, expeditions and good reads. Sadly we've not the resources to actually commission material but fortunately we know many who are happy to devote their valuable time to help keep us informed. Notably the Recording Schemes with their newsletters and other stories; and if you've a tale to tell do get in touch.

Editors

Network Partners

As a group of independent Recording Schemes within Dipterists Forum we've all collaborated to help one another achieve mutual aims. The thriving and successful club whose activities are reported in these pages attests to this. With origins very close to agencies such as JNCC and English Nature we've sought out partners to help us achieve our aims and objectives and in doing so Dipterists Forum has become a well respected member of a much larger network embracing all in our sector.

An easy first win, if they'll forgive me for putting it like that, was BRC who's remit is to help Recording Schemes and who now help us financially with the mailing of our newsletter plus a host of other support systems like online recording. JNCC provided much support too, their investment in desktop recording tools (now passed to a consortium of mainly LRCs) remains invaluable.

Later formal partners included BENHS to whom we're now affiliated, many of our entomologists are also on their committee, they advise on collecting legalities.

Finally the recording community invented the NBN. By 2000 the need for Open Data to facilitate scientific research had become apparent to all organisations in our sector so everyone became involved. The NBNt was mutually set up as a charity, employees were recruited and online Open Data systems set up in the form of the NBN Atlas.

It's our idea so naturally we support it as a member, as does every other organisation in our sector, we're the Network in the National Biodiversity Network. Our partners are everyone else in that Network, from Buglife to Plantlife.

Our obligations to them all are not onerous, we've our guidelines (opposite) and our immediate partners have theirs:

Biological Records Centre

Read their 50th anniversary booklet and the recent Recording Schemes conference account if you want to know more. Also use their tools (iRecord)

BENHS

They've got byelaws but the only way you'll fall foul of them is by trading in endangered species. They've useful guidance on collecting and their byelaw **5.2 Recording** regarding collections is of interest:

- Species lists, together with any other data, should always be lodged with the relevant county and national recording schemes. If possible, the data should be entered on a database compatible with the National Biodiversity Network

National Biodiversity Network

The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) is a collaborative partnership created to exchange biodiversity information.

Dipterists Forum are paid up members of this.

NBN Trust Member

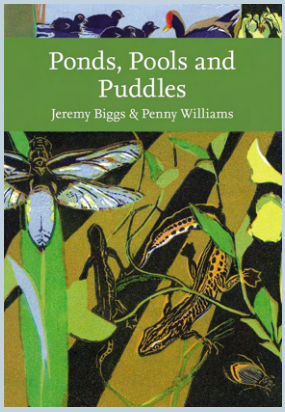
No byelaws here but their principles are simple enough, they advocate the sharing of biodiversity information (Open Data) via FAIR principles and provide the facilities to do this via their NBN Atlas. Exactly what we asked for.

iNaturalistUK

Additionally NBNt launched iNaturalistUK as a recording tool, collaborating with BRC to assist online iRecord verifiers assimilate that data too. DF Committee member Victoria Burton (Buglife) was part of that launch.

NBN Steering Group: Tools & Resources

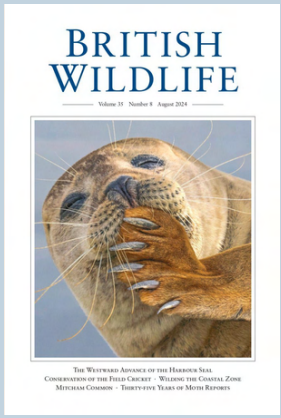
Good reads:



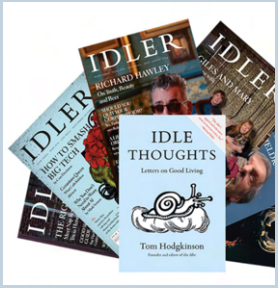
New Naturalist



Graphic novel (Faber & Faber)



Conservation updates



The Idler (1892 to date) for etiquette

Viz #338 (4 page flies special)

New Scientist

Otherlands, Thomas Halliday

Technology

Impossible things before breakfast

In an era dominated by letter writing* and print as the primary means of disseminating information, Thomas Edison opined that "the radio craze will die out in time". Such systems do drift in and out of style: television, desktop entertainment PCs, smartphones/tablets then home office laptops. Typically, invested corporations, once take-up reaches ~80% in one of these related systems, will seek to disenfranchise the remainder.

Like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, we naturalists therefore have 6 impossible things to believe before breakfast. No need for all of them but if you subscribe to one of the last three in that list you may have access to some useful tools. So why not use one to add a nice fly picture or two to Alice's pre-breakfast list ?

One easy fix is one or more iNaturalist bookmarks in your Explorer. It rather depends on your interest group but clearly Matt is enjoying his daily hoverflies; mine's slower but August's Red Queen (*Loxocera hoffmannseggi*) was a particular delight. For an iRecord fix you'll have to look a little deeper than a simple bookmark but for some popular groups those Targeting Revisit sites look as though they might entertain. Alice now has somewhere in Wonderland to explore after breakfast.

Yours with sincere and perfect affection Ed.

Tom Hodgkinson (Editor of the Idler), September 2024, Strange death of letter-writing. The Oldie.*

***Founded 1892 by Jerome K. Jerome*

Technological determinism

Technology columnist John Naughton raised the subject of the ideology of "technological determinism" (Observer 2024-08-11) in which science fictiony things are promoted by corporations to the point where the public begin to think they are inevitable. Much like Douglas Adam's digital watches, or Google Glasses. It doesn't always pan out though, Google Wing's drone delivery experiment in Australia crashed and burned thanks to common sense & democracy. "*The inevitability myth can - and should always be challenged by citizens*" says Naughton. That same technological determinism "guff" applies to our sector too.



The Red Queen, *Loxocera hoffmannseggi*. Will she ever visit our shores? [Photo: Arne, Germany]

"For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong." H.L. Mencken

"Don't listen to the person who has the answers; listen to the person who has the questions." A. Einstein

"Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value" A. Einstein

Pinning one's hopes

Lance Gorman and I used to joke when we were pursuing flies in Lancashire, of the idea of a pin gun that would shoot a fly down, pin it and identify it all in one go.

That's come a little closer than we might have foretold. In the New Naturalist book Ponds, Pools & Puddles the authors talk of environmental sampling methods which simply takes a sample of pond water and test it for DNA. This EDNA technique can then determine which species are present in the water. They've used it a lot to test for fish species but it works for other species too. Lance's pinning gun may now be replaced by a huge robotic vacuum cleaner sucking up all the flies from a site then using EDNA to sample the resultant soup. As fanciful as our pin gun that sounds, such things already exist, they're called bats. So if you struggled to find much this year due to the weather then so did they - and it's life & death to them.

Thanks to identifiers

You may have missed this on the iNaturalist forum but it's a sentiment that applies to all our Diptera identifiers too, regardless of platform (iRecord, iNat, NBN Atlas etc.):

I just wanted to thank again all the expert identifiers. You've slogged through lots of ambiguous or malformed observations, made your best guesses, dealt with really atypical photos, and some of you (a lot of you maybe) are feeling some fatigue. But everything ... is because of the efforts of you and people like you. So thank you ... for all your hard work and dedication. Even if you were to retire now, your meticulous efforts will pay dividends for many years to come. Every success ... we owe to your involvement and dedication.

Magazine publishing

Bold type

If you watched the popular Netflix series Good Girls Revolt set in the swinging 60s or the more contemporary The Bold Type then you'll have a bit of an idea of what's going on in a newspaper/magazine office.

Nothing so glamorous here at Flyty Towers but bits of what they were all doing looked familiar, the extras busying away at desks are Production Artists. Until the 90s there'd typically be 16 for a hundred page monthly.

New Scientist list 46 in their editorial staff. That's roughly 1 full-time employee for every weekly issue. Compare that to our Bulletin and you get 2FTE per year; scale that down as you wish to account for size, quality, circulation etc. but it still amounts to a heck of a lot of volunteer time on this Bulletin.

Detailed comparison of roles are tricky but we can look at some broad categories:

Writers: How do you give encouraging tips in such a huge and complex area? Just give it a shot. Writer E.M. Forster came up with a valuable tip along those lines, suggesting there are two writing styles: those who know what they think and write it & those who find out what they think by trying to write it. The latter forces one to consider lines of argument, choose relevant evidence, find sources of information & inspiration resulting in clarity of expression.

Investigative reporters: You'll find a fair bit of this in New Scientist and particularly in British Wildlife where their focus is on Conservation and so our reporting on these issues reflects similar concerns. Headed by Mark Welch's team you'll find plenty of this kind of material, notably an article by Rob Wolton in this issue. Other past contributors include Martin Drake and Steve Falk and there are always stories arising from other areas of interest related to recording and publishing. We've even managed to match British Wildlife's stories from Sue Everett from time to time. The poster in the last issue summarised many issues.

If you've an interest in this kind of pursuit there is a huge range of topics/issues available as previous Bulletins show. A bit of good networking with fellow naturalists and you've a story to pursue then tell. Hot topics are Open Access, collections and larvae/breeding; contributions are most welcome.



Feature writers: We've published a host of these over the years from a variety of authors. Typical in this issue is Donald Smith below.

Editors: To maintain the magazine's profile, reputation and integrity within the accepted standards of the organisation and its partners (see *Network Partners* above.) We've a cloud of them, the Conservation team edited by Mark Welch. All the Recording Scheme newsletters are by independent editors using their own production artist skills.

Report writers such as Andrew Cunningham who writes the Devon Regional pieces qualify, as do those compiling write-ups of our events like Alan Stubbs in this issue and the team writing up the Annual Meeting talks.

Beyond that the remaining contributors may best be categorised as feature-writers, report-writers or reviewers - amazing job all those folk; write for other magazines and they'd pay you, so thanks for your contributions.

Once the editors and writers have all played their parts it all needs compiling and collating into a Bulletin; there's a technical term for this job:

Production Artists who ready jobs for the printers, resulting in camera-ready copy. Average UK salary £80 per day. Several constituent roles here, amongst them Art and Pictures editors

Those essential production jobs fall to our Bulletin editorial team (see Image Library item below) as it all needs collecting, compiling and collating. This is what the anonymous folk at desks in the background of those Netflix series will be doing, unglamorous but essential.

Camera-ready copy: the point at which printers learned to take work from DTP artists and the point at which the Flyty Towers editorial team have finished their jobs until the next time.

All is not done yet though. The remainder of the chain, taking up that camera-ready copy and ensuring it gets printed and distributed to members is a series of tasks involving quite a few of our Dipterists Forum crew.

Deployment:

Once the camera-ready copy is complete the job of the DTP Artist is finished and the prepress magazine is dealt with by different teams:

- **Print:** by one team, check the New Scientist personnel again and you'll see another bunch of people involved in this, from finance, membership and subscriptions & negotiations with printers, mailing and archiving. All have equivalents in our club.
- **Online:** additional DTP artist tasks such as integration of safe interactive links into pdfs are required. Various systems for online deployment are being investigated.

Glossary

Desktop publishing (DTP): is a growing field, a useful skill for students entering into various fields such as publishing, e-books & websites. In the above 60s example they'd all be at typewriters but from the 80s onwards publishers geared up to WYSIWYG DTP systems that achieved prepress.

DTP Artist: A desktop publishing artist is a worker responsible for translating the work of art directors and graphic designers into digital files ready to go to print or be placed online. A DTP operator is usually skilled in multiple computer design applications. Before the introduction of digital processes they were known as Finished Artwork artists

Production Artist: Art director, production manager, image editor, illustrator, page designer, DTP Artist and prepress

Prepress: Camera-ready copy, a print-compliant and/or online compliant PDF file

Cock-up: A typesetters term referring to a misaligned letter

DTP software: A range dedicated to the task are available, used for 25 years in the Bulletin. Affinity Publisher (£35) excels at tasks such as indexing, making it most suitable for e-books and the like. Word-processors are commonly used. Subscription payment models are less popular.

Draft: for your eyes only

E-zines electronic alternative to print magazines with interactive features and the ability to browse on multiple devices

E-books: digital files similar to a printed book. Steve Falk points us to examples on ResearchGate in this issue. With good DTP skills these can be made to emulate classic styles such as RES keys, WildGuide books or New Scientist pages (*qed*)

Open Access: see discussions in previous Bulletins at https://tinyurl.com/2pzer9hc

Print and pdf: Two quite separate production tasks to produce different versions

Forum News

Publishing papers

Steve Falk

ResearchGate

Online Steven Falk PDF reports and papers for some interesting site surveys and studies:

An Entomological survey of some Caingorms sites 2022 by Steven Falk and Nigel Jones)

Entomological survey of some Outer Hebrides sites 2022 by Steven Falk)

2018-19 Entomological survey of Sutton Park, Birmingham by Steven Falk and Chris Kirby-Lambert)

Plus many Darwin Tree of Life papers, survey reports, and other interesting items that relate to Diptera here:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Steven-Falk-2/publications

ResearchGate is a good way of getting high quality Diptera information into the public domain, and can allow you to post reports that are too big for standard journals. Such reports can then help support papers published in Dipterists Digest, British Journal of Entomology & Natural History etc., and are also easy to hyperlink to posts on Twitter/X, Facebook, Dipterists Forum discussion groups and emails.

Poo

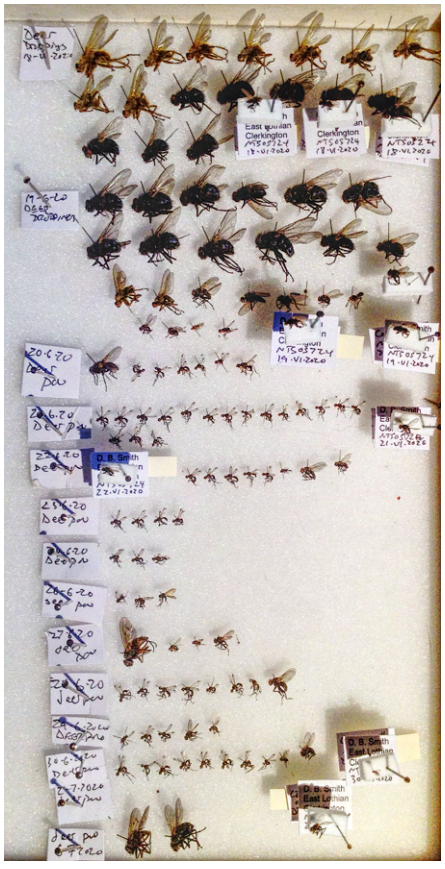
Donald Smith

Where there's muck, there's flies!

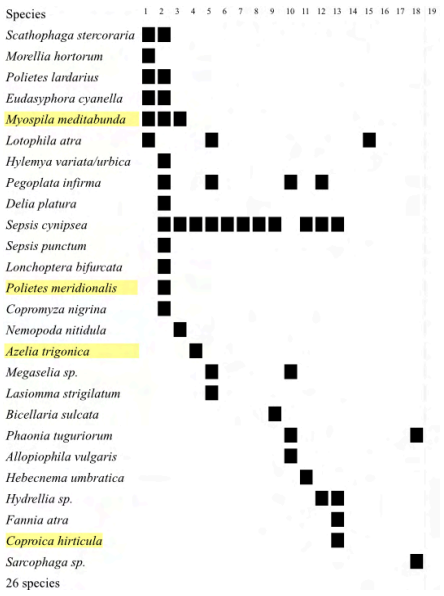
Having exerted myself to mow the lawn one day in the middle of June 2020, I was disconcerted to come back a few hours later to find the perfect green sward marred with a fresh deposit from one of the roe deer that like to graze our vegetable patch. Turning the insult to advantage, I stuck a bottle trap over the top of the droppings and waited for visitors. They were not long coming and for the next two weeks there were several flies in the trap every day; thereafter catches became erratic. Most specimens were identified to species (Table, thanks to Dave Brice for confirming my sphaerocerid identifications) apart from some female anthomyiids (two *Hylemya variata/urbica*), a couple of phorids (*Megaselia* sp.), two female muscids (*Azelia* sp.), an ephydrid (*Hydrellia* sp. female), a female *Sarcophaga* and a few tiny flies missing their head or abdomen. This is not the first time someone has collected flies in this way, and my efforts have not greatly expanded the field of scatological studies. However, I learned a little bit more about flies.

First, flies are fussy. For the first couple of days almost all the flies were large (*Scathophaga stercoraria, Eudasyphora cyanella, Polietes lardarius*), but after day two the catch was almost all of much smaller fry (photo). Being in full sun, the deer droppings must have dried out quite quickly. What was impressive was that the flies could tell the difference between wet fresh and dry stale droppings without coming near enough to end up in the trap. Most of the species that turned up on the first two days were not seen again. One stalwart was *Sepsis cynipsea* which was present almost daily for almost two weeks. But from day three onwards the sense was of new species turning up each day. Then right at the end of my "study" two large flies again and no small ones … testament to the ephemeral temptation of faecal matter!

Secondly, male and female flies can have quite different behaviours – there was an excess of males for both *Scathophaga stercoraria* (9 males, 2 female) and *Sepsis cynipsea* (44 males, 8 females), and an excess of females for *Eudasyphora cyanella* (5 females, 1 male). Of 19 species for which there were fewer than four specimens, 14 were represented by only females and 5 by only males, or possibly four if the *Azelia* females were also *A. trigonica*.



Third, though I knew this already, flies are diverse. At least 26 species were attracted to this golf ball sized bait, three of which were muscids that I had not previously found in the garden or the woods around – *Mysopila meditabunda* (three females on different days), *Polietes meridionalis* and *Azelia trigonica* (both males), together with the sphaerocerid *Coproica hirticula* (female). The last three species are all fairly unusual records for Scotland.



And lastly, a fly in context means something more than one fly among hundreds in a net after bludgeoning one's way through promising habitat. Flies I was familiar with now had a little more personality than before, having been caught while going about their business, drawn in by the freshness or staleness of the dropping, territorial males on the hunt for females, females looking for a place to lay eggs. Now to go through the catch from a road-kill hedgehog ...

Woodland

State of UK Woods and Trees Report - Woodland Specific Diptera Data

Tom Walsh (Woodland Trust)

Following the release of our State of UK Woods and Trees report in 2021, the first report of its kind laying out the facts and trends on the current state of the UK's native woods and trees, we are currently developing the second edition of the series, focusing on the state of UK woods and trees in a changing world.

As part of the new report, we are looking to include trends in population data for a range of taxa to support our woodland wildlife chapter. In addition to data from the Bunce woodland survey report and JNCC UK indicator species, we are hoping to include additional data on populations trends for further species/species groups including woodland specific invertebrates, bryophytes, lichens and fungi. As such, we are interested in hearing about any woodland specific data regarding Diptera that we may be able to highlight. Specifically, we are looking for:

- Woodland associated species which are showing notable population increases or decreases
- Woodland associated species which are showing notable range changes
- Where possible, any information on how populations and ranges of woodland associated species may differ by country and/or region

This information, if available, will be invaluable in adding context to the chapter and relating current drivers of changes in woodland biodiversity to species populations across the UK. If this is something that you may be able to help with, please do get in touch.

Many thanks,

Tom Walsh tomwalsh@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Farming

SFI – a great step towards nature-friendly farming?

Rob Wolton

In England's farming circles SFI is much talked about. I'm not referring to some genre of science fiction, but to the Sustainable Farming Initiative – acronyms are rife these days in the agricultural world. Great hopes are pinned upon it to make up the shortfall in farming income following the loss of the main farming subsidy pre-Brexit and to make farming in an environmentally-friendly way economically feasible. Different schemes are being developed in the other three UK countries – it's a devolved matter – and I offer my apologies to readers from these other countries for being England-centric. But I have the excuse of our family farm, which I manage, being in Devon, so naturally I know what is happening in England best.

Tax-payer support for environmentally-friendly farming these days is fiendishly complex. For example, we have a Higher Level Stewardship agreement under a legacy scheme, Environmental Stewardship, but are planning to move into a combination of mid-tier Countryside Stewardship and SFI. I've probably lost most readers already, but in case you are interested, Countryside Stewardship and SFI are elements of the once much used acronym ELMs, aka Environmental Land Management schemes, that started to be developed post Brexit, a third element being Landscape Recovery Schemes. Got it? No, well then you stand excused, most farmers I speak with haven't and I would not be at all surprised if someone corrects me…

Anyhow, back to the SFI. This is the talk of the countryside because it's designed to be simple way of getting fair payments to manage land in a way that's friendly to wildlife, or to the soil, water, historical features, etc. It's purposively designed to contain elements that are not too challenging, so farmers have a realistic chance of making up the loss of money following the demise of that main pre-Brexit farming subsidy I talked about, the Basic Payment Scheme. Under that scheme farmers simply got money per hectare of land they managed provided they complied with some very basic environmental rules – like not removing hedges. Now you have to take positive action for the environment. If you want to do more challenging things then increasingly the SFI can pay for them too, otherwise look to Countryside Stewardship, or collaborate with your neighbours to enter a bespoke Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Within SFI there's a long menu of 102 options farmers can select from (the list gets longer every year). Here are some examples:

- Create or maintain flower-rich grass margins
- No use of insecticide on arable crops and permanent crops
- Sow pollen and nectar flower mix
- Bumblebird mix – yes you read that right and you can get £747 per ha
- Create scrub and open habitat mosaics

One very popular option in livestock areas now is often referred to simply as SAM3 after the Defra code, and that is establishing and maintaining herbal leys: these are replacing monocultures of rye grass on a large scale. Another is HRW2 – manage hedgerows (basically in any way apart from cutting them hard back every year). A recent improvement in the scheme is to pay farmers who already have flower-rich grassland just as much as those who are creating it, resulting in a massive increase from £182 to £646 per ha. Previously, farmers who had already done the right thing were heavily penalised.

So, I hope you will agree, all good stuff and genuinely encouraging. In April 2024 there were already 13,900 SFI agreements covering over 2 million hectares, on top of many more agreements under Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship. Of course, there's much that can still be improved within SFI but it is definitely going in the right direction and should make a big difference to the quality of the farmed environment in England, and to its insects. The majority of farmers are thinking seriously about SFI, if not already in it.

Conservation Officer report

Mark Welch

Middlewick Ranges, Essex: proposed SSSI

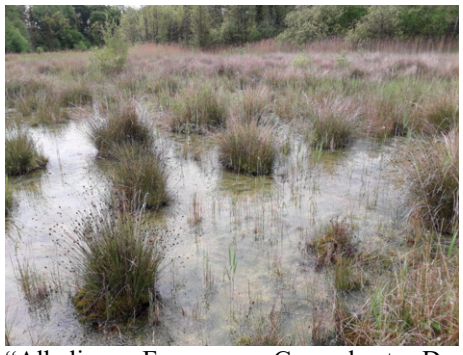
In July I was contacted by Buglife about their proposal for designation of the MoD's Middlewick Ranges in Essex as an SSSI in the face of imminent sale of this land by the MoD and obvious threats from development which loom large. After consulting the DF committee, I added DF to the list of signatories to a letter that Buglife has now sent to Natural England (Marian Spain) with their formal case for SSSI designation. Buglife has also created an online petition on *38 degrees*.



The pNS satellite fly *Miltogramma germari*, a cleptoparasite of the solitary bees *Dasypoda hirtipes* and *Anthophora bimaculata*. Photo: Vanna Bartlett

Among the important vertebrates at Middlewick Ranges are Barbastelle Bat and Nightingale. The list of Diptera for Middlewick Ranges that Buglife sent me contained only 168 species (out of c.1500 invertebrates), of which a dozen had conservation status and included the following: *Tomosvaryella minima* (Pipunculidae, NR, NT), *Micropeza lateralis* (Micropezidae, pNS), *Oscinimorpha sordidissima* (Chloropidae, pNS), *Trixoscelis marginella* (Heleomyzidae, pNS), *Aulogastromyia anisodactyla* (Lauxaniidae), *Eudorylas zermattensis* (Pipunculidae, pNS), *Miltogramma germari* (Sarcophagidae, pNS), *Dorycera graminum* (Ulidiidae). The first British record of *Homoneura interstincta* (Lauxaniidae) was from Middlewick Ranges by David Gibbs in 2004.

NPPF consultation – a policy for alkaline fens



Cothill NNR with pools containing thick mats of Chara (May 2022). Photo: Mark Welch

The Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) has submitted a formal request to the government (Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government) for a policy on "Alkaline Fens – Groundwater-Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems" in relation to an open consultation on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be carried out during the period 30/7/24 to 24/09/24. This request focuses on the heavily degraded state of many of the Oxfordshire fens. The government will respond to this open consultation by end 2024.

FHT's concerns are that the Local Plan for Oxfordshire and the preferred option policies for the sites allocated for development do not adequately account for the adverse impacts of development on the groundwater catchment. The obvious key issues are groundwater capacity, water quality and water chemistry, all of which are impacted by inappropriate land management practices and housing development, e.g. nutrient run-off from arable fields; inappropriate sites for water abstraction; the impact of large impermeable concreted/tarmacked areas on the hydrology of vulnerable sites. The latter problem prevents the recharge and supply of clean, calcium-rich groundwater to the alkaline fens. Lowland fens are already designated as irreplaceable habitat in paragraph 180 of the NPPF. FHT argue alkaline spring/seepage fens (home to many rare flies) should have a special status reflected included in a dedicated policy for such fens which highlights the sensitivity of the rainwater catchment. Thanks to Judy Webb for information.

Batman

So long and thanks for all the flies

Darwyn Sumner

Dipterists Forum isn't a campaigning organisation but occasionally we'll add our voices in support of some worthwhile project such as Buglife's Middlewick Ranges SSSI campaign. Hopefully this will match up with changes in the worrying continued neglect of SSSI designating and attempted disbandment of Natural England reported in British Wildlife.

Comedian Stewart Lee, discommoded by changes in the UK's changes in politics recently landed firmly on his feet writing in the 28th July Observer with a piece very much in our area, with the amusing notion of DC comics building a vast franchise on the premise of a man having the powers of a weak dying mammal after spending a week in Monmouthshire "bereft of life" where previously bats would have been seen feasting on insect clouds. Radio gets called into question as a source of acoustic cues with his comment that "you still can't see the Green party on the BBC news anything like as regularly as, …" Well worth a read, hope he keeps it up.

Natural England

Green attacks fail

Writing in June's **British Wildlife**, Miles King tells of the late government plans to remove Natural England's powers to designate SSSIs and even tells of rumours circulating that the "Tory manifesto will include a commitment to disband Natural England." If you were disturbed at reading this then you'll be uplifted by Graham Lawton's column in **New Scientist** (3rd August) in which he states that "Voters around the world support green policies and politicians should take note" . More recent British Wildlife stories are somewhat more encouraging, though recent plans by Natural Resources Wales to cut 265 jobs is disturbing.

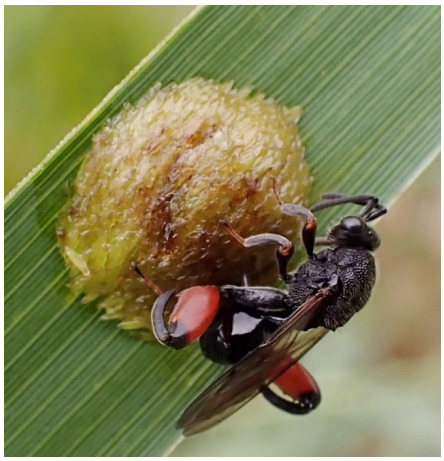
Adopt-a-Species

Adopt-a-Species News

Judy Webb

In Cothill Fen SSSI/SAC where I monitor rare plants and rare flies (and do practical conservation volunteering) weekly on Fridays, a long cold wet spring meant that the weather was poor for the whole of the time I might have expected to see the rare Milichiid *Milichia ludens* on the bark or flying around the ash tree with the nest of its host Jet Ant *Lasius fuliginosus*, so no records this year. The same applies to the rare early-flying cranefly *Triogma trisulcata*. Hopefully they managed to complete their life cycles on the few dry days when I was not there.

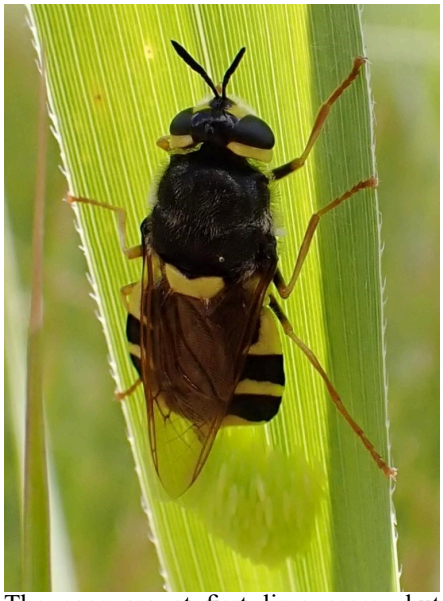
The start of the soldierfly emergence season in Cothill Fen is usually the end of May. I put cleaned out grapefruit skins (live bait traps) out in late April in the NNR fen section but no soldierfly larvae were seen under any of them until early May when only *Odontomyia sp* were seen. A search of waterlogged moss mats and mats of Chara stonewort algae in warm sunny shallow water locations on 10th May revealed good numbers of *Odontomyia* and *Stratiomys* mature larvae hiding away just below the surface of these plants in the warmest location. Sieving shallow marly mud from a pool revealed fully mature active *Stratiomys* larvae. From marly mud one *Stratiomys* puparium found on 10th May in the NNR section was retained at home and hatched to a male Clubbed General *Stratiomys chamaeleon* on 31st May, possibly slightly earlier than I might expect it to be flying in the fen, but not by much. It's presence in the rearing pot was indicated by a loud 'buzzing' noise which continued for some time and caused me to wonder whether this was part of 'warming up' to be ready to fly. It was released back to the fen.



The parasitic wasp Chalcis sispes ovipositing in a Stratiomys egg

Weather continued unpredictably poor for fly recording. One common soldierfly, the Black Colonel *Odontomyia tigrina* was seen on the wing in the fen on 24th May. By the 1st of June I was seeing numbers of *Stratiomys* empty puparia on waterlogged Chara mats, so emergence well under way even though weather poor for sweeping. The species that might be expected here alongside S. chamaeleon include Flecked General *S. singularior*, Banded General *S. potamida* and possibly Long-horned General *S. longicornis* based on past adult records.

A *Stratiomys* puparium found on 24th and retained at home produced a chalcid parasite the Red-legged Big-thigh *Chalcis sispes* instead of a soldierfly on 7th June. These chalcid wasps are specific to *Stratiomys sp* larvae and can be swept fairly frequently and often more abundantly than their host flies from fen vegetation all summer. I'm told that good numbers of these indicate a good host *Stratiomys sp* population. *Stratiomys* species oviposit masses of eggs on leaves of emergent vegetation over shallow water (larvae hatch and drop to the water). On 21.06.2024 I was able to photograph a *Stratiomys chameleon* female doing this (photo).



The eggs are at first lime green, but quickly turn yellow then brown. On 5th July I was lucky enough to encounter a female Chalcis sispes ovipositing into a different *Stratiomys* egg mass on a reed leaf about 1m above a shallow water pool. The female wasp injects an egg into individual *Stratiomys* eggs which takes some time which aids photography. Recent hot and dry weather may have accelerated emergence and completion of life cycles but at the time of writing *Stratiomys* sp. are still on the wing with sighting of one adult *S. chamaeleon* on 28th July.

About

Adopt-a-species

The Conservation team have been running this project for several years now. It was begun by Barbara Ismay (Bulletin 64) and later co-ordinated by the team.

The list is based upon "BAP species and other rare or threatened species" and we've featured reports on many of them over the years.

A good starting point for reading about these is Bulletin 75, p9 where Rob Wolton summarises the scheme followed by several authors accounts of a variety of species. Steve Falk, Roy Crossley, Martin Drake & Judy Webb.

If you've a search tool in your pdf reader then subsequent reports are simple to find in your collection of Bulletin pdfs if you keep them all in the same folder. You'll find later authors included Ian Andrews, Iain MacGowan from the Malloch Society, Chris Spilling and others.

Browse through your Bulletins for the past decade to find a host of exciting flies and their stories. As you do so, check your recent finds and join Judy in telling us their tales.



Salticella fasciata from 2007. [D.Sumner]

Countryside Access



Darwyn Sumner

Site-seeing

Without any kind of designation some of our most valuable sites are at risk. Even the lowest tier, Local Wildlife Sites, may have only been designated on the basis of brief botanical surveys. If they even fail to meet that grade they may still be of considerable invertebrate interest (though not necessarily public access, check first)

Perhaps we can add the idea of "undesignated sites of invertebrate interest" to our Bulletin shopping list. Technology offers some good tools to share location details, SatNav data points can be exchanged as we've discussed before in this Bulletin but iNaturalist site-based projects can help a good deal more by providing maps. On my list for revisiting this year:

- **Norfolk**: **Burgh-next-Aylsham** LWS in process
- **Cheshire**: **Worthington Flash** for *Neria femoralis*
- **Leicestershire**: **Cloud Wood** county favourite
- **Lancashire**: **several sites** - historical hotspots

Thus doubling the value obtainable from iNaturalist because it can be used to share site information too.

Maybe you know of some good sites in your area that are worth visits by other dipterists, do let us editors have links to ones you've created. It's such an easy thing to make those site maps using iNaturalist + Google Earth to draw shapes. Once you've done that and set up an iNaturalist project as a container for them there's space too for any amount of text descriptions about the site such as parking spots etc.

Like our blocked footpaths we'll lose them if we don't investigate them (BNG doesn't currently cover invertebrate interest though.)

[*The most effective way of ensuring you don't drive past a stonking site on your way through an unfamiliar county is to have Alan Stubbs in the car with you*]

Open Spaces Society

So easy to be led onto different paths with the topic of countryside access. The OSS website is well worth a visit as it is packed with resources:

https://www.oss.org.uk/

as is the BENHS collecting code

https://www.benhs.org.uk/resources/collecting/

and if you have specific enquiries then your Local Records Centre will know all about permissions for Local Wildlife Sites and others.

Dipterists Forum field trip organisers of course take great care to ensure there is permission to collect.

Just taking photographs may be safer.

AND NOW.....

Waiter, there is a hoverfly in my soup



Alan Stubbs

Waiter. I am terribly sorry sir. We endeavour to maintain the highest standards.

Customer. But I expect more than one hoverfly in hoverfly soup!

Waiter. Regrettably, this year our suppliers cannot keep up with demand. We have even ceased production of our famed Marmalade Migration soup because there appears to have been no migration, almost unprecedented in recent decades.

Customer. The menu seems remarkably sparce.

Waiter. I am afraid most of our wild fly soups have similar problems, such as Hilara Thrila.

Customer. Well import them.

Waiter. The problem is not confined to Britain. Besides the postal service is too unreliable to ensure fresh deliveries. Legislation such as CITES means that parcels are confiscated by customs officers who cannot tell whether protected species are being illegally sneaked through.

Customer. OK, but surely there must be something better than what you have served.

Waiter. With the compliments of the management, I can replace your order with Blowfly Soup, hand reared by the recording scheme organiser and her family to ensure that only the most nutritious genetic lines are chosen. Would you prefer Blowfly Maggot Broth or the Brilliant Blowfly Gem version?

Ah, the Broth for you sir, and for madam?, …. The Gem. I see the card on the table – a memorable way to celebrate your wedding anniversary.

NBN Trust
Making data work for nature

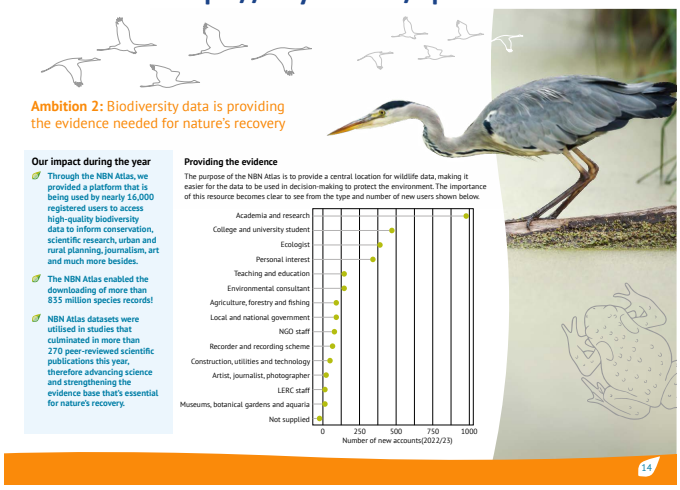
National Biodiversity Network

NBN's Communications and Engagement Manager Mandy Henshall asked me back at the start of June for 500 words on behalf of Dipterists Forum, one of their data partners, as a contribution to their NBN Trust impact strategy. Regrettably I had to decline, being in the final throes of packing for the first of several hunting expeditions during that month.

Naturally the apologies I made was in the region of 500 words in the email but not the sort of thing she was wanting.

Here's last year's Annual Impact Report. If there's one url worth typing out in this Bulletin, this is the one:

https://tinyurl.com/4p22tkvc



One of the 32 pages in the report, this one features research

Rarely does one get asked for concise items, I like a theme to wrap a story around but after rejecting several which I pondered whilst waving my camera around in wet Norfolk, all of which would have been too wordy I did have occasion to look at several examples of ~500 words. The tiniest ones are to be found in iNaturalist, the default "Joe Bloggs is a naturalist", a little longer in British Wildlife explaining who the author is at the end of each feature piece. Eventually I compiled a recollected history of our involvement with NBN and used it to acknowledge the contributions made over the years by various naturalists I've come into contact with. Now I have my theme and lots of pointers to little cameo accounts of a number of contributors to our Network, all within that 500 words bracket (if you track them down on NBN's website.)

About our Network

The "Network" in the title gives it away, it's actually all of us with an interest in Biodiversity. We share both mission and vision.

It consists of all the players in the game, from big NGOs and Recording organisations such as BTO, through government organisations such as Natural England & Defra, national organisations such as NFBR & BRC and regional ones such as all the Local Environmental Records Centres to individual Recording Schemes and collectives such as Dipterists Forum.

Back in 200? they all got together in an attempt to coordinate everyone's efforts to improve biodiversity data services across the board. Solutions were debated until eventually they came up with an Open Data solution and they all threw together their expertise and cash to set up a Trust to deliver those services on everyone's behalf. And so the NBNTrust was born and experts recruited to build the first of those Open Data systems, the NBN Gateway.

We were involved in all this from the very beginning, me serving in both NFBR and in a fledgling Local Records Centre, Stuart Ball wearing both a JNCC and a Dipterists Forum hat and others working in various organisations such as BRC. The early conferences were packed with all the great and good you could ever imagine. Alan Stubbs was at one, together with at least another 3 DF members. At London Wildlife Trust's premises, RSPB's Mark Avery chaired a group that I was part of, assigning BRC's Mark Hill to lead our particular team of four.

The NBNt team grew and with it their systems and services, supporting biodiversity projects across the board. LRCs developed within NFBR resulting in a professional body, ALERC which I helped set up as a CIC and became Company Secretary. The NBN Gateway became the NBN Atlas due to improved infrastructure and NBNt continued to consult widely about the aspirations and needs of all its members, some of it via a series of remarkable conferences in partnership with the likes of NFBR and NHM. You had to be there, the networking opportunities were (and still are) phenomenal. You cannot keep the likes of Martin Harvey, Chris Raper, Steve Garland and Derek Whiteley away from these things, even I gave a short presentation. Stuart Ball was awarded Honorary Member for his NBN efforts

We helped devise and pay for it so of course we joined it. Their principles are short and sweet, Open Data via FAIR principles and their most recent initiative in which they partner BRC: iNaturalistUK for which Buglife's DF committee member Victoria Burton was a key promoter and endorser.

By Dipterists Forum joining them and assisting their work via our membership subscription we fully endorse those principles and systems. We've got badges to prove it and several of our DF members have award certificates in their homes.

Step into any NBN conference as a Dipterists Forum member and your reputation is assured amongst representatives of even the largest organisations. If you're one of the above you might even get "awe" (you had to have seen Steve & Derek's double act as Waldo & Statler from the Muppets)

All previously reported in our Bulletin of course, one substantial account is in Bulletin 72 from 2011

Sumner D.P. 2011. *Dipterists Forum in the NBN*. Bull. Dipterists Forum. 5–6.

People in the Network

An historical journey through our involvement with the Network since its formation. Your journey will differ but most listed below should be recognisable. Red & amber items are actual awards (see box), green are contributors in various roles and blue are honourable mentions.

We've winners of these prestigious awards within Dipterists Forum or at least fellow naturalists who have contributed to our work in some way. My recollection is that in the earlier days Stuart Ball for example contributed extensively to key conferences.

All of that predates their more formal (and sponsored - Opticron, FSC, British Wildlife, NHBS) awards though so I guess early contributors missed out on formal thanks of this nature.

You may recognise these folk:

2010: Derek Lott (Honorary Member) my late boss, his Open Data coleoptera dataset from Leicester VC is legendary, I worked on it with him

2013: Stuart Ball (Honorary Member) A considerable amount of foundation work. For example Stuart, Trevor and I were part of the team that began work on digitised Vice County maps using the originals housed at NHM.

2017: Mandy Rudd (Board Member): Chief Executive of Greenspace Information for Greater London (we worked together in NFBR to form ALERC) The GIGL newsletter gets the occasional mention in this Bulletin.

2017: Jann Billker (Gilbert White Youth Award for recording terrestrial and freshwater wildlife.) Recall he accompanied Barbara & John Ismay at the Canterbury Field Meeting (reported in Bulletin 82)

2017: Liam Olds (Adult Newcomer Award)

2017: Derek Whiteley with Roseanna Burton (Lynne Farrell Group Award)

2017: Paula Lightfoot (David Robertson Adult Award)

2018: Trevor James (Gilbert White Adult Award) presented by Martin Harvey



Trevor was NBN Development Officer for National Societies & Recording Schemes and author of the Handbook *Running a Biological Recording Scheme or Survey*

2018 Dipterists Forum (NBNt Member)

Thank you for the Dipterists Forum's support by becoming an organisational member of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). Currently we have over 200 members, organisations and individuals whose support allows us to promote biological recording and the NBN Atlas, the largest species data base for any country in the world. In addition we have hundreds of organisations, individuals and volunteers who supply the millions of species records to the NBN Atlas.

NBN Secretariat

Sumner, D.P. 2018 *Dipterists Forum becomes NBN member*. Bulletin 86 p7

2019: Sue Taylor (Newcomer Award)



2019: [Ian Wallace - caddisflies] (Award for Wildlife Recording) known for the Riverflies scheme and often seen at ento. shows

2019: Alan Outen (runner-up Award for Wildlife Recording)

2020: David Nichols (John Sawyer NBN Open Data Award) for NatureSpot

2021: Victoria Burton iNaturalistUK launch

2022: Steve McWilliam (runner-up Award for Wildlife Recording) Steve founded the Cheshire LRC Record and edited the Lancashire & Cheshire Ent. Soc. newsletter for many years, he also helped launch iNaturalistUK

2022: Darwyn Sumner (GBIF Biodiversity Open Data Ambassador); advised by NBN's Sophia Radcliffe. See box below

2023: Dipterists Forum - in Annual Impact Report

2024: Matthew Vosper UK Hoverflies on iNaturalistUK featured in NBN June Newsletter

2024: Dipterists Forum Recording Schemes project on iNaturalistUK featured in NBN August Newsletter

Many thanks to all the above for flying the Dipterists Forum flag and helping support all the Recording Schemes throughout the wider recording community and providing us with such a good reputation. Apologies to those I've left out and to NBNt's Mandy due to my soggy June exploits, hope this makes up for it.

References

Crossley, R, 2019. *Dipterists Forum - the early years*. Bulletin 88, p4

Chandler, P. 2011. *Why not join the BENHS*. Bulletin 72, p18

Sumner, D.P. 2011 *Dipterists Forum in the NBN*. Bulletin 72 , p5-6

Harvey, M. 2019. *Sharing biological records*. Bulletin 87, p7

Sumner, D.P. 2021 *iRecord + iNaturalistUK* Bulletin 92 p2

Falk, S. *British Flies on Flickr* Bulletin 92 p5-8

NBN Awards

These awards have been developed by the National Biodiversity Network, the National Forum for Biological Recording and the Biological Records Centre. Their intention is to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions made to biological recording by adults and young people, which is helping to improve our understanding of the UK's wildlife

Announcements for nominations take place in January and close in March so our Autumn Bulletins are the only issues in which we can tell you about them. Keep an eye on:

https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-awards-for-wildlife-recording/

Read more at the following links:

1. Who are NBN https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/

2. Principles https://nbn.org.uk/news/fair-data-principles/

3. iNaturalist https://nbn.org.uk/news/inaturalistuk-year-in-review/

4. Primacy of the NBN Atlas https://tinyurl.com/4eb4sn6j/

and keep up to date with their news at

https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/latest-stories-from-our-network/

Other NBN affiliations

In addition to the above awards, Dipterists Forum has links to NBN in many other ways through its founding members:

Environment Agency, JNCC, Natural England, Marine Biological Association, National Forum for Biological Recording, Natural History Museum, Natural Resources Wales (was CCW), Natural Environment Research Council (BRC origins) & Wildlife Trusts.

NBN is also the UK's participating member of GBIF (see box below)

Clearly we cannot detail all the ways in which we either contribute to the work of all the above (and others) but the Natural History Museum has provided the venues and other support for much of our efforts. See the feature below.

NBN & iNaturalistUK

Darwyn Sumner

This was the second major initiative launched by NBNt. Several had had a go at it earlier, indeed the Natural History Museum had already advocated using it alongside iRecord so interest was already quite considerable. Consequently NBN did what other countries had done already and configured and promoted our own UK version.

The basic details can be found at

https://uk.inaturalist.org/

where you'll find all the links you need.

It excels at statistics so there you'll discover the UK now has over 50,000 naturalists signed up and they've amassed nearly 6 million records; our Diptera records are 3.6% of that figure. These pass to the Recording Schemes via iRecord thanks to BRC development efforts as well as directly to GBIF.

The site also enjoys endorsement by DF committee member Victoria Burton, another of just 3 featured on the site is also a dipterist, Steve McWilliam who you'll find active on iNaturalist confirming IDs for many fly species.

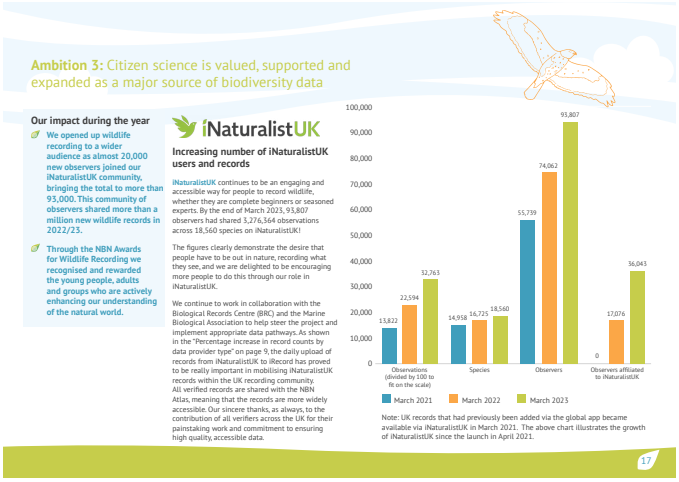
Just two of the many dipterists active on iNaturalistUK. We've also Matt Vosper, Ian Andrews, Roy Lowry, Sam Rees, Chris Raper, Barry Warrington heading up the list of identifiers on our sites. Stats are easy to find, just go to one of our Recording Scheme projects and click the Identifiers button.

Not just UK dipterists either, overseas experts are substantial contributors to identification of our UK finds and if you find one who takes an interest in your particular group of study then there's an excellent opportunity to strike up conversations and friendships with fellow dipterists in France, Germany, Austria, Finland and more. A very substantial win for our DF objective "*To focus on the Diptera of the British Isles whilst maintaining an interest in those of continental Europe and elsewhere.*"

A popular and valuable recording tool fully endorsed by Dipterists Forum and all her Network partners

If you've not had a try so far then do join us. You'll need a picture of course and a clear notion of the four "W"s. In the meantime explore the various projects detailed in this Bulletin and **take a look at their blog** https://uk.inaturalist.org/blog

More impact



Analysis of iNaturalistUK popularity last year



Particular mention of Dipterists Forum, a popular member of the iNaturalistUK community.

Many thanks from Dipterists Forum and indeed the whole Network for the astounding efforts of all those involved in working with iNaturalistUK.

Read on for details of all our iNaturalist projects …

GBIF Biodiversity Open Data Ambassador

GBIF



The Global Biodiversity Information Facility, is an international network and data infrastructure funded by the world's governments and aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth.

It comprises a network of participating countries of which the UK's National Biodiversity Network are one, through the open data on NBN Atlas, as too is iNaturalistUK

https://www.gbif.org/what-is-gbif

Within GBIF are a corps of professionals advocating best practices in open sharing and transparent use of biodiversity data. We are a small group of volunteers, the GBIF Biodiversity Open Data Ambassadors. There are 4 in England (including myself, NBN's Sophia Ratcliffe and Paula Lightfoot) plus one in Scotland. To qualify one has to show evidence of international contributions to GBIF's Open Data, mine for the Czech Republic & Slovakia (so far.) We volunteers are worth ~€1M per year according to GBIF Secretariat

Further details may be found at

https://tinyurl.com/y9hdhdb9

Helpfully, GBIF provide support for their volunteers in various ways, not only through their Forum but also in their published Code of Conduct

https://www.gbif.org/code-of-conduct

Darwyn Sumner

GBIF Biodiversity Open Data Ambassador

GBIF message: *At the end of each year, we recognize volunteers' efforts with digital badges that credit the different roles in which they have served*

Thanks for all you do for GBIF!

GBIF Secretariat

Biological Records Centre

The Recording Schemes meeting which we detailed in the last Bulletin went ahead in the Spring. Fortunately we caught the event just in time for some of our observations to be included in the multi-organisation poster which we reproduced with kind permission in the last Bulletin. The report from that meeting can be found here

https://www.brc.ac.uk/article/brc-national-recording-schemes-meeting-2024

A very thorough report issued in a surprisingly quick time. Well worth a read by our Recording Schemes and indeed many other members with a wish to know more about what BRC are getting up to these days. Dipterists Forum members represented included Martin Harvey of course and somewhere in that poster you'll find an assortment of issues conveyed to me from numerous Recording Schemes and other organisations in recent times.

Gratifyingly one of the questions asked turned up in one of the presentations - what does the Biological Data Flow picture look like now?

Where your records go

Biological Data Flow

The following flow chart was part of the presentation by Natural England's Mike Prince:

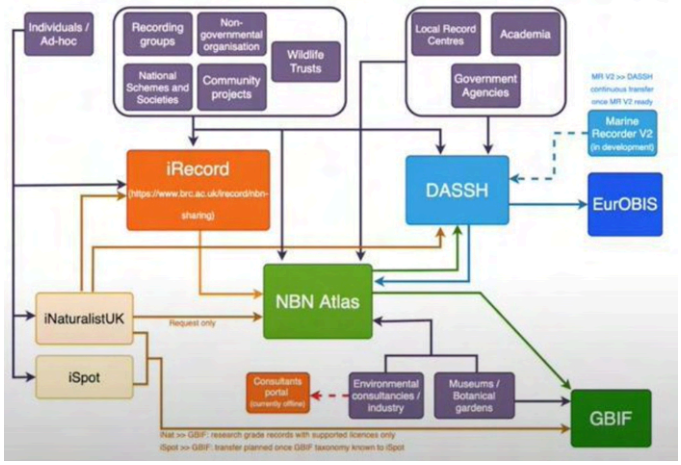


Figure 1. Network of online Biological Data Silos

Orange lines represent some level of quality control - verification.

Traditional Biological Recording systems such as MapMate, Recorder 6 and Excel etc. plus Darwin Core are part of the mechanisms helping move the data along the arrows. Records collections stored elsewhere are the "known unknowns" and thus not represented.

By simplifying the overall view of the network of systems in this way Mike's achieved a valuable clarity. All those systems have been focussed upon in this Bulletin (#96 p14) except the blue marine bits.

It would be possible to add more detail and arrows because each box may be a system in its own right. For example Local Records Centres link to Environmental Consultants, National Pond Survey dips into the Government Agency box and many of our Diptera Recording Schemes (best summarised by the back pages of each Bulletin) plus friends into that National Schemes and Societies box.

Mike included this in the context of his presentation regarding NCEA, the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment so you should watch his video to learn more about that.

Maps

Targeting Revisits maps

We had the logos for these on a couple of Recording Schemes in the last Bulletin without any detail regarding what they were all about. Again BRC has that explanation at

https://www.brc.ac.uk/article/targeting-revisits-maps-help-get-most-out-insect-recording

It may well be that implementing it for your Recording Scheme would require you to have all your records on iRecord and be organising a highly popular group. my three don't qualify for either. It looks cool though, try them out.

Identification

Verifiers

The verifier community who provide the quality control allowing your records to pass from iRecord to NBN Atlas' Open Data was seen even in the early days of iRecord as the problematic bottleneck. So many records, so few verifiers with the experise to check them. We listed them back in 2021, Martin Harvey will be happy to list them again in the future but he has to ask them first.

It's working fairly well for some schemes though undoubtedly the larger ones have a big job on their hands. Ian Andrews is doing a great job on Muscidae (see Mike Ashworth's new Study Group below.) The Sciomyzidae are OK, just, with Matt Harrow much more skilled than I but it could use the addition to our list of one or two folk who really know their stuff. For craneflies, Ryan Mitchell continues to act as a verifier (as he has done for some time), and he is likely to be joined by Jenni Wilding who recently offered to help with this

If you are experienced in recording a particular family of Diptera and are able to offer some time to help with verification, do contact the relevant recording scheme organiser and/or BRC, who can then liaise over how best to take things forward.. That goes for our iNaturalist dabblers too (including overseas experts if they can be bothered by one small country not their own - Finland and Holland have similar systems for example), there are clearly folk there who know their stuff.

You'll find a lot of them at **https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp172** and the Craneflies at **https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr2250**

Questionnaire

BRC's NBN Atlas survey

This survey was sent to Recording Scheme organisers. It seeks our opinion regarding the use of unverified records on NBN Atlas and asks for suggestions as to how to verify records from non-Recording Schemes

Joined up systems

NBN + BRC + iNaturalistUK

"The work of BRC is a major component of the National Biodiversity Network"

A summary of BRC's relationship with **NBN** and **iNaturalist** can be found at https://www.brc.ac.uk/theme/apps-and-technology in the section "Increased data-sharing" and the **iRecord/iNaturalistUK** details are at:

https://irecord.org.uk/help/linking-inaturalist

Darwyn Sumner & Martin Harvey

Museums

Natural History Museum

Though we're only formally signed up to our big three we've also our hosts to thank. From the smallest office and tearoom through small boardrooms to grand lecture rooms such as the Flett Theatre and later Darwin Centre facilities, a large number of the above events have taken place in the Natural History Museum.

> Not all of them I hasten to add for the benefit of poor travellers; Dipterists Forum alternates our Annual Meeting with other regional museums.

Different Recording Schemes will have different members of NHM staff on their support crew depending on their particular specialities. We are lucky in having several, current and retired, and are always on the lookout for any more to turn to the dark side.

As a founding member of NBN it's unsurprising that the NHM would be supportive of their aims and objectives and indeed they've a page of recording advice on their website to help direct enquirers to key organisations and initiatives should that be their first place to search: **https://tinyurl.com/hyzykenb** or just go to **https://www.nhm.ac.uk/** and enter the search term "recording", the one we feature below is fourth on the list:

How to share and explore wildlife records online

A very useful and comprehensive guide on this page, a few highlights are:



Figure 1 A side-by side comparison of iNaturalist and iRecord



Figure 2 Directions to NBN Atlas and Natural England's site site

Additionally there are details of a junior (<13yr) version of iNaturalist called "Seek" Teachers and parents take note, this is one good way to help them learn about wildlife.

Finally there are brief tips on how to look for records already uploaded as Open Data:

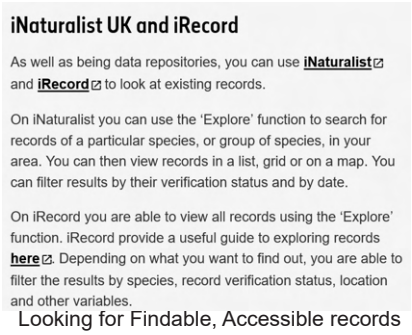


Figure 3 Looking for Findable, Accessible records

A clear and valuable guide for those starting out. The authors aren't specified, just a copyright note from the NHM Trustees which I'm sure they'll forgive.

Predating the NBN's iNaturalistUK initiative judging by the older logo. We've many more iNat tips recounted in the Bulletin since then

Darwyn Sumner

Museums Open Data

DISCCo project

Announcements on progress with the DISCCo project reported in previous Bulletins come through their website:

https://www.dissco.eu/

Its objective is to "*digitally unifies all European natural science assets, sharing common access, curation, policies and practices across countries while ensuring that all the data complies with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data).*" - that's Open Data to you and me.

It has one of those News pages with a number of interesting articles, you can subscribe to get regular updates if you wish. In one article there's an offer to give you guidance on "best practice on how to photograph specimens". I'll be looking into that before attempting work on my collections (see Techniques below.) - that article has contributions from NHM and Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh

It's an international initiative so you'd need to begin exploring from there to determine progress in UK museums.

As it's international the ultimate destination for the biodiversity data will be GBIF, same as iNaturalist. This bypasses UK silos such as NBNAtlas I'm afraid so do take care to assign sensible verification levels if you go trawling GBIF for data of an old UK collection for your analyses.

Recording schemes

The Nature of Recording Scheme support

Darwyn Sumner

One of the primary functions of Dipterists Forum is support for all the Recording Schemes. The two main avenues are through our partners BRC + NBN and through our Bulletin.

Summarising all that is a tricky task since there are a number of ways in which each publicise the work of the Recording Schemes, notably BRC through hosting an online list of them all plus maintaining pages on our own DF website and from the Bulletin team the iNaturalistUK projects and the interactive brochure which forms the back pages of each Bulletin.

Each could undoubtedly say much more (and do) but the following very simple table will give some idea of how each are supporting the efforts of the Recording Scheme organisers - and through them all your recording efforts in the field.

Recording Scheme	Bulletin	Group	Open Science
Leaf-miner Recording Scheme	6	3	
Anthomyiidae Study Group	6	3	C
Calliphoridae Recording Scheme	2	4	C
Chloropidae Study Group	0		N/A
Conopid Recording Scheme	6	3	C
Cranefly Recording Scheme	27	1	C
Mosquitoes Recording Scheme	1	4	C
Dixidae & Thaumateidae Recording Scheme	4	3	C
Empids & Dolichopodids	17	2	C
Fungus Gnats Recording Scheme	13	2	C
Heleomyzid Recording Scheme	2	4	C
Ked, louse & bat-fly Recording Scheme	1	4	C
Kelp-fly Recording Scheme	2	4	C
Soldierflies & Allies Recording Scheme	18	1	C
Lesser Dung Fly Study Group	1	4	N/A
Lonchaeidae Study Group	2	4	N/A
Micropezid & Tanypezid Recording Scheme	17	2	C
Oestridae Recording Scheme	8	2	C
Pipunculidae Study Group	3	3	N/A
Flat-footed Flies Recording Scheme	5	3	C
Rhinophoridae Recording Scheme	1	4	C
Flesh-fly Recording Scheme	2	4	C
Snail-killing Flies Recording Scheme	8	2	C
Sepsidae Recording Scheme	10	2	C
Scathophagid Recording Scheme	4	3	
Hoverfly Recording Scheme	29	1	
Tachinidae Recording Scheme	4	3	C
Tephritid Flies Recording Scheme	8	2	
Muscidae & Fannidae Study Group	1	4	C
Smaller Acalypterates Recording Scheme	1	4	C

The column "Bulletin" is a count of the number of mentions in the Bulletin throughout a 16 year period from Bulletin 61 to 92. That's 252 items passing through the Bulletin Editor's inbox throughout that period. About 1/3 of these are Newsletters from the Schemes themselves, the remainder are shorter accounts penned by the Editor within the Recording Schemes sections of the Bulletin. The Group column merely divides these into 4 groups based on that figure.

The Open Science symbol represents an Open Data dataset with FAIR access on the NBN Atlas. Most, though not all, may be attributed to BRC systems which send verified records to the NBN Atlas. Greyed-out symbols represent Schemes who are "working on it" with the help of BRC.

This is only a simple visual guide, there is a lot more effort underpinning the work of those Schemes and many helpful guides in the Bulletin. Please consult the brochure and our website to find out more about our Schemes & Study Groups.

Spiritual

The Sharing Naturalists

As naturalists our concept of sharing is fundamental. It's why we joined Natural History Societies and the like so that we could learn from other experienced naturalists. As a group we own the idea; all the sciences arose from naturalists and our spirit of enquiry and teaching.



Reverend C.E. Shaw shares his find on an Oldham Natural History Society ramble in the 1970s,

Sadly there's always a Mr Hyde to our Dr. Jekyll. I can see one now, crouched down behind a Peak District wall taking notes to say "look what you missed" on the BNA coach home. Their spirit lives on.

Today reproducibility of scientific research is considered to be one of the main problems of modern science. A combination of new analytical methods and the prevalence of cheats in some sectors such as medicine has resulted in principles having been drawn up to help share information in transparent ways. Online repositories have been devised, the reason we naturalists clubbed together to form our NBN, to assist with modern sharing methods.

Further reading:

Chavan V.S. & Ingwersen P. 2009. Towards a data publishing framework for primary biodiversity data: challenges and potentials for the biodiversity informatics community. BMC Bioinformatics. 10 Suppl 1: S2.

Costello M.J., Michener W.K., Gahegan M., Zhang Z.-Q. & Bourne P.E. 2013. Biodiversity data should be published, cited, and peer reviewed. Trends Ecol. Evol. 28: 454–461.

Wilkinson M.D. 2016. Comment : The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. Nature. 1–9.

Ritchie S. 2020. Science Fictions: Exposing Fraud, Bias, Negligence and Hype in Science. Penguin, London. 353 pp.

… and a host of other articles in this and previous issues of the Bulletin

"DF and recording scheme organisers to continue working to share data, where appropriate, with BRC and NBN Atlas."

Dipterists Forum recording schemes meeting 2019

Questionnaire

iNaturalistUK

September seems to be the month for online surveys. This second survey should have come through via email to all iNaturalistUK users registered since 1st June.

It is initiated by NBNt and their main announcement is at

https://nbn.org.uk/inaturalistuk/take-part-in-inaturalistuk-user-survey-2/

NBNt have engaged **Exeter University** to conduct this survey on iNaturalist usage and you'll find additional notifications on their forum and on BRC's site:

BRC endorse iNaturalist, having developed addins to their iRecord system, .

https://www.brc.ac.uk/article/inaturalistuk-user-survey

By the time the Bulletin goes to press the survey will be closed and we've to await analyses and outcomes. However you can gain some insight into the kind of analysis if you refer to NBNt's Annual Impact Report for last year (see above.)

Your opinion counts - help the NBN Trust to empower everyone to explore biodiversity!

Many thanks to all our iNaturalistUK users

Funded through the **Natural Environment Research Council** as part of their RENEW programme

Locations

Site Recording

Gratifyingly that Google Earth system outlined in the last Bulletin seems to have worked nicely. It's rather old technology by now, the use of kml files to share exact locations so it's surprising I've never seen it used. What I did when I got the spreadsheet sites list for Lancaster was enter the coordinates that Steve Garland had prepared for all the advised parking spots, shift them slightly to land exactly on the layby or whatever and export to a kml. Jane then circulated the files before the meeting.

We'll never know how many found it useful, certainly Joyce and I had them in our SatNav and used them to get around. Mike Ashworth however was delighted and showed me something on his mobile phone which displayed all the little flags and which presumably was part of an app he used to navigate. Straight to the parking spot he told me, he even took a long drive to Sandscale Haws which was outside our official range but presumably his phone SatNav told him how feasible the drive was. He'd a cracking time there by all accounts.

Darwyn Sumner

Recording for yourself

The magic formula is there is no magic formula [Duncan Green]

Top priority for any nature spotter is to keep your own record of things that you've found. You can look at methods for submitting them to Recording Schemes etc. once you've tidied your own collection up.



We've covered this topic a few times in the Bulletin but reassurances and tips are always going to be helpful.

If you collect **specimens** then the humble spreadsheet is going to be the most handy. It'll do individual printed labels and as you get cleverer with it you can learn helpful tricks. For example Martin Drake uses pivot tables (beyond me) to pull out site reports and Malcolm Smart had an ingenious method to produce maps. Using lookup tables you can also avail yourself of Chris Raper's UKSI checklist which will save you the tedium of mis-typing species names. If you were able to name one collector on our recent Lancaster expedition who didn't use a spreadsheet at some point then I'd be most surprised.

The beauty of spreadsheets of course is that your tidied-up list can be bunged straight into iRecord. Try it out with a short list of common stuff. The instructions are all there on their website and a detailed set of instructions has been drawn up by Jane and Martin for use with our expeditions.

If you collect **photographs** then camera users will be in the habit of downloading onto a laptop or desktop. Make that a priority if you use a mobile phone, Amateur Photographer tells us there are countless billions of snaps tied up on these things.

Once transferred you'll need an organiser. The naturalist's default one is Photool's iMatch simply because you can build your own hierarchical tree of species names. This can be built at a leisurely pace, perhaps tagging all the soldierflies first then later adding more specific tags once you've got them identified. Once your tree of favourite fly pictures is done then you can flip the view to the tree and explore your own gallery of marvellous pictures.

As for what to do with those records afterwards: choose from the above online systems or acquire a desktop biological recording system such as MapMate or Recorder 6.

KEY

Open Science. A combination of **Open Data** and **FAIR** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable)

NBN Atlas iRecord iNaturalist

Principles

Open Data

Countries are thirsty for summarized data and insights for policy-making but we are running short of tools (Martinez, 2023)

Worth revisiting the concept of Open Data from time to time so that we can assess how our efforts are contributing to conservation via a range of systems.

Open data is publicly available data that can be universally and readily accessed, used, and redistributed free of charge. It is structured for usability and computability
(from The Global Impact of Open Data by Andrew Young & Stefan Verhulst)

The concept is used in a variety of fields, the two closest to our interests are in the fields of GIS where the availability of maps are important to our pursuits and in the publishing of species occurrences obtained from a variety of sources, notably from naturalist recorders.

Map availablity has been debated previously within our Network. Ordnance Survey offers a combination of free and paid spatial data whilst Google's are copyrighted and OpenStreetMap is free.

The case for Open Data with regards to our published records is well expressed by our Network at

https://nbn.org.uk/news/fair-data-principles/

… whilst BRC are investigating means to open up their silos to more sharing via their recent survey (above)

An important aspect of data publication is that *data should be permanently archived in an online, open-access repository (permitting use without conditions) with sufficient metadata for potential users to understand how and why they were collected*. That's our NBN Atlas.

Another interesting read is GBIF's strategy, their aim is:

To mobilize the data, skills and technologies needed to make comprehensive biodiversity information freely available for science and decisions addressing biodiversity loss and sustainable development

https://docs.gbif.org/strategic-framework/en/

References

Costello & Wieczorek (2014): *Best practice for biodiversity data management and publication*. Biological Conservation 173, 68–73. (https://tinyurl.com/yalmb3zf).

Sumner, D.P. 2021. *Where to find online flies*. Bulletin 91, p10

Sumner, D.P. 2021. *Biodiversity Open Data*. Bulletin 92 p9

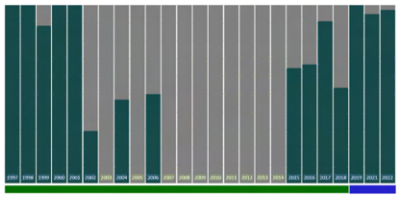
GBIF Biodiversity Open Data Ambassador

Open Data

Field Week Expeditions

Epoch 3

Covers the period 1997 to 2018. No changes have occurred since the chart below, detailed in Bulletin 97. Comprehensive Open Data uploads to 2001 by Mike Howe and I are followed by a long gap, then begun again from 2015 onwards. If you have anything from those lean years then do let us know. It could well be that you uploaded to iRecord independently, if you haven't then 2002 to 2014, especially our field week trips, would be good periods to prioritise. Analysis of iRecord sounds feasible; a filter on known participants, dates and locations. All that sounds an horrendously time consuming task though.



The *central database that is maintained and regularly updated on the NBN* (Bulletin 73) is on our **NBN Atlas partner page**



Field week based in Exeter, Devon. 3rd to 8th July 2011. What did they find?

Epoch 4

Stirling 2019, Cornwall 2021 and Norfolk 2022 are all on the NBN Atlas and can be viewed at

https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp172

The summer 2023 dataset from our Swansea field week was due to be processed in the spring of 2024, so only a slight delay. Lancaster 2024 is ongoing.

Martin Harvey and Jane now have an iRecord procedure for collecting your records at those expeditions. Attendees receive a guide on how to do this. So far the system has not got a means of adding iNaturalist records to the published Open Data datasets on NBN Atlas. Until that is resolved we maintain a list of those records as iNaturalist projects. Links to them all are maintained on the journal of our Dipterists Forum iNaturalist project page (see below)

Spring & Autumn meetings

We've yet to consider the issue of processing spring and autumn meetings such as our spring Oxford 2022 meeting. There is an iNaturalist project for this however:

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/oxford-fens-meadows

For this particular one TVERC kindly provided site boundaries to every place we explored so you now have maps of Judy Webb's favourite spots which she discusses in her Adopt-a-species.

Please don't forget that everyone involved in these is an unpaid volunteer and that submission of records should be fun rather than thought of as a condition. Fantastic job everyone and we hope you enjoyed your holiday with us. Check out Alan Stubbs' report for special finds at our Lancaster meetings and older Bulletins if you'd like to see similar summaries from previous expeditions.

Darwyn Sumner

Dataset progress

iNaturalistUK

Earlier this year I received the following request from NBN's Purba Choudry:

> *My colleague Giselle Sterry - our lead for iNaturalist UK - suggested that I contact you, as I am researching case-studies of the positive impacts of wildlife data on conservation.*
>
> *Can you think of any success stories where data collected by the Dipterists Forum have helped increase the biodiversity of a particular site, or brought about other conservation benefits?*
>
> *If you could let me know - even if the direct impact is still being assessed or not yet fully confirmed - that would be great!*

I gave her a list of a number of projects at the time and Rob Wolton helped fill her in on the topic of Open Data. I hope the following accounts, and other exciting projects we've set up since March, augment them:



https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/dipterists-forum

In addition to **Recording Scheme projects**, (24/30) all the **Dipterists Forum Expedition projects** are linked on one of the iNaturalist Journal pages. Membership is rapidly increasing - do join us.

The site augments the information on the Bulletin back covers.

Growth

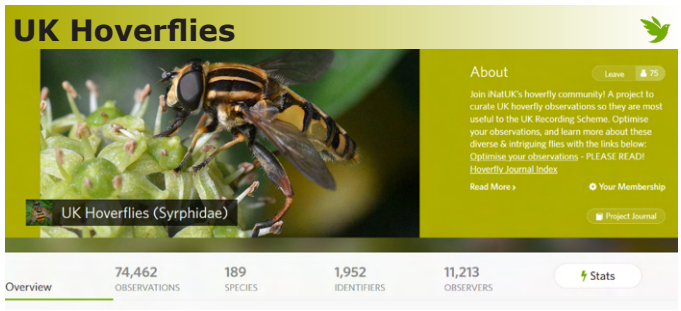
Figures rose rapidly from the 73,000+ records reported in the last Bulletin and hit the 100,000 on 21st July. Just ahead of the numbers in the separate Hoverflies project. Most importantly there are 13,549 observers now, potentially a lot of new members.

Joining iNaturalist projects

Signed up members rose from 57 to 73. The benefit of joining these projects is that for each image you post you get a list of icons showing you which project they have become part of. So if you regularly upload Oestridae images and have signed up to that one, you can click the icon to see how well that project is doing as a result of your contribution. Muscidae is the most recent addition (see below.) Join as many as you like, there are regional projects that may interest you too.

Recording Scheme organisers are urged to join their own project.

Featured in NBN's August Network News



https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/uk-hoverflies-syrphidae

Matthew Vosper continues to help manage this site. It featured in the NBN newsletter as iNaturalistUK's "Project of the month"

Featured in NBN's June Network News

In this year the number of signed up members rose from 75 to 117 and the succesful ID rate was 87% thanks to their efforts.

Expedition iNat Projects

The journal on our Dipterists Forum page has the links to all the expedition projects (and others) that we've set up -

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/dipterists-forum/journal

Summary breeze

iRecord

Because of the way that each online recording system was developed it is a relatively simple matter to summarise iNaturalist progress for our Diptera datasets. **Equivalent summaries** on the iRecord datasets would require a dedicated individual or team. Fortunately we have them, they're our Recording Schemes. Their summaries are to be found below or in their Newsletters. Check in to the iRecord site and other accounts in this Bulletin, there are some exciting new initiatives being undertaken. As the iRecord datasets get uploaded to NBN Atlas through the work of verifiers you'll see the figures rise on our Dipterists Forum partner page at https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp172

Don't forget that the two systems are linked, each Recording Scheme's page on the iNat site has a link back to their page on our own Dipterists Forum website and each record on iNat finishes up being checked through iRecord by the verifiers, so they all end up on the NBN Atlas. Except those that cannot be identified from snaps.

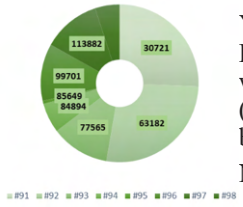
Darwyn Sumner

Open data progress

NBN Atlas

Recording progress

Open Data Diptera records on Dipterists Forum's partner page on the NBN Atlas rose from 113,882 at the end of 2023 to 119,921 in the past 6 months. Spring and Summer are not the best months for poring over computers to verify records so we'll see what we have by Christmas. The 2023 Swansea expedition records might be in by then.



You can monitor the progress of Open Data on our **Dipterists Forum partner page** whilst other datasets such as Soldierflies (167k) & Craneflies (137k + 46k) are to be found elsewhere.

NBN Atlas Diptera total is 1,708,294

References

Sumner, 2024 *Open Data - 10 years after*. Bulletin 97

Drake, 2016. *Recording Schemes Meeting Report*. Bulletin 81 p11

Recording Scheme News

Small Acalypterates Recording Scheme

iNaturalist has risen from 856 records to 1219 at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/smaller-acalypterate-families

Aulacigaster leucopeza was found once again at the same tree I photographed it in 2019 (Dipterists Digest 31/2 p234.) It also gets mention in Bulletins 84 & 85 but these did not make it to iRecord either. I did extract records from Steve's files for all those other little Families, so we've data ready to upload once we're confident. Maybe we can then grow our NBN Atlas datasets (235 + 846) records

https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr2747

Download the newsletter from ResearchGate at

http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29534.24647

Darwyn Sumner, Nigel Jones & Steve Falk

Oestridae Recording Scheme

Our smallest Recording Scheme but I recently chatted with Michel Valim who has an interest in arthropods of medical and veterinary importance, mainly Neotropical species in Hippobosca, Crataerina and lice. He's quickly rattled through the IDs of our 37 images on iNaturalist at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/oestridae-uk

Which now gives us a massive 89% at Researchgrade level.

I've a couple of pictures from our 2008 Cairngorms field trip, specimens handed to me by Andrew Grayson. I could add them too if I knew their more precise location.



Where in the Cairngorms?

Agromyzidae Recording Scheme

Barry Warrington is a regular correspondent, check out his website here:

https://agromyzidae.co.uk/

A BENHS + YNU funded enterprise.

Soldierfly Recording Scheme



The iNaturalist project now has 17,783 records and 7 members.

Their NBN Atlas Open Data dataset of 165,314 records is at

https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp37

The website for more current news (including Targeting) is at

https://soldierflies.brc.ac.uk/

(Ed.)

Stilt & Stalk Fly Recording Scheme

This scheme's website scheduled to be frozen by the Natural History Museum in June remains functional.

https://micropezids.myspecies.info/

Though there are the occasional glitches regarding access it's still sometimes useable to access information. It can't be edited though.

Curiously the **Newsletter issue 5**, uploaded to ResearchGate at

http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25601.84325

reached 100 reads just before the UK publication via its inclusion in the last Bulletin, after which it rose to only 106 by the end of the year. Suggesting perhaps that there's a lot more interest worldwide in what we get up to.

The European **iNaturalist** site now has 32 members and reached 4,000 records in mid-September; fun to monitor frequently during the flying season but declining to a trickle outside that. The UK site has 7 members and 389 records:

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/european-micropezids-tanypezids

It received a significant accolade this year with the Sussex image of *Micropeza lateralis* by Rupert Lees (https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/236456629) being awarded iNat Observation of the Day on August 18th. Only 60 Diptera have ever made it to this list.

There are a further 69 sets of images on **iRecord** but as I explained, there's no-one to verify those. The rest of the iRecord records number 180 now, I verified some during last year but it's clear from some odd names assigned that some of those uploading records are using outdated keys and taxa from ~80 years ago rather than the current recognised keys & taxa. The Open Data on **NBN Atlas** remains at 6,409 (23-04), an update is expected shortly.

New European species

A most interesting conversation at the Birdfair, back at its Rutland Water location, with Caucasia tour operator Peter Smyth who shared my interest in palaeobiogeography and its relationship with current biodiversity hotspots. He informed me afterwards that he'd met a guy at the show from a Dutch company Wildernistrek interested in developing entomological/reptilian tours of the Caucasus.

And why would you want to go there? Take a look at this:



Sphyracephala babadjanidesi

Shot and collected by Sandro Kiladze in Armenia and uploaded to iNaturalist. Not only new to our European list but only our second species of that genus.

It had been recorded in the most obscure of papers **Zaitzev, F. A. (1919): A new element of the tropical fauna in the Transcaucasia (Dipt. Diopsidae). Bulletin Museum Caucase 12: 1-6** (thanks to Jere Kahanpaa for that find) the paper seems more elusive than the fly as the thread on Diptera.info reveals

https://diptera.info/forum/viewthread.php?thread_id=113649

Just too late to add to the European list on the Scratchpad research site. A nice example though for NBN's Purba Choudry looking for valuable iNaturalist discoveries.

New German checklist

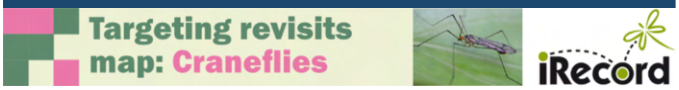
Germany records 13 Micropezidae species in the following paper:

Doczkal D. & Stuke J. 2024. Checkliste der Stelzfliegen Deutschlands (Diptera: Micropezidae). Version:31. August 2024. Cat. dipterorum Ger. 24: .

Darwyn Sumner

www.inaturalist.org/people/202372

Cranefly Recording Scheme



Earlier this year Pete Boardman stepped down as organiser for the Cranefly Recording Scheme. Many thanks to Pete for carrying out this role since taking it on 2018, helping many people get enthused over craneflies and dealing with a very large number of records, including over 47,000 verifications within iRecord!

Ryan Mitchell, Jenni Wilding and John Kramer will be ensuring the recording scheme continues to function with record verification and assistance with identification queries. Ryan was already working with Pete to help verify cranefly records on iRecord, and he and Ian Andrews provide support for the UK Cranefly Recording Scheme group on Facebook. Jenni Wilding has now joined the iRecord verification team. John Kramer is continuing as newsletter editor, and enquiries about records can be sent to Ryan (contact details are available on the DF website.) The team is still in the early stages of organising the individual roles and responsibilities and potentially looking to expand the team.

Alan Stubbs, whose many achievements of course include writing the 2021 BENHS book on British Craneflies, continues to take a keen interest and is in process of producing keys to larvae, as well as identifying some specimens and photos for others. This is a large group of flies with over 300 species, and now that an up-to-date book and identification keys have been published the scheme will benefit from a team of skilled organisers to take things forward.

(text by Martin Harvey and others)

***Newsletter news from John**: There's insufficient copy to produce an Autumn issue of Cranefly News, but a number of people have offered articles for the Spring issue*

John Kramer organiser

Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme

The **Open Data** datasets on Dipterists Forum, parter page on NBN Atlas is in two parts. The first, of 9859 records is the extraction of the Steve Falk pre 2014 records I did back in 2021. The second is the ongoing iRecord dataset from everyone else (and Steve now) which has now reached 6229 (from 4568) following Matt Harrow's immense efforts on iRecord verification.

Find them both at https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp172 but more usefully, use the NBN Atlas to search for any species that interests you, they're all there now. Well minus a couple of hundred whilst we catch up with this season's batch.

The **iNaturalistUK** project with 795 records and 6 members has only a 35% success rate. Doability from photos in this family is poor due to the Tetanocerini but don't despair, there are some very easy ones and you've got Steve Falk's Flickr gallery if you want to have a crack at some.

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/sciomyzids-uk

Newsletter #7 as a preprint to **Researchgate** attained 78 reads in a year, download it at

http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35768.11528

Research opportunities within this group are considerable and though there is an excellent team with strong interests, Alan Stubbs opines "*One of the early popular families ... From my distance, the scheme needs extra leaders*"

Make this scheme your second favourite, it's got everything you need to get going thanks to efforts from a top-class team.

I mentioned to Matt that it looked as though we might have enough material for another newsletter. Items so far include:

- A record of *Antichaeta brevipennis* from Bishopbriggs, Lanarkshire by Geoffrey Wilkinson (keep an eye on Dipterists Digest)
- Doable maps from NBN Atlas now that we're up to date with the Open Data there
- Teaming up with Ben Rowson of the Conchological Society (https://conchsoc.org/) to match host snails to their Scio parasites. We can do a cross-match on the UK's best pond using the NBN Atlas Scios + published snail list in **Ponds Pools and Puddles** book based on known hosts in Stuart's key. But as Alan Stubbs says "*There is the need to develop the field craft to find larvae/puparia, and to get better info on hosts in the field (too reliant on lab tests at present)*"
- Can we use maps to give us clues as to likely host/parasite relationships? I've requested access to National Pond Survey datasets and GIS materials - perhaps we'll have success later in the year.
- Stuart Ball's workshop in October as part of the Tanyptera project.

Darwyn Sumner

Tachinidae Recording Scheme

Steve Falk announces that he has completed his Flickr gallery of the Tachinidae at

https://tinyurl.com/m764ahrm

Parasite Flies (Tachinidae) on **Flickr**

This resource covers over 95% of the British tachinid species, acting as a virtual museum collection with carefully photographed pinned specimens plus their diagnostic details. Species are presented as 'albums' arranged alphabetically within alphabetically arranged genus 'folders'. For many species, the specimen photos are supplemented with images of living individuals to provide a better impression of what they look like in the field. Within a species album, images are arranged in the sequence of 1) male living, 2) male specimen(s), 3) female living, 4) female specimen(s), 5) locations and 6) host(s), Many of the photos of diagnostic body parts have accompanying footnotes to help explain what is being shown. If you keep clicking on a photo, it will zoom in to the detail, like a microscope. Each species album also has a drop-down species account (click 'show more' after the start of the species text in the header area). These accounts describe the appearance and identification of each species, its distribution and ecology, and provide a hyperlink to the NBN map plus any other useful online information. For many tachinids, these are the most detailed species accounts currently available. There is also text (often with hyperlinks) for each genus.

The Flickr feature is most functional when viewed on a PC or laptop but will act as a phone app with reduced functionality and will display medium functionality in an iPad, tablet or Kindle-type device. To compare two or more species (using a PC or laptop with tabs), open the Flickr feature simultaneously in two or more tabs, and then find the most equivalent images of each species. Then click between the images for instant comparisons. This can be very useful for comparing frons widths/head shape, abdominal markings, and wing venation. Thanks to OUM and Chris Raper for allowing me to photograph their specimens, also assorted other folk for loaning me specimens or providing photos of living tachinids.

Steve Falk

Read more on the Tachinid Recording Scheme website at

https://tachinidae.org.uk/blog/

Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group

More than just house flies!

Mike Ashworth

The Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group (MFSG) has now been established under the auspices of The Dipterists Forum, dedicated to promoting interest among UK dipterists, entomologists, general naturalists and the public in the Muscidae & Fanniidae.



The Muscidae are a highly diverse family including some large and noticeable species, such as *Mesembrina meridiana*, the well-known *Musca domestica,* and some confusion species, like the greenbottles in genus *Neomyia*. Many people have heard of house flies and may know a few of the more prominent species. Few people are aware of the full range of species. The British list currently includes 293 species in 40 genera. Although commonly called house flies, very few are truly synanthropic. The ecology of these species is very diverse with larval habitats including dung, carrion, fungi, damp mosses, mud, saltmarsh, dead wood and birds' nests. Others attack animals and are important as vectors of livestock disease. The Fanniidae, commonly known as Lesser House Flies, are closely related and until recently were regarded as a subfamily of the Muscidae. Inclusion of the fanniids add a further 61 species in 2 genera.

The initial offerings of the MFSG are a web presence on the Dipterists Forum web site, with resources including keys available in the members' section, an account @UKMuscidae on X, an email list for questions and discussion about all things muscid and a biannual newsletter to appear in the Bulletin.

If you are interested in taking part …

- please read the first issue of the MFSG Newsletter which is included in this Bulletin, and which contains more information about the Group
- please contact Mike Ashworth drmikeashworth@gmail.com and ask to be added to the email list
- if you are a user of X, please follow @UKMuscidae and tag @UKMuscidae in your muscid-related posts

Calliphoridae Recording Scheme





Useful resources on the Field Studies Council website at **https://www.fscbiodiversity.uk/blog/blow-flies-part-1** plus Viz issue 338 + Audiobook (Ed.)

Newsletters

Recording Scheme Newsletters

All the Recording Scheme Newsletters are read with great interest by DF members, some even have circulations way beyond that, organisers maintaining their own circulation list. If they are uploaded as **ResearchGate preprints** then not only does that circulation widen to include our friends overseas but it also achieves the highest possible level of digital security, a DOI, a system devised to be as near "forever" as is possible and used extensively by formal journals.

It's an easy system to use, all you need is the pdf and a couple of facts. Bunging references into it first is a good idea as ResearchGate trawls it looking for those then alerts their authors that they've been cited. One who features cited in mine for example is Jindřich Roháček, so you might find you've made contact with a helpful overseas expert. They'll be amongst your first "reads" on the site and you then get weekly notifications of those figures as a brief summary.

Fun with figures is only feasible for authors, so I'm restricted to ones I've uploaded:

Micropezids & Tanypezids #5 (185) I'll probably add the other 4 some time

Sciomyzids #7 (78) The previous 6 would have to be added by their authors

Small Acalypterates (32 since July)

Empid & Dolichopodid #29 - Martin Drake

Muscids & Fannids #1 - Mike Ashworth

Hoverfly Newsletter #76

Comment



I still find it unbelievable that certain organisations/bodies aren't able/willing to provide support to folk like yourself.

Projects



Steve Falk project

Though a number of valuable Recording Scheme datasets have been extracted from Steve's pre-2014 prolific surveying, the freezing of the site where this data is made available will temporarily delay attempts to look for more Families. Their **current location** is on a Scratchpad site, where you can try to find extraction methodology, detailed instructions and source files.

An alternative site is under preparation when I can find time.

Details of how to set about it can be found in Bulletin 92 p17-18

Darwyn Sumner

Overseas



Remember Mark Pollett's accounts of the expedition to Corse recounted in previous Bulletins?

The following is now available on ResearchGate:

Alexandre Cornuel-Willermoz et Thomas Lebard, 2024. Catalogue des Syrphes de Corse (Diptera : Syrphidae)

https://tinyurl.com/mpwhsb9m

Photography

Handy stages

Darwyn Sumner

Prompted by my poor choice of studio photography gear at Lancaster I went hunting for a more reliable setup.

I got as far as a nice portable rail setup which avoided tripods. Though the rail assembly may look rather intimidating there were one or two finds I encountered in my "Meccano" adventure that might prove of interest to all.

First is a "lab lifter", a raisable platform of the kind I saw a few times in the Lancaster workshop. The usual style is a sturdy blue aluminium plate but I chanced upon a couple of brands and came up with this one for <£10



Changor Laboratory Jack Table (£9.39)

For photography, no matter how you have your camera fixed you need to adjust the height at which you present your specimen. These lab lifters are the recommended means. It's the rotating stage that's the real bonus with this model, gently tweak that until you have the perfect angle for your head, wing or body shot.

Highly portable too.

Second is a gooseneck LED lighting system by JJC.



They do two models, the £16 one just uses small battery cells but the more substantial £32 one can also be run from a USB cord and has a steady strong light. They're designed to fit into a camera flash hotshoe but if you had another purpose in mind (studio, not field) then clamps and adaptors can be readily found.

Shown here dwarfing a small Olympus 4/3 with the famous Zuiko macro lens

Finally a cheap DIY concentric stage which can prop a specimen from vertical to horizontal (nearly so if not pinned) and fits neatly on the above stage.



Materials required are a Christmas bauble (8 for £3, Works) some dense plastazote (child's playmat; find neutral colours) and a tin can (Asian supermarket/grocers) of a diameter slightly larger than the bauble.

Use the can base to cut one circle to jam into the lid (clamp the can base on to plastazote on a cutting mat then cut around it with a scalpel), punch a large hole into the centre of this (smoother the better so find a punch, woodworkers or pastry cutters.) Cut another circle to jam into one of the bauble hemispheres, experimenting with different circular templates until you have a good fit which allows your micro-pinned specimen to be fixed at the sphere's centre. Store your hemispheres in the tin can.

This is a smaller version of one I described in a previous Bulletin. Very suitable for expeditions as it packs away neatly.



Examples of Micropezids & Tanypezids from Lancaster

For details visit the expedition's iNaturalist site below

Close-ups

There are two approaches you can take to producing reasonable close-ups. You'll be familiar with one if you have an Olympus Tough. It takes a series of shots then melds them all together in the camera to produce a sharp image. Olympus pioneered this technique but now you'll find it in other brands such as Nikon who call it Focus Shift Shooting. Ian Andrews showed us a vertical setup using the Olympus Tough in a previous Bulletin but with the equipment detailed above plus a small sturdy **desktop** tripod (e.g. Neewer CK-30) whose legs can splay nearly flat, you've a horizontal setup enabling you to orientate specimens to get just the angle you need.

The second approach of course is focus stacking, Stuart Ball demonstrated this some time ago, Malcolm Storey has a whole website devoted to these kinds of images and Cardiff museum have some very nice kit dedicated to this as I'm sure do others - ask to see it next time you visit.

The main difference with this approach is it takes a heck of a lot of images to meld into one good picture. Accordingly it's best if you wire up the camera ("tether") to a computer then you can save all the snaps there and delete them when you've done stacking (Affinity Photo will do this job nicely.) Don't forget to empty your Recycle Bin afterwards.



Diopsis sp. stacked from ~90 shots [D. Sumner]

To see the results of my first efforts visit our expedition's iNaturalist site at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lancaster-dipterists-forum-field-week-2024

References:

Malcolm Storey, Nigel Jones & Ian Andrews in Bulletin 85

Image library

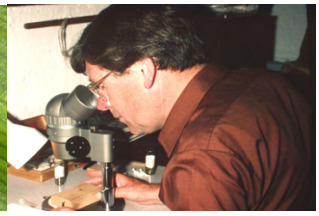
Art & picture editing

Darwyn Sumner

Since publishing in colour for the first time in 2018 we've acquired access to quite sizeable image collections in order to illustrate features.. Some of them are available online and thanks to the generosity of many through Flickr we not only have the famous **Steve Falk collections** but also our very own **Dipterists Forum Group** which I set up in 2022 and now has 27 contributors. Andrew Cunningham uses Flickr very efficiently to submit images to the editor in order to illustrate his accounts. Prior to this several members were very generous and sent the editor some quite valuable collections, I have sizeable numbers from Alan Outen (449), Joan Childs (93) and Mike Pugh (83) together with occasional ones from other contributors.



Sciomyza dryomyzina [Alan Outen]



Roy Crossley 1983 [Mike Pugh]

Copyright is a perennial issue but go back far enough in time and some useful line drawings are safe. The source of amusing cartoons is predominantly older Punch magazines but occasionally The Studio and others from that era.

Contemporary material comes in via authors and of course my own when the need arises.

No doubt our New Scientist counterparts have their own network and system of payment (as does British Wildlife) but we rely on the generosity of others. It's all secure enough on the one system here as I backup regularly using Acronis, though where that all goes after my annual subscription ceases is unclear.

Taxonomy

Normally you'll find this subject tackled individually by the Recording Schemes or maintained by Peter Chandler in Dipterists Digest together with Chris Raper who manages the UKSI and has shown interest in our project:

Taxanotes



This is the name given to the follow-on project to Scratchpads by its last developer at NHM, Rob Davies. He gave us a talk at an Annual Meeting and you can still find that video on our Youtube site.

Luckily for us he'd caught the bug by the time the Scratchpads project was discontinued at NHM and became the prime developer of alternatives as the international consortium "Save our Scratchpads" formed from individuals across the world.

The Scratchpad loss is related to Drupal 7 (terminates 2025-01-05), the platform used to develop it. As Windows 3.0 users will realise, these things go out of date and are replaced by more modern versions. Developers are continually struggling to keep up as you'll know if you ever tried to convert an old Microsoft Access database to a new one, or even an old Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet to an Excel file. Support for Drupal 7 will shortly be withdrawn as they move to Drupal 10 and to redevelop Scratchpads in that new thingy would have meant a costly "back to the drawing board"

Enter Rob Davies keen to develop Drupal 10 alternatives in his spare time, having left NHM and now working for the University of Portsmouth. Helped by a very capable international team of ex-Scratchpadders with skills it is hard to get my head around, he's now taking state-of-the-art taxonomic models and trying to get those working within Drupal 10 so that eventually we might get something that can be used in the Scratchpad, "taxonomic tree" style whereupon it can be filled with taxonomic terms by us researchers.

In the meantime he's also helping us transfer the old Scratchpad contents onto different servers, these important relicts will then remain accessible elsewhere than NHM servers which are frequently unavailable.

In preparation for this and to provide a receptacle for old and new versions I've bought a domain and hope to use it for websites. One style in particular is of interest, that of the Tachinidae Recording Scheme set up and maintained by Chris Raper using Wordpress (https://tachinidae.org.uk/blog/)

Rob has kindly offered to assist me with whatever choice I make, perhaps Drupal 10 would provide more flexibility.

Collections

Curation & recording

Museums are rightly proud of their role in curating collections of all types of material.

Speak to most and their focus will be on the **accessions** management aspect. They've devised the most splendid metadata system for detailing these sets of objects, be they physical or digital. This is the SPECTRUM standard, parts of which found their way into the work of Charles Copp when he was working on Recorder and they're to be found in other areas too (e.g. details of datasets on ResearchGate.)

This accessions focus is to be found in recent activities of museums such as the forthcoming **Collections Trust conference** and the ongoing **DISCCo project**.

From our **species occurrence** perspective (aka recording + Open Data + FAIR principles) though, it can be tricky to draw links between the two focusses. A museum will take on a collection of diptera and it will immediately get properly accessioned as a set of objects.

What we'd like to know are the four "W"s of each object within that collection. Not just the fact that, for example, the NHM has the Wallace collection, but exactly what he found and where. Pictures are a good start and there's a neat example of this if you do a little exploring, with a fine set of **images on GBIF** of *Texara compressa*, the work of Daniel Whitmore.

Small collections can be uploaded to iNaturalist too if you're prepared to photograph them. The projects on a collection of Indonesian Micropezids given to me by Malcolm Smart (**https://tinyurl.com/mt8znr2w**) and a box from Chris Palmer (**https://tinyurl.com/2z2m3rs4**) afforded lots of "stacking" practise (7k photos) and resulted in some interesting finds whilst leaving a pictorial legacy. Perhaps over time some expert will come along and help improve the IDs even better.

The **Collections Trust** tell us " the Museum Data Service will be a game changer for the sector." which is where you'll find some teams forging links between our two areas of endeavour:

https://museumdata.uk/

That public search interface came available on 12th September. Additionally look for museum datasets on the NBN Atlas partner pages where FAIR data useable by us for science research or just curiosity will appear over time.

One example is the A.E.Wright hoverfly collection which I curated at Liverpool Museum many years ago. The Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet files came to light recently so Tony Hunter and I can begin work on that at some point. I recollect that Lance Gorman and I borrowed the AEW notebooks from Neville Birkett to figure out location details. It contained the famous 1940s *Doros profuges* specimens which had us both chasing around the Grange-over-Sands region. Succesfully.

Darwyn Sumner

(with thanks to Tony.Hunter@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

The A.A.Allen (1913-2010) Diptera collection once thought lost has been recently refound and acquired at auction by Andy Godfrey

Peter Chandler

Membership Matters

By mid-July 2024 we had 463 paid-up members and 371 subscribing to the Dipterists Digest. We have received new subscriptions from 25 people and 14 resignations. This means that we still have around 50 people who have not yet paid their subs for this year and about the same number who are still paying at last year's rate. Reminder e-mails about the new rates for 2024 and for late payers were sent to those members with registered email addresses. If you did not receive one it is probably because:

a) we don't have your email address

b) the email address we do have is out of date

c) the email is sitting in your spam folder.

Communication by email is by far the easiest way to contact me regarding membership matters and for me to send notices about DF matters. If you have **Please make sure that you keep me updated with your email address.**

All subscriptions, changes of address and membership queries should be directed to John Showers at:

103, Desborough Road,
Rothwell,
KETTERING,
Northants,
NN14 6JQ
Tel.: 01536 710831
E-mail: showersjohn@gmail.com

Membership and Subscription Rates for 2024 have changed from 2023.

Members and Subscribers are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January each year. The rates are as follows:

Dipterists Forum Subscription Rates 2024

	2024
UK rates:	
Membership + hardcopy Bulletin	**£12** pa
Membership + pdf Bulletin	**£8** pa
Membership + hardcopy Bulletin and Dipterists Digest	£26 pa
Membership + pdf Bulletin + hardcopy Dipterists Digest	£22 pa
Overseas rates	
Membership + hardcopy Bulletin	**£18** pa
Membership + pdf Bulletin	**£8** pa
Membership + hardcopy Bulletin and Dipterists Digest	£30 pa
Membership + pdf Bulletin + hardcopy Dipterists Digest	£26 pa

We have decided to have an overseas Dipterists Forum membership without having to subscribe to the Dipterists Digest as well, as we have had a number of queries about this from overseas.

At present we are not offering the Dipterists Digest in pdf format

Subscribers who opt for pdf versions of the Bulletin will be able to download their copy from dipterists.org.uk when it becomes available. (approximately mid-March and mid-September) Pdf files will not be emailed to subscribers but a notice of publication will be placed on the website

Members who pay by standing order will have to amend their bank instructions to pay the new rate for 2024. If you do not wish to change your bank instructions via online banking, a pdf file of instructions can be downloaded from the website. Please sign it and send directly to your bank.

BANKERS ORDER PAYMENTS

You can set up a banker's order or bank transfer to pay the subscription via online banking using the following details:

Dipterists Forum
NatWest Bank
Sort code 60-60-08
Account no. 48054615

Please **add your name to the payment reference** or we will not know from whom the payment was made.

International payments should use:

IBAN: GB56NWBK60600848054615
SWIFT: NWBKGB2L

Alternatively you can send your bank the banker's order mandate form, which can be found on the DF website. This form explicitly states that it cancels previous payments to Dipterists Forum.

OTHER PAYMENT METHODS

Cheques should be made payable to:
"Dipterists Forum" and sent to the address above.

John Showers

New Membership Secretary needed for 2025

I would like to stand down as Membership Secretary at the end of 2024 so we are looking for one or two volunteers to take over. I am willing to help a new Membership Secretary find their feet. It would be possible to to split the job into two roles:

a) Handling payments, queries and maintaining the membership spreadsheet

b) Producing mailing lists for both email and postal communications

Both roles would require use of spreadsheet software (either Microsoft Excel or LibreOffice Calc). The latter software is free to download and works exactly like classic Microsoft Office. All expenses can be claimed back from DF.

If anyone is interested please contact me. I can send more details if required.

John Showers

PDF viewer tips

I use PhantomPDF as my reader but other pdf readers should have similar functions.

The default display is as continuous single pages. To display as a double page spread, adjust the view to "facing" using the button on the navigation bar. For a book though this swaps the verso/recto arrangement because the pdf starts with a single recto page. This can be corrected using the "separate cover page" option on the View menu. Hey presto! left pages are left and right ones right.

Pdf files will not be emailed to subscribers

Membership benefits

All clubs have some costs, cast your eye over our last financial statement for details where you'll see what they are and how your subscription covers them. The kindness of others also means we've some income to augment those costs. Businesses, charities and community interest companies incur costs, we minimise these by being a club - no paid employees, just volunteers.

The main benefit you receive as a member of Dipterists Forum is the latest newsletter (this Bulletin) which tells you about everything we are currently doing i.e. all the other benefits. Older Bulletins are available to anybody - Open Access.

To keep your costs down we are currently offerring a **"torn and soggy"** discount on the Bulletin (that's how Adrian Plant gets his copy in Thailand), you can save us an envelope, BRC a stamp and you £4 by specifying pdf only for your Bulletin.

Subscribers who opt for pdf versions of the Bulletin will be able to download their copy from dipterists.org.uk when each issue becomes available.

Typically it can take several weeks after each deadline for the tasks outlined in the "Bold Type" feature (Bulletin 98) to attain camera-ready status. This may take until the end of the Winter and Summer seasons, Spring & Autumn is the best estimate we can give.

We have modified the News section on the opening page of our website to advertise its availability promptly.

Eds

Fly zone

Contacting us

The inside front cover of this Bulletin has all the contact details you should need.

Members

See John Showers instructions above if you want to join and support us (**and get copies of this Bulletin**.) Don't forget we've also a Forum on our website where you can raise topics.

Logging on to the DF website

To log onto our website for the first time you need to use your e-mail address as the login username. The site will then send you a temporary password that you can use to log in. Once logged in you should change your password.

If you do not have an email address or if the one we hold is now out of date you will need to email me or Martin Harvey to set it up for you.

John Showers

Meetings

Watch for announcements on our website. In particular, since some of them are to be held online, look for details of how to participate.

www.dipterists.org.uk/

We invariably organise both a workshop in February and a Summer Field meeting each year. Occasionally, shorter Spring and Autumn meetings may be held too.

Meeting participants will be emailed with details once booked.

Bulletin

Contributing

For Bulletin related matters, information or sending articles for the next issue, then

email Darwyn Sumner & Judy Webb (Judy's successor to be announced**)**

[Include "bulletin" in the title so's we don't lose them]

We'd also much appreciate your feedback.

Mark Welch wants to know about anything **conservation** related and Jane Hewitt needs to be kept informed about Diptera related issues in order to do her Secretary stuff.

Deadlines

Spring Bulletin - 31st December

Autumn Bulletin - 31st July

Newsletters: Camera-ready copy only please

Downloading

Bulletin may be up to 3 parts: **Contents** are membership-only, **Newsletters** and **Recording Schemes brochure** are free. See our website.

Dipterists Digest

Contact Peter Chandler

Recording Schemes

As for flies in particular, bring those to the attention of the Recording Schemes. Contact details are on the back pages which can also be downloaded as an interactive pdf so that you can follow all their links to websites, recording initiatives and newsletters. For more recent Recording Schemes see recent Bulletins, the iNaturalist site below or our website.

Photographs

Photographers may participate by uploading their images either as records to the sites preferred by each Recording Scheme or as set up for our expeditions or simply to our Flickr group. Our additional iNaturalistUK initiatives are summarised at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/dipterists-forum

Bursaries

The Dipterists Forum holds an annual weekend course in February or March, covering a specific family of flies in detail, at the Preston Montford field studies centre near Shrewsbury. The 2025 course will cover the Ephydridae family and be held March 7th-9th. The Forum also has annual residential Summer field meetings lasting for one week. The 2025 meeting will be held during June in the Glen Affric area of Scotland. See elsewhere in this Bulletin and our website for up to date information about these meetings.

We offer a small number of bursaries for each of these events, awarded on a competitive basis. Bursaries cover half the total cost of the course/meeting. If you would like to apply for a bursary for either (or both) of these events or would like more information, please send your application by e-mail to me, **John Mousley, at john-sally.mousley@ntlworld.com**.

Your application should say what you hope to gain from attending, how you would expect to contribute to the Forum's aims of the study, recording and conservation of Diptera, and why you would benefit from financial assistance. If you are currently involved in a research programme, please include brief details. We will be looking for evidence of enthusiasm and interest in flies. Preference may be given to those who have not received a bursary previously. Applications should not exceed 300 words. Successful applicants will be expected to write a short account of their experience for publication in the Forum's Bulletin.

Applicants must be members of the Dipterists Forum at the time of their application. The closing dates for applications are Friday 6th December 2024 for the Preston Montford course and Friday 15th February 2025 for the Glen Affric Summer field meeting.

John Mousley

Eulogy

Malcolm Smart

20th September 1943 – 16th June 2024

It is very sad that we have to inform members about the death of Malcolm. As most of you will know, he has been an integral part of the Forum for a number of years, most notably in planning very important Summer Field Meetings in conjunction with the Committee. You will be able to read about the true extent of his commitment when Barbara and John Ismay provide a more comprehensive obituary in due course.



Slovenija 2003 with Ljublijana museum's Tomi Trilar [D Sumner]

From a personal viewpoint a number of us are going to miss a very warm and exceedingly bright companion. A number of us have visited his home at 'Southcliffe' for various purposes and have been delighted to meet Mary – his devoted wife- and the two dogs!! The main attraction was his beautifully organised and spacious study. His library was comprehensive but the collection was very special. An extended shelf system accommodated a run of store boxes containing Diptera from many countries as well as the British Isles. Most remarkable was his unique system of labelling and cataloguing specimens. He made full use of 'dBase' and demonstrated complete mastery of microsoft 'Excel', the result being a collection where each insect was pinned with relevant data, ensuring that Liverpool Museum where it now resides, will get maximum value out of this most important legacy.

All this had become possible because his professional life as Chief Overseas Petroleum Engineer for Shell, enabled many additional forays into terrain adjoining pipelines and the fascinating accommodation offered by the job. Flies had become an early object of special interest to him from an early age, because the London family home was at no great distance from the great museums and gardens. As a youngster, he became involved in wildlife activities initiated by the members of the 'London Naturalist' and met up with its notable members, especially Parmenter who encouraged his early studies on hoverflies. He joked that the real purpose of his early academic success was to put him in a position to get a job that would facilitate his access to remote (and dangerous) locations where exotic fly species might be lurking.



Some of the exotic Indonesian locations where Malcolm collected

This was also characterised by an alternative obsession with volcanology. He was well known as a local lecturer on the subject and offered a variety of talks to societies. Mary was endlessly concerned by this preoccupation and chided him for risk taking, as they clambered about in the vicinity of active craters with occasional hasty retreats as lava bombs suddenly descended.



Rob, Alan & Malcolm, Autumn 2010 [Roger Morris]

Expeditions with Malcolm were always fun. He would often go 'off piste' in the Range Rover if he thought a promising situation was at hand. His excitement certainly fired up anyone collecting with him and his personal generosity would have been well known to all his close contacts. Sadly a life spent in the tropics and diabetes began to take its toll. With his constitution gradually weakening, Mary and the family deciding that a return to Australia (his favourite country) might help, but the end soon came. Mary sent the following message:

'*Just to let you know that Malcolm died peacefully in hospital June 16th. Brett, Dale and I were with him as he had been in hospital for two and a half weeks. He went downhill very quickly. Having both boys close by was a great relief. The hospital was fantastic. He had a few months over here where he was walking out each day and loved sitting on the promenade at Manly.*'

We extend our sympathy to Mary and the family and in the knowledge that we have lost a fine Dipterist and also a wonderful friend.

Mike Bloxham

Regional Groups

Other regional reports

We'd be happy to feature reports from other regions, you needn't be so well coordinated as the Devon Fly Group nor even ramble together. We've featured Leicestershire in recent issues and following recent stories, maybe Scottish groups would care to tell more tales (Malloch Society)

Northants Diptera Group

I expect everyone has felt the frustration of awful Spring weather this year and we have certainly had our activities curtailed. Nevertheless there have been some exciting finds in the county. Kev Rowley found the hoverfly *Psilota anthracina* in Yardley Chase. A meeting of the Northants Odonata Group found a pair of the bee-fly *Villa cingulata* (Mark Tyrrell and Steve Cham) in another part of Yardley Chase. It is hoped that this species will continue to expand its range on the limestone of Northants. At the other end of the county in Fineshade Woods an investigation of a wet flush and Alder Carr produced several craneflies associated with calcareous flushes, including *Molophilus corniger, Gonomyia recta* and *Lipsothrix remota*.



Villa cingulata [Mark Tyrrell]

A cranefly taken in one of the Pitsford Water NR moth traps caused me a bit of confusion. It turned out to be *Symplecta stictica* but with an open discal cell on each wing. This aberration has been reported once before but I have sent the details with photos to Cranefly News.

John Showers

The VC32 iNaturalist site-based project continues at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/vc-32-northampton

as does the Devon Fly group's project at

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/devon-fly-group

Ref.: Wolton, 2013. Establishing local Diptera groups . Bulletin 76

Tachinid workshop



The Dipterists Forum holds an annual weekend workshop at Preston Montford Field Centre every February. Each year the focus is on identification of a different family of flies. This year's meeting on the Tachinidae, one of my favourite groups, proved very popular. Consequently, we managed to fill two workrooms with happy Dipterists hoping to figure out some of the identification challenges for this family, such as the dreaded postpronotal lobe bristle arrangement. Chris Raper and Matt Smith (who run the Tachinidae Recording Scheme) were on hand throughout the weekend to check our IDs and help us with tricky specimens. They also provided us with a draft set of updated keys based on the 1993 Belshaw RES Handbook. This made our job much easier as not only has the Tachinidae undergone some recent major revisions in taxonomy, an additional 40 species have arrived in Britain since Belshaw's work. One of the best things these weekends is the chance to use a reference collection to look at species that you have never encountered. Chris heroically managed to fit his comprehensive reference collection into his small car and transport it safely to Preston Montford (see the picture of just a few of his many, many drawers of flies). Many thanks to Chris and Matt for leading this workshop; hopefully they will receive a good influx of records for their scheme as a result.



These workshops are excellent value for money, provide a great opportunity to improve your ID skills and are a friendly social occasion to meet other Dipterists. Participants can work at their own pace, so don't feel you have to already be an expert to take part. Next year's workshop will be on the Ephydridae (further information elsewhere in this Bulletin).

Jane Hewitt

PS don't forget to take a look at Steve Falk's image collection at **https://tinyurl.com/m764ahrm** (Ed.)

Spring Field Meeting 2024

Radnorshire – mid Wales

Saturday 17th May to Sunday 19th May

The weeks leading up to the spring field meeting had been characterised by almost unremitting cold and damp weather that had made fly finding expeditions a largely joyless affair. In the days immediately before the 17-19 May, better weather was at last in prospect, but those of us of a pessimistic disposition muttered terms such as "it will never happen", "they've told us this before, the liars" and "it's mid Wales, so it's bound to rain all weekend". How wrong we were! With unbridled joy I set out on Friday morning in bright sunshine and genuine warm conditions. The sun stayed out all afternoon for my visit to Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's splendid Gilfach Nature Reserve, and it stayed out until the end of Sunday, before returning to largely overcast and cool conditions on Monday. The Dipterists Forum was truly blessed by the weather gods.

On Saturday morning, 30 members and local entomologists gathered at Elan Valley car park, where Phil Ward introduced us to the area and then led a number of the group around several biodiversity hotspots within the 70 sq. mile Elan Valley Estate.

The exceptionally poor early spring weather of 2024 severely depressed insect populations throughout Britain, so we had to work hard to find Diptera and other insects, none-the-less some noteworthy finds were made.

Our first stop was Carn Gaffalt Nature Reserve, managed by the RSPB. Phil took us to an area featuring many wonderful veteran oak. Rowan was in flower, attracting large numbers of the hoverfly *Sphegina sibirica*. I picked up a small cardinal beetle that didn't look right for either of the two widespread species in the beetle family (Pyrochroidae) and was reliably informed by Phil Ward that it was the rare *Schizotus pectinicornis*; Radnorshire/Breconshire is one of its two British stronghold localities. Alice Parfitt found *Brachypalpus laphriformis* (Syrphidae) here; Ian Draycott found the robberfly *Dioctria oelandica* (new to Breconshire) and I swept foliage of trees which yielded *Fannia minutipalpis* (Fanniidae) and *Lonchaea ultima* (Lonchaeidae). The latter was also found at Dolymynach a lush wetland area fringed by trees. Also at Dolymynach, two males of the rather scarce Anthomyiid *Paradelia brunneonigra* were collected.

The group rounded off the day by climbing to Pont ar Elan at 320m alt. This is a popular picnic spot, and our band of enthusiastic net-waving Dipterists attracted much curiosity from picnickers and passing motorists, so the net waving was supplemented with a good deal of Diptera flag waving. This area of upland flushes was rather disappointing on the day but I was pleased to find a male of the widespread but rather infrequent Anthomyiid *Phorbia nuceicornis* – a first for me.

Many of the group dined together on Saturday evening at the Llanerch Inn in Llandrindrod Wells. I think this was greatly enjoyed by all, judging by the colossal decibel count generated by the enthusiastic conversation around a long table. Much catching up with friends and Diptera news was achieved. Fans of carbs feasted on what I was told is a mid Wales specialty; carb loaded dishes such as curry with rice, chips and poppadom (yes, all three together); suitably filling after a long day's field work.

On Sunday, Phil took most of the group to Abercamlo Bog Nature Reserve where a highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly the discovery of several adult *Microdon myrmicae* (Syrphidae). The species identity was confirmed by searching ant nests of *Myrmica scabrinodis* where Rob Wolton found *M. myrmicae* puparium. Mike Lush also recorded *Anasymia lunulata* (Syrphidae) here.

Sunday was rounded off by a visit to Gilfach Nature Reserve, where we enjoyed the stunning and varied landscape.

Rob Wolton had great success at Pentrosfa Mire where he recorded *Anasimyia lunulata* (Syrphidae) in good numbers, alongside *Odontomyia tigrina* and *Stratiomys singularior* (Stratiomyidae). The record of *S. singularoir* may well be only the second for the central Wales area.

Thanks are due to Phil Ward, who dedicated his whole weekend to guiding many of us around some terrific sites and was also extremely helpful with planning the weekend. Ellie Bagget (Plantlife) and Josie Bridges (Natural Resources Wales), through the Natur am Byth project, very kindly arranged access and collecting permits. Jane Hewitt made sure that all the details and maps required for a successful weekend field trip were provided to participants.

At time of writing we have nearly 600 records of over 350 species on iRecord with plenty more to come in as participants work through their samples in the coming months.



1. Dipterists amongst veteran oaks at Carn Gafallt (Nigel Jones)



2. Exposed river gravels at Dolymynach (Nigel Jones)



3. Rob Wolton, Nigel Jones, Mark Welch and Jenni Wilding searching for Microdon puparia at Abercamlo Bog (Jane Mee)



4. *Phorbia nuceicornis* from Pont ar Elan (Nigel Jones)



5. Dipterists explore acid flushes at Pont ar Elan (Jenni Wilding)



7. *Dioctria oelandica* (Martin Harvey)

Nigel Jones

Ireland

Five go fly-ing in Cork and Kerry: 20-25 May 2024

After a wonderful weekend on the DF Spring Meeting spent sampling flies in Radnorshire (17th-19th May), four of us (Rob Wolton, Mark Welch, Martin Drake and Mike Ashworth) headed to Ireland for five more days of dipterological camaraderie and fieldwork in counties Kerry and Cork. Ryan Mitchell, the fifth member of our group and based in Co. Sligo, joined us at the cottage.



The Gearach near our cottage, Co. Cork

The afternoon crossing from Fishguard to Rosslare gave good views of 30+ cetaceans (Harbour Porpoise, Common and Bottle-nosed Dolphin), many Guillemot, Puffin, Gannet, Manx Shearwater and a few Razorbill. A smattering of Tystie greeted our arrival in Rosslare Harbour. After a very efficient shop for provisions at the "Supervalu" in Rosslare, we were away on the 3-hour drive to our base at Macroom, halfway between Killarney and Cork, and next to The Gearach SAC and Ramsar site in the River Lee valley (photo). Ryan was already ensconced in the cottage. Martin set up a nifty mini-Malaise in the garden to run for 4 days, kindly loaned to us by Richard Lane. We had 3 stereomicroscopes between us and plenty of identification keys. Evenings were spent sorting, bottling and pinning specimens (photo).

Martin and Mark had decided to focus on a few families rather than gather many; Rob, Ryan and Mike were up for anything. We visited around ten sites (Ryan had organized permissions to collect). These sites ranged from magnificent mature mixed woodland, floored with moss-covered boulders in Killarney NP to bog, the braided river plain of The Gearagh, high dunes, shoreline, saltmarsh, wooded limestone pavement, wet woodland and wet heath. Ryan demonstrated the effectiveness of using a 4m long-handled net to sample tree canopy; a method that is worth the rest of us perfecting. Apparently, Ryan also has a 6m handle to reach those parts that others cannot (and may never).



Rob on the shore of Loch Yvagannan, Co. Kerry

Firsts-for-Ireland from the trip identified so far include: *Metopina braueri* (Phoridae), a charming 1.5 mm scuttle fly, 2♀ swept from moss-covered limestone pavement in Yew/Ash/Holly woodland at Muckross, Co. Kerry; *Lispocephala fuscitibia* (Muscidae), 1♂ Loch Yganavan, Co. Kerry and *Fannia atra* (Fanniidae), 1♂ Gougane Barra lake, Co Cork. Martin found *Syntormon pseudospicatus* (Dolichopodidae) on saltmarsh at Rossbehey, Co. Kerry, and at Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford.



Gullied limestone pavement, Muckross, Co. Kerry

Noteworthy finds on our local SAC, The Gearach, were the empids *Rhamphomyia geniculata* and *Empis bicuspidata*, the hoverfly *Parhelophilus consimilis*, the platypezid *Agathomyia viduella*, the micropezid *Neria commutata* and the soldierfly *Beris clavipes*

A visit to nearby Mullinhassig wood (Co. Cork) gave Ryan his first *Xylota florum* (Syrphidae). By the waterfall in wet woodland at Gougane Barra (Co. Cork), to Martin's delight, Mike photographed, caught and identified a target species, the large dolichopodid *Liancalus virens* (photo). Gougane Barra also provided Martin with the splendid female of *Empis borealis* (photo) collected from Irish Spurge.

On our visit to Loch Yganavan, Co. Kerry, Rob spotted a splendid male Common Scoter sat on a nearby boulder at the lakeside. The shoreline, wet woodland and wet heath hinterland of "Scoter lough" provided the empid *Hemerodromia baetica*, the syrphid *Microdon myrmicae*, the micropezid *Neria cibaria* and the new-to-Ireland muscid *Lispocephala fuscitibia*.



Our base at Carradroghid, Co. Cork

Our ferry home from Rosslare departed in the evening, so we made the most of a rather soggy last day by stopping en route at a couple of coastal sites in Co. Wexford. Five minutes sweeping shoreline rocks at Ballyteige Burrow in blustery conditions landed Mike just five specimens but each a different species! At our final stop at Kilmore Quay we had a brief 20-minute window of non-rain, which allowed Mike and Mark to sample the wrack in a sheltered cove, collecting the coelopid *Coelopa pilipes* and the anthomyiids *Fucellia fucorum* and *F. tergina*; Mark pooted 300+ *Thoracochaeta* (Sphaeroceridae) of three species, including *T. johnsoni* (the third Irish record after the first and second were recorded in 2022).



Liancalus virens from Gougane Barra (Mike Ashworth)



Rossbeigh dunes, Co. Kerry

After a 3-hour crossing to Fishguard in a largely empty Stena ferry, we tumbled into our beds at midnight in St Clears Travelodge (Carmarthen), with the knowledge of fun had, a job well done and more riches to come!

Mark Welch

Summer Field Meeting 2024

Lancashire

Lancaster University

22nd June to 29th June 2024



Our base at the University of Lancaster provided good accommodation, food and workspace, all within easy proximity. Considering the abnormalities of this year's weather, the last week in June treated us kindly: three hot field days when we dared mutter that it was too hot and three days of rather cool dull conditions, no disruptive rain.

Our party comprised 30 resident entomologists and some local day attendees; the latter included Steve Garland whose local knowledge was extremely helpful. Our group came from many districts, from Fife to the coast of southern England and the Isle of Man. It was soon ascertained that poor numbers of flies was a general experience, most dire in the South-East of England and East Midlands. Our meeting venue embraced the Morecambe Bay the climatic hot-spot in NW England so it is not surprising that we experienced sub-optimum results, especially near the coast. Most disconcerting was that hoverflies and bees were exceedingly scarce or absent even on the most idyllic displays of suitable flowers, yet historically this is a rich area for both. Limitations aside, it was a very enjoyable meeting that still gained plenty of material and good records.

Our radius included plenty of sites representing a wide range of ecologies. In addition to Vice County West Lancashire (VC 60), many sites were in Westmorland (VC 69); the latter is now the SE part of modern Cumbria. Annoyingly the boundary is ill-defined where it cuts across the entomologically rich Silverdale/Arnside habitat complex.

The notes below relate to geographic areas. Major outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone dominate some areas, providing a rich flora, and this is a prime region for limestone pavement a BAP Priority Habitat. Raised bogs and upland fen are an important feature in parts of Westmorland, both also Priority Habitats.

To the north of Lancaster, to the west of the M6, lies the Silverdale habitat complex, an area of limestone hills and knolls, dominantly woodland, with limestone pavements and some ponds and lakes. Gaitbarrows NNR is especially important: here an empty puparium of the hoverfly *Microdon mutabilis* was found in an ant's nest under a stone: Hawes Water yielded the dolichopodids *Thrypticus cuneatus* and *Ethiromyia chalybea*, also the Fanniid *Fannia tuberculata* (the latter at its northern limit). This NNR had the woodland hoverfly *Eumerus ornatus* (a species also found at Warton Crag); a small tarn had the muscid *Hydrotaea velutina* and a wet meadow just south of the main pavement had the lauxaniid *Homoneura thalhammeri*. Grubbin's Wood provided the doli *Hercostomus fulvicornis* and the muscid *Coenosia pygmaea*: the doli was also noted at Heal Brow. Leighton Moss RSPB lies on the edge of the complex, an open water and wetland site (not an acid moss!): the craneflies *Limonia trivittata* and *Molophilus pleuralis* were not unexpected; the saproxylic hoverfly *Brachypalpus laphriformis* was a pleasing find. The elusive stilt-fly *Megamerina dolium* was found in Eaves Wood.



Megamerina dolium, Eaves Wood [D. Sumner]

To the SE of Lancaster, the Heysham 'peninsula' provides lowland near-coast habitats that are not calcareous dominant. Heysham NR had some very nice acid grassland but the main prize came from a shaded calcareous seepage at the base of a slope bordering fen, the uliid *Herina paludosa*. Middleton Marsh NR includes a small lake with some excellent marsh fringe but on this occasion did not live up to expectations. Saltmarsh at Carnforth was rather windy but both species of the doli *Thinophilus* were detected.

Much of the remaining part of North Lancashire, east of the M6 lies on the Bowland Shale Formation (rocks famed for the aborted fracking trials to obtain natural gas); mudstones and shales predominate, locally calcareous. The main southern part, Bowland Forest (little woodland!), was given much attention during the previous Lancaster meeting (drought was badly affecting more coastal areas). This time focus was on 'new' sites. In the south a cluster of 4 speculative unofficial sites proved very interesting, with Boggy Wood yielding *Ptychoptera scutellaris* in atypical habitat, and in Brock valley extraordinary gooseberry thickets on woodland seepages having a good fauna, the cranefly *Limonia trivittata* revealing that this is a calcareous site. In the northern part, the owners of Artle Dale SSSI gave access to incised valley woodlands; the stream at the bottom had the aquatic rhagionid *Chrysopilus erythrophthalmus*; the muscid *Lispocephala brachialis* was another good find and the cranefly *Molophilus undulatus* a useful record, but excellent valley-side seepages as well as the river margins were not yielding the faunal richness they very likely contained. Similar under-performing was experienced in nearby Cragg Wood where alder seepage carr and a nice stream were sampled. However, Birk Bank has a very nice acid valley mire, with masses of Bog Asphodel in flower: the cranefly *Dicranomyia distendens* was present among other bog species. The River Lune (that runs through Lancaster) meanders across its flood plain: easy access points are relatively few; we went to one which lies to the east of Caton. As the general case, the margins of flowing water were very unproductive but we did record the anthomyiid *Zaphne divisa* and local crane flies *Nephrotoma anilis* and *N. guestfalica*. Much further up the

River, at Kirkby Lonsdale the therevid *Cliorismia rustica* was found where sandy conditions occur.



Steve Falk & Alan Stubbs at Whitbarrow [D. Sumner]

On the north side of Morecambe Bay, localised Carboniferous Limestone outcrops provide some very flowery open habitat and well as woodlands; the quarry at the base of the south end of Whitbarrow has seepages which yielded the aquatic soldierflies *Oxycera pardalina* and *O. pygmaea*, the uliid *Herina palustris* and the cranefly *Orimarga juvenilis*. Humphrey Head is a limestone promontory with grassland and woodland; saltmarsh on the west side was of special interest since a strong population the robberfly *Machimus coweni* was seen at the top of the saltings (the flood embankments may be the population base). Other records included the saltmarsh cranefly *Dicranomyia sera*, the muscids *Phaonia fusca* and *Lispe nana* and the terrestrial acrocerid *Ogcodes pallipes* and the muscid *Coenosia pygmaea*. The coastal alluvial plain below Whitbarrow has raised mosses: we visited Meathop Moss NNR on very hot afternoon, not ideal, but the boardwalk on the south side gave access to less acid (partly wooded) margins, rising to more central parts of the dome of peat where acid bog conditions prevailed; some characteristic bog species were found, the localised *Dicranomyia distendens* included. Further west, Roudsea Wood and Mosses NNR contains a mosaic of acid and limestone woodland plus adjacent raised bog, and estuarine saltmarsh: it would take all day and access to closed areas to get a proper view. The cranefly *Dicranomyia lucida* was found in a fen glade (former tarn); *Nigrotipula nigra* and the muscid *Phaonia falleni* were also among the interesting species. A bit further inland we were given access to the Hay Bridge estate, a habitat mosaic which includes raised bog habitat which merges into Rusland Moss NNR. The Hay Bridge fringe of the moss had poor fen wooded fringe on very wet peat, the fauna including a strong population of the cranefly *Phylidorea longicollis* (a swamp species adapted to flooding and an indicator that this habitat can be much wetter underfoot than we experienced). A stream is part of the complex and *Nigrotipula nigra* was found on wettish peat just inside the NNR boundary. Larvae of *Microdon myrmicae* were found in a *Myrmica* ant's nest on the bog.

Going north, the M6 climbs to the summit of a col (with Torbay Service Station and minor roads to the east) before descending to Penrith. To the east at about 1,000 ft a minor road crosses Tarn Moss NNR, with streams and seepages on basin peat supporting upland nutrient poor fen. A little further east, lies Sunbiggin Tarn SSSI with adjacent fen mosaic. Tarn Moss was impressive and yielded the craneflies *Dicranomyia occidua and Orimarga juvenilis* on small marginal seepages (both need calcareous influence). The soldierfly *Oplodontha viridula* was recorded at Sunbiggin Tarn at an unusually high altitude, also *Dolichopus nitidus*. Other useful records are expected to be reported.



Oplodontha viridula [D.Sumner]

It will not be until the winter that most people submit identifications but the starter list of goodies is encouraging. Few draft totals are available but 69 species of craneflies is pretty good considering the poor year (flowing water species were especially scarce or absent – excessive rainfall impact or phenology timing?): the total should rise to at least 80+. We had very diverse expertise across the orders so as usual records are not confined to Diptera (aculeates were exceptionally scarce for the time of year, as hoverflies).

We have held these meetings for some 50 years, and never any one from Northumberland to my recollection: this year we had two. I suspect everyone has their favourite site of the week where they would like to spend more time. Gaitbarrows NNR for instance. To me Tarn Moss was tops, for its high quality habitat with super flora (but the Bowland sites are among others which are also of high cranefly fauna potential). Martin Drake nominated the saltmarsh on the west side of Humphrey Head as the place where he would most like to re-visit. During a week we get a brief snap-shot, the timing, season and weather rarely being just right for all one's favourite taxa, but we did pretty well.

Alan Stubbs

Meetings

Forthcoming.

Annual General Meeting

Annual General Meeting of the Dipterists Forum
Natural History Museum, London
16th November 2024

The Chair will open the AGM at 12:15 (time to be confirmed)

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM
3. Chair's Report (to include vote of thanks to retiring committee members)
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Dipterists Digest Editor's Report
6. AOB.
7. Election of Officers and ordinary members to committee

The Officers and ordinary members proposed for election this year, 2024, are as follows*:

Officers

Chair	**Mark Welch**
Vice Chair	**Erica McAlister**
Secretary	**Jane Hewitt**
Treasurer	**Phil Brighton**
Membership Secretary	**vacancy**
Indoor Meetings Secretary	**Erica McAlister**
Bulletin Editor	**Darwyn Sumner**
Assistant Bulletin Editor	**vacancy**
Digest Editor	**Peter Chandler**
Publicity Officer	**Erica McAlister**
Website Manager	**Martin Harvey**
Conservation Officer	**Robert Wolton**
Training co-ordinator	**vacancy**

Ordinary Members

Zoe Adams	**Victoria Burton**
Tony Irwin	**John Mousley**
Chris Raper	**Marc Taylor**
John Showers	**Judy Webb**

8. Chair's thanks to hosts and formal closing of the Annual General Meeting

**List as of July 31st 2024. Any subsequent changes/additions will be posted on the Dipterists Forum website by early October 2024.*

Jane Hewitt, DF Secretary

Annual Meeting

Saturday 16th November 2024
Natural History Museum, London

Venue

Dipterists Day & the AGM will be in the Neil Chalmers Suite, located near the base of the cocoon, at the North end of the Darwin Centre 2 building. We aim to broadcast the talks live, so that members unable to attend in person can still participate. Details of how to access this broadcast will be posted on the Dipterists Forum website.

Registration

Details of how to register for the Dipterists Day meeting, access to the collections, and the Dipterists supper will go up on the DF website at the start of October.

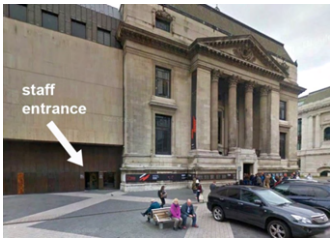
Provisional list of talks

Once finalised a full timetable will go up on the forum website.

Will Hawkes – Insect migration
Vladimir Blagoderov – Fossil Diptera [TBC]
AGM
Mike Ashworth – New Fanniidae & Muscidae study group
Olga Sivell – The Locust Blowfly *Stomorhina lunata*

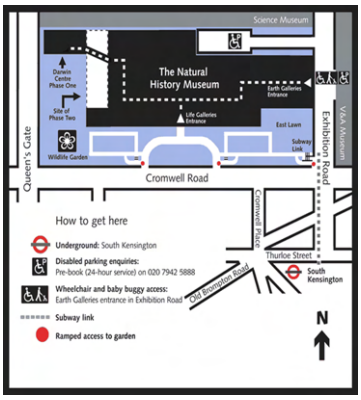
Access

The museum opens its doors at 10 am, and the meeting will commence at 10.30 am.



Please enter through the staff entrance on Exhibition Road and report to the reception desk for a visitor pass. Tell the reception staff you are attending the Dipterists Forum event. There may well be a queue for the public entrance trailing past the staff entrance, just squeeze through and use the staff entrance.

Travelling to the Natural History Museum.



Engineering works periodically affect London's public transport network at weekends so always check the Transport for London website before planning your journey. The closest tube station is South Kensington which is served by the District, Circle and Piccadilly lines. Note that this station does not have step free access. Also remember London buses no longer accept cash payments.

Accessible parking

Blue badge holders can book a space in the museum carpark, accessed via Queen's Gate (entrance indicated on the map above). Contact Zoe Adams for more information (Z.Adams@nhm.ac.uk).

Exhibits from the members

Anyone who would like to exhibit a poster, or a display of specimens at the event should contact Zoe Adams to arrange logistics (Z.Adams@nhm.ac.uk).

Visit to the NHM Collections:

DF members will have the opportunity to access the National Collections during the weekend. Again, details of how to book a slot will be posted on the forum website at the start of October.

Dipterists Supper

The Dipterists Supper will be on the Saturday evening.

Things to do whilst at the NHM

Take a stroll through the museum's revamped gardens, entrance is free, and they are open daily.

Anyone interested in the sounds of nature should go and listen to the art installation **The River, by acoustic artist Jana Winderen** in collaboration with Tony Myatt

Zoe Adams

Workshop

Friday 7th to Sunday 9th March 2025

British Ephydridae

FSC centre Preston Montford

Level: Advanced

Tutor: David Gibbs & Sam Thomas

Price: Last year's rates were: £220 single occupancy, £195 shared occupancy room

There will be a small increase on these rates for this year.

How to book:

You can book a place on the course through the FSC website under the section onNatural History courses. I recommend a keyword search for "Ephydridae" to find the course information. Details of the Ephydridae course will go up on the FSC website at the start of October 2024.

https://www.field-studies-council.org/fsc-natural-history-courses/

Fairs

[AES Annual Exhibition & Fair 2024]

28th September 2024

Report in the next Bulletin if anyone took pictures.

Staffordshire Invertebrate Science Fair 2025

1st March 2025

Staffordshire University

Leek Rd Campus, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2DF

Expeditions

Summer Field Meeting 2025

Glen Affric, Scotland

Tomic Estate Lodges

14th to 21st June 2025

We will hold our next summer meeting in the Glen Affric area of Scotland providing an opportunity to explore its lochs, moorland and magnificent Caledonian pine forest. Loch Ness and the Dundreggan rewilding estate are nearby, with the Black Isle somewhat further afield but still within range. Accommodation arrangements will be something a bit different for 2025 - we will be based at Tomich Estate in self-catering lodges. The cost for a lodge (which has three bedrooms) will be £670 for the week. Booking information will be posted on our website in due course. Contact the DF Secretary (jane.e.hewitt@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending and would like more details.

Jane Hewitt

By 24th September Jane tells us that this was already fully booked and places were restricted to cancellations.

Do not despair though. That same week is an ideal period for other favourite sites. We've details of them on several pages of this Bulletin (12, 20, 21) and if you'd care to return to Norfolk then do get in touch.

Darwyn Sumner

More from Lancaster 2024



River Lune shingle [Sue Taylor]



Humphry Head Saltmarsh [Sue Taylor]



Pair of *Tomerus (Machimus) coweni* [Sue Taylor]. These were abundant at Humphrey Head.

County Recorders

Dipterists Forum



Scotland
- Dumfries & Galloway ERC
- Fife Nature Records Centre
- Lothian Wildlife Information Centre
- Glasgow
- Highlands & Islands
- North East Scotland
- unassigned
- Outer Hebrides
- Shetlands BRC
- Orkney BRC

Ireland
- CEDAR (Ulster Museum)

North West England
- Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre
- Greater Manchester LRC
- Lancashire Envi. Record Network
- Merseyside BioBank
- rECOrd (Cheshire)
- Isle of Man

Wales
- North Wales (Cofnod)
- Powys & Brecon Beacons
- South-East Wales
- West Wales BIC

West Midlands
- Staffordshire Ecological Record
- EcoRecord (Birmingham & Black Country)
- Herefordshire BRC
- Warwickshire BRC
- Worcestershire BRC
- Shropshire EDN

South West England
- Bristol ERC (BRERC)
- Cornwall & Isles of Scilly - ERCCIS
- Devon BRC
- Dorset ERC
- Gloucestershire Centre for ER
- Somerset ERC
- Wiltshire & Swindon (WSBRC)

Maps themed by standard UK regions subdivided into Local Environmental Records Centre counties (see boxes)

North East England
- North & East Yorkshire EDC
- West Yorkshire
- North East
- Rotherham, Doncaster
- Sheffield
- Barnsley

East Midlands
- Leicestershire & Rutland ERC
- Lincolnshire ERC
- Northamptonshire BRC
- Nottinghamshire
- Derbyshire (closed)

East of England
- Norfolk Biodiversity Info. Service
- Bedfordshire and Luton
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
- Hertfordshire ERC
- Essex (closed)
- Suffolk

Greater London
- Greenspace Information for G. L.

South East England
- Hampshire BIC (HBIC)
- Thames Valley ERC
- Kent & Medway BRC (KMBRC)
- Surrey BIC (SBIC)
- Sussex BRC (SBRC)
- Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
- Isle of Wight

The dipterists indicated have a good local knowledge and work closely with their LERC. Blue background = organised Regional Groups. Yellow text = hoverflies only

ALERC
Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

A joint ALERC & Dipterists Forum project by Darwyn Sumner

Newsletter No. 29
Autumn 2024

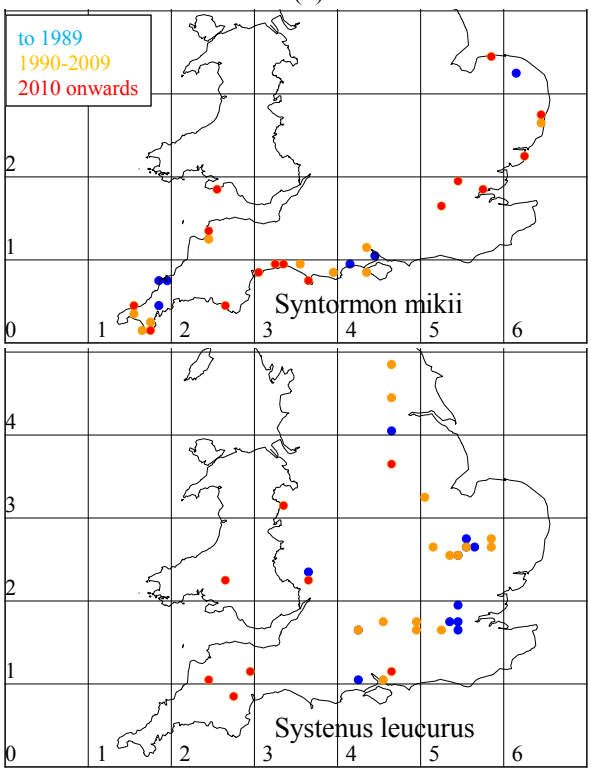
Dolichopodids recorded at the Dipterists Forum summer field meeting in South Wales, 2023

Martin Drake

This meeting must rate as one of the most disappointing of recent years. A mix of poor weather during the week following one of the driest early summers for many years made a bad combination for finding flies. Our base during 8-15 July at Swansea University was well placed for some beautiful sites from the coast to the hills. From over 40 sites we found 106 species, which is at the lower end of what we normally manage during these meetings, but reasonable given the weather.

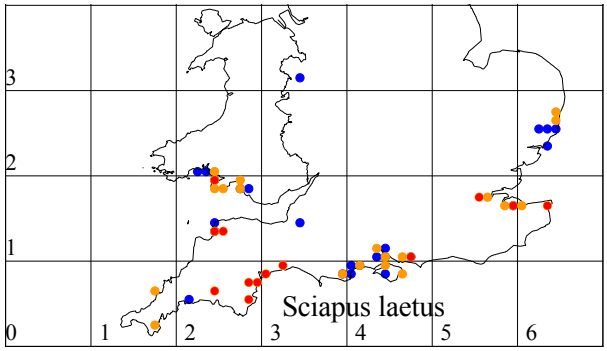
The only Nationally Rare species was *Syntormon mikii* from Oxwich NNR found among reed and *Iris* in wet woodland on the edge of the dunes. I believe this is the first record for Wales for this predominantly coastal species (map). We had six Nationally Scarce species. Close to Oxwich is Mill Wood where *Syntormon fuscipes* was found. It is probably frequent in southern Wales but likely to be overlooked as yet another tiddler, and hardly deserves its conservation status. *Systenus leucurus* from Dinefwr Deer Park was another first for Wales (map). It is infrequently recorded in England but overlooked because the adults are loath to fly from the rot-holes in which their larvae develop. The single female was caught by sweeping up and down the trunks of big trees in this old parkland while looking for *Medetera*. I did find *M. unisetosa* here which is probably fairly frequent in the southwest although nearly all the records are mine so there is likely to be considerable bias as I live in Devon. Two other *Medetera* of interest were *belgica* and *peloria*, both previously confused under *muralis*, so it was ironic to get both the new look-alikes here but no *muralis* which turns out to be the least common of the three (Drake 2024, *Dipterists Digest* **31**, 74-79). Also at Dinefwr was *Sympycnus spiculatus* whose distribution is scattered over Wales and England with a greater frequency in the north and Scotland. Two more coastal species were *Dolichopus notatus* and *Sciapus laetus* at Cwm Ivy, the former in scrubby dunes with short turf, and *D. signifer* at the dunes of Crymlyn Burrows. The two *Dolichopus* species are frequent around the Welsh coast but *S. laetus* has a curiously dense but restricted distribution on the southern coast (map). Two not especially uncommon species are worth mentioning in a Welsh context. *Sciapus wiedemanni* was found in pine and oak woodland on dunes at Pembury Forest. It is quite frequent in dry grasslands throughout Britain but in Wales is confined to the coast, perhaps reflecting the lack of suitable dry habitat in rainy Wales. At the other extreme, *Lamprochromus bifasciatus* was found in wet woodland at Dinefwr, but this wetland species is unaccountably scarce in Wales (map).

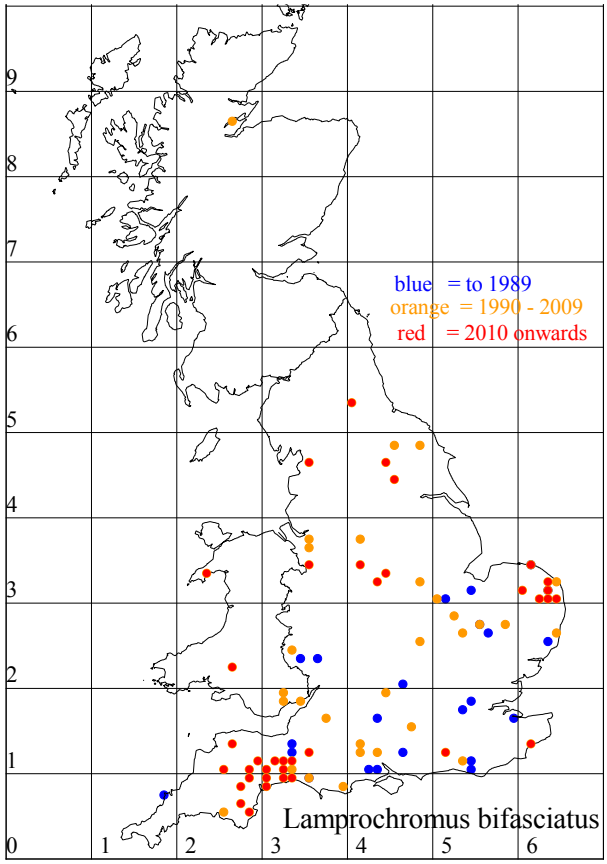
Among the most widespread in terms of number of sites where they were found, the usual suspects were abundant, e.g. *Chrysotus gramineus* (at 33 sites), *Gymnopternus aerosus* (25), *Poecilobothrus nobilitatus* (20) and *Dolichopus plumipes* (19). Among less common ('local') species of slightly more interest were *Chrysotimus molliculus* (8), *Hercostomus nigriplantis* and *Syntormon denticulatus* (7), *D. wahlbergi* and *Argyra vestita* (6), *D. diadema* and *D. sabinus* (5).



As in recent meetings, a large number of specimens were passed to me for identification during the evening at our lab, and I must thank the many collectors for this contribution. Of the total 106 species, 13 were found by others and not by me. It may not sound a big addition but it's definitely worth the effort of passing me specimens. Among those that I did not find was the single individual of the scarce species *Dolichopus signifer*, while several others were not just run-of-the-mill species, like *Ethiromyia chalybea*, *Poecilobothrus principalis*, *Rhaphium longicorne* and *Tachytrechus insignis*.

All the records are available on iRecord thanks to Jane Hewitt.

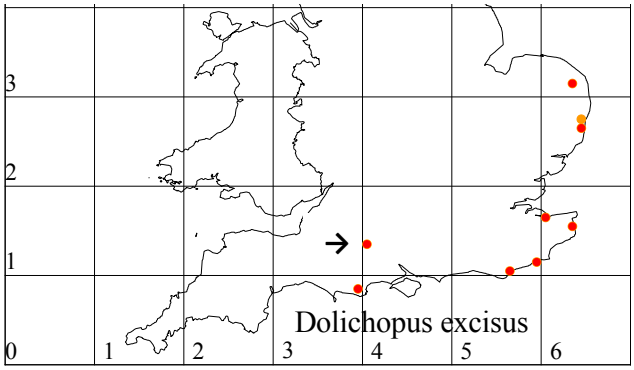


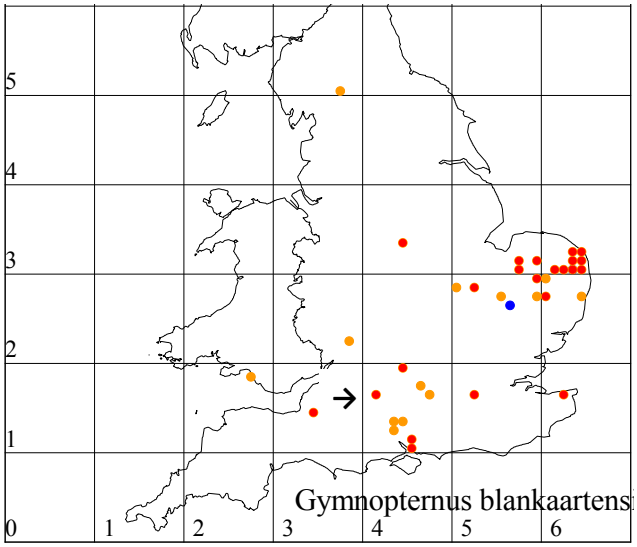


Dolichopodids recorded at the Dipterists Forum spring field meeting in Wiltshire, 2023

Martin Drake

In the expectation that May in recent years is more like June of a couple of decades ago, I joined the Dipterists Forum's brief spring field meeting in Wiltshire, 19-21 May, based on the edge of Salisbury Plain. Together with records from a few others, we found 25 species from a variety of sites ranging from chalk grassland and scrub to fens. The most interesting was Mike Ashworth's find of *Dolichopus excisus*, of which the few previous records suggested was a 'near coastal' species but now is known well inland from the wet meadow at Langford Lakes (map, arrow). But since the species has been known in Britain for only 20 years since David Gibbs found it, its distribution is probably just poorly understood. *Neurigona suturalis* was frequent in the scrubby areas of Salisbury Plain on the Chalk, reinforcing the established understanding of the preference of this species for dry woodland and scrub, which is not the usual habitat one expects of a dolichopodid. *Syntormon macula* turned up a couple of times, females at this time of year; it is quickly becoming clear that this is not the rarity once thought. The same comment applies to the over-rated status of small *Rhaphium fasciatum* which is probably just overlooked (Smallbrook, woodland). Although not given a rarity status, *Gymnopternus blankaartensis* is probably rather scarcer than these previously mentioned species, turning up in seepages under the trees along the valley floor of Jones's Mill nature reserve (map, arrow).





Possible female of *Chrysotus collini*

Martin Drake

Chrysotus collini is rarely recorded. I found a large population on Steart marshes, Somerset (ST2543, 17 vi 2023), the new Wildfowl & Wetland Trust reserve. Finding lots of males is unusual in itself but they were accompanied by many females that I assume belonged to this species. They have yellow front and mid tibiae and dark hind tibiae, which narrows the candidates to three known species: *blepharosceles*, *cupreus* and *monochaetus*, ignoring *melampodius* whose female is unknown and which may well not be British (I cannot find a convincing male specimen in museums). If I am right, then these females are indistinguishable from the common *blepharosceles* of which only a few males were found in the same samples. Of course, I may be wrong as one would expect all the tibiae to be yellow, matching those of females whose males have the same colour pattern as *collini*, like the ubiquitous *gramineus*. Another reason for being mistaken is that *Chrysotus* have pronounced protandry (males predominate at first, then females later) so I may have sampled when male *blepharosceles* are declining and their females just appearing, but this seems very unlikely in mid June. A job for DNA analysis to solve, perhaps.

Syntormon in cold months

Martin Drake

Syntormon metathesis was added to the British list only recently (Drake 2023, *Dipterists Digest* **30**, 55-59) but already Martin Greenland has added a record from the southern part of the Norfolk fens (Burgh Common TG441127), and of particular interest is the date – 21 March 2023. A few other species of *Syntormon* have been collected early or late in the year, suggesting that they may overwinter as adults. In particular, *S. denticulatus* has been found in nearly every month (not December), followed by *S. pallipes* (not January or December). Given how few records exist for *S. metathesis*, the early date suggests another species with a long winter flight period.

Size distributions in dolichopodids

Martin Drake

Stuart Reynolds writes an excellent series of articles in *Antenna*, the bulletin of the Royal Entomological Society, on a wide range of issues. His latest (although his name as author has been omitted by mistake) concerns the well known but less easily explained size distribution in arthropods (Reynolds 2024. Insects great and small: on the significance of size. *Antenna* **48(2)**, 61-69). A typical size-distribution histogram for beetles shows a preponderance of small species, and when replotted with lengths converted to their log values shows that this distribution is log-normal. I tried this for dolichopodids, using the mean values for each species, which I have measured for ten individuals of each sex for each species where available (Figs. 1, 2). I combined males and females as there is little difference in the histograms when each sex is plotted separately. While wing length is more reliable than body length as a measure, since bodies shrink in dry specimens but wings don't, I illustrate both measurements here since my supposedly better measure does not show quite such a clear log-normal distribution as the body length. I don't know why.

As Reynolds and others point out, there is an odd shortage of very small species – the curve drops off sharply at the left-hand side. In this respect, dolichopodids are no different from other insects.

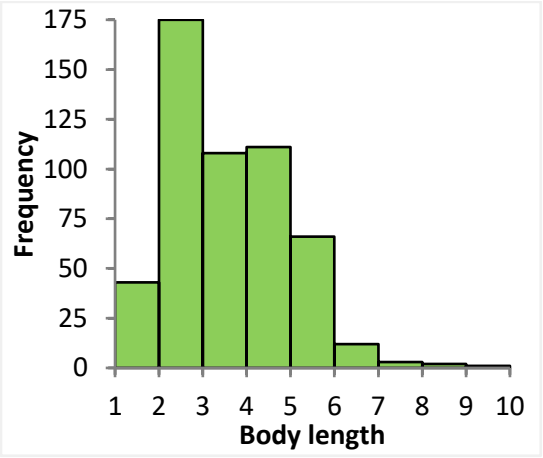


Fig. 1. Size frequency of dolichopodids using body length.

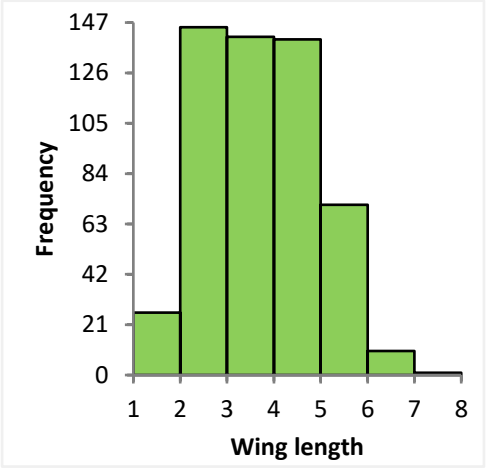


Fig. 2. Size frequency of dolichopodids using wing length.

Another thread that Reynolds discusses is the difference in size between insect orders. A graph he presents shows that mean size and its variance are fairly discrete for each order, taken from the tiniest to the largest of 35 orders. At the smaller scale of suborders of dolichopodids, this holds approximately true, although I have used minimum and maximum size since the sample of each subfamily is necessarily rather small and not amenable to estimating standard deviations (Fig. 3). Excuse my primitive histogram which gives the mean value in the middle with min and max as boxes rather than as a single line. What I find interesting is that two subfamilies that appear to include a mishmash of clades, based on morphology, have the widest range of size – so Diaphorinae includes large *Argyra* and tiny *Chrysotus* (among others), and Hydroporinae has our giants like *Liancalus* and *Scellus*, as well as tiny *Aphrosylus*. This is a gross simplification, but maybe size is a 'character' that should be included in phylogenies.

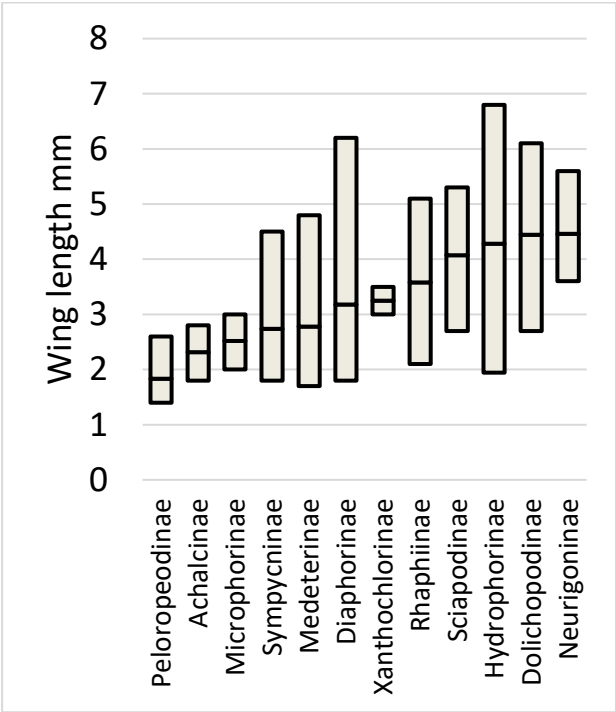
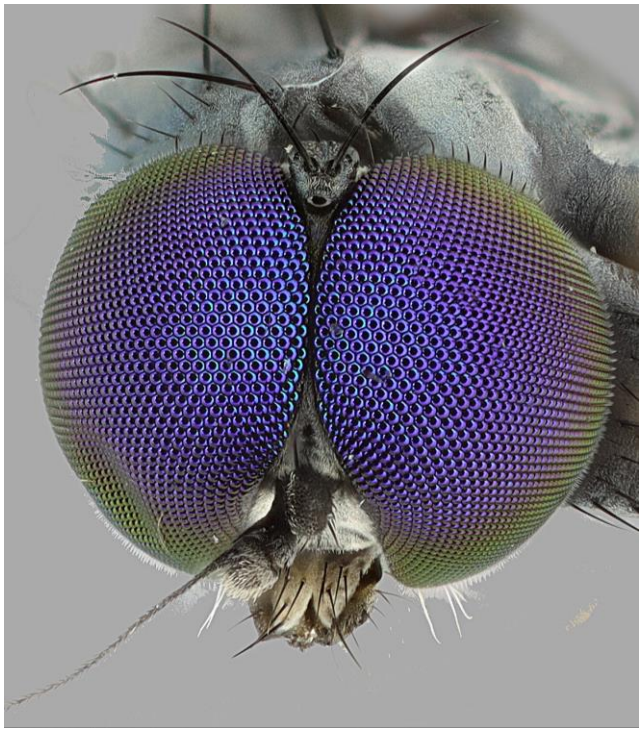


Fig. 3. Wing length within each subfamily of dolichopodids, ordered by the mean value (with minimum and maximum).

Eye colour in dolichopodids

Martin Drake

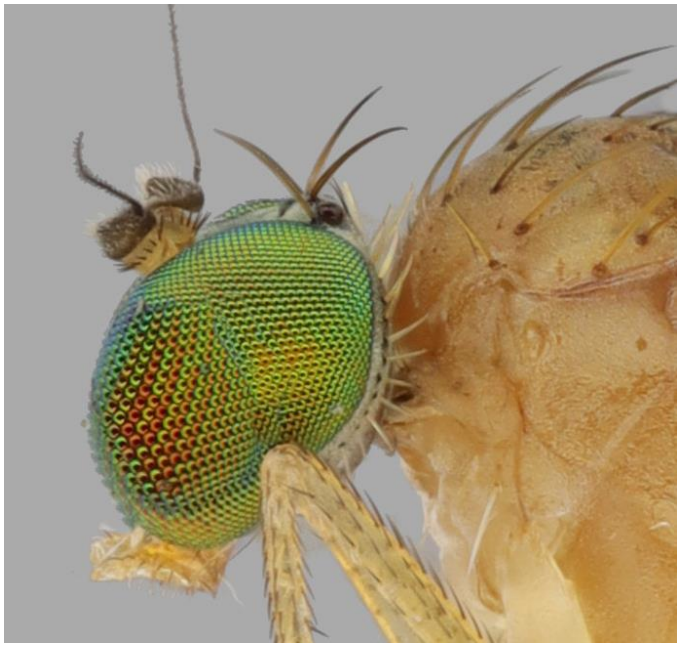
Colourful eyes are one of the attractive features of dolichopodids. They not like this for out delectation but do add to the fascination. It is a shame that the colours fade when they dry out, and the eyes often collapse if ethyl acetate is used as a killing agent (CO_2 or freezing help in this regard). As with other dipterans with coloured eyes, the lens is not completely transparent but reflects a narrow range of wavelengths, which accounts for the colours we see. Colour photoreceptors are found in the larger facets which are consequently the most colourful parts of their eyes. Stuart Ball's photo of *Diaphorus oculatus* shows an eye with the large facets having only one colour, violet in this case, but other species have alternating rows with facets of different colours, including red, orange, yellow and green, which correspond to different internal structures orientated at right-angles, as in Stuart's photo of a *Xanthochlorus*.



In species with colour patterns, the differently coloured facets are sensitive to different wavelengths, providing a spectral filter which enhances colour contrasts. One suggestion for this is to improve colour vision and to overcome glare caused by polarised light from reflective surfaces. In the sunlit leafy places that many dolichopodids live, this should improve their performance as predators of small arthropods. Or the colours are another signalling device, or conversely signalling using legs and wings with white 'flags' shows up better against a coloured background.

An avenue to pursue is the relationship between the type of colouring and the habitat occupied and the type of courtship. Why are the large facets of *D. occulatus* monochrome but those of *Xanthochlorus* bicoloured?

Many thanks to Stuart for permission to use his photographs.



Dutch atlas of dolichopodids

Marc Pollet and Henk Meuffels (2023) have produced a wonderful atlas of the Dutch dolichopodid fauna. The down side is that it is in Dutch, but pasting text into Google Translate overcomes language problems if you need only small bits of information. The upside is that it brings together a lot on ecology and phenology. As you would expect in a country smaller and less diverse climatically and geologically than Britain, the Dutch fauna is smaller than our (264 species compared to about 320) but it does include genera and species we don't have. Some of these may occur in Britain, such as *Campsicnemus lumbatus* and *Dolichopus tanythrix*, so checking the habitat preferences is a way of homing in on these possible additions.

Pollet, M. & Meuffels, H. 2023. *Verspreidingsatlas van Nederlandse slankpootvliegen (Diptera: Dolichopodidae)*. – EIS Kenniscentrum Insecten en andere ongewervelden, Leiden.

Aquatic empids book out now

By the time you receive this Bulletin, the book by Rűdiger Wagner, Marija Ivović and Adrian Plant on aquatic empids will be published (Sűßwasserfauna von Mitteleuropa, 21/26 Empididae). Despite the title of the series, this volume includes the British fauna. The book covers identification of males and, where possible, females, larvae and pupae, along with ecology, behaviour, flight period and distribution. Wait for a proper review, but I'm guessing it will be a boon to British empid enthusiasts.

Contacts

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Nigel Jones – nipajones@talktalk.net
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Newsletter compiled by C. Martin Drake

Hoverfly Newsletter
Number 76
Autumn 2024
ISSN 1358-5029





At a time when hoverflies are very difficult to find (see the Recording Scheme Update) it is heartening to be able to include, in the final three articles of this newsletter, recent finds of rarities. Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 77** (which is expected to be issued with the Spring 2025 Dipterists Forum Bulletin) should be sent to me: David Iliff, **Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 9HN, (telephone 01242 674398), email: davidiliff@talk21.com**, to reach me by 20th November 2024. Given the size limitations it may be worthwhile to send your articles in good time to ensure that they are circulated with the bulletin, in which newsletters are restricted to a maximum of eight pages. My thanks to all contributors, and also to Martin Matthews for his meticulous proof-reading of the text.

The hoverfly illustrated at the top right of this page is a male *Microdon myrmicae*.

HOVERFLY RECORDING SCHEME UPDATE: Autumn 2024

Stuart Ball, Roger Morris, Joan Childs, Ellie Rotheray and Geoff Wilkinson

What a difference a year or two makes! In 2022 we had a lovely warm dry spring that turned into one of the hottest and driest summers on record. The impact on hoverflies was very obvious in south-east England, although the overall dataset shows less of an effect because the impact was less pronounced further north. Conversely, 2023 was cooler and wetter. Were hoverfly numbers down because of the weather or because fewer animals had survived the ravages of the preceding drought?

This spring (2024) has seen much lower daytime temperatures even though it has been one of the warmer springs on record. Those figures are misleading because average temperatures are based on a combination of daytime and night-time temperatures. Greater cloud cover reduces daytime temperatures but means that nights are warmer, so this supposedly warm spring masks the fact that we have not had as much sunshine as in several preceding years. Less sunshine may equate to fewer hoverflies observed but it does not necessarily mean that there are fewer animals around. That is a big test and as yet we have no way of evaluating the differences.

What we can say is that hoverfly numbers in 2024 are reported to be low almost everywhere; partly because it has been too wet and cold to do any recording, and partly because there are no flies even when the weather is fine. Time will tell, but reports from numerous recorders speak of low numbers and disappointing results from visits to potentially productive places.

Do we see this shortfall in the data that has arrived so far? Perhaps not! Activity on the Facebook group does seem to be down, but in part that may be because the recorder base is maturing. The group was very active in its formative years and we relied very heavily on data extraction direct from the page. There has been a marked shift in this process, with much more data being placed on iRecord and iNaturalist, together with SyrphBoard. Some old friends seem to have concentrated more on posting directly on these platforms, having gained enough confidence in their identifications to need less assistance from the group. This shift

is obvious from the graphs for 2023 and 2024 (Figs 1 & 2).

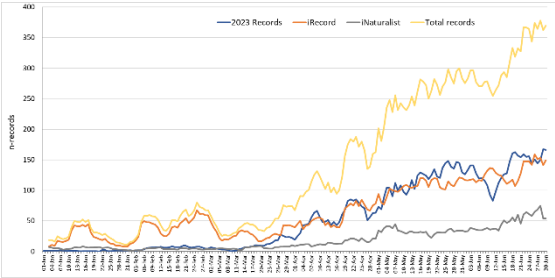


Figure 1. Breakdown of 2023 records from Facebook, iRecord and iNaturalist based on photographs submitted

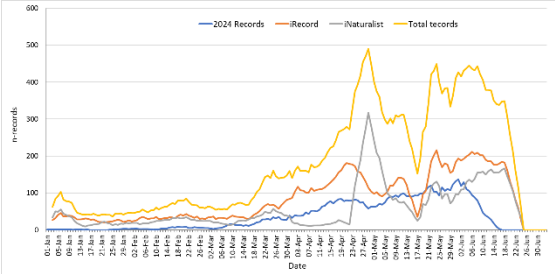


Figure 2. Breakdown of 2024 records from Facebook, iRecord and iNaturalist based on photographs submitted

It is noteworthy that in 2023, the highest number of records compiled over the three platforms was in the order of 350 records per day on a seven-day running mean, whereas in 2024 it has reached somewhere over 400 records in June (ignore the big peaks and troughs that were caused firstly by a data flow glitch in the iNaturalist flow to iRecord and then by Roger forgetting to take his computer on a trip away). At least superficially, we must conclude that there has been no strong decline and that there may actually have been a slight increase in incoming records.

Bearing in mind that the peak in recorder effort was in 2020, since when the numbers of records submitted has dropped a little, it is difficult to imagine that 2024 has seen a substantial increase in recorder activity. Nevertheless, the growth in the use of iNaturalist is noteworthy and may be a factor. Some very active Facebook members have switched to this platform, which may explain this partial uplift, which shows that iNaturalist is almost as popular as iRecord amongst contributors. We must add, however, that it is not our favoured platform because the data are far less useful.

In our last update we emphasised that whilst iNaturalist has been given a lot of prominence in Dipterists Forum's Bulletin, it was not DF's preferred platform. Our position is clear: we prefer iRecord for several reasons that are evident in the data received so far, based on records from 2022, as can be seen in the following breakdown. We need to look at the statistics for 2023 and 2024, but there are a few points that are worth highlighting.

Potential use	iNaturalist	iRecord
Mapping at 100km resolution	100%	100%
Mapping at 10km resolution	97.69%	100%
Mapping at 1km resolution	91.46%	99.95%
Mapping at 100m resolution	74.32%	97.39%
Adult phenology at daily level	99.97%	100%
Adult phenology related to gender	10.32 %	70.29%
Species representation (to segregate)	92.04%	97.32%
Proportion of GB list (to aggregate)	96/283	168/283
List length 100+ species	0%	0%
List length 50+ species	0%	1.54%
List volume > 50 records	0.34%	6.65%
Reliable flower visit records	0%	1.10%

Table 1. Comparative usefulness of iNaturalist/iRecord data submitted in 2022

Several important points emerge from Table 1. The numbers of records with at best a 100km grid reference are very high in iNaturalist data. In 2022 it was 2.31% (in 2024 it is currently running at 5.88%). As a matter of policy, we do not verify these records – they are rejected as unverifiable. It is also clear that a far lower proportion of the British species list is represented in the iNaturalist data, making it less useful for some analytical purposes and more influential in misdirecting analytical results. We think these results point to a very different user base that focuses on incidental records rather than detailed recording. As such, we would urge recorders to stick to iRecord because there can be no guarantee that we will have the capacity in the longer-term to deal with iNaturalist. For example, in one recent verification session it was found that 96 of the 120 records ready for verification were at 100km resolution! That sort of return for effort is not

viable. It transpired that they were part of a block of records that the iNaturalist team were revising, which caused them to be released to iRecord. Nevertheless, this level of weakness in the data is concerning. No recent evaluation of data submitted at 10km resolution has been made for 2023 as yet, but it is unlikely to show any improvement over 2022 based on current experience.

We are some way behind in our annual programme of data incorporation at the time of writing. 2023 data for iRecord and iNaturalist have yet to be incorporated, as have data from SyrphBoard. It will happen, but we have been heavily distracted by revisions to the WILD*Guide*. By the time this Newsletter reaches you, the book will finally be available and with those who have pre-ordered. It will hopefully create a stir! With that out of the way, Stuart and Roger have put a lot more effort into completing their guide to British flies but will also be able to address the data backlog!

As can be seen from Figure 3, the numbers of incoming records have dropped since the peak of 2020, although 2021, which was not a good year from a recording perspective, is very close. Perhaps the asymptote has been reached? This seems to be a possibility, as we have seen a steady decline in the activity of some of our specialist recorders who once provided the underpinning data on more challenging taxa.

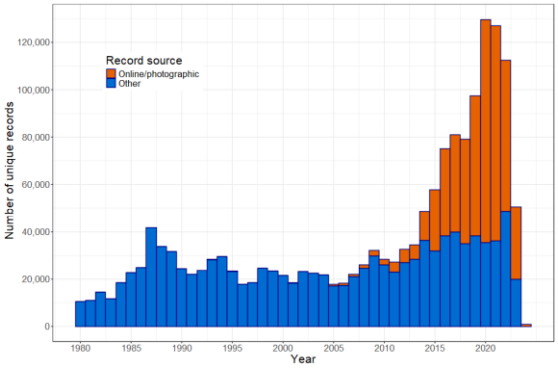


Figure 3. Annual records of hoverflies between 1980 and 2023, separated into data from traditional sources and from photographic recording.

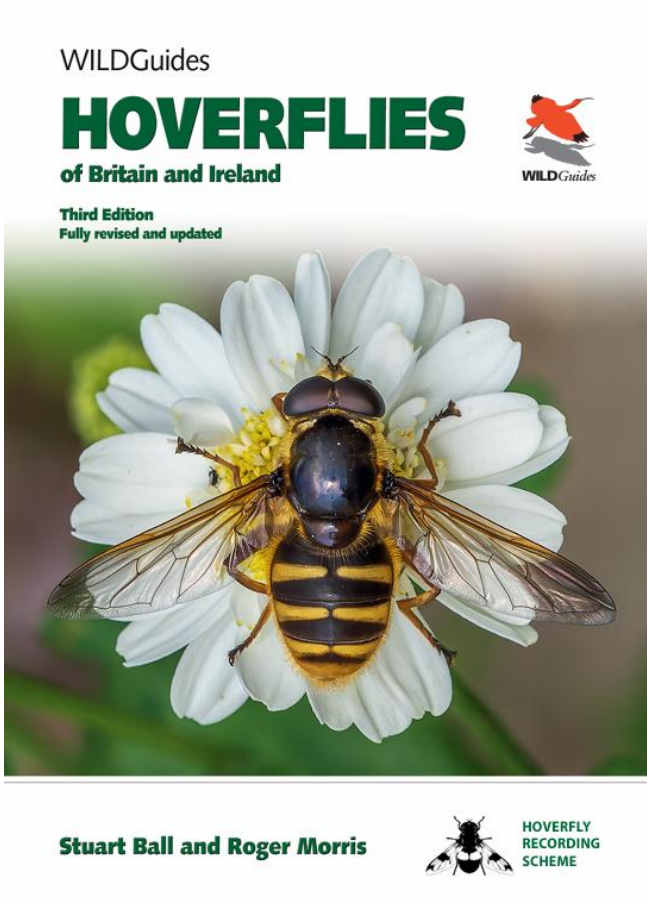
It has been our experience from running training courses that new people tend to maintain their interest in hoverflies for a comparatively short while. In the case of the very keen and able recruits, that drop-off is not due to a change in levels of recording activity; instead, it represents a shift in interest and greater concentration on new challenges and fly families that are more difficult to identify. In recent years we have seen several of our most able alumni shift their attention to 'tinies' – Phoridae and Sphaeroceridae. This sort of progression is great for dipterology but it really illustrates how hoverflies have moved from the 'too difficult' bracket of the 1970s to the entry grade today! So, perhaps the reality is that a proportion of the original recruits to hoverflies via Facebook have moved on to new challenges. It would not be surprising, as once one has seen the wonders of the fly world there is so much more that could be investigated.

Wild*Guide* Update

Roger Morris

On 1 July, the camera-ready copy went to the printers in Italy. We believe that the finished book should be back in Britain by mid-August and that it will be in the bookshops by early September. Those who have pre-ordered copies should also receive their copies by the end of August or early September.

This edition is substantially bigger than the second edition. It covers 13 extra species and also includes more detailed guidance on how to identify *Platycheirus*, *Eristalis* and yellow-banded Syrphini. Moreover, it contains some 400 new photographs and as such is a very considerable revision of the second edition. The front cover is illustrated below.



Is DNA an opportunity or a threat?

Roger Morris

I was recently contacted by Barry Yates at Rye Harbour, enquiring about the British status of *Sphaerophoria laurae*. It had apparently been identified from a sample from Rye Harbour by the Sanger Institute. Barry could not find this species listed as British and wondered why not? The answer is simple, as yet, it has not been recognised as British on the basis of traditional specimen-based recording.

Might it occur in GB? We simply don't know. My immediate reaction is that it seems to be unlikely, bearing in mind that the highly authoritative guide to the hoverflies of NW Europe (Bot & Van de Meutter (2023) (see recent review in this Newsletter) does not list it. Checking GBIF, I found that it seemingly occurs widely in Scandinavia, mainly on the coast, but there are also odd dots in various parts of Europe that seemingly correspond to montane locations. A species account for *S. fatarum* by the Biodiversity Data Centre of Ireland comments that *S. laurae* occurs at a higher altitude than *S. fatarum* so we must assume that this is a cold climate species that is unlikely to be found on the south coast of England!

I therefore feel that we should discount this reported occurrence and must question the origins of the DNA profile. *Sphaerophoria* are difficult to identify at the best of times, so we really need to know the origins of the profile of *S. laurae*. Has a specimen been retained and in which case where is it? In essence, the concept of holotypes is emerging all over again – they need to be available for checking when anomalous results arise. Alternatively, does the DNA profile precisely match that of *S. laurae*? I did some more digging and clearly it does not; moreover, the numbers of profiles available to the analysts are quite limited and several of the commoner species recorded in GB do not appear to be available. We must therefore conclude that best fit does not equate to a confirmed presence.

This case highlights the problems that we face in the process of DNA-based identification. Far from being redundant, traditional taxonomists are rapidly becoming a very valuable asset at a point where they have been largely squeezed out from academia and the museum network. Here in GB, we have the added problem that there are relatively few such specialists, most of whom are getting a bit long in the tooth and may not want to spend their time checking identifications for DNA profiling or collecting specimens specifically to feed into the DNA sequencing programme. As such, that suggests a need to establish a budget to pay consultant entomologists to seek out and supply material for sequencing. Again, that highlights a problem because it seems to be assumed that the network of non-vocational entomologists will provide the taxonomic expertise free of charge. Perhaps that is

misguided? Certainly, it shows that the need for competent taxonomists is not dead; indeed, it must start to be a priority because there are so few people who can deal with more challenging taxa than hoverflies.

Didea alneti reappears after more than 30 years' absence

Roger Morris & Chris Barlow

Didea alneti has always been a somewhat enigmatic British species. Records extend as far back as the 19th Century with numerous records from Scotland and the West Midlands, but the data held in the HRS dataset suggests that it has not been recorded on consecutive years from the same locality. The data are confusing as they come from various sources with entries representing potentially the same record in slightly differing formats, including differing place names and grid references but the same recorder. A lot of work is needed to disentangle the data and create a unified analysis.

The last occasion when it was recorded was1989 when it was reported from Slaley Forest in Northumberland on 29th June and again on 11th July by M. McEwan. These records were the first for 33 years since a specimen from 'Morden' in Dorset (presumably Morden Bog) was recorded by P. Harwood.



Figure 1. *Didea alneti* photographed by Chris Barlow

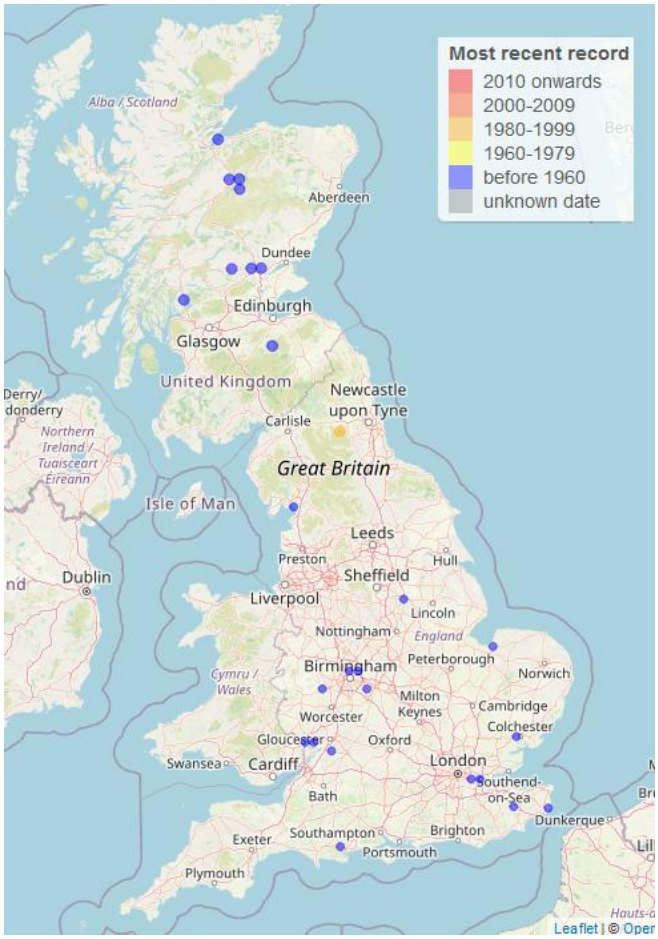


Figure 2. Distribution of historic records of *Didea alneti* as shown on the HRS website http://hoverfly.uk/hrs/taxonomy/term/512/map

Since 1989, there have been no further sightings, despite the last known site having been visited by a variety of people in subsequent years, although greenish-blue *D. fasciata* regularly cause a flurry of excitement. Many of the original records are supported by specimens in various museum collections and the data raise a number of interesting questions. It is especially noteworthy that although intermittent, *D. alneti* was seen quite regularly until the 1930s, after which it almost disappeared. Bearing in mind the limited mobility available to most people in those days, one wonders whether in fact there was a resident population of *D. alneti* that died out by the 1960s?

This June, Chris Barlow and Louise Hislop visited Dipton Wood in Northumberland (NY9761), on 8th June where Chris photographed a dark blue *Didea* that he posted on the UK Hoverflies

Facebook page and caused immediate excitement.

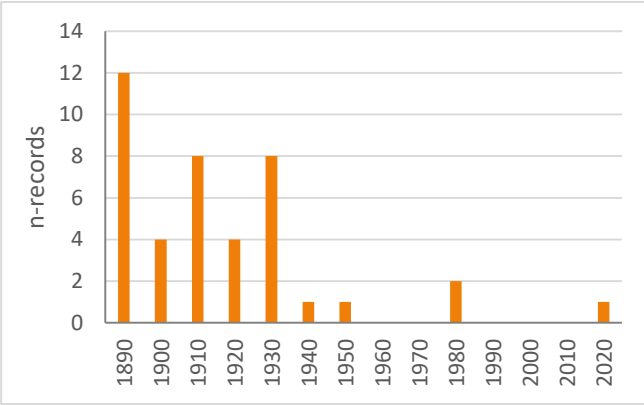


Figure 3. Numbers of records for *Didea alneti* by decade

The key to *Didea* in Stubbs & Falk (2002) separates *D. fasciata* from *D. intermedia* and *D. alneti* on the basis of the colour of the club of the halteres (yellow as opposed to black) and the extent of black at the base of the scutellum (confined to the basal area in *D. fasciata* and more extended in the other two species). In the photo of Chris Barlow's find the halteres are obscured and it is difficult to determine the extent of the back area at the base of the scutellum but this marking might be interpreted as being somewhat limited, suggesting that the specimen might be a bluish form of *D. fasciata*. Unlike, *D. fasciata* and *D. intermedia* females, which have extensive pale markings on tergite 5, this segment is black in *D. alneti*. On this basis Gerard Pennards advised that the specimen appeared to be *D. alneti*.

Dipton Wood lies less than 10 km north of Slaley Forest, so maybe the find is linked? It seems unlikely that there has been a resident population for all these years and it not having been noticed, but it is equally noteworthy that the two localities are so closely approximated. Until now, we have assumed that records of this species are the result of chance temporary establishment but perhaps there is a resident population?

Bot & Van de Meutter (2023) show that *D. alneti* has a long flight season but with a strong peak in May, suggesting that visits to both Dipton Wood and Slaley Forest in 2025 could be the most productive time to try to re-locate this species.

References:

Bot. S. & Van de Meutter, F., 2023. *Hoverflies of Britain and North-west Europe: a photographic guide*. Bloomsbury Wildlife, London. 400pp.

Stubbs, A.E. & Falk, S.J., 2002. British Hoverflies: An Illustrated Identification Guide. British Entomological & Natural History Society, Reading.

Mallota cimbiciformis in Gloucestershire

Martine Fenn

Walking along the Macmillan Way footpath through Hailey Wood near Coates at SO965008 on 7th July, I spotted an unusual looking hoverfly - a large bee-mimic type. The sun had just come out after a heavy shower and the hoverfly was feeding on hogweed along the woodland edge. Pete took several photographs which enabled us to identify it as the scarce *Mallota cimbiciformis*. We contacted David Iliff who confirmed the identification. He also noted that this is a first for Gloucestershire as presently defined; there is a single record for Blaise Castle in Bristol (which is in the West Gloucestershire vice county) from 1922.



Mallota cimbiciformis male
photos by Pete Fenn

A new site record of *Myolepta potens*

Ian Draycott

On 2nd June 2024 I was at home at Great Doward in South Herefordshire using the opportunity of some warm weather to try to improve my identification skills of dark calyptrates. I potted a selection of flies from my porch windows and from a flowering Spiraea bush a few yards away. One of them was mainly black and appeared to have striking orange/yellow wing bases, however on closer inspection it was clearly a hoverfly, and the colouration was not from the wings but the abdominal tergites showing through. I soon realised I had found my first *Myolepta* species and following some on-line investigations believed it to have the right features to be a male *Myolepta potens*. I cooled this individual down sufficiently to photograph some key features before releasing it again unharmed and then submitted a record via iRecord, emailing an alert to David Iliff of the Hoverfly Recording Scheme, who was able to verify it.

The key points separating *M. potens* from *M.dubia* are the extent of the orange on the third tergite and the width of the facial median stripe.

David was kind enough to provide me with some background information on this species including the report to Buglife by Andy Godfrey who had conducted a focussed search for this critically endangered species at Moccas Park NNR during 2019. This seems to be the last time it was recorded in UK.

This species was originally known from a few sites in Bristol and Somerset but considered extinct in UK in 1960. Then after 41 years it was rediscovered in Moccas Park in central Herefordshire during a survey of saproxylic Diptera in 2002 (Godfrey & Drake 2003). It was found there mainly in rot holes of mature Horse Chestnut trees both by emergence traps and by examining or rearing from rot hole material. Its presence was reconfirmed there by Godfrey in a survey of 2019 albeit in much reduced numbers.

The only other recent UK records are from the south eastern part of The Forest of Dean by John Phillips - from Welshbury Wood SO6815 (June 2009, a male), Pope's Hill SO6814 (August 2013, a female and July 2019, a male) and Awre peninsula near Brims Pill SO698069 in 2015. Also, an earlier record from John of an undetermined *Myolepta sp* from Blaisdon Wood SO6916 is highly likely to have been this species.

This recent record raises a couple of questions about the true distribution and habitat requirements of this species. Firstly, Moccas Park is ca 25 miles northwest of Great Doward and the Forest of Dean sites are a further 15 miles or so due east. There is plenty of mature woodland between these areas so *M.potens* should have a wider distribution than has been realised. Secondly, there are not many Horse Chestnut trees on the Doward and although Sweet Chestnuts are frequent here most rot holes in this area are found on old Beech trees.

References

Ball, S & Morris, R. (2013). Britian's Hoverflies. Wildguides Ltd.

Falk, S. Diptera Collections on Flickr.

Godfrey, D. (2020) Survey of Moccas Park, Moccas, Herefordshire for *Myolepta potens* (Diptera Syrphidae) in 2019. Buglife.





Myolepta potens male (photos: Ian Draycott)

More Than Just House Flies! The Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group

Newsletter 1, Autumn 2024

Edited by Mike Ashworth
ISSN XXXX-XXXX



Lispe tentaculata De Geer, female, photographed on 26th July 2024 at Allerthorpe Common, South-east Yorkshire [photo: Ian Andrews] – see article in this issue

What is the MFSG?

The Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group (MFSG) has been established under the auspices of The Dipterists Forum, dedicated to promoting interest among UK dipterists, entomologists, general naturalists and the public in the families Muscidae & Fanniidae (M&F).

The Muscidae are a highly diverse family including some large and noticeable species, such as *Mesembrina meridiana*, the well-known Musca domestica, and some confusion species, like the greenbottles in genus *Neomyia*. Many people have heard of house flies and may know a few of the more prominent species. Few people are aware of the full range of species. The British list currently includes 293 species in 40 genera. Although commonly called house flies, very few are truly synanthropic. The ecology of these species is very diverse with larval habitats including dung, carrion, fungi, damp mosses, mud, saltmarsh, dead wood and birds' nests. Others attack animals and are important as vectors of livestock disease. The Fanniidae, commonly known as Lesser House Flies, are closely related and until recently were regarded as a subfamily of the Muscidae. Inclusion of the fanniids add a further 61 species in 2 genera.

Activities:

- establish a web presence for the MFSG
- establish an X (formerly known as Twitter) account @UKMuscidae with regular tweets promoting news, events, 'special' and 'interesting' records and additions to the web site
- encourage specialists and enthusiasts in M&F to collaborate and exchange information, ideas and tips on study methods, through an email group, the web site and elsewhere
- encourage identification and recording of M&F using iRecord for all new and some historical records, including providing tips on collecting, identification and recording
- work with iRecord to provide guidance for additional verifiers
- feature individual species or genera to focus on their status, ecology, habitat requirements and interrelationships
- encourage study of behaviour, distribution, habitat and conservation requirements, phenology, early stages and interactions with other organisms
- encourage discussion of tricky identification questions through "ID Tips", e.g. see article on *Polietes meridionalis* in this issue
- help with identification and with the recognition of species new to Britain
- collate feedback on and highlight problems with currently available keys
- bring research outcomes to a wider audience
- compile and promote links to publications and information on the web e.g. Steven Falk's photographic collection on Flickr

As a Study Group rather than a Recording Scheme we do not aim to collect and process records, but we encourage submission via iRecord and will work to increase the verification effort.

Identification Characters to Separate *Polietes lardarius* (Fabricius) and *P. meridionalis* Peris & Llorente (Diptera: Muscidae) after Zielke (2016)

by Mike Ashworth

The genus *Polietes* contains medium to large flies which are distinguished from other genera in the tribe *Muscini* by having the medial vein M_1 straight. In both sexes the eyes are densely haired (except *steinii*), and the arista is long plumose. Females have a pair of crossed interfrontals. The larvae are coprophagous developing in dung from large herbivores, with later stages becoming predaceous on other dung-dwelling invertebrates.

Of seven European species, there are five on the British list. *P. lardarius* (Fabricius, 1781) is common and widespread across the whole of the UK with 1,278 NBN records (as of July 2024). *P. domitor* (Harris, 1780) is equally widespread though less frequently recorded (323), *P. hirticrus* Meade, 1887 is uncommon (48) and found in upland areas in northern England, North Wales and Scotland, and *P. steinii* (Ringdahl, 1913) is rare with status pVulnerable (Falk & Pont, 2017), with only five scattered NBN records the latest from 1989.

Polietes meridionalis Peris & Llorente, 1963 was reported as new to Britain in 2013 (Pont & Falk, 2013) and now has 71 records in NBN. It was historically known as a largely southern European, largely Mediterranean, species. Pont & Falk reported that *meridionalis* had been present in the UK, but previously unrecognised, in ten English counties, Pembrokeshire in Wales, Wigtownshire in Scotland and three Irish counties. They note that it has a more restricted distribution than *lardarius*, but, with the help of a warming climate, is likely to be expanding its range and becoming more abundant.

Polietes lardarius and *P. meridionalis* are very similar species allowing the presence of the latter in the UK to go almost unnoticed. Eberhard Zielke (2016) has re-evaluated their morphological characters and proposes a revised key for both sexes. Zielke writes that the colour of the anterior spiracle, used in most keys, can vary according to lighting and viewing angle. He suggests three confirmatory characters. Zielke's couplet for separating these two species is reproduced here:

- Independent from point of view colour of anterior spiracle always yellowish-white to dark yellow; outer margin of upper calypter usually at least at a certain point of view with a dark seam..... ***P. meridionalis***
- Colour of anterior spiracle at different points of views never consistently yellow. The colour is white, grey or yellowish-brown to dark grey, brown and blackish and it usually changes when points of views are changed; upper calypter at no point of view with a dark seam, although at certain light angles several individual hairs of the calypter-fringe might appear blackish ..... ***P. lardarius***

The following confirmatory characters are also provided:

P. lardarius: Anterior part of head partly brown or greyish white, however, in some specimens at certain point of view also yellowish. **Male:** Hind tibia usually without conspicuously long anterior setae on the upper half. Hind margin of lower calypter diverging from margin of scutellum at angle of about 90° (see Fig. 2). **Female:** Frontal vitta usually straight sided or only weakly concavely narrowed when viewed from about halfway between anterior and dorsal of the face.

P. meridionalis: Anterior part of head at different points of view usually more consistently golden yellow to yellow brown. **Male:** Hind tibia at anterodorsal or anteroventral point of view with an irregular row of conspicuously long setae on upper half of anterior surface. Hind margin of lower calypter diverging from margin of scutellum at angle of much less than 90° (see fig. 2). **Female:** Frontal vitta distinctly concavely narrowed, when viewed from halfway between anterior and dorsal of the face.



Fig. 1. Head and thorax of males of *P. lardarius* (Fabricius) (left) and *P. meridionalis* Peris & Llorente (right) taken on 23rd May 2024 at Lough Yganavan, County Kerry, Republic of Ireland. [Photos: Mike Ashworth]

On 23rd May 2024 I took males of both species in wet woodland at the edge of Lough Yganavan, County Kerry, Republic of Ireland. Fig. 1 shows lateral views of the head and thorax of these specimens. The photographs show more or less clearly, and the clarity is much greater when viewed with a microscope, three features: 1) *meridionalis* has a dark margin to the upper calypter, whereas in *lardarius* the margin is concolorous with the rest of the calypter, 2) the colour of anterior spiracle is a good yellow in *meridionalis*, whitish in *lardarius*, and 3) the anterior part of head is a rich golden yellow in *meridionalis*, somewhat pale whitish in *lardarius*.

In my experience, when presented with a single specimen rather than comparative material, the darkening of the margin of the upper calypter in *meridionalis*, or the pale margin in *lardarius*, is particular obvious.

Separation of males using the shape of the lower calypter is difficult to envisage it from a description, and hence in our Fig.2. below we include Fig.2 from Pont & Falk which shows this feature clearly.

Steven Falk's Flickr collection for the Muscidae has photographs of both species in which these characters can also be seen.

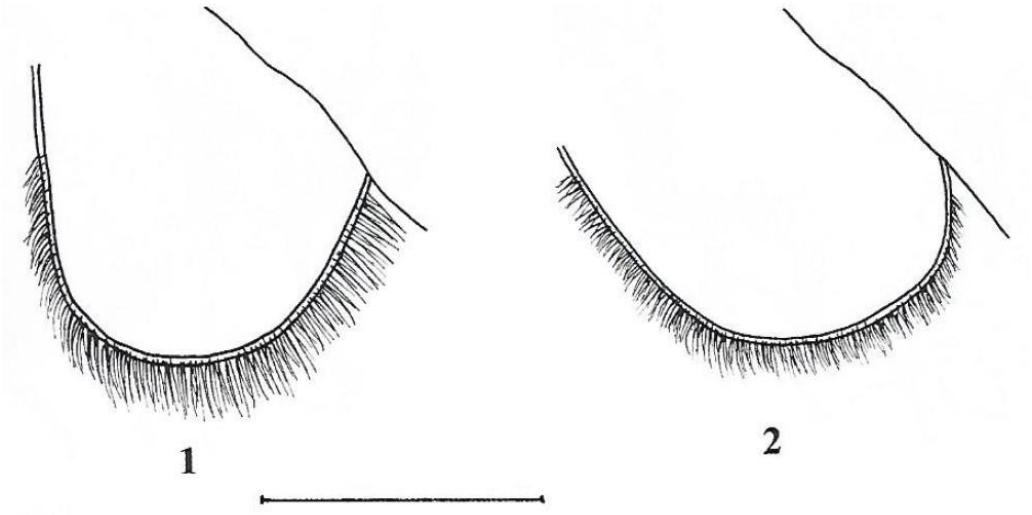


Fig. 2. Male lower calypter of *P. lardarius* (Fabricius) (left) and *P. meridionalis* Peris & Llorente (right). Scale line 1mm. Fig. 2. from Pont & Falk (2015).

P. meridionalis is certainly much more abundant than the 71 NBN records would suggest. My own records between 2020 and 2024 comprise nine *meridionalis* out of a total of 25 for both species showing a split of roughly ⅓ *meridionalis* to ⅔ *lardarius*. These are mainly from southern England, esp. Somerset, but also include the specimens from the Republic of Ireland (shown above) and two *meridionalis* from different sites in south-west Scotland in Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire.

The general European distributions of these species show that *lardarius* is a more northern species, absent from North Africa and the Middle East, whereas *meridionalis* is more southern. With changing climate, it may be that *meridionalis* will become more common than *lardarius* in southern England

I recommend reading Zielke's paper and if you have historical specimens identified as *Polietes lardarius*, it may be worth checking your records.

The author would like to thank Adrian Pont for interesting discussions and comments on the manuscript.

Adrian C. Pont & Steven Falk, "*Polietes meridionalis* Peris & Llorente (Diptera: Muscidae) new to Britain" Dipterists Digest, 2015, 20, 45-51.

Eberhard Zielke, "Observations on the distinctions between *Polietes lardarius* (Fabricius) and *Polietes meridionalis* Peris & Llorente (Diptera: Muscidae)", Journal of Entomology and Zoology Studies 2016, 4(6), 780-783. https://www.entomoljournal.com/archives/2016/vol4issue6/PartK/4-6-68-106.pdf [accessed 30th July 2024]

Steven Falk, "Muscidae (house fly and relatives)", Flickr Collection, [accessed 30th July 2024] https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/collections/72157632832500762/

MFSG at the Dipterists Day

There will be a presentation introducing the Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group at:

The Dipterists Day

16th November 2024

Natural History Museum, London

See https://dipterists.org.uk/events for more details and for how to register



Fig. 1. *Lispe tentaculata* De Geer, male, photographed on 26th July 2023 at Allerthorpe Common, South-east Yorkshire [photo: Ian Andrews]



Fig. 2. *Lispe tentaculata* De Geer, female, photographed on 26th July 2024 at Allerthorpe Common, South-east Yorkshire [photo: Ian Andrews]

Lispe tentaculata De Geer (Diptera: Muscidae) in VC61 South-east Yorkshire

by Ian Andrews

Lispe Latreille 1796 is a genus of muscids with adults and larvae both predatory and associated with mud and damp substrates at water's edge. Adults are remarkable for their large, more or less spathulate palps.

There are some 200 species worldwide and 10 in the UK. The majority of the UK species are coastal and rarely recorded. According to Falk & Pont (2017) five of the ten species have provisional status designations as below…

Lispe caesia Meigen	pNationally Scarce
Lispe consanguinea Loew	Data Deficient
Lispe loewi Ringdahl	pNationally Scarce
Lispe nana Macquart	pNationally Scarce
Lispe uliginosa Fallén	pNationally Scarce

Only one of the remaining 5 species is abundant and widespread, *Lispe tentaculata* De Geer, 1776. Vikhrev (2011) states it to be a common species across its natural habitat, found on boulders at stream and lake sides and beside temporary pools and muddy areas, but avoiding saline muds. That fits with my experience of it in VC61, where it is found beside pools on lowland heath, on mud beside a spring-fed stream where cattle gather on Wolds grassland, and on temporary pools on brownfield sites beside the Humber (where it exists on the inland side of the sea wall, with *Lispe litorea* on the seaward side). I have records from late May to late September but peaking in late July.

Vikhrev (2011) notes that adult *tentaculata* feed either on dead insects or on living prey, but in the latter case that the prey is usually an insect larva rather than an adult, and that if they do seek adult Diptera as prey, that it will be something slow like a chironomid midge. I have watched a female stalk a *Campsicnemus*, though, grabbing it with the front legs and feeding upon it once it was pushed into the mud. The species is a good watch, as it is very active in sunny weather, males seeking out logs at the water's edge from where they can repel rivals, generally harass any other flies daring to enter their area and seek females. Most of their time is spent beside the water, walking around actively on the mud or on algae or plants in the water. They rarely leave that area at all in my experience, operating usually within a meter-wide zone either side of the water's edge.

Specimens are usually needed to identify members of the genus, but clear photos to show the posterior peg on the male fore metatarsus, in combination with three post-sutural dorsocentrals on the thorax and all tibiae grey, would allow a record of *tentaculata* from a photo.

It is an attractive muscid to look out for and all records are welcome.



Fig. 3. *Lispe tentaculata* De Geer, female, with prey photographed on 26th July 2024 at Allerthorpe Common, South-east Yorkshire [photo: Ian Andrews]

Falk, S.J, & Pont, A.C. 2017. A Provisional Assessment of the Status of Calypterate flies in the UK. Natural England. Commissioned Reports, Number 234

Vikhrev N. (2011) Review of the Palaearctic members of the *Lispe tentaculata* species-group (Diptera, Muscidae): revised key, synonymy and notes on ecology, ZooKeys, 84, 59-70.

Vikhrev N.E. 2015 Taxonomic notes on *Lispe* (Diptera, Muscidae), parts 10–12 Amurian Zoological Journal, VII(3), 2015, 228-247

Werner, D. & Pont, Adrian C. 2006. New results on Diptera predators in the blackfly plague areas of central Europe and the Caucasus. Acta Entomologica Serbica, Supplement, 2006, 131-140.

Ed: A few of Ian's excellent photographs of *Lispe tentaculata* in habitat are shown here. Find more in full resolution on his Flickr site https://www.flickr.com/photos/52163027@N02/albums/72157660074807931/

Resources

The MFSG web page is located on the DF website: https://dipterists.org.uk/muscidae-group/home

E.C.M d'Assis Fonseca, RES Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects, Volume 10, Part 4b, 1968 - 124 pages. The classic key to British Muscidae & Fanniidae (as sub-family Fanniinae). Missing modern name changes and some new species, but still excellent. Available as a free PDF download from the RES website. Paper copies may be available from used book sellers.

R. Rozkošný, F. Gregor & A.C. Pont, The European Fanniidae (Diptera), 1997. Available as a free PDF download from the ResearchGate website

F. Gregor, R. Rozkošný, M. Barták, & J. Vaňhara, Manual of Central European Muscidae (Diptera), 2016, Schweizerbart Science Publishers. Excellent and very detailed but missing some British species which do not occur in the region of Central Europe. Available new from booksellers at ca. £185.

Stuart Ball. Identification Guide to British Muscidae, March 2010, A draft guide prepared for the DF workshop in 2010, and amalgamating information from d'Assis Fonseca (1968) and earlier version of Gregor et al. Available to DF members.

James McGill, A set of draft keys prepared by James and not completed, but useful and nicely structured. Available to DF members.

Some materials, such as the draft keys mentioned above) have been made available to DF members in the membership area of the website. Log in and navigate to Resources -> DF membership area.

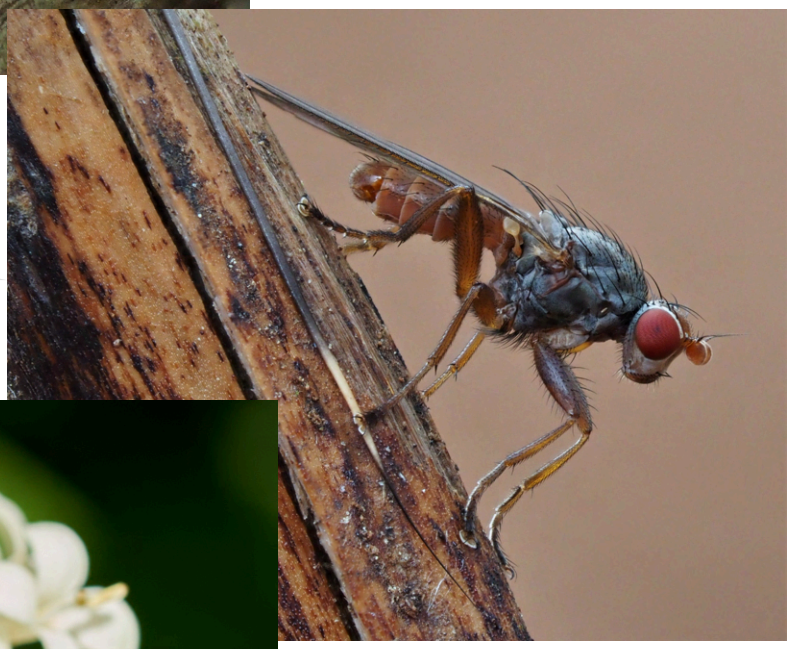
Steven Falk, "Muscidae (house fly and relatives)", Flickr Collection, [accessed 30th July 2024 https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/collections/72157632832500762/

If you know of any other useful resources, please contact the editor at drmikeashworth@gmail.com

Dipterists Forum Flickr group



Dioctria linearis
Ian Andrews
Olympus OM1 - Mk III
Zuiko 60mm macro



Neoleria propinqua
Ian Andrews
Olympus OM1 - Mk III
Zuiko 60mm macro



Didea fasciata
John Showers
Sony ILCE-7M3



Oxycera pardalina
Sam Thomas
TG-5



Oxycera trilineata
Darwyn Sumner
Nikon Z6 + macro flash (R1C1)



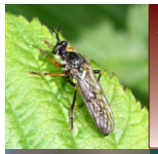
Physocephala rufipes
Sam Thomas
TG-5



Cistogaster globosa
Nigel Jones
TG-5

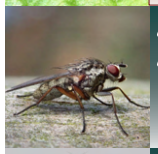


Nephrotoma submaculosa
Sam Thomas
TG-5



Soldierflies & Allies
Recording Scheme

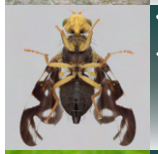
Martin Harvey kitenetter@googlemail.com



Anthomyiids
Anthomyiidae Study Group

Phil Brighton

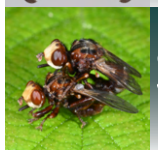
helophilus@hotmail.co.uk



Tephritidae
Tephritid flies Recording Scheme

Laurence Clemons

laurenceclemons56@gmail.com



Conopids
Conopid Recording Scheme

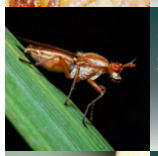
with Lonchopteridae, Ulidiidae, Pallopteridae & Platystomatidae

David Clements dave.clements1@ntlworld.com



Agromyzidae
Leaf-miner Recording Scheme

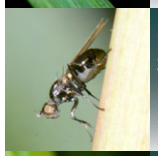
Barry Warrington agromyzidaeRS@gmail.com



Sciomyzids
Snail-killing flies Recording Scheme

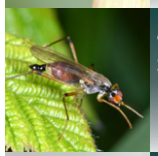
Ian McLean ianfgmclean@gmail.com

Darwyn Sumner darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com



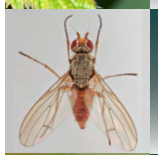
Sepsids
Sepsidae Recording Scheme

Steve Crellin steve_crellin1@hotmail.co.uk



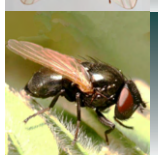
Micropezids & Tanypezids
Stilt & stalk-fly Recording Scheme

Darwyn Sumner darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com



Heleomyzids
Heleomyzid Recording Scheme

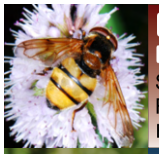
Ian Andrews syrphus@hotmail.co.uk



Lance-flies
Lonchaeidae Study Group

Nigel Jones nipajones@talktalk.net



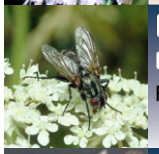


Hoverflies
Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Stuart Ball stuart.ball@dsl.pipex.com

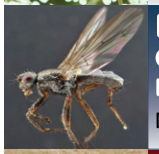
Roger Morris syrphid58@gmail.com

E David Iliff davidiliff@talk21.com



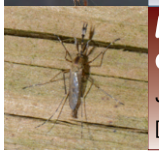
Rhinophorids
Rhinophoridae Recording Scheme

Ryan Mitchell ryanmitchell1994@live.com



Kelp-fly Recording Scheme
Coelopidae, Heterocheilidae, Helcomyzidae

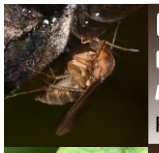
Donald Smith KelpflyRS@gmail.com



Mosquitoes Recording Scheme
Culicidae

Jolyon Medlock jolyonmedlock@hpa.org.uk

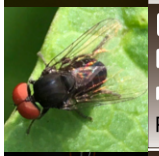
[See also mosquito@UKHSA.gov.uk]



Fungus Gnats
Recording Scheme

Mycetophilidae & allies

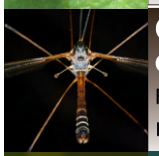
Peter Chandler chandgnats@aol.com



Flat-footed flies
Recording Scheme

Platypezidae

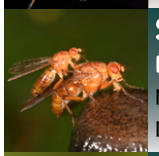
Peter Chandler chandgnats@aol.com



Craneflies
Cranefly Recording Scheme

Ryan Mitchell & Jenni Wilding

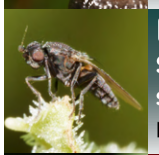
EJohn Kramer john.kramer@btinternet.com



Small Acalypterates
Recording Scheme

Nigel Jones nipajones@talktalk.net

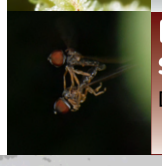
Darwyn Sumner darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com



Lesser Dung Flies
Study Group

Sphaeroceridae

Mark Welch m.welch@nhm.ac.uk



Pipunculidae
Study Group

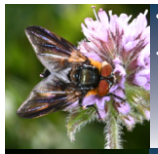
David Gibbs DavidjGibbs6@sky.com



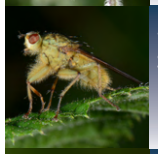




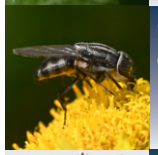
Dipterists Forum Recording Schemes & Study Groups



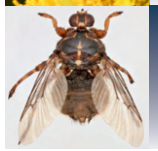
Tachinids
Tachinidae Recording Scheme
Chris Raper chris.raper@gmail.com
Matthew Smith MatSmith1@compuserve.com



Scathophagids
Scathophagid Recording Scheme
Stuart Ball stuart.ball54@gmail.com

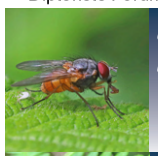


Calliphorids
Calliphoridae Recording Scheme
Olga Sivell aruma@wp.pl

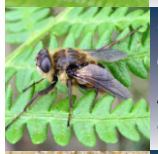


Hippoboscids & Nycteribiids
Ked, Louse & Bat-fly Recording Scheme
H: Denise Wawman denisewawman@gmail.com
N: Erica McAlister e.mcalister@nhm.ac.uk

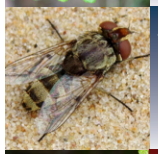
Collating & Managing
Methods available to the schemes are limited, for example there are presently no suitable image management tools. Current tools are: Recorder 6, MapMate, Excel & Access. Both BRC and Dipterists Forum may help Schemes with this task.



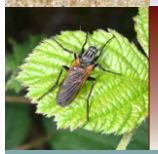
Muscidae & Fanniidae
Muscidae & Fanniidae Study Group
Mike Ashworth drmikeashworth@gmail.com



Oestrids
Oestridae Recording Scheme
Andrew Grayson andrewgrayson1962@live.co.uk

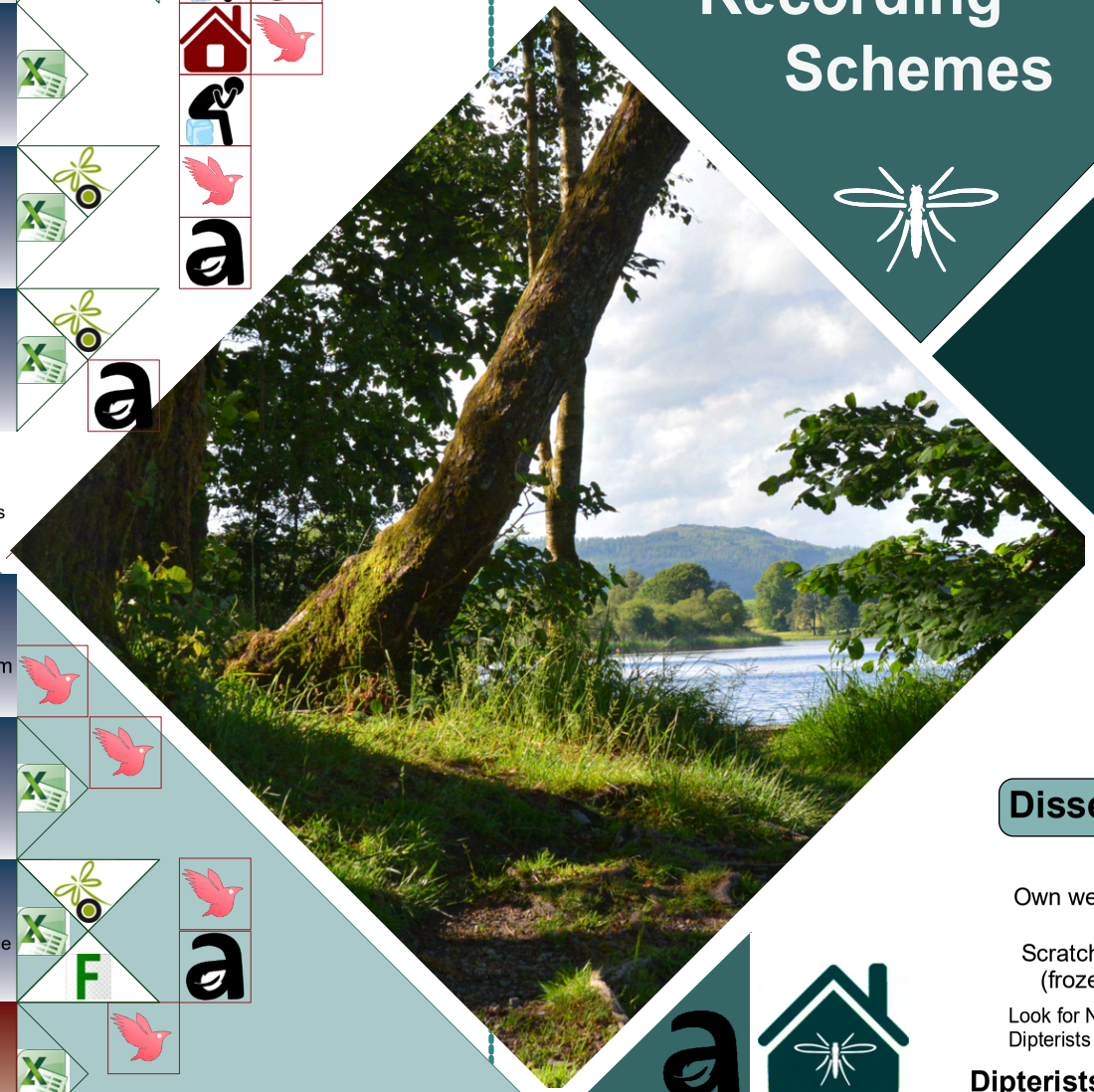


Sarcophagids
Flesh Fly Recording Scheme
Daniel Whitmore daniel.whitmore@smns-bw.de
Nigel Jones nipajones@talktalk.net



Empid & Dolichopodid
Recording Scheme
Martin Drake martindrake2@gmail.com
Steven Hewitt smhewitt@hotmail.co.uk
Nigel Jones nipajones@talktalk.net

Homes and keys
All of the Recording Schemes have a home on the Dipterists Forum website
Some of these are quite substantial and may be where you will find **identification keys**.
Others have additional homes (red home symbols) which they might prefer (check both)



Collecting
iRecord
Spreadsheet
iNaturalist
Social media

Disseminating
Click these icons at each Scheme

Own website
iNaturalist project (Dipterists Forum)
Scratchpad (frozen)
Open Data (NBN Atlas)

Look for Newsletters on these sites and in the Dipterists Forum Bulletin

Dipterists Forum www.dipterists.org.uk

Publishing
Open Data publishing to publicly accessible sites is our contribution to conservation & education. Many schemes achieve this through NBN Atlas and GBIF. In 2020 our UK total was 341,353 with an additional four times that figure planned.

Design
D. Sumner (ADS)

Download as interactive pdf from Dipterists Forum website