



DIPTERA

RECORDING SCHEMES BULLETIN No. 19, September 1985

This issue announces the programme for the annual meeting in November and gives some past results and future plans for the field meetings.

ANNUAL MEETING - SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1985

The programme follows the established format with a series of lectures in the morning, followed by exhibits and discussion meetings in the afternoon. The venue is the British Museum (Natural History) at South Kensington, London.

Morning Session (Main Lecture Hall) - Chairman to be announced.

- 11.00 - 11.20 Progress in tephritid taxonomy. Dr Ian White.
- 11.20 - 11.40 The hoverfly recording scheme - a progress report. Philip Entwistle.
- 11.40 - 12.10 The biology and control of cattle flies. Dr Eric Hillerton.
- 12.10 - 12.40 Reading the landscape in pursuit of flies. Alan Stubbs.
- 12.40 - 13.00 Life histories of some Cheilosia associated with marsh thistle (hoverflies). Dr Graham Rotheray.

LUNCH A choice of pubs, cafeterias etc. or bring sandwiches.

Afternoon Session (Demonstration Room, Palaeontology Department)

- 14.00 - 15.00 Setting up exhibits and informal.
- 15.00 - 16.00 Informal or discussion session (including the study of empids and dolichopodids).
- 16.00 - 16.45 Informal or Mosquito Discussion Group meeting.
- 16.45 - 17.00 Close of Session (removing exhibits etc).

The lecture programme aims to be informative and pitched at a popular rather than academic level. There is a mix of topics that includes hoverflies and the increasingly popular picture winged flies of the family Tephritidae. The cattle fly study is one that some of you have contributed to. All give a chance to glean new information, much of it unpublished. The landscape item will consider several aspects of ecology, including (as a result of arm twisting) geology.

The afternoon programme gives time for meeting old friends and making new acquaintances. It is to be hoped that as many of us as possible will bring along an exhibit since this greatly adds to the value of the day. The discussion on dolichopodids and empids is by request - that's good, it helps to know what is wanted. If there are any more ideas that can be fitted in, such as demonstrations, then by all means write in. There will be provision to give advice on identification and other matters. As last year the discussions are optional, being in a room adjacent to the exhibits.

Those that have been before will know what it's all about. May we re-assure those who are hesitant in coming that we shall be delighted to see them. And if you are new to Diptera, it is all the more relevant to come and join us.

DIPTERIST'S SUPPER

This year it will be the 10th Dipterist's Supper, by tradition an evening event following on after the Annual Meeting of dipterists on 9 November. It consists of a buffet with alcoholic refreshment, taking place in the Conservazione Room at the British Museum (Natural History). Doors open at 5.45 pm, with the meal around 6.15 - 7.30, and though some people have to rush off for trains, things are still lively till the official close at 9 pm.

This is a good occasion to make new acquaintances and renew old ones in an informal atmosphere. The supper is open to all dipterists, and those new to Diptera are more than welcome.

Unlike events earlier in the day, the supper is a tickets only affair. Advance booking is essential, on a first come first served basis, so it is as well not to leave writing until the last minute since there are only 80 tickets, and most of those soon go. The price, inclusive of food and drink is £5 - a bargain offer as all who have been before will know (10 years ago it was £4 - how's that for beating inflation!).

To book, please write as soon as possible, and enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for return, to Adrian Pont, Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

RESULTS OF RECENT FIELD MEETINGS

If those who led field meetings would care to send in a note, a report can be put in the next issue. Two meetings can be reported here.

Thompson Common, Norfolk, 1 June 1985

Seven dipterists, plus two wives, attended this meeting, led by Tony Irwin. The Norfolk Naturalist's Trust Reserve (also SSSI) comprises grassland, scrub and woodland with pools and marshy hollows (glacial pingo landscape).

Adults of the stratiomyids Stratiomys furcata and Odontomyia tigrina were found and aquatic larvae of four species were obtained, including the very rare Oxycera angulata. Hoverflies included Orthonevra geniculata, O. brevicornis, Parhelophilus frutetorum, Xylota abiens, Criorhina asilica, C. berberina and C. floccosa. Wifely contribution included capture of an Empis tessellata carrying as prey a male Prionocera subserricornis - only the second British specimen of this crane-fly! The tipulid Limnophila abdominalis is also a rarity.

The leader persuaded Phil Withers to wade out to tussocks of sedge in deep water said to contain Stenomicro - all we could see was a bottom above water (just), pooter end somewhere in sedge, but alas no such acalypterate (let that be a lesson the next time Tony Irwin directs you into ridiculous situations!). However, Phil did find a moth fly new to Britain during the day.

Charterhouse-on-Mendip, 29 June - 7 July 1985

A party of 18 attended. The field centre proved very functional and provided a good base from which to run forays to a wide range of sites over a 10-20 mile radius. After earlier abysmal weather, an anticyclone arrived to give sunny conditions during much of our stay.

Limestone grasslands on the Mendips yielded at a several sites the bee fly Bombylius canescens, the rhagionid Symphoromyia immaculata and the conopid Thecophora atra.

Woodlands provided a good range of species. The hoverflies Volucella inflata, Eumerus ornatus and Pipiza austriaca proved widespread. Xylota coeruleiventris was found in deciduous woodland, not far from conifers, but there was no sign of X. florum. The fungus gnat total reached 132 species, including the second British record of Mycomya pectinifera, and one site yielded 78 species. There were a number of interesting craneflies including Tipula selene and Limonia inusta.

Berrow dunes, with its pond and curious saltmarsh, was a popular locality. There were various stratiomyids, the otitid Meliera omissa and some nice dolichopodids including both species of Thinophilus. One of the party made quite a study of saltmarsh localities.

Predictably the Somerset levels were rich in stratiomyids. Odontomyia ornata, Stratiomys furcata, Vanoyia tenuicornis and other species were widely recorded, sometimes in numbers. The hoverfly Lejops vittata seems to be almost anywhere that Scirpus maritimus grows.

During such a productive week, a summary statement cannot do justice. We had our failures, such as no sight of the hoverfly Myolepta potens or of the asilid Epitriptus arthriticus, but everyone seems well satisfied with their experience of Somerset and Avon.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Leyburn, Yorkshire, 3-6 October 1985

The autumn foray, when craneflies and fungus gnats provide the main objective of recording, will be at Leyburn in the Pennines. The area has been chosen because it seems to be an exceptionally poorly known area for insects as a whole, yet there are clearly excellent habitats available. Wooded valleys with streams and rivers should be very productive at this time of year and there are bogs and other useful habitats that also deserve attention.

Accommodation will be arranged at a guest house once we know how many are coming. The idea is to assemble in the evening of Wednesday, 2 October but if you can only join in at the weekend it will still be nice to see you - to help with collecting if not identifying. The NCC Leyburn Office will provide a working base for sorting material in the evenings. If you are interested, contact Ian McLean, NCC Peterborough.

Next years meetings

We had hoped to sort out a base for next summers meeting in time for this Bulletin. However, it has not proved possible but we hope to announce in November the place and dates for a week long field meeting.

This year we were able to announce field meetings in several parts of the country. This is only possible if people step forward to lead meetings. There are now some 250 people on our circulation list and more needs to be done to catalyse local recording. Hence it would be nice to think that we can hold a good (but not over ambitious) programme of day or weekend meetings in 1986. Would volunteers for arranging meetings please contact Ian McLean. The next Bulletin will probably go out around Christmas.

SOME OTHER MEETING DATES

There are usually enquiries about dates of other autumn events. We know of the following.

Amateur Entomologist's Society Exhibition

At the Civic Centre, Hounslow (West London) on Saturday, 12 October. Equipment, new and second hand books, etc will be on sale.

British Entomological & Natural History Society Exhibition

At the Old Town Hall, Chelsea, London on Saturday, 2 November. There are usually a fair number of dipterists and the NCC contingent will be there.

Yorkshire Naturalist's Union - Entomological Section AGM/Exhibition

Saturday, 12 October at 2.30 pm - Leeds University Zoology Department. Information via Roy Crossley, 46 St Davids Road, Otley. (Tel. Otley 464199).

Apologies that Dipterist's Day clashes with the Derbyshire Entomologist's Society Exhibition again. Dipterist's Day is normally the second Saturday in November, so as to be predictable, but occasionally we have had to select another date if BM(NH) facilities are not available on the preferred date and we also try to avoid a clash with Brit. Ent. Soc. We usually know a year ahead.

INVERTEBRATE SITE REGISTER

Many of you will already know of the Invertebrate Site Register organised by the Nature Conservancy Council. The aim is to complete the coverage of county reviews (half of England still remaining to be done) and to make headway on national reviews of species groups.

Steven Falk is currently on contract at NCC Peterborough to undertake the national review of conservation priorities for Diptera. He is already in contact with some of the specialists to draw up lists of rare species, more broadly than the forthcoming Red Data Book, as the basis for evaluating site lists. Later this autumn these lists will be more widely available and he will be in contact with all those people on the recording schemes address list to consult about sites of importance.

We are trying to bring invertebrates as a whole into mainstream conservation. The basis of this has to be defining which sites are important and then trying to ensure these sites have a future, including appropriate management. It is hoped that dipterists will join with us in ensuring our favourite places are not neglected - there is more to life than butterflies and birds!

Among the six entomologists working on the ISR at present, most are known to the dipterist's world in various quarters. Stuart Ball is collating county reviews for NE England (and later parts of Midlands and SW), Andy Foster has East Anglia, Peter Kirby has East Midlands and Roger Key is engrossed in northern England (minus NE) and Cheshire. Paul Hyman, who is carrying out the national review of Coleoptera, claims no more than to be able to swipe the occasional fly to pass on.

So, it's all going to happen in an all too short two years. There will then have to be a major re-evaluation of all sites, including Wales, Scotland and the half of England where county reviews often missed out on including information on sites of value for Diptera.

THE PETERBOROUGH EFFECT

There seem to be lots of enquiries as to what it's like in exile from London. Well, it's nothing like the TV adverts for a start - the smell of numerous brickworks chimneys, and the sugar beet factory, and the 35 miles of flat agricultural 'desert' to Kings Lynn, do not make good viewing.

However, there prove to be some surprises. There are a few good sites for stratiomyids. One such site produced 5 species of aquatic strats as larvae in one visit, and the next visit yielded nine species as adults - a total of 10 aquatic species. Another site has Oxycera terminata which is only known from SW England. It was also a surprise that the southern asilid Machimus rusticus should be on an NNR close by. Hoverflies have included Volucella inflata (in several woods), Brachyopa pilosa, Orthonevra brevicornis and Metasyrphus latilunulatus.

There are some useful finds across various other families, including a crane fly (Erioptera) and two pipunculids that appear to be new to Britain.

It is really very confusing since we don't know where we belong. We are not in the south (since the northern crane fly Pilaria batava is here), we are not northern (NB Machimus rusticus), we are not eastern (NB Oxycera terminata) and we are not western (NB Chrysotoxum verralli). It just goes to prove Peterborough is in the middle of nowhere in particular, but it looks as though some interesting distribution records are out there beyond the black glass office windows.

1985 - A CURIOUS SEASON INDEED

There is probably no such thing as a typical summer, but we cannot let 1985 go by without comment. You may recall that 1983 and 84 had rather cool springs followed by hot drought conditions. Having got our sun tans, this year has been a cold start followed by - yes, cold. And if you are only complaining of cold you have been lucky - in many parts of Britain it has been very wet as well. Actually, by sheer fluke the main summer field meeting hit one of the few patches of real summer. And of course today, during proof reading of this Bulletin, it is an Indian Summer.

It seems all branches of entomology are complaining of curious results. Among Diptera, the season has been marked by the lack of specimens in so many families. Sciomyzids, for instance, are virtually extinct it would seem, with top sites scarcely able to turn up more than a token specimen. It's certainly been an incredibly poor season for crane flies in many southern localities (probably as a result of earlier drought).

Should there be contributions of interesting news on this subject, a short review will be included in the next Bulletin.

AND NOWSWALLOW THIS

We thought that nothing could compete with Bill Ely's pooter, but he may have found his match. An article in 'Birds' magazine says that a half grown brood of five swallows can eat more than 6,000 flies a day. Now if that were the average consumption for nestlings, which take 20 to 21 days to mature, that would be 120,000 flies per brood of five. According to the 'Atlas of British Birds' there are between 500,000 and 1,000,000 breeding pairs of swallows in the British Isles (lets say $\frac{3}{4}$ million). This implies that 45 million flies a day are crammed down swallow nestlings throats, or 900 million flies per reared brood nationally - apart from what the adults eat. And swallows have more than one brood. Its enough to put you off swallows as the symbol of summer - and please don't mention fly catchers.

Thank goodness there's only one Bill Elyah, come to think of it though, he has a brood!

Central Panel of Diptera
Recording Scheme Organisers

Co-ordinator
A E Stubbs
Nature Conservancy Council
Northminster House
Peterborough PE1 1UA
(Telephone: Peterborough (0733) 40345)

First International Congress of Dipterology - Budapest 17-24 August 1986

Anyone interested in attending, and at c.£400 it will unfortunately mainly be the professional dipterist's, should note that Ian White and Adrian Pont are hoping to make a block booking for travel which will reduce costs. They may be contacted at the British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD. Tel. 01-589-6323