

DIPTERA



RECORDING SCHEMES BULLETIN No. 21, AUGUST 1986

Autumn will soon be upon us, so check your diaries to see that you have the annual meeting date marked in. There are various news items to report.

Note that details about next summers field meeting at Bangor include the financial advantage of booking before Christmas.

ANNUAL MEETING - SATURDAY 8 NOVEMBER 1986

The arrangements follow the traditional format at the British Museum (Natural History), South Kensington, London.

MORNING SESSION (main lecture hall): Chairman Dr Graham Rotheray

- 11.00 - 11.25 The breeding distribution of Simulium flies in southern England; their relationship to physical geography. Dr Roger Crosskey.
- 11.25 - 11.50 Watching scuttle flies in Selawasi - some results from Project Wallace (report from the Royal Entomological Society's expedition). Dr Henry Disney.
- 11.50 - 12.15 Empids and dolis in central Britain. Roy Crossley.
- 12.15 - 12.40 Hoverflies in the Sheffield area and North Derbyshire. Derek Whiteley.
- 12.40 - 12.50 Recording Xylophagus ater. Keith Alexander and David Clements.
- 12.50 - 1.00 Down to the beach. Alan Stubbs.

AFTERNOON SESSION (demonstration room, Palaeontology Department)

- 2.00 - 2.30 Informal and setting up exhibits.
- 2.30 - 3.15 Informal, viewing exhibits, help with problem specimens.
- 3.15 - 4.15 Discussion session, or informal.
- a. Recording schemes (especially Hoverflies and Larger Brachycera);
 - b. Empididae and Dolichopodidae;
 - c. The Invertebrate Site Register: national review of Diptera.
- 4.30 - 5.30 Discussion session on mosquitoes (British Mosquito Group), or informal.
- 5.30 - 5.45 Close of session and removal of exhibits.

The numbers attending have been growing steadily, with an estimated 120 in the lecture hall last year. Please keep up your support for this event since it creates such an unequalled chance to meet each other and keep abreast of what is going on. Our address list has been gaining many new names over the last year, so to them may we say that all are welcome and that this event is very much concerned with making the newcomer to the study of Diptera feel at home.

The usual request - it would be nice for everyone to see a good range of exhibits, so if you are able to display the season's goodies or any other type of display, then this will be most helpful.

The day tries to provide a range of interesting and informative subject matter. If there are requests, such as for 'how to do it' demonstrations, then please write in with plenty of advance notice and we will try to cater for these needs.

DIPTERIST'S SUPPER - 8 NOVEMBER 1986

Immediately following the Annual Meeting, a separate event the Dipterist's supper will follow. Unlike the day's events, the evening starting at 5.45 pm is a tickets only affair and you are advised to book well in advance to be sure of a place at this gastronomic delight - a help yourself buffet with drinks inclusive. Don't be shy of joining in.

Bookings (accepted on a first come, first served basis for the 80 places), enclosing a cheque for the ticket price of £6.50 should be addressed to Adrian Pont, Department of Natural History, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, SW7.

AUTUMN FIELD MEETINGS - SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1986

Thornham Magna, Suffolk - 6/7 September

The Thornham estate, owned by Lord Henniker, comprises a variety of habitat types, dominated by several areas of ancient woodland. The parkland contains a number of old oaks, and there are also some good ponds. The site is situated 9 miles NEN of Stowmarket, 62/1071.

Casual collecting has turned up, among others, Megamerina dolium (twice), Otites guttata, Phaonia canescens and there is an old record of a male Callicera spinolae from this area. Toads heavily infested with Lucilia sylvarum were commonplace last year.

Laboratory facilities are available free of charge at the Field Centre in the grounds and accommodation at local B & B should be straightforward. The extensive valley fens of Redgrave, Lopham and Market Weston are within easy reach.

Further details and guest house list from Phil Withers, 27 Beech Way, Dickleburgh, Diss, Norfolk.

Mendips - 15-19 October 1986

Each autumn we arrange a long weekend to study the fauna occurring at that time of year, crane flies and fungus gnats in particular. Having seen the Mendips in mid summer in 1985, and having reconnaissance of good habitat, we are returning for an autumn foray, basing ourselves at a guest house. The period is Wednesday to Sunday, but you are welcome to join in just for the weekend if that is all you can manage. Anyone wanting details, please contact Alan Stubbs at NCC, Peterborough.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS IN 1987

Bangor, North Wales - 4-12 July 1987

Our main summer field meeting will be based at Bangor, using accommodation at the University College of North Wales.

This strategic location gives ready access to a great variety of habitat. Anglesey has excellent fens and marshes, major sand dunes and salt marsh, coastal cliffs and maritime grasslands. To the south-west the Lleyn Peninsular has major wetlands, including bog and fen. To the north-west the coastal belt includes woodlands, some dunes, the Conway estuary and the famed Great Ormes Head with its limestone grasslands. Inland is Snowdonia National Park, its glaciated mountains giving fine upland scenery and habitat, with some nice wooded valleys on the flanks. There are National Nature Reserves, trust reserves and many other high grade sites to visit. It is the home territory of Joan Morgan who will be with us as local guide.

We usually have 15 to 20 dipterists. The booking is for 30 anticipating that this should be a popular location. For those who have not been on such a meeting, it is an excellent opportunity to see interesting places, and flies of course, and to gain from the experience of being with other dipterists. Those with experience are in their element, and picking up field craft from each other, but it cannot be emphasised too strongly that we welcome those who may be finding their feet in Diptera. This is the finest way possible of learning the ropes, from seeing how other people find things in the field, to helping you recognise what you have caught, to named specimens on offer in the lab. Each day we go out in small groups and the evenings become a gathering of collective experience. Not only does an area become better recorded, but there is a good chance that you will have become more proficient in returning to record your home area. And addressing ourselves to dipterists abroad, we should be delighted if some of you can share the week with us.

The booking has to be confirmed by late December if we are to take advantage of prices before they go up in January. The daily rate is £10.50 plus V.A.T. (currently 15%) which equals £84 plus V.A.T. for the full 8 nights, assembling on the evening of Saturday 4 July and dispersing on Sunday 12 July. The price includes breakfast and evening meal. Accommodation is in single rooms in a student hall; lab. facilities are being arranged. Bookings should be made via Alan Stubbs (address at end of Bulletin), with a deposit of £5 (cheques payable to University College of North Wales). Anyone booking later than 18 December will have to take pot luck as regards financial implications (the College cannot say at present) but next Bulletin (?January) will give advice since some of you may not be able to commit yourself before early next year.

Other meetings in 1987

As indicated in the earlier report, there will be another Scottish Dipterists meeting.

May we hope for some volunteers for running local meetings next season. This plea brought little response last year, but it would be nice to see people get together in the field in their home district at least once in the year. You've all got address lists so there's no excuse for not contacting people with common interests even apart from events arranged via the Bulletin.

Anyone with a meeting to announce, even if just your name saying that you will arrange a meeting if there is a response, should let Alan Stubbs know by 11 January if an announcement is to go in the next Bulletin.

There will, of course, be an annual meeting in the autumn which will be the second Saturday in November if possible.

NEWS FROM LAST SUMMER'S FIELD MEETINGS

Wyre Forest 23-26 May 1986

A Party of 3 attended this meeting which was blessed with a number of 'good' finds. Highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly the discovery of Chalcosyrphus eunotus at the Knapp and Papermill N.R. Alfrick, a Worcs Trust reserve. As described in the hoverfly book this fly was taken from a log in a stream. By coincidence 8 days later 2 more C. eunotus males were taken from a similar situation in a woodland near Stourport, Worcs. (by Tony Simpson of Leigh). I will be attempting a comprehensive survey of West Worcs. Woodlands with streams running through them, in the hope of further finds of C. eunotus. Later on in the year on July 26 a female Xylota xanthocnema was taken from the same Alfrick site as C. eunotus, plus a further mystery species of absolutely indeterminable status as far as I'm concerned. 'Bacchini' is as near as one can get. The specimen has been sent to Martin Speight for identification. Other flies of note were: Cheilosia nebulosa, Orthonevra brevicornis, Sphegina verecunda, Neoascia meticulosa, Chrysotoxum arcuatum - this is about its most southerly location, all from Wyre Forest; and Neoascia obliqua from Alfrick. Also Bombylius discolor - Wyre, Empis planetica - Wyre, still plenty more to identify from all 3 attending the meeting, so there may be more to come.

Nigel Jones

Scottish Field Meetings 7-9 and 27-29 June in Perthshire

The earlier meeting was a gathering of Scottish Dipterists. The second was the annual Scottish Entomologists' meeting. Both events were well attended and, thankfully, blessed with good weather. On very helpful advice from Ros Smith (NCC) a variety of SSSI's and Nature Reserves were visited.

Some highlights were a second Scottish record for the hoverfly, Xanthogramma pedissequum on Ballinluig Island where several males and females were flying above the short, shingle-side vegetation. Other notable hoverflies were Sphaerophoria virgata, Brachypalpoides lenta, Xylota tarda and Platycheirus melanopsis. Large numbers of Scaeva pyrastris larvae were seen at various aphid colonies during the second meeting possibly coming from a first wave of migratory adults from the continent. The magnificent-looking deer bot fly, Cephenomya auribarbis was seen in some numbers resting on exposed stones in a stream. Rarities included the scathophagid Nanna brevifrons, the empid Ocydromia melanopleura, the doli Rhaphium gravipes and the tipulids Molophilus variispinus, M. czizeki, M. pusillus and M. curvatus.

Further gatherings of the clans takes place next year, details to be announced but interest can be registered with Graham Rotheray, Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF.

Carmarthen, 5-13 July 1986

Eighteen attended the week long meeting, based at a teachers training college. We had a large laboratory, single room accommodation, and for the most part good catering. The weather was kind.

What more could we want, yes flies - they were pretty good too. As ruefully commented at the time, if no one has time in the evening to go round seeing what the other folk have found, it must be good. Undoubtedly the highlight was the Dolichopodidae - in the 12 years of running these meetings we have never done so well in interesting species. The second impression is of horseflies, it being such pleasure to be in Tabanus sudeticus country, with a fair range of other species including T. autumnalis and Atylotus fulvus.

Hoverflies included Anasimyia lunulata, all three Sphegina, Tropidia, Xylota florum, Platycheirus immarginatus, Microdon mutabilis, and overall a fair range of species. We just about managed the tail end of the flight season of robber fly Pamponerus germanicus, and are the wiser about the ecology of the therevid Dialineura anilis which seems to require bare sand among open structured vegetation. Remarkably acrocerids were found at several localities - this family normally eluding us altogether. Some localities were good for snail-killing flies, including useful records of Colobaea and Pteromicra species. Among the crane flies, Erioptera neilsei was the rarest species but a good number of other new vice-county records were made. The otitid Tetanops myopinus was in good numbers on the fore dunes at one site. There were many more interesting species besides, over a range of families. Oh, yes..... there is at least one species new to Britain reported so far, a fungus gnat new to science whose nearest relatives are in Africa - well we always knew that Wales was an exciting exotic place with a marvellous climate.

Because coastal habitats were so productive in interesting species much of our time was spent here, both in the former county of Carmarthen and in Pembrokeshire. The dunes and slacks were excellent, and MoD even changed their operational plan in order that we could record on one of their sites. Seepages coming out of the dunes at and just above high tide mark proved to be of exceptional value, especially for Dolichopodidae, as well as wet rock faces. Inland there were various types of wetland, some of which were very productive. Somehow, we did not spend as much time in woodland as usual - but that leaves plenty of nice places still to explore in this memorable part of Wales.

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES

Cranefly Recording Scheme

On the way back from the Carmarthen meeting a visit was made to Haugh Wood in Herefordshire, and at long last Gonomyia alboscuteolata has been located (in enormous numbers at one spot). It was found here by Wood at the turn of the century but had been searched for unsuccessfully on five occasions in recent years, including a special search on the first crane fly recording scheme field meeting in 1974.

Mosquito Recording Scheme

In Spring 1986 there was Issue Number 1. of the British Mosquito Group Newsletter, with the intention of there being two issues a year. Clearly there is a lot of activity going on.

A new key (reported below under forthcoming publications) should get the recording scheme onto a firm basis, enabling many more people to start recording.

Large Brachycera Recording Scheme

The data which was called in last winter has been computer processed and we should be seeing samples of the print-out at the autumn meeting. The next step is map production, and an atlas, but BRC does not wish to give a date at present.

As an example of what can be done, Keith Alexander and Dave Clements, are hoping to publish their study on Xylophagus ater. They have revolutionised the recording of this elusive species by looking for larvae under bark of dead trees. Its not elusive anymore, at least if you have the knack!

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

In part because there was so much Larger Brachycera data, the hoverfly data is still held up in the pipeline for processing at BRC. By the November meeting it should be possible to clarify the time scales. Anyway, carry on recording, the maps should be quite a revelation when we get them.

The report on the Wyre Forest meeting gives excellent news about success in finding Chalcosyrphus eunotus at further localities in the West Midlands. Nigel Jones will no doubt be glad to hear from anyone who wishes to join in a survey for further localities. The Wyre report also mentions an intriguing mystery object. No doubt other exciting finds have been made - please drop Philip Entwistle a note for his next Hoverfly Newsletter.

See the announcements under forthcoming publications.

Empididae and Dolichopodidae Study Group

At the time of writing another newsletter is in hand with the editors, Anthony Bainbridge and Roy Crossley. It sounds as though they have some very interesting notes for circulation, including update of British keys - remember, you will only get the newsletter if you have ensured that you are on the address list for this study group.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

A new work on British Mosquitoes is to be published by the Freshwater Biological Association. This will include keys to larvae, pupae and adults, as well as ecological information. This important new reference provides a good basis for the mosquito recording scheme to involve a wider band of recorders. It is hoped that publication will be before the end of the new year and even if it should just miss the autumn meeting, you can be sure that there will be stop press news as to when and how to obtain it.

Hot off the press in time for the November meeting, we eagerly await 'Hoverflies of the Sheffield area and North Derbyshire' by Derek Whiteley. At £1 (plus p & p) it is bound to be a good buy from all that has been heard of the recording in those parts.

'British Hoverflies' is being re-printed and should be out this autumn. There is a 14 page appendix with supplementary information on distribution and ecology of many species, as well as an update on literature. The appendix will be available on sale as a separate for those who already have the book. Some minor changes have been made on some key couplets in the light of experience and a few proof errors corrected - a new version of the corrections slip to the first print is being compiled and will be issued to all hoverfly recording scheme members automatically and to others on request. Thanks are passed to those who provided information for this up date, and please keep up the good work in getting more people interested in hoverflies - there is now another 1000 copies to sell! The price, in hard back only this time, remains the same - £21 plus p & p, or £15 for members of BENHS (and people who state they are members of the British hoverfly recording scheme), via Andrew Callow, 25 Cranes Park Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8BS.

Cambridge University Press is shortly to launch (probably end of August) a book on 'Hoverflies', No. 5 in its 'Handbooks for Naturalist's Series', the author Dr Francis Gilbert. It is mainly a biological introduction for schools. It has limited taxonomic treatment, referring the user on to 'British Hoverflies'. There are selected colour illustrations, re-

using some of Steven Falk's work. The new book marketed on a fairly large scale, will hopefully help spread the interest in hoverflies to a yet wider audience.

The Royal Entomological Society Handbook to Sphaeroceridae, written by Brian Pitkin, should be out next spring. The RES Handbook to Tephritidae, by Dr. Ian White, is to follow, scheduled to appear in the first half of 1987. These Handbooks cover two of the large gaps in up-to-date key works to Acalypterates and the effort of the authors will no doubt be greatly appreciated. On a slightly longer timer scale, Ken Smith is preparing a major revision of keys to dipterous larvae, down to generic level as far as is possible. If you have any larval material of genera that are poorly known or undescribed, then Ken would be very glad to hear from you. This RES Handbook will undoubtedly be a major contribution to the furtherance of the study of Diptera, and a fitting finale before his retirement.

At present Ken Smith is seeing through the publication of a major book, 'An introduction to forensic entomology', to be published later this year by the BM (NH). Diptera feature large in this subject and we can anticipate that this work will become an important reference on biological information on a number of families of flies.

NEWS FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL

The Invertebrate Site Register national review of Diptera is now at its half-way stage. Steven Falk hopes to have soon put the last touches to his list of nationally rare species, and his write ups of the status of such species is now well advanced. The next 12 months are going to be increasingly concerned with identifying top sites. He will be exhibiting on this project in November, and some time will be allocated during the afternoon discussion period. Steven thanks all those who have been spending time on searching out records of the rarest species and giving advice on their habitat needs and associations.

Over the last year or so a fair number of new National Nature Reserves have been declared, often deliberately without publicity. Thus there is now a new entomological NNR, with among its special features, 10 species of aquatic statomyids and the management will be very much orientated towards maintaining the entomological interest. The name of the NNR is the Flits (how about that for a fly reserve) but you will not find it on any map - its in Herefordshire. Other new NNRs (in the last couple of years) of high interest to the Dipterist include Dounton Gorge (Hereford), Castle Eden Dene (Durham), Gibraltar Point (Lincs) and Crymlyn Bog (Glamorgan).

The Invertebrate Site Register, for all interests, now has about 3000 sites of reported value. When evaluated, these sites are drawn to the attention of NCC's regional staff, and of course many of these sites, even if not SSSI's (or due to become so) are managed for conservation purposes by other organisations. It is increasingly possible to influence events. At Haugh Wood in Herefordshire, for example, even though it is not currently an SSSI, we have been discussing with the Forestry Commission the measures necessary to retain important butterfly and moth populations - and they have taken these measures on board. As is so often the case we can build in the needs of various groups of insects, in this case the management will help maintain the very worthwhile hoverfly fauna, and the very rare crane fly Gonomyia alboscutatta already mentioned.

At about the time this Bulletin is circulated, the 'New Scientist' will carry an advertisement for two further permanent entomological posts in the Chief Scientists Directorate. These posts will be particularly concerned with the implementation of the Invertebrate Site Register, advising the regional staff on the action needed on the ground.

FOREIGN DESK

We would like to say that dipterists in other countries are welcome to join any of our events should they find it possible to visit Britain on the dates concerned. Whilst circulation of the Bulletin is limited for administrative reasons, we would like our invitation to be generally known.

AND NOW..... YORKSHIRE PRIDE

The Carmarthen field meeting gave a marvellous opportunity for a mere southerner to observe Yorkshire character.

Meal times at Trinity College were shared with other groups, so it was a show stopper when the dipterists spotted the huge horsefly Tabanus sudeticus sitting on the outer surface of the windows. Our ex-railway man (former custodian of that famed hoverfly locality at Oughtibridge Signal Box) was off like a shot down the length of the refectory and back down the lawn. There he was face to face with the giant, neither of them daring to make the first move. But here was our gladiator, prepared to do battle without trident or shield. Slowly he produced his cloak of mail (a handkerchief) and stalked in for the final pounce - his audience poised on the edges of their seats, not a knife or fork to be heard. And yes, a huge roar thundered from the crowd as our hero accomplished defeat of the giant and what reception on his triumphant return, and oh what modesty displayed. The final accolade was when the American group said, 'gee, is that a horsefly; I've never seen one that size!' The stature of British dipterists was rapidly inflating as it became clear that at last there was something that Americans were not claiming theirs as the largest, greatest or most dangerous thing in the world. Out of loyalty to Queen, Country..... and yes, Yorkshire..... we did not let on that it was a harmless toothless male that Austen Brackenbury had caught.

Contrast this with one who does not live a thousand miles from Otley, banker by trade. Imagine Pembrokeshire's tourist beaches, semi-naked bodies strewn aimlessly just like the picture post cards show - and then consider a motley party of six storming along the beach dressed in boots and full field gear, veering towards the cliffs - straight towards innocent sunbathers. Now if people will choose to sit right next to the best dipterous habitat, they cannot be surprised if large white lumps of muslin on long poles come precariously close to flapping around their ears. Of course, true British reserve will prevent most holiday makers from even 'noticing' that anything unusual is occurring, at most just happening to casually glance that way whilst the mind is going full tilt trying to explain the inexplicable. Now rather surprisingly, even in Britain, there are just one or two people who can overcome all inhibition and have the audacity to ask what you are doing. Most dipterist's might just about manage 'well, er', were collecting flies'. No such feeble reply from a Yorkshire man - Roy Crossley's reply in impressive tone is 'we're research scientists'. That has most enquirers cowering with humility - 'might as well impress them you know! His alternative tactic for people asking what he is doing is to say in stern snappy voice 'we're collecting flies' and then with devastating counter attack - 'and what do you do for a living'. You can detect how few words are necessary to explain to someone why they cannot have a bank loan!

Central Panel of Diptera
Recording Scheme Organisers

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