

DIPTERA



RECORDING SCHEMES BULLETIN NO 23, AUGUST 1987

The prime purpose of this bulletin is to give the programme for the Annual Meeting and the Dipterist's Dinner. The autumn field meeting is announced and other items reported.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE DIPTERA RECORDING SCHEMES, SATURDAY, 3 OCTOBER 1987

Those of you that read the last Bulletin will know that the meeting has had to be brought forward much earlier than usual. The meeting will be held at the British Museum (Natural History), where in the past we have been very fortunate in having use of the facilities free of charge. Through the generosity of the Director and Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History), the charges normally levied for the hire of the Museum's rooms have been waived for the annual meetings of the Diptera Recording Schemes. There has also been a generous concession as regards admission charges. For this year's meeting, therefore, the following arrangements will apply:

There will be a charge of £1 admission for everyone attending part or all of the day's activities:

- For those attending the daytime meetings but not staying for the Dipterists' Supper. Tickets must be obtained in advance from Adrian Pont, so please send £1 plus s.a.e. as soon as you know that you will be attending. If you arrive without a ticket, you will have to pay the regular admission fee of £2.50 (and will also have to pay it again to return to the Museum after lunch).
- For those attending the daytime meetings and/or the Dipterists' Supper. The cost of the Supper this year will be £8, and this will include an admission ticket to the Museum that will cover the day's events. Tickets are obtainable, as usual, from Adrian Pont. Please do not forget to enclose s.a.e. to reduce administrative time and expense.

Morning Session - main lecture theatre

Chairman - David Henshaw

11.00-11.25 A dipterist in Papua New Guinea. Dr John Ismay.

11.25-11.50 Hoverflies: some aspects of mimicry, variation and behaviour.
Dr Jon Heal.

11.50-12.15 Thistle tephritids and their biology. Margaret Redfern.

12.15-12.35 Hoverflies and their habitats around Sheffield and North Derbyshire. Derek Whiteley.

12.35-1.00 Kent: recording in a changing county. Eric Philp.

LUNCH Choice of pubs, cafeterias etc in area, or bring sandwiches.

AFTERNOON SESSION - demonstration laboratory, Palaeontology Department

2.00-2.30 Informal, setting up exhibits.

2.30-3.00 Informal, viewing exhibits.

- 3.00-4.00 Discussion session
 a. Recording schemes and study groups.
 b. Finding and rearing larvae.
- 4.00-5.30 Informal, viewing exhibits or Mosquito Study Group meeting.
- 5.30- 5.45 Remove any remaining exhibits.

The series of lectures should provide an interesting range of topics. John Ismay was the first organiser for the Hoverfly Recording Scheme and is a specialist on Chloropidae. He has just finished a spell of 6 years based at Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, and while there he undertook several trips which enabled him to see a range of the available habitats. He is going to give us a dipterist's eye view of this tropical insect paradise. Jon Heal has carried out research on the genetics of variation in some Eristalis species and will consider the inter-related matters of mimicry and behaviour in hoverflies. Margaret Redfern has published some fascinating studies on thistle tephritids (picture winged flies) and was author of the Cambridge University Press book on the thistle insect fauna occurring in Britain. Earlier Bulletins have drawn attention to the publication 'Hoverflies of the Sheffield Area and North Derbyshire' which has been widely received as a very fine review. Its author, Derek Whiteley will give a talk including slides of the habitats favoured by hoverflies in his area (this talk was to have been given last year but for illness). The advance in knowledge of this hoverfly fauna has been very much stimulated by the catalytic role of Sheffield Museum and other museums and groups in the area. The last talk considers the role of another records centre, on a broader theme. Eric Philp has been promoting recording at Maidstone Museum, covering a county that is under intense development pressure, the more so now that the Chunnel is almost bound to be opened in the early 1990s. Your Chairman for the morning session is David Henshaw, an amateur specialist on Agromyzidae (leaf mining flies).

The afternoon session gives the chance to renew old acquaintances and to make new friends. It is very informal, with exhibits and a discussion session. As usual we invite you to bring exhibits. This season has been a very productive one judging by the grape vine news, so please give others the chance to see your interesting finds. This year the discussion session will include an item on finding and rearing larvae, so exhibits on this theme will be especially relevant. If you have specimens you need an opinion on then usually we can find someone with the expertise, more certainly with the main recording schemes. Don't be shy of coming if you've not been before since the event is very much concerned with helping people along in the study of flies. There will be a demonstration on making genitalia preparations if, as seems likely, Tony Irwin has an audience.

DIPTERISTS' SUPPER - 3 OCTOBER 1987

The traditional Dipterists' Supper (a buffet) will follow on from the Annual Meeting, in the Conversazione Room of the British Museum (Natural History). Drinks will be served from 5.45 pm and the supper will be from 6.30 pm to about 10 pm. The Museum's main car park, at the Cromwell Road entrance, will remain open for guests during the evening. The evening gives further opportunity to meet fellow dipterists and to discuss our interests. It is necessary to book in advance for a ticket, with the number restricted to the first 80 to apply. Please reply promptly to ensure your ticket for the evening, 26 September will be the final date for the issue of tickets. Don't hesitate to join in, it's open to all dipterists no matter how new to the subject you may be.

Enquiries and bookings should be addressed to the dinner organiser:- Adrian Pont, Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell

Road, London SW7 5BD. The cost this year, inclusive of drinks, is £8 (inclusive of the £1 museum entrance charge); cheques should be made payable to A C Pont and it is helpful to enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your ticket.

Autumn Field Meeting: 14-18 October 1987

As usual there will be an autumn foray, held as a long weekend. The dates are fixed but the options on venue are still being firmed up. It is likely that we shall be using guest house accommodation and some idea of numbers will be helpful. If you are interested in being kept in touch, please write to Alan Stubbs (address at end of Bulletin).

The objective is to cover the autumn peak of crane flies, fungus gnats and other autumn flies in an area poorly recorded at this time of year. The likely options are the West Midlands (eg Ludlow) or the Lake District (eg Grange-over-Sands). Even if you are not specialising in the main groups of autumn flies, by all means join in and help with the collecting.

REPORT FROM THE FIELD MEETING IN NORTH WALES : July 1987

Once again the Dipterist's week coincided with one of the few really hot spells of the year and about two dozen enthusiasts gathered in Bangor in early July to make the most of the great variety of habitats from coastline cliffs, saltmarshes, bogs and woodlands to mountain tops, not to mention the much sought after seepages. Splitting up into small groups about 80 site visits were made during the week, the greatest assault on the North Wales Diptera there has ever been! True to form Peter Chandler recorded two species of fungus gnats new to Britain and a pleasing number of rarities of various families were picked up by others.

Syrphids were not as abundant as some would have liked but a good site near Red Wharf Bay yielded 21 species in half an hour. The Tipulid fauna seems to have been reasonably satisfying with the rare Orimargo virgo new to Wales found at Fedw Fawr and Great Orme. Limonia morio, rare in general since 1960, turned up at a surprising number of sites, and L. inusta was also found at several localities. Other noteworthy species were Nephrotoma quadristriata at Aberffraw and Tasiocera laminata at several sites including Swallow Falls.

Tabanids were not as plentiful as in South Wales in 1986. Tabanus sudeticus was scarce this year but was caught at Four Crosses, Lley. Atherix marginata, an uncommon rhagionid, was found at several river sites, mostly not far from the coast. Scarce stratiomyids taken during the week include Beris fuscipes, Oxycera morrisii, O. rara (new to North Wales) and O. pygmaea and Stratiomys chamaeleon with only one previous Anglesey record.

Interesting Dolichopodids include Chrysotus suavis from Lligwy Bay, and from Llyn Idwal Hydrophorus nebulosus and Campsicnemus compeditus. C. alpinus was found at Mynydd Bodafon in Anglesey. Many additions to local lists are expected later. The Anthomyiidae were given a critical look, mainly on coastal dunes, resulting in the discovery of the rare Delia quadripila, known previously only from Brora in Sunderland. Nupedia aestiva was surprisingly abundant everywhere but other expected common species not seen were probably out of season.

A number of visits to some of the NWNT reserves added useful information to the known insect lists. Over 40 Tipulids were listed from Ddol Uchaf, Flints where there had been only 4 on the list. Ferdinandea cuprea, a scarce hoverfly species locally was found at Nantporth. The Sciomyzid Colobaea bifasciella at Cors Goch was new to Anglesey as were Tetanocera freyi and Renocera stroblii and also the crane fly Ptychoptera contaminata.

Newborough Warren is always rewarding and the hoverfly Anasimyia lunulata was new, as also was the Dolichopodid Schoenophilus versutus. Other Syrphids here of note were Mallota cimbiciformis and Cheilosia mutabilis. The technique with marsh thistles and a knife showed that C. albipila was much more common in North Wales than had been suspected before the larvae had been looked for. Aber Valley NNR was the best site for fungus gnats with 56 species (out of a total of 140 species for the week from all sites). The Scatopsid Ectactia platyscelis was in a wood at the mouth of the valley. A long list of crane flies is expected from here when the material has been sorted.

Llyn Hafodol, Anglesey, maintained its interest and a long list of species is also expected from here in due course. Colobaea bifasciella also turned up here with the hoverflies Parhelophilis consimilis and Lejogaster splendida new to North Wales. It was good to know that the crane fly Limonia magnicauda, first discovered here in 1976, was still present in reasonable numbers along with Pilaria scutellata. The superb extensive areas of Typha produced all four Anasimyia species among the hoverflies (lineata, transfuga contracta and lunulatus) not to mention some good Sciomyzids.

This is just a small sample of the interesting records received to date and doubtless there will be other exciting finds as material is looked at in detail in the months ahead. Apart from Diptera there are many other interesting insects in North Wales! Amongst these were the lacewings Chrysopa abbreviata and Sympherobius pygmaeus, the Heath Assassin bug Coremus sp. and the day-flying scarabaeid Amphimallon ochraceus. Clouds of Silver-studded Blues are a feature at the Great Orme and Mike Pugh commented on the impossibility of avoiding taking considerable numbers in the net when sweeping for Diptera. We've all complained at times about unwanted earwigs, aphids, cuckoo-spit or even grass seeds fouling up our nets - but a surfeit of butterflies? How many other places in Britain can boast such a situation?

Joan Morgan

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES

Writing in mid field season, it is not easy to keep up with the flurry of activity but some snippets of news are better than none.

The Bangor field meeting is reported above and notes on other field meetings will be included in the next bulletin (leaders of field meetings please note that text is invited).

Crane fly Recording Scheme

On route to Bangor, two North Wales Naturalists' Trust reserves were visited. One yielded 45 species of crane fly, the other 44.

Limonia morio is turning up frequently around Peterborough and in Wales. Though a frequent species according to old literature, it was very scarce in the 1960's-1970's (when Wales, for instance, was extensively recorded). It is interesting to find this upturn in the species fortunes.

See also 'and now'.

Dixidae Recording Scheme

Dixella filicornis has been published as new to Wales (Entomologists' Monthly Magazine 123:178).

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

Newsletter no. 4 has been issued and the editor, Martin Drake, will be pleased to receive text for the next one.

The main discoveries this year would seem to be among the Stratiomyidae (soldier flies). Odontomyia ornata larvae have been found in Essex (M Drake), Stratiomys chaemaeleon in Anglesey (S Ball and I Perry) and the undescribed larva of Odontomyia hydroleon in Wales (A Stubbs).

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Newsletter no. 5 was issued a few months ago and contains some very interesting items. Graham Rotheray, the editor, has some text in hand for future bulletins and will welcome further contributions.

1987 has seemingly been a good season compared with the last couple of years. The good weather in the spring really brought out the goodies. If it is possible to single out any of them, the discovery of Chalcosyrphus eunotus in Dorset (W Dean) is perhaps the best (of the news that has reached Peterborough). Also, a 1979 record of Didea alneti (P Crow) has surfaced, the only post 1960 record it would seem.

Sepsidae Recording Scheme

The Atlas has been issued by BRC and may be obtained from them at cost price (£1 + 25p for p&p), cheques payable to the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. Stocks will be available at the annual meeting on 3 October.

Adrian Pont, the scheme organiser, will continue to welcome further records.

Sciomyzid Recording Scheme

An Antichaeta new to Britain has been found near Huntingdon (J Cole). It is large, like a Sciomyza, so should not be confused with other species in the genus.

A day to remember

After the Bangor meeting, Ian McLean and Alan Stubbs went to South Wales, where an outstanding botanical site, which yielded the soldier fly Odontomyia hydroleon last year (A Fowles), is under threat.

The site comprises c.50 acres of habitat mosaic with meadows and carr, extensive seepages and a stream. In this one visit Alan got 66 species of crane fly (the previous record was 60 for a site of equivalent size, with 50 reached only on very few occasions), together with 36 species of hoverfly. The latter number is very good, but the combined total with Ian was 47 species and Adrian Fowles had 2 more making a total of 49 hoverflies in one visit.

The total of 13 larger Brachycera was not in quite the same league, but it includes Odontomyia hydroleon which proves to be in a reasonably strong population at its only GB site, and a larva (previously undescribed) was obtained. The sciomyzid list also runs to 13 (10 is perhaps a reasonable target for a single visit to a good site).

NAMING TACHINIDS

Work has just started on British Tachinidae with the aim of producing a new identification handbook (247 species). The project is scheduled to last 3 years and is financed by the Royal Entomological Society. To make a real advance in understanding of Tachinids, your help is vital. There are no host records for 30% of the species and confirmation of many existing records would be highly desirable. Please send any reared or parasitised material (including puparial trappings, bits and pieces etc), identified or not, together with full host data (preferably with grid reference, locality, county and habitat). Contact is being made with specialists in other invertebrate groups who may have reared material. I am also keen to learn of all collections of adult Tachinidae with locality data so that the distribution of the species can be recorded comprehensively; checking of personal voucher collections may be possible but please consult me first.

Dr Paul Williams. Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History),
Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD

AND NOWPRINCESS DIANA OPENS TROPICAL CRANEFLY DISPLAY

Many of you will be familiar with the butterfly houses that are opening up all over the place. There are now about 50 of these walk-in tropical 'aviaries', receiving some 1 million visitors a year.

We are thus pleased to see that on 28 July 1987 the first tropical crane fly house was officially opened in west London. No expense has been spared, indeed this show house cost some £4 million to build. Quite clearly refined ecological conditions are required, so there are mist sprayers, fans and heating all linked via computer so that the climate can be monitored and adjusted at 2 minute intervals. It is fitting that crane flies should receive this level of attention, far better than that for butterflies.

Your scheme organiser was there for the grand opening. On arrival Princess Diana shook hands with his mother and chatted to his father-in-law and, after a view through the crane fly house, unveiled a plaque pronouncing this to be known as the Princess of Wales Conservatory. Afterwards your scheme organiser duly admired the flight of tropical crane flies, in an area landscaped and tastefully planted by the staff at Kew Gardens. In fact a kind man came up to pamper them with a shower from a hose, and that really got them lively and displayed at their best. All this trouble for a species of Limonia previously unseen in Britain was greatly appreciated and adds a completely new dimension - imagine, there will be about a million visitors a year to a crane fly show house. Now you don't need to go on a day trip to Papua New Guinea.

Central Panel
of Diptera Recording Scheme Organisers

Co-ordinator
Alan Stubbs
Nature Conservancy Council
Northminster House
Peterborough
PE1 1UA PE1 1UA