

DIPTERA



RECORDING SCHEMES BULLETIN NO. 29, JANUARY 1990

This Bulletin announces a number of events for the coming season, including the summer field meetings. In addition to the normal array of reports, we start with a review.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE 1990s

The 1990s will be dominated by the countdown to the year 2000, not only a new century but a new millenium. The media will ensure that almost every angle is covered but, as dipterists, we will have our own special perspective.

All recording schemes are clearly heading for a new date class in the year 2000. Whilst our recording schemes have many purposes, clearly one of them is to make a historic statement on status and distribution. Think how we would now be viewing such a statement by Verrall and his generation for the close of the last century and think how future generations of dipterists will value the statement we make. Today, the base of taxonomic and ecological knowledge, the ability to travel, information on availability of habitats and the numbers and organisation of recorders give us great advantages to improve upon the scant and tantalizing glimpses of the last century.

We established recording schemes in the 1970s and got them working in the 1980s. A journal has evolved out of the growing enthusiasm generated. There have been frustrations, especially over data processing and data output, but with perseverance these difficulties can be overcome. Indeed we have to develop ways and means of processing far more data if we are to meet the goal of good distribution maps within 10 years.

Technology is developing fast. The 1980s have seen enormous advances in computers and in the number of people using them at home and at work. It is reasonable to suppose that in the 1990s the capacity and agility of home computers will lead to a growing percentage of recorders processing their own data and trawling in data on a county or taxonomic basis. Also, local record centres are increasingly taking on the task of computerisation of data. The ability to analyse data for flight periods and other ecological aspects will come into its own. Though there are uncertainties over the future resources of BRC, NCC and other national bodies with a role in these matters, many of the problems of processing data should start to resolve themselves through self sufficiency.

Recording schemes as such are but one element of our interests, with many families not as yet covered. My own view is that so long as data processing is a limitation, we must concentrate on doing the job properly on the chosen schemes. It is important, however, to advance our knowledge across as broad a front of Diptera as possible. Great strides have already been made in closing the gaps in decent keys and it will be a worthwhile goal to go into the next millenium with workable keys to virtually all Diptera families.

Our field meetings will need constructive planning. At present rate, this century there are only 10 more summer meetings and 10 more autumn ones to consolidate distribution knowledge. If we can increase local field meetings and increase the numbers attending major meetings (at present only about 8% of those registered with schemes) we can cover more sites.

The environment has moved to a high public profile and looks set to become one of the dominating political issues. Significant climatic change is forecast, so it is even more important that the present distribution of fauna and flora, and their interactions, should be understood now as a basis against which to anticipate and monitor changes. This is but one of the growing number of global problems where the historic recording base in Britain places us in an exceptionally good position to judge what is happening to wildlife.

Britain has seen enormous changes in its landscape, driven by the momentum of food and timber deficiencies during the Second World War and by development as a whole. The European Economic Community has further exaggerated many policies which affect the countryside, and which in recent years have been devastating other European countries - 1992 being but one deadline causing a mayhem of relentless destruction. Eastern Europe may soon join the headlong rush. Almost overnight we cannot rely on the survival of species elsewhere in Europe and we are one of the few countries with good historic data.

On the credit side, the public is turning 'green' very fast. It wants landscape and wildlife conservation like never before. Already public opinion has led to an easing of some agricultural policies so that land may yet be taken out of agriculture and made available to make new forests and other habitats. The conservation movement, having got over the initial hurdles, is accepting the conservation of invertebrates with open arms in many quarters. The use of flies in site assessment, red data books, SSSI criteria etc. is widespread. The next big need is an understanding of site management requirements for rare (and preferably all) species but strides are being made, the recent advances in ecological knowledge and larval studies being a hopeful sign for the future. The growth in books on insects has brought such creatures within the scope of knowledge of a wide spectrum of naturalists. At a time when the final options for site conservation are being called, and where management decisions made now are the make or break for the fauna, the status of much of our fly fauna in the next century is already being shaped.

The momentous political events of 1989 have suddenly demolished the Iron Curtain. Even Russia is looking rather less firmly closed than was the case. For much of this century the major part of the Palaearctic Region may as well have been on the moon; now there is the possibility, however fragile, that some of us may yet see the 'forbidden lands' and more easily meet with its dipterists. In conjunction with the recently developed Palaearctic check list, there may well be a great stimulus to studies of European taxonomy, ecology and distribution.

Arguably any year, decade or century is an arbitrary time interval. However, there can be little doubt that we live in interesting times, either reflecting a well known Chinese curse or a great opportunity. This will be a challenging decade for world environment and world politics. The challenge to us in Britain is to leave a worthwhile historic record, to ensure a future for our fauna and to encourage more people to join us in that effort.

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ANNUAL RECORDING SCHEMES MEETING - 10 NOVEMBER 1990

Advance notice is given. The venue will be the Natural History Museum in London. The Dipterists' Supper will be arranged for that evening.

FUTURE FIELD MEETINGS

Winchester, Hampshire 7 - 15 July 1990

A booking has been made at King Alfred's College, Winchester where single room accommodation and laboratory space is available. The meeting will be led by Alan Stubbs and Matthew Oates (Hampshire based) and we shall be joined by the aculeate hymenopterists whose leadership includes George Else (Hampshire based).

Winchester is an ideal strategic venue with a good road system radiating out. It places us in the heart of a very species rich county with many high quality sites. Surprisingly few sites have been recorded yet some of those that have been studied have an excellent fauna. There are exceptional valley fens, as in the Itchen and Test valleys (includes the empid Syneches discovered last year at Winchester). High quality chalk grassland is another feature of the county, and there are rich woodlands. The New Forest is within easy striking distance, with its heaths, bogs and forests; the re-discovery of the hoverfly Eristalis cryptarum will be one objective but there is much else besides. We shall be at peak season in the richest horsefly area in Britain including Tabanus sudeticus (if you don't fancy large horseflies, there are plenty of 'safe' sites). Thyridanthrax fenestratus (bee fly) and Pelecrocera (hoverfly) should be on the heaths. We are also in easy reach of the Western Weald with its rich heaths, woods and grasslands. The coast is not far away, including saltmarsh. The intrepid could even make a day trip to the Isle of Wight. Permits for the New Forest, National Trust land and a fine series of National Nature Reserves and Wildlife Trust Reserves will be arranged, plus access to various otherwise private and inaccessible sites.

Last year was very successful in encouraging newcomers with little experience of Diptera to these field meetings. They were all keen to come again. These occasions are a remarkable opportunity to pick up experience on how to find flies and to identify them. And it is a very informal atmosphere that easily accommodates those who are shy or apprehensive about joining in. So, we hope that even more of you will come and learn the ropes the easy way.

The cost is £12.95 + VAT per day half board which for 8 nights runs to £103.60. There will also be a small charge for use of the lab. Bookings accompanied by a £5 deposit payable to 'King Alfreds College', should be sent to Alan Stubbs (Nature Conservancy Council, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA; please mark envelope 'Personal') preferably by 31 March 1990 to be sure of a place.

Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire 12 May 1990

The meeting last year was very successful. With one more season to go before publication on this National Trust Reserve, another recording session would be worthwhile.

The event is held early in the season in the hope that dipterists will be less committed elsewhere and because there is the chance of some very useful records. The hoverfly Anasimyia interpuncta should be out as a

lure. It would be nice to re-find the strat Odontomyia argentata for which there is an old record - and the habitat is still plausible. As last time, a party is almost bound to make worthwhile additions to the list in such a good quality site.

The leader is Ivan Perry (27 Mill Road, Lode, Cambridge CB5 9EN; tel 0223 61111 (work) or 0223 812438 (home). Meet at 10.30 at the car park near the end of the signposted lane from the village of Wicken (TL562705). Late arrivals will be waited for if they give advance notice of their attendance.

Sutton Park, West Midlands 19 May 1990

This site has proved such a good one that a third visit is justified, earlier in the year to see the spring fauna.

Sutton Park is only a few miles from the M5/M6 junction and provides 2 square miles of wilderness with a mosaic of bogs, ponds, heath, grasslands, carr and drier woods. This year the meeting place is the car park just inside Banner Gate at the SW corner of the Park (42/091955), just off the A452. If you are late, in the morning the party will be towards the lake, a few hundred yards to the W - NW of the car park.

Details may be obtained from the leader, Adam Wright (Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 SRW: tel: 0203 833333).

Cothill Fens, Oxon 3 June 1990

This fenland complex is one of the finest in the south Midlands. It includes Cothill National Nature Reserve, with a large pond and fen surrounds within fen woodland and the adjacent Parsonage Moor nature reserve with calcareous flushes and fen, both of which are renowned ecological sites. High quality fenland and related habitat extends over a much larger area, extending for well over a mile up valley.

The Diptera have been partially recorded but considerable scope remains for improving on the lists. As an indication of the potential, records include the hoverflies Chalcosyrphus eunotus and Cheilosia chrysocoma and the stratiomyids Stratiomys chamaeleon and Odontomyia angulata.

Cothill lies 5 miles SW of Oxford and on old maps is within the former Berkshire boundary. The leader is Keith Porter who has been sampling various Oxfordshire fens and revealing that there is a wealth of potential for rare species. Meet at the Fleur de Lys pub at Cothill (SU464996) at 10.30 a.m. The fen reserves (SU463997) lie up a footpath opposite the pub and Dry Sandford Pit reserve is 400 yards north up the road, on the right (SU465996). If you might be late, it will help if you ask for a map in advance. Anyone coming from a distance who would like to stay in the area can be advised on other high quality sites and access permission arranged.

Keith Porter, Nature Conservancy Council, Foxhold House, Crookham Common, Newbury, Berks RG15 8EL. Tel. 063 523 8881.

Isle of Rhum, 25 or 27 - 30 June 1990

The 10th Scottish Entomologists' Field Meeting is based on the Rhum National Nature Reserve, an island in the Inner Hebrides. Accommodation is

free (but pretty basic) and self catering. Details from Geoff Hancock (Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow, Scotland G3 8AG. Tel. 041 357 3929) who needs to firm up arrangements soon.

Coombes Valley and Charnet Valley, Staffs 18-19 August 1990

These RSPB reserves are situated in wooded valleys lying on the upland edge of western Staffordshire. Coombes Valley has a rich fauna of butterflies, moths and beetles so the flies ought to be of interest. There is oak woodland, meadows, heathy areas and a stream lined with alders and ferns. Charnet Valley Woods have yielded a very rich dead wood beetle fauna but the flies are unknown. Ancient oak/lime woods and alder woods lie on sandstone and limestone, with numbers of calcareous seepages.

Colin Plant is leading a BENHS meeting and as a dipterist will welcome us to join in. On 18 August, meet at the Coombes Valley RSPB car park (SK010535) by 11.00 a.m. On 18 August, via a lane running east from Consall, meet at the County Council's Consall Wood Nature Park visitor centre (SJ995484) by 11.00 a.m. from where, via a private road, access is gained to Charnet Valley reserve near the pub at SK000491.

Colin Plant, Nature Reserve Interpretive Centre, Norman Road, London E6 4HN. Tel. 01 470 4525 (or home 0279 507697).

North York Moors, 10 - 14 October 1990

Advance notice is given that it is intended to base the main autumn foray in the North York Moors National Park using farm house or guest house accommodation near Pickering. Further details will be given in the next Bulletin.

Yorkshire Naturalists' Union field meetings

Dipterists are invited to join the following YNU Entomological Section field meetings. Details if required may be obtained from Bill Ely (9 Clifton Lane, Rotherham, S. Yorks S65 2AA).

12 June 1990 Gunnarside Gill. Meet by the bridge in Gunnarside (34/951982) at 11.00 a.m.

2 July 1990 Hell Worth, Ripon. Meet on Hell Worth Lane by the River Skell (44/300699) at 11.00 a.m.

14 July 1990 Burton Leonard Quarries. Meet by the village green in Burton Leonard (44/325637) at 11.00 a.m.

8 August 1990 Owston Wood. Contact P. Skidmore, Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, for details.

15 Sept. 1990 Mulgrave Woods. Meet at East Row car park, Sandsend (45/861125) at 11.00 a.m.

DIPTERISTS DIGEST

Issue No 2 was collected from the printers literally the day before Dipterists' Day in November. In the rush to meet this deadline a considerable number of typographical errors were overlooked. The editor apologises to authors and readers. An 'errata' column will appear in No 3.

Now that we have more time, and a new process running smoothly, final page proofs for No 3 and subsequent editions will be sent to authors for final checking, resulting in a more accurate final product.

With just under 200 regular subscribers, a professionally typeset journal is not possible, and reduced CRC (camera-ready copy) from laser-printed A4 masters is the best we can do.

The good news is that No 3 has a cover sponsor, allowing a glossy colour cover, and we are hoping to improve the presentation quality of the interior too! The subscription price remains the same.

The new process allows for a rapid turnover of material, and issues No 5 and No 6 are planned for 1990.

No 4 is a monograph handbook to "Moth Flies : Psychodidae" by Phil Withers, and is available as a separate at £6, including postage. Dipterists Digest is a very flexible publication, and future monographic works are possible (as optional extra issues to subscribers).

The standard 40/44 page journal will remain at the £2.50/£3 level, and additional issues will be priced accordingly.

Nos 3 and 5 will be issued before the next field season and No 6 depends on the continuing flow of copy.

May I take this opportunity to thank all contributors, particularly those who have waited over a year to see their work in print. Thanks too to the editorial panel and all subscribers for your continuing support.

The future is looking good. When we reach 500 subscriptions we can return to the more 'polished' type of journal similar to issue No. 1.

Derek Whiteley, 730 Ecclesall Road, Sheffield S11 8TB

THE MALLOCH SOCIETY

The Scottish dipterists have formed their own informal Society, named after a Scotsman who became a world famous dipterist (when living in the USA).

The Society had its second meeting in Perth in November, following a gathering that proved an inaugural one a year ago. The life of Malloch was reviewed and the ecology and conservation needs of the hoverfly Hammerschmidtia ferruginea considered. A dinner, with wives, followed.

The Society aims to tackle small projects that improve knowledge and assist conservation of the Scottish fauna. Hence the Hammerschmidtia project will entail a series of weekend field meetings to clarify habitat requirements, habitat resources and conservation management requirements for this apparently endangered species.

For further details contact Geoff Hancock (Glasgow) or Graham Rotheray (Edinburgh).

A REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING ON 11 NOVEMBER 1989

As a sequel to the 'and now' in the last Bulletin, Peter Chandler was invited onto the stage at the end of the morning lectures. He received a great round of applause for the 500th fungus gnat. It proved most embarrassing that he had not brought us a prize. However, he was given a cluster of porcelain toadstools, especially commissioned from the Angela Drake Studios, on a wooden plinth made by Martin Drake. An inscription read "THE PRIZE for the 500th British Fungus Gnat awarded to Peter Chandler 11 November 1989".

The afternoon discussion period covered a number of issues:

- BRC issued a statement on its position in serving schemes and on the pressures upon it both financially and the wider demands on its staff at ITE.
- The hoverfly recording scheme was a major item. The inadequacy of feedback on data submitted is a matter needing resolution. Regrettably there would seem to be some major impasses still to resolve. Ideas are sought on how to achieve data processing when the financial resources to do so at BRC are unavailable. Sponsorship may be one way forward. Data checking is one of the major tasks and several area representatives said they would be prepared to check BRC printouts of data for their counties. The outcome of the discussion was that area representatives would be consulted to see what activity was under way in their home patches and to see what they felt could be done to advance the recording effort (this is now being put into effect).
- The newly launched 'Wildlife Magazine' includes a regular news report on what's going on about 'flies'. Alan Stubbs is writing this but will be careful not to be too precise, such as naming species new to Britain (the Bulletin and Newsletters, incidentally, are not formal publications).
- We briefly considered the 1989 drought which started with winter drought. The main concern is depressed water tables, especially where underground water abstraction is aggravating the problem - the effects in some areas in the south is worse than in 1976.
- Few people indicated that they had been collecting in mainland Europe.
- The concept of workshop weekends, such as on the recognition of families of Diptera, seemed to have only one supporter.
- The meaning and pronunciation of scientific names was felt worth pursuing so that names seem less like gobbledegook. There were three volunteers who will take on a component of the check lists as follows - Richard Tribbeck (larger Brachycera), Hugh Carter (Syrphinae) and Laurence Clemons (other hoverflies). This project has advanced fast, a draft for hoverflies being already on Laurence Clemons' computer. A special issue of Dipterists' Digest is in mind, with a presentation doubling as a check list.

Day and weekend field meeting leaders were sought for 1989. It was suggested that the best way to cover West Scotland was by a small group touring in late May when the weather prospects were not too bad.

If anyone wishes to express views on these or other topics, please write to Alan Stubbs.

REPORT FROM AN EARLIER FIELD MEETING **Rogate, West Sussex 11-15 October 1989**

A party of 10 attended all or part of the meeting, a welcome increase on recent years. It was especially pleasing that two people with little experience came and they enjoyed the event as much as everyone else.

We found 51 species of craneflies and over 120 species of fungus gnats. About 35 sites were visited in 16 10 km squares. Though numbers of flies were down because of the drought it proved a successful meeting. At one site in Hampshire Carex tussocks yielded 8 species of Elachiptera (Chloropidae) and at another fen there was a sphaerocerid new to GB. A specimen of the conopid Leopoldius brevirostris at ivy flowers proved to be the first West Sussex record. A number of rare fungus gnats and some good records among various other flies were also gained.

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES AND STUDY GROUPS

Cranefly Recording Scheme

A draft of the Palaearctic check list has been sent for comment by Pjotr Oosterbroek (Amsterdam). It runs to nearly 500 pages including bibliography and index! Though it will bring in some name changes and re-ordering of the British checklist, it offers a badly needed revision which will be useful when new British keys are developed (parts already in draft).

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

Work on redescribing Odontomyia larvae is well on its way. Larvae from Walberswick NNR, Suffolk contain an unknown Odontomyia which could be O. microleon.

Pitfall traps are proving successful in obtaining strat larvae, as at Walberswick (providing they are in the right spot for such species!). Water traps are useful for adults.

A male Tabanus miki has been identified from Norfolk (1948, K Durrant, det. J Chainey), one of the few males in collections for this rare species.

A newsletter is to be prepared by Martin Drake who will welcome items.

Empid and Dolichopodid Study Group

Newsheet 8 is circulated with this Bulletin to those registered with the group. Editor - R Crossley, 1 The Cloisters, Birker Lane, Wilberfoss, York YO4 5RF.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Consultation with the area advisory network will be under way during the early months of this year.

Hampshire will now be represented by Dr Chris Palmer (Hampshire County Museums Service, Chilcomb House, Chilcomb Lane, Winchester SO23 8RD).

Steven Falk has now moved (see News Items)

A further hoverfly newsletter is in preparation. Your editor, Graham Rotheray, will welcome text.

An updated version of the Provisional Atlas of the Hoverflies of Essex has appeared as Essex Biological Records Centre Publication No 7. The author, Roger Payne, has collated data from 18 other dipterists (an impressive total). The new atlas includes a map and statement for 161 species, as well as consideration of species not recorded since 1970 and a map of the known prime hoverfly sites in the county. As a model for presentation of county mapping it has much to commend it (it happens to use a 10km grid; the presentation would be equally suitable for quadrad or tetrad grids).

Pipunculidae Study Group

Michael Ackland has, with great energy, launched into illustrating the genitalia of the British species. Apart from assisting accurate definition of the known species, there are a number of awkward specimens and difficult species complexes to resolve.

Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme

Hands up those who have taken three species of Antichaeta in one go, let alone ever having taken 3 species! Andy Foster has done just that at a Breckland site, adding Antichaeta atriseta new to Britain.

The Pherbellia from the 1989 Bideford meeting in Devon proves to be P.roskosnyi (like scutellata). Ivan Perry not only found this one, but a second Pherbellia new to Britain in 1989, in the Breck. All nets and pooters mindfully turn Breckwards!

NEW ADDRESS LIST

It is two years since the last address list and a number of people have changed address or joined us. Please check your entry, including the schemes listed against your name which determines newsletter circulation. If there are any alterations required, please let Alan Stubbs know (address at end of Bulletin). It is difficult to know whether people have moved or their entry is otherwise in need of correction (even deletion) unless told, so please also help ensure that other people's entries are accurate. Do you know of other people who should be registered?

The county/area listing is given to help you to know who else is interested in Diptera within range of you. The full address list indicates which schemes they are interested in. Hopefully this will facilitate greater contact. So don't be shy - it's difficult working in isolation so have the courage to break the ice. Why not set up your own local field meetings? Note that the hoverfly advisory network and Central Panel representatives are there to help you.

NEWS ITEMS AND REQUESTS

The Natural History Museum

We complain when insects change their name. However, even an institution as august as the British Museum (Natural History) is not immune. To avoid confusion with the British Museum at Bloomsbury Square (archaeology and all that), and to gloss up its user-friendly image, the long-standing alternative name, the Natural History Museum, becomes the official one. As with familiar insect names, 'BM (NH)' will take a long time to sink. Apparently 'NHM' is the new recommended abbreviation.

Royal Museum of Scotland

To add yet further to the confusion, the Royal Scottish Museum (RSM to its friends) has also changed its name. 'RMS' now seems to be about to come into vogue. Dare I mention that the RMS is part of the National Museums of Scotland, NMS. Oh for nomenclature stability and rules of priority.

Nature Conservancy Council

Steven Falk has been on contract with NCC. He now has a permanent position as a Keeper of Natural History at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordon Well, Coventry CV1 5RW (where he joins Adam Wright). His National Review of Diptera is planned for publication by NCC later this year.

Anglesey Diptera

In July 1987 the Dipterists' Field meeting was held in Bangor and the area within a radius of about 25 miles had the best going over it had ever known. As a result many new records, mainly for Anglesey and Caerns VCs, were made. This has transformed what was known about several Diptera families which up to then had received little attention.

Fifteen people sent me lists of their captures, some just the highlights, others very comprehensive long lists. I have now collated all the Anglesey records and those who participated in the visit may be interested in some of the results.

Species new to the Island range over 35 Dipteran families, in some cases just single additions to the list, but some very impressive numbers in others. This clearly reflects the interests of collectors, pride of place going to Dolichopodidae with 77 species recorded for the first time on Anglesey. Surprisingly, there were only 13 Mycetophilid species recorded for the first time in the lists I received (doubtless others are still being described as being new to science!). There were 26 additions to the Tipulid list, 29 Empididae, 20 Syrphidae, 19 Anthomyiidae, but only one Calliphorid and one Tachinid. To date these all add up to 264 additions to the Dipteran fauna of Anglesey. I am grateful to all those who sent me their records and will be pleased to receive any more information that may now be available as people have worked through their store boxes during the last two winters.

A more detailed note on the Dolichopodidae and Empididae has gone to the Editors of the appropriate Newsletter.

M Joan Morgan, UCNW Bangor

Are there any more illustrators out there?

A number of new reference works are in hand and in mind. These can only make progress on any reasonable timescale if there is help with illustrations.

In hand is the Larger Brachycera Book where it seems almost inevitable that photographic plates will now have to be used unless colour illustrators are at hand (Steven Falk cannot manage this). In mind is a new reference to the families of flies (myself and Peter Chandler); Cyril Hammond's artwork has been irretrievably lost. A new crane-fly work is needed. It would also be nice to see other authors tackle picture winged flies (*sensu lato*). Pipunculid genitalia are already being done by Michael Ackland.

Please let me know if you feel you are able to tackle colour or line drawing artwork at the standard of accuracy required.

Alan Stubbs

A possible Heleomyzid handbook

A glance at the list of 'specialists' who are prepared to look at your problem specimens will show you that Peter Skidmore and Phil Withers volunteered to cover the Heleomyzidae. The fact that no-one has yet asked for their assistance has not daunted them; now that Peter has finished his mighty Muscid tome and Phil has published his Psychodid Handbook, they are (relatively) more able to contemplate a Handbook for heleomyzid-lovers.

WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE! We need help in various areas to enable as comprehensive a treatment as possible. The more material or information you can provide, as below, the better position we will be in to complete a Handbook before one or both of us expires from exhaustion. Thank you, team.

We need:

- Any preserved larvae and/or puparia of any British Heleomyzidae/Trixoscelidae (to Peter).
- Any rearing information linked (or not) to the above (to either of us).
- All your records of all species except Suillia. Any Suillia records which are post Phil's revisionary paper (which you're all using, aren't you?) (to Phil).
- Females for dissection (please) of spermathecae (good characters found here) of the following:

Suillia dunicola, S. flava, S. notata, S. oxyphora (!), S. pallida, S. vaginata, S. atricornis, Heteromyza commixta, H. oculata, Tephrochlamys laeta, Neoleria maritima, N. prominens, N. propinqua, N. ruficeps, Eccoptomera longiseta, E. ornata, E. pallescens, Morpholeria dudai, M. kerteszi, M. ruficornis, Chaetomus confusus, C. flavotestaceus, Scoliocentra caesia, S. scutellaris, Heleomyza brachypterna, H. dupliciseta, H. czernyi, H. captiosa, all Trixoscelis (to Phil).

- Hints, tips or guesses on collecting strategies (either of us).

Phil Withers, 27 Beech Way, Dickleburgh, Diss, IP21 4NZ

Peter Skidmore, Doncaster Museum, Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2AE

A request for Lacewings

There is now a new recording scheme for Neuroptera, Mecoptera and Megaloptera. Dipterists tend to sweep specimens or find them in malaise traps so the scheme will welcome material in alcohol or dry. Whilst the smaller ones can be pooted, it is only fair to say that the large green lacewings can issue an unpleasant smell. Scorpion flies can chew up flies. On field meetings we try to keep lacewings, especially if Joan Morgan is with us giving encouragement, so we know that lacewings are little trouble. The scheme organiser (also known to us as a dipterist) is Colin Plant Nature Reserve Interpretive Centre, Norman Road, London E6 4HN. Tel 01 470 4525 (or home 0279 507697).

NEW LITERATURE

An introduction to the immature stages of British Diptera

This much anticipated Handbook for the Identification of British Insects 10 pt 14 was published in December. Ken Smith has produced a superb reference of 280 information-packed pages. There are keys down to family and mostly to genus where known, with 91 pages of illustrations. The text considers each family, reviewing all known larvae with their breeding sites. There is advice on finding, rearing and studying the early stages.

It is to be hoped that this Handbook will be a catalyst to more people studying the early stages of flies, an essential if we are to understand the reasons for the ecology and distribution of species and their conservation needs.

The price, £30 (£21 to RESL Fellows), is high but regrettably publications of most sorts are becoming expensive. For the number of pages, the price is relatively no more than other recent RES keys. Whether or not you are currently interested in larvae and other early stages, the sheer volume of relevant information on the biology of species, together with the quality of the illustrations and other contents, makes this work good value. If you are hesitant, have a look at a copy next time you are in the Natural History Museum bookshop.

Congratulations, Ken, a marvellous finale to your very productive professional career at the BM (NH). Please don't hibernate in retirement.

Scuttle Flies

To complete coverage of the family Phoridae, the very large genus Megaselia is the subject of Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects (10 pt 8); price £14 (RESL fellows £9.80). It covers 220 species, the new British check list being a major revision. Included are nearly 100 pages of illustrations, keys, one description of a new species, and additions and corrections to Vol 10 pt 6.

The author, Dr R H L Disney, has given the same care as he gave in his earlier part on phorids. These flies will remain a specialist group and one must admire the enthusiasm behind tackling such a difficult genus. No doubt there are plenty more species still to be found, both new to Britain

and new to science, so we can anticipate that Henry Disney will be advancing the British list still further.

This is not a beginners group. They are suitable for those who enjoy slide mounting and have the aptitude for complex and difficult identifications.

Moth Flies

Dipterists Digest No 4 covers the family Psychodidae. A revision of the keys was badly needed and Phil Withers has certainly taken a good step forward. The British list is now 89 species and has been treated pretty thoroughly.

The keys include distribution notes, and there are 180 figures assembled on 33 pages. There are notes on the collecting, preservation and examination of psychodids.

It is only fair to say that moth flies are not a beginners groups. Some species look rather nice, with patterned wings, but the wing scales easily rub off unless handled carefully and wing vein characters may only be visible by removing hairs from a wing. In essence they have to be slide mounted, which means time and aptitude towards dissecting tiny fragile insects. However, it would be nice to see more people having a go, at least with the easier species, since there seems to be useful ecological potential. Larvae can be among the commonest to find in some situations such as leaf litter and fen litter so there is something to do in the early months before the season gets busy.

AND NOW EXPENSIVE TASTES

It won't have been many weeks ago that the seasonal feast of turkey and Christmas pud dominated the diet. Those faced with the preparation and washing up may well have envied larvae content enough to munch through their usual fare of leaf litter or gunge.

However, the gastronomic season cannot be allowed to pass without reflecting on the cuisine of some larvae with more refined tastes. How about truffles? First find your truffles! Without the required antennae tuned to locate such delicacies, a foray to Central London will suffice. How much do you think you would have to pay for 1 lb of the best white truffles? £20, £50, £100? No, more pocket money is needed. It's £400 - and that is before cooking.

So just be a little bit more impressed next time you see Cheilosia soror. They must have the most expensive tastes of any British fly so this is clearly a hoverfly of refinement - think of those soror larvae savouring every raspful of truffle. I wonder how many soror one could get for 1 lb. Don't spoil it by asking the price of British 'any old truffle' but imagine Italian soror gorging themselves on the best.

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