

Diptera Recording Schemes Bulletin No 4

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We have several other new items. It will no doubt be of interest to hear something of the best recorded localities in Britain and a start is here made with a short note on Malham Tarn a locality situated on the western edge of the Pennines, one of the few upland areas to have received fairly comprehensive treatment of the Diptera.

AUTUMN EVENTS

Annual Meeting of Diptera Recording Schemes

The meeting is to be held on Saturday 12 November at the British Museum (Natural History), South Kensington. The event is open to anyone with an interest in diptera and is aimed at an informative but non-technical level. Whilst the recording schemes have their place, the idea of the meeting is to set a much wider base and encourage all dipterists in Britain to regard this day as the natural focus for meeting and making new acquaintances.

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| 11.00 - 11.20 | Introductory Review. A E Stubbs |
| 11.20 - 11.45 | Behaviour studies with dung flies. Dr G A Parker |
| 11.45 - 12.10 | Biology of Pipunculids. M A Jervis |
| 12.10 - 12.30 | Ecological studies on Scandinavian Calliphorids and results of National Fish Skin Week. J P Dear |
| 12.30 - 13.00 | Biology of some Larger Brachycera. A G Irwin |
| LUNCH | (Choice of pubs and cafeterias) |
| 14.00 - 14.30 | Exhibits (setting up time) |
| 14.30 - 15.30 | Hints on the identification and collecting of hoverflies. A E Stubbs |
| 15.30 - 16.00 | Informal discussion on Recording Schemes |
| 16.00 - 17.30 | Taxonomic consultancy and exhibits. |

The morning session will be in the main Lecture Hall. A series of short talks cover a variety of groups of flies and hopefully will provide a stimulus to your interests. The theme is very much concerned with drawing attention to ways in which even the newcomer to diptera can easily contribute original observations.

The afternoon session is in the Conversazione Room. Hopefully there will be a wide range of exhibits and that, of course, depends on people bringing items

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along. Any theme on diptera is welcome - art work, interesting specimens from your collection, interpretative exhibits, mapping results etc. The talk on hoverflies is optional as are the other afternoon events but we hope that many people will find the programme of interest and value. The taxonomic consultancy idea had some teething problems last year, but this time the 'consultants' will be introduced and labelled and there will be microscopes and keys laid on. The concept is that many people work in isolation and would be glad of the chance to gain an opinion on problem specimens - or if you have only recently started on a family, just to have someone confirm that your box of common species are correctly identified is a major help. Clearly we shall be best prepared for families of flies covered by recording schemes, but we will look at anything within reason.

During the afternoon it will be possible for experienced people to work in the Diptera Section and for the inexperienced to at least see the British Collection. The exhibits will be on display for the whole afternoon and into the evening Dipterists Dinner, though some exhibits will disappear earlier if the exhibitor is not staying.

Dipterists Dinner

This event has proved extremely successful. It is held in the form of a buffet in the Convezione Room from 18.00 - 22.00, thus running on from the recording meeting but being an entirely separate function. The main idea is to have time for discussion, any exhibits available helping to this end. The Dinner provides an informal and friendly atmosphere where there is the time to chat about items and for the new comer to talk to those elusive people who one hears of but never normally has the chance to see.

Tickets are required in advance for this event at a cost of £5 per person. All enquiries should be addressed to Mr A C Pont, British Museum (Natural History) Cromwell Road, London SW7.

Autumn Field Meeting - Brecon Beacons, October 7-13

A booking has been made for a long weekend field meeting based at the Brecon Beacons National Park Field Centre. The party is to assemble on Friday evening 7 October and disperse after breakfast on Wednesday 12 October. Should you not be able to stay for the whole of this period, you may join in for just part of the time. The cost is £4.50 per day inclusive of full board with three main meals, use of labs, shared bedrooms in small units.

The meeting is timed for the Autumn peak of Nematocera, previous experience in Wales at this time of year having been extremely favourable. Syrphidae and larger Brachycera will be effectively over, but various groups of smaller flies such as certain acalypterates should be plentiful. This is primarily a recording meeting, but even if you are not especially keen on Nematocera, you are still welcome to join in - you are bound to pick up some useful hints and some training sessions will be introduced if there is the demand.

Details and bookings through Alan Stubbs (address at end).

Society Exhibitions

On Saturday 1 October the Amateur Entomologists Society holds its Annual Exhibition at University College School, Frognall, London NW3, 12.00-16.00. The British Entomological and Natural History Society Exhibition is on Saturday 29 October at Chelsea Old Town Hall, Kings Road, Chelsea 12.00 - 17.00. Both exhibitions are open to non members. A number of dipterists usually attend. Peter Chandler and Alan Stubbs will be pleased if you would make yourselves known to us should you be present. If you want any flies checked, they can be returned on November 12.

NEWS OF THE SCHEMES

Cranefly Recording Scheme

The first batch of Tipulinae distribution maps is distributed with this Bulletin and is sent to all recorders. It must be borne in mind that despite their size, many of the Tipulinae craneflies are elusive and are easily overlooked in an area because the emergence period is often short. In many respects this is the most difficult end of the craneflies compared with the Limoniine species where the commoner ones have substantially more records.

A revised key to Nephrotoma is available on request. It has been prepared by Pjotr Oosterbroek (of the University of Amsterdam) who is carrying out a major Western Palaearctic and world review of the genus. The key includes 6 species of the European mainland which could conceivably turn up in Britain.

Two species of Dicranomyia new to Britain have been taken this year. Both currently defy identification. A male from Gaithbarrows National Nature Reserve, N. Lancs. was taken in July (it looks rather like sericata which is normally out in May). A yellowish female from Kindrogan, Perth, has an open discal cell.

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

A special record card with all the species is due from the printers soon so please stand by for a call for records and material this Winter. A note on the scheme has been circulated to all concerned.

Does your collection contain Chorisops with green frons and yellow humeri? If so you have a species new to science which is being described by Roskosny (in press). Your scheme organiser, Dr Irwin, will be pleased to receive early news from anyone with such specimens so that the status of the species in Britain can be defined.

Among the more exciting finds this year are Oxycera morrisoni from North Lancashire and larvae which may belong to O. meigeni a species not on the British list. The latter were in a sea cliff seepage in Cornwall.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

A special record card is due from BRC shortly. A note on the scheme has been circulated and the first call for records will be during this winter.

A note has been prepared which draws attention to taxonomic changes and new papers which update the Royal Entomological Society Handbook to Syrphidae, published in 1953. The taxonomy is going through a period of turmoil, but that is a problem for the organiser to worry about rather than the recorder. There are considerable sections of the hoverflies which are straight forward and most of the real problems are centred around black, and especially small black species. This is highlighted by AES re-examining Cheilosia and separating out about 11 additional forms which appear to be good species, plus a number of further forms of less certain status. The Pipizella/Heringia group is about to be thrown into disarray when a new continental work is published and there are already British specimens at hand which do not fit with accepted British species. Paragus is also in the melting pot. Pipiza is no nearer a simple solution, but you will be glad to know that we are adopting lumping rather than splitting of species. It is probable that because black hoverflies look uninteresting and difficult that they are widely ignored. The present message

is that 'black is beautiful' and far more material is required. Please also note that in genera where currently only males can be identified (eg Sphaerophoria, Neocnemodon) it would be of great value to keep pairs in cop so that reliable material is available for the compilation of keys to females.

Sepsidae Recording Scheme

The manuscript for the new Roy. Ent. Soc. Handbook has been completed by the scheme organiser, A C Pont, and is in the hands of the editor.

During the Summer a number of very useful records have been gained for the rarer species.

ADDRESS LIST

An address list is enclosed. This reminds you who your scheme organisers and regional representatives are and you will be able to see the interest of other people living in your area.

NEWS OF OTHER GROUPS OF DIPTERA

National Fish Skin Week

Results have been coming in. Apparently rancid goldfish are not as good as smoked haddock, but at the time of writing it is unclear whether this result applies to cats or calliphorids - it is the green and blue bristly animals which should have been collected. Anyway all will be revealed at the Annual Meeting and in the next Bulletin. If you have any further material or data please let J P Dear know soon.

Bibionidae

A simplified key has been prepared by R Lane and is available on request. He is interested in assembling distribution records and has offered to identify material. Address:- Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History) Cromwell Road, London SW7.

Chironomidae Larvae

A new key to the genera of Chironomid larvae is available on request from P Cranston, Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7.

Ephydriidae

An experimental key to genera has been prepared for those willing to try it out and comment upon any snags. Available on request from Dr A Irwin (Castle Museum, Norwich)

Phoridae: Report from Dr H Disney

I am working on Phoridae and among other things am hoping, with the help of Ken Smith, to produce Keys to the British species. I am making a break with phoridological tradition by working from slide-mounted specimens. This is firstly because I find structural characters (particularly of male terminalia) are more easily observed on slide mounts than micro-pinned specimens. Secondly it is more convenient for ecologists and general collectors to preserve Phoridae in fluid (such as 70% alcohol) than to micro-pin every specimen.

The proposed Keys to the British species will be advanced by the receipt of specimens from all over Britain. I have already received valuable specimens from several Dipterists, particularly from some of the Recording Schemes field meetings. These have produced species new to Britain and also species which, while still sub judice,

are probably new to science. The indications are that there are about 300 British species. Several species are only known for one sex. I have a drawer of females that are sub judice! It is, therefore, particularly valuable when I am sent pairs of specimens caught in copula.

At present I have more than 100 British species on slides, with a few thousand specimens awaiting examination. This backlog means that any specimens I am sent will not be identified immediately! However I will undertake to send lists of identifications in due course. It is only by receiving specimens from you that I will be enabled to build up the necessary slide collections needed for taxonomic revision and the production of Keys useable by the non-specialist.

My interest in Phoridae extends to the World fauna - thus any specimens caught on holiday abroad will also be welcome. Please preserve specimens in fluid (e.g. 70% alcohol or even duty-free French spirits!) I particularly welcome Phoridae reared from known hosts or media.

Henry Disney, Malham Tarn Field Centre, Settle, Yorkshire BD24 9FU

NEWS OF THE SUMMER FIELD MEETINGS

Just a few notes to be going on with:-

Welsh Borders, May

A small party spent a long weekend based on Hereford, the Moccas week having fallen through. Visits were made to the Wyre Forest and various sites in Herefordshire and Breconshire. We obtained a new Mycetophilid and some interesting craneflies and empids but the main purpose of the timing was hoverflies - so herewith a few of the latter:- Brachypalpus eunotus (third British specimen), B. bimaculatus, Neoascia obliqua, Sphegina verrucunda, Cheilosia chrysocoma, Metasyrphus nitens, Parasyrphus malinellus, Melangyna arctica and Didea fasciata.

Dundee and Ballater, July

A months drought under heatwave conditions reduced the catch. However with an average party size of 10, we covered 90 sites within 50 10 km squares. It will take more than a few lines to summarise and it is impossible to do justice at this stage. Tipulidae Erioptera connexa, Limonia omissinervis, Rhabdomastix 3 spp.: larger Brachycera Villa sp., Phthiria pulicaria, Atherix ibis, Symphoromyia crassicornis, Rhadiurgus variabilis, Laphria flava: Syrphidae Didea intermedia, Chaemaesyrphus scaevoides, Xylota coeruleiventris, Tropidia scita (+ some good species awaiting determination); Sciomyzidae Dictya umbrarum: Sepsidae Sepsis neocynipsea and Themira germanica (3rd & 5th specimens to BM respectively).

East Anglia, August

The East Anglia regional representative, Dr Irwin, contacted dipterists in his area and assembled a party of thirteen for the weekend 20 - 21 August. One day was spent on the Breck and the other in Norfolk. Rumours circulate about some good finds but details are not yet at hand.

THE DIPTERA OF THE MALHAM TARN AREA, YORKSHIRE

The Malham Tarn area is a classic complex of very varied ecosystems. Not only is it situated near the geographic centre of the British Isles (thus having both 'southern' and 'northern' species) as well as covering a considerable altitudinal range (so that one finds both 'upland' and 'lowland' species) but also the richness of the area has generated a wide ranging documentation that embraces the whole spectrum of environmental science. An important paper was the results of an insect survey carried out between 1954 and 1958 (Flint, J.H. (Ed.), 1963, Proc. Leeds Phil. Lit.

Soc. Sect. 9 (2): 15 - 91). This survey recorded over 400 species of Diptera on Malham Moor. Partly as a result of courses on Diptera held annually since 1972 the total now stands at well over 600 species. There are still major gaps. Thus much needs to be done on the Mycetophilidae, Sciaridae, Ceratopogonidae, Cecidomyiidae and Psychodidae. Among Brachycera the smaller Empididae and Dolichopodidae merit much more attention. For example the survey team recorded no species of Hydrophorus but we regularly record three species on the surface of acid peat pools and fen ponds.

With regard to Cyclorrhapha I am now putting the Phoridae on the map. There are many 'difficult' Calyptrata to be added to the list, in particular the Anthomyiidae need looking at. Many smaller Acalyptrata remain to be recorded, in particular our records of Agromyzidae and Sphaeroceridae are very sparse in relation to the numbers one can observe in the field.

In the survey one of the groups most thoroughly collected was the Tipulidae (under H. Henson). There is a need for keen crane-fly folk to re-examine the situation to see if any changes have occurred in the last 20 years. There are species that were not recorded by the survey. For anyone who has never seen the extraordinary larvae of Triogma or Phalacrocer they flourish on the nature reserve.

One of the facts about the survey that has become apparent is that it was only a beginning. If one concentrates on a group that wasn't particularly favoured by the survey team one can easily double the list. Thus the survey recorded two species of Dixidae. The card index now includes 8 species on the nature reserve and a 9th on the edge of the Moor.

Dipterists are welcome on Malham Moor, which through their efforts is becoming one of the best documented places anywhere from the point of view of Diptera as a whole. For those who think Hoverflies are all that count the list now stands at 61 species (12 not recorded in the survey!)

Henry Disney

SCHEME ORGANISER SAVAGED BY GIANT LARVA

Whilst on a survey of the Lizard Heaths, our co-organiser of the Larger Brachycera Scheme, Dr Irwin, was demonstrating the characteristic features of a large Tabanid larva.

As he held the larva in his hand, he commented rather unkindly that the pointed back end looked the same as the pointed front end. This was too much for any self-respecting carnivore and the back end promptly sank its jaws into Dr Irwin's thumb.

There then began a life and death struggle as he writhed in agony complaining of the pain as the larva's head burrowed in. His audience pondered with interest that the entire head had been inserted and perhaps if patient more of the larva might burrow into its tasty pabulum. However, the victim was rather less patient. He proposed all manner of brutish ~~attacks~~ ^{counter} attacks but pleas for the furtherance of science prevailed and the larva was duely plucked live from the agonised thumb. With great pride the near mortal wound was displayed - a hole with a hinged lid of skin. Estimates of the size of the hole depend on who you speak to!

Co-ordinator
A E Stubbs
Nature Conservancy Council
19 Belgrave Square
London SW1X 8PY

The Central Panel
of Diptera Recording Scheme
Organisers