

August 1978

Diptera Recording Schemes Bulletin No. 6

As the autumn approaches, this Bulletin reminds you of a number of events and informs you of various publications.

It is hoped that there will be an even bigger gathering for our Annual Meeting and there is the enticing offer of a reduced price Dipterists Dinner to ensure that a visit to London on 23 September is an essential in every dipterists calendar.

The apparent inactivity of various scheme organisers will deserve forgiveness when you see the Dipterists Handbook. It has been a hectic time for those writing demanding texts, with editorial whips pressing for dead lines to be met.

Did you notice the summer? Well the spring meeting reports one of the few highlights to a gloomy season.

AUTUMN EVENTS

Annual Meeting of Diptera Recording Schemes, 1978

As reported in Bulletin No. 5, the meeting will be held on 23 September at the British Museum (Natural History), South Kensington. This is a major event open to every dipterist, catering for both the beginner and the experienced worker. This year we expect to be joined by a few dipterists from other countries, taking advantage of the fact that our date is arranged to follow on from the European Congress at Reading.

Normally a full programme is announced beforehand. This year we are leaving the options more open since we are still clarifying who will be available in London.

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| 11.00 - 11.10 | Introduction (A E Stubbs) |
| 11.10 - - | Films on behaviour of flies, including fascinating slow motion sequences. |
| - - 13.00 | Short talks on other themes |
| LUNCH | (choice of pubs and cafeterias) |
| 14.00 - 14.30 | Exhibits (setting up time) |
| 14.30 - 15.30 | Behaviour of Larger Brachycera and Hoverflies (probably A Irwin and Dr M C D Speight). |
| 15.30 - 16.00 | Informal discussion on Recording Schemes. |
| 16.00 - 17.30 | Free period for looking at exhibits; a taxonomic consultancy will be arranged. |

The morning session is in the main Lecture Hall and the afternoon session is in the Conversazione Room. The programme will be varied to suit a wide range of tastes and the level of approach avoids technical jargon. The day is all the more rewarding if there are plenty of exhibits - so the success of the venture is helped if you are able to bring along an exhibit.

There is plenty of scope for exhibit subjects - rare species are always good for creating discussion among entomologists, flies associated with a locality or habitat, displays demonstrating life histories, art work - potential ideas are limitless. Microscopes will be at hand to assist the specialists give an opinion on flies which require identification; we still have not got the taxonomic consultancy idea working perfectly, but if you bring along a box of flies, there is a good chance that you will finish the day with some worthwhile advice.

Dipterists Supper

As usual the Dipterists Supper will follow the day session. The Supper will be held in the Conversazione Room at the British Museum between 18.00 and 22.00 p.m.

The high cost of previous Suppers was a deterrent to a number of those attending the day session. Means have been found of reducing the cost this year to £3.50. Last year there were 50 dipterists so hopefully even more of you will be able to come this time.

The dinner, held in the form of a buffet, is an informal social occasion which gives beginners and the experienced a chance to mix and discuss things of mutual interest. If past occasions are a guide, this is an event not to be missed.

The organiser is Adrian Pont (Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW 7 5BD. If you have not already received his circular, please write to him and invite yourself. Unlike the day session, the Dinner attendance is by advance booking only.

Autumn Field Meeting - Newbridge on Wye, 5 - 8 October

For the benefit of those who have mislaid Bulletin 5, details are repeated here. Please note that bookings are now due.

A provisional booking at the University of Wales field centre at Newbridge on Wye has been made for a long weekend covering 5-8 October.

The field meeting will be based on the Radnorshire/North Breconshire border, poorly known country needless to say but P Cranston has stayed there before and speaks highly of the countryside round about with its moorlands, flushes, streams, rivers and woodland. The area is strategically placed between our previous October forays in North Wales and south Breconshire so will add a valuable piece in the jig-saw of distribution maps for autumn species. Nematocera and various groups of other flies should be in good numbers but hoverflies and larger Brachycera will be virtually over.

This is a special economy meeting. If you are happy to live in primitive but adequate conditions of bunk beds in small unit dormitories and self catering it will cost about £1 per day for use of the centre. Anyone who prefers a higher degree of comfort can easily gain B & B + evening meal in farm houses or a hotel. There is more than adequate working space in the laboratory (bring your own microscopes).

Bookings should be made through A E Stubbs (address at end of bulletin). The party is to assemble on the evening of Wednesday 4 October but you can come just for the weekend if you cannot manage a longer stay. Advice on B & B accommodation can be provided on request.

AUTUMN SOCIETY EXHIBITIONS

The following exhibitions are attended by a number of dipterists. Peter Chandler and Alan Stubbs will be pleased to meet you there. These exhibitions, in conjunction with the Museum meeting, are often used for relaying boxes of material requiring identification.

Amateur Entomologists Society

This year the Society is arranging a major event at Wembley Exhibition Centre (within the Wembley Stadium complex) on 21 October 1978. This will be open from late morning to about 5.00 p.m. Equipment and book sellers will have stalls in trade fair atmosphere and there will be a range of exhibits by members and organisations. Entrance fee 20p. The Society is hoping for good attendance in order to make a full scale exhibition viable - so please encourage friends, and yourself, to attend if you are within range.

British Entomological and Natural History Society Exhibition

Normally the two Society exhibitions are held well apart, but this year they are very close. The 'British' exhibition will be on 28 October at Old Chelsea Town Hall, (Kings Road), opening late morning through till about 5.00 p.m. There is usually a very good range of members exhibits, normally including some Diptera.

NEWS OF THE BOVEY TRACY FIELD MEETING

This proved a very successful meeting. The accommodation within its own grounds was ideal, and we were well looked after by the proprietor at Colehayes Park. There were 29 of us, including a small contingent from the Aculeate Recording Scheme which fitted in with the dipterists very well. Above all we had a heat wave - a rare claim for this summer.

Spring was very late but things improved rapidly during the week. There was no shortage of good spots to go, in fact the grounds of Colehayes Park proved one of the richest in flies. Records are still awaited from most of those attending (strong hint!) but there was a good selection of hoverflies, such as Brachypalpus sp., Xylota lenta, various Criorhina, Eristalis cryptarum, Microdon mutabalis, Volucella inanis. It was rather early for Larger Brachycera, but several Xylophagus ater and Dioctria oelandica were taken. Craneflies included Tipula marginata, T. selene and Molophilus czizeki. A very good and important advance in knowledge of Devon Diptera will have been made (and the aculeate folk did extremely well).

NEWS OF THE SCHEMES

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Late 1979 should see the publication of 'Flower flies (Diptera:Syrphidae) of the Palaearctic Region - a Guide and Catalogue' within the new Entomograph series. Chris Thompson (one of the editors, USA) called a meeting in London attended by J Ismay (our recording scheme organiser), Dr M C D Speight, K G V Smith and A E Stubbs to discuss the contents. In particular it is intended to resurrect some Mosses Harris names, which means that about 15 British species will change their specific name. After pleads for stability of our existing names, it became clear that these changes were bound to come in the end and it was better to accept the changes now before another generation of syrphid workers got fixed on our current names. 15 changes in 250 species is not too much to swallow but we will hold fire on giving the new names until the final decisions are in print. This

book will have some very useful chapters of general relevance to the British field worker but the main body of the catalogue (with location of type material) will be of specialist interest. The price has yet to be fixed but it will not be cheap. Those at the meeting asked for a clear indication as to which species occur in Europe/Western Palaearctic.

Taking advantage of Chris Thompson's presence in the Museum, his opinion was sought on the possible existence of two species within the series of Anasimyia (ex Helophilus) transfuga. He confirmed that there are two species but they are none too easy to separate. A formal description of the new species is expected in print within 12 months. Meanwhile, please keep vouchers for all locality records.

We have received news that Francis Gilbert is starting a Ph D study on foraging strategies of hoverflies, supervised by Dr Sally Corbett. Anyone with information on this topic or advice on culturing syrphids is invited to write to him at St John's College, Cambridge.

The weather has been poor for hoverflies this season, apart from the Devon trip. Maliota and Myolepta luteola were found on the fringe of north west London (on heath bedstraw flowers). Three Doros were found at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve, Sussex by a British Museum party. Sphaerophoria loewii is apparently not extinct in Britain - the grape-vine reports that G Glombeck has found it in Essex. No doubt more good news will surface at the Annual meeting.

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

M. Jefferies is retiring as co-organiser on leaving Britain, so Dr A Irwin will cover all groups within this scheme.

The most interesting record received so far this season is that for Stratiomys chamaeleon in south Oxfordshire (V.C. Berkshire) by J Ismay. There cannot have been many, if any, records in recent decades.

Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme

Professor L V Knutson on a recent visit to London has agreed to write us some notes on field craft for finding the early stages and infected host molluscs. He has discussed the fact that he cannot undertake the preparation of the Royal Ent.Soc. key as originally planned some years ago and A E Stubbs has provisionally agreed to tackle this once the hoverfly revision is completed. The task is not difficult, the main time factor being the preparation of illustrations, including all the male genitalia - once this hurdle is cleared, a Handbook could be prepared without undue delay. If there should be an experienced volunteer for illustrating, please contact A E Stubbs. This is a nice family of flies and a Key is needed before the recording scheme can function effectively.

AUTUMN PUBLICATIONS

Dipterists Handbook

Three hundred pages of essential reading await you. As a companion work to Colyer and Hammond, Flies of the British Isles, it contains a wealth of information. Subjects include collecting and recording methods, a key to families of larvae, comprehensive accounts of associations with other animals and plants, reviews of the Diptera of major and minor habitats and much more besides. There is a great deal of previously unpublished material as well as condensation of widely dispersed and in-accessible information.

This has been a mammoth effort involving over 20 authors. Publication is by the Amateur Entomological Society, supported by a major grant from the Royal Society. The proofs are coming through shortly and it is touch and go whether the Handbook will be available on 23 September but it will be on sale at the AES Wembley Exhibition. The selling price has yet to be fixed but may be about £6 and the agent for orders is L Christie, 129 Franciscan Road, Tooting, London SW17 8DZ.

The Amateur Entomological Society deserves our thanks for acting as publisher of such a sizeable work. A good deal of their publications rolling fund is tied up in this Handbook so brisk sales will be more than welcome. If we are to receive support in publishing on Diptera in the future, it is as well to help the sales drive. The title is misleading since the book is of relevance to a wide range of naturalists in dealing with the many fascinating ways in which other animals and plants inter-relate. The introductory accounts relating ecological principals to a group of insects is of wide relevance. Anyone concerned with identifying what they find will need a key to larvae. Please help the publicity among naturalist friends - you may even convert some into studying Diptera.

Diptera of the Reading Area

The publication of a faunal list for an area of Britain is a rare event and it is, therefore, a pleasure to announce the above title. To those living within range it is a must since this will become a basis and stimulus for further recording. To those living in more distant parts it should be of great interest to see what lives around Reading in contrast to your home ground.

Reading Natural History Society have shown great faith (under a little pressure!) in publishing such a specialist reference. The best way of repaying that faith, and encouraging this and other Societies to publish on Diptera in the future, is to help demonstrate the demand by buying a copy. It will hopefully be available by mid September from the author and compiler, H Carter (Museum and Art Gallery, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QL) at approx £1.80. Copies should be obtainable in London on 23rd September.

Chironomidae

A very well illustrated key to male Chironomids is now available and should provide a great stimulus to those working on the group. It is a considerable advance on the old RES Handbook key and relies on genitalia. Flies should be preserved in spirit.

Pinder L C V, 1978. A key to adult males of British Chironomidae. Freshwater Biological Association, Scientific Publication No 37. £4.50. Available from the librarian, FBA, The Ferry House, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 0LP.

Dolichopodidae

The eagerly awaited Royal Entomological Handbook on Dolichopodidae is now published at £6.50. This is one of the groups of flies that soon attracts the beginner and it is indeed a very nice family to study. As with virtually every family of flies there are a few difficult genera but on the whole it is possible to make easy progress with the group. Our thanks to the author, Mr E C A d'Fonseca for providing an up to date key in English.

ADDRESS LIST

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THE LAST WORD - ON DRESS

It became quite clear at the Bovey Tracy field meeting that success as a dipterist depended upon ones dress. Now this is no revolutionary statement to advocates of the processes of evolution - specialisation and adaptation of the predator so that the prey won't see him and all that. However, even the most ardent theorist in evolution could not have anticipated the correct camouflage for the successful dipterist.

Among a random sample of assorted dipterists in all manner of assorted gear, there was one individual who sort of stood out - beyond the norm for the genotype. This individual wore white plimsoles, white short shorts, white short sleeved shirt and, wait for it, a white floppy hat. Moreover, apart from a net, he seemingly had no collecting gear.

Mind you, it needs style to go with this combination - casually plucking a fly out of nowhere, saying 'is this of interest' as if it were the hundredth Syrphus ribesii that day and, on being told it is Brachypalpus to loud exclamation, even more casually saying 'oh, is it unusual then'. A whole week of this, with a steadily growing list of rarities, can get rather maddening for the controls in this experiment.

Mike Jefferies, we shall sorely miss you when you move to Australia in November, but the image of you in your tropical African tabanid gear, floppy white hat and all, should really flatten the Aussies.

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The Central Panel of
Diptera Recording Scheme Organise