

EMPID AND DOLICHOPODID STUDY GROUP

NEWSHEET NO 13

August 1994

EDITORIAL

Not being in the slightest degree superstitious I had agreed some time ago that I would put Issue 13 to bed, but am now left wondering if, in view of the changes at English Nature with regard to the Recording Schemes, it will be the last. We must hope not. I have the strong impression that the Newsheet has met a need among a small band of the faithful, and had enabled the rapid publication of notes and informal papers which have helped us all and would not otherwise have seen the light of day. I can attest to the value I have derived from many of the pieces we've published since 1986, and so could many others. While we can be sure that the future of British dipterology will be different from the past, we must hope that a new structure will emerge, built upon the secure foundations of the past 8 years.

The issue is slender, but it seemed right to go ahead nevertheless and publish in fairness to those contributors who submitted material some time ago. May I draw your attention to the note by Roy Crossley on the Empid & Doli 'Review of the Scarce and Threatened Flies of Great Britain'. Roy has been working hard to update Steven Falk's earlier data and, as he says, it is much to be hoped that publication of the Review will arouse interest among dipterists who have not yet caught the E & D 'bug'. To return to a related point I made in an editorial a few years ago, never let yourself be put off by a suspicion that your train of thought is too trivial for the Newsheet: if an observation interests you it will probably stimulate others too. We all have much to learn from each other in even the most seemingly insignificant detail.

Roy Crossley is glad to receive BRC Record Cards for E & D species. Some time ago it was suggested that a pilot recording scheme be instituted for *Campsicnemus* (s.l.), *Hydrophorus* and *Empis* (s.l.). It would certainly be worth focusing on these genera for a while longer before judging whether a full recording scheme might be justified in due course. But I have to admit that I have not practised what I preach, and am as guilty as anyone of failing to keep my records up to date and failing to complete those damn cards. I tell myself that one fine day all will become ordered and recorded. Until then I run furiously to stay in the same place. Perhaps others recognise the affliction too.

Our thanks again to our contributors. I hope to see many of you at the Dipterists Day in November. By then I shall have completed an Index of Newsheet Articles and Notes dating back to issue 1 in 1986, which may enable those who hold the complete set to trace contributions more easily, and may of itself trigger the flow of more on the same lines.

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FORTHCOMING EMPID AND DOLICHOPODID 'REVIEW'

The 1991 NCC publication 'Research and survey in nature conservation No 39 - A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Great Britain (Part 1)' by Steven Falk includes a list of Empidoid species in the various proposed rarity classes. Although species accounts are given for Diptera of selected families, the empids and dolies are not included in these.

However, Steven had prepared draft accounts for these flies prior to his departure from NCC, and I have recently up-dated the original raw data sheets as far as possible, and also completely revised the species accounts.

It is anticipated that the Joint Nature Conservation Committee will be in a position to publish the results in a volume which hopefully will be available in the autumn of this year.

At the present time (July 1994), the final corrections to the typescript have almost been completed, so the work is well advanced.

In addition to being a useful work of reference, it is hoped that the Review will stimulate greater interest in the families amongst dipterists in general, and also an increase in recording and the publication of many notes!

Roy Crossley
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HERCOSTOMUS SILVESTRIS FROM SKYE

Early this year, having got down to the hard core of flies which have been lingering in a store box with queries against them, I sent them off hopefully to Roy Crossley, feeling sure that he would deal with them with no difficulty. Even he had to admit uncertainty about the *Platypalpus* which arrived headless, but most of the other dolis and empids achieved a name which I was able to add to various lists of site records.

The most interesting one which had puzzled me turned out to be the first record for Scotland of *Hercostomus silvestris*. I beat this from trees in woodland by the shore at Duisdale, Skye, NG 703 137, on 11.7.91. It was first described in Britain by Marc Pollet (Dipterists Digest, 1990, 7, 30-33) from specimens in the Natural History Museum taken at Porthcawl, 1906 and Yorkshire, 1909.

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DOLICHOPODIDAE IN WEST CORNWALL

In collaboration with the Cornish Biological Records Unit I am collecting records of dolichopodids in VC 1 (West Cornwall) to determine the status of the family in this most south-westerly part of the British Isles. VC 1 lies west of a line approximately from Wadebridge on the River Camel in the north to Truro on the River Truro in the Fal estuary to the south, and includes the Isles of Scilly.

Records of dolichopodids held by the CBRU are comparatively few and I would appreciate any unpublished records even of species that are considered common or widespread elsewhere. Unless indicated to the contrary all records received will eventually be entered in the data bank of the CBRU and also acknowledged in any publication.

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DESCRIPTION OF A *DOLICHOCEPHALA* SPECIES

Peter Chandler informs us that he has recently received 14 copies of a 1983 paper by Dr R Wagner (in German and with no English summary), in which the description of *Dolichocephala thomasi* is published. (See my note in E & D Issue 12).

Anyone who would like to have a copy is asked to write to Peter at Weston Research Laboratories, Vanwall Road, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 4UF enclosing a s.a.e.

Roy Crossley

MR E C M D'ASSIS FONSECA

Just as the name of Collin still towers over Empid workers, so does that of Fonseca over Dolichopodid enthusiasts. During the preparation of the 'References' section for the forthcoming JNCC 'Review' of rare and threatened Empidoidea there were the inevitable references to both authors. Collin's name is easy to deal with, but Fonseca is a little more tricky, and on checking other works in order to establish the correct style, I discovered that it is dealt with in a variety of ways.

After discussing the matter with Peter Dyte, I followed his advice, which was to the effect that Mr Fonseca ought to know how to refer to himself and therefore one should follow the style used by him in his own publications.

His references in his own 'Handbook' are as follows:-

Assis Fonseca, E.C.M.

I have followed this style in the 'Review' and in deference to the memory of the great man, I respectfully suggest to colleagues that we should all do the same in future.

Roy Crossley

UNSTABLE WING VENATION IN *EMPIS VERRALLI* COLLIN

Collin (1961, British Flies v. 6, *Empididae*, page 492) referred to abnormalities in the venation of the wings of this species. He described four females, three of which lacked a proper 'Empid fork to the cubital vein'. This species can be found in numbers in late May and early June on daisies (*Bellis*) growing on roadside verges crossing peat moorland in the Shetland Isles (West Mainland and Yell) and on Eday in Orkney, and the flies also feed on cuckoo flowers (*Cardamine*) growing in damp places amongst the peat. They land on your coat as you cross the wind-swept moor. Under these conditions, the flies can be picked off the flowers whilst they are feeding. Males outnumber females collected in this way (Mid Yell, 29.v.87, 15♂, 2♀; Loch of North House, West Mainland, 9.vi.93, 29♂, 14♀) and all of the males show the typical forked vein R_{4+5} of *Empis* (Collin's cubital vein). One female collected in Yell and one female from Loch of North House however had this vein simple in both wings, resembling a small species of *Rhamphomyia*. A further female from Yell had the forked vein missing from one wing but present in the other wing.

A number of empids were found to be trapped in the swirling waters of the Brae of Basta on Yell on 29.v.87, a small rocky burn descending from the peat covered hill down to the sea. Collected from the water, they proved to be 7♂ and 22♀ of this species. Three females had R_{4+5} simple in both wings and seven females either lacked a forked vein in one of the wings or had an incomplete fork, with the remnants of R_4 , in one wing. All of the males and the other 12 females showed the normal venation for *Empis*, with a forked vein in both wings.

This loss of stability in the venation appears to be sex-linked, in that both Collin and myself have found abnormalities only in the female flies. Some of these abnormal females would run down in a key to *Rhamphomyia*. Perhaps the moral is - always trust the male genitalia.

In the Northern Isles *E. verralli* is associated with damp peat moorland, which is abundant in the Shetland Isles but more restricted in its distribution in the Orkneys. Typically, in the habitat of the adults of this species, the moorland is dissected by small and rapid streams which form small pools when obstructed by rocks. Verrall first found this species on Snowdon in Wales, and Collin said that it was found commonly in all parts of Scotland and was also found by Waterston on the island of St. Kilda. Cheetham found the species not uncommon in Yorkshire. It is not clear how far this species is found further south or if it is restricted to the type of habitat found in the Northern Isles. The empid volume of Die Fliegen der Palaearktischen Region, published some 15 years after Collin's original description, does not indicate a distribution outside the British Isles and Collin does not mention any other records from Europe, although he does this for other species.

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And Finally I notice that we have got into the habit, when not abbreviating the title to 'E & D', of calling this Newsheet the 'Empid and Dolichopodid'. Surely that should be Empidid or the other should be Dolichopod Both of these sound wrong, and they play havoc with my Spellchecker. Either we DID or we DIDn't but you can't have it both ways.

(AFB)