Cranefly News

The Dipterists Forum Cranefly Recording Scheme
For Superfamily Tipuloidea & Families Ptychopteridae & Trichoceridae

Newsletter No 45 **Spring 2026**

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Phoo5. Adam Poole

Editorial

There must be many County groups who have interesting cranefly-related activities to report. If so, Cranefly News would be pleased to hear from you. Thanks to Ray Morris, a founder member and Chairman of the Leicestershire and Rutland Entomological Society, summaries of the current status of many families of Diptera in Leicestershire and Rutland (VC 55) have been produced in the past few years. These are available from:
https://www.naturespot.org/content/leicestershire-rutland-entomological-society

Five of these Occasional Papers cover the families of Craneflies:
LESOP 43 – Tipulidae
LESOP 41 – Pediciidae
LESOP 46 – Limoniidae, Chioneinae
LESOP 53 – Limoniidae, Limnophilinae & Limoniinae
The Cylindrotomidae are included in LESOP 40.

The lists are being added to all the time, thanks especially to the efforts of a very active team of moth-ers. The latest addition to the Vice-County list of *Cheilotrichia imbuta* is from Adam Poole. Adam writes as follows:

Cheilotrichia imbuta, a cranefly new to VC55 – Adam Poole

2025 has been a good year for cranefly species in my Broughton Astley Garden. I try to record most species I find in and around the garden and attracted to the moth trap light and have recorded 32 cranefly species to date. I've been fortunate enough to record a VC55 first in *Cheilotrichia imbuta.* This is a very small cranefly (wing length approx. 4mm) almost invisible to the naked eye but very striking under a hand lens or microscope due to its yellow colouration and black knees (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 *Cheilotrichia imbuta*

There is one look-alike, *Thaumastoptera calceata*, which is also small, yellow and with black 'knees'. The venation in both species needs good lighting and a dark background to observe, but *T. calceata* lacks a discal cell, and the male genitalia (Figs 2 & 3) are very different. The species is found along river margins and the males swarm in the evenings. It will be interesting to see if this species is now breeding in Leicestershire somewhere along the local brook in Broughton Astley. The species is widely distributed throughout the Midlands and the UK (NBN Atlas, accessed Dec. 2025).

Fig. 2 *C. imbuta*. Male styles. Photo Adam Poole

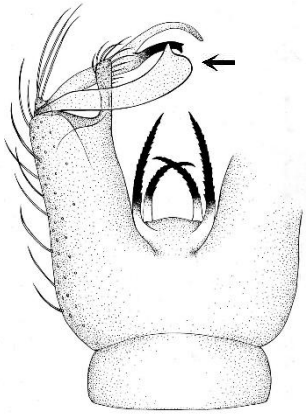

Fig. 3 *C. imbuta.* Male styles drawn by C. Nahaboo from Stubbs (2021) *British Craneflies*

Molophilus ater Meigen 1804 discovered in Norwich (continued from Cranefly News #44)

The very thorough report in Cranefly News #44 by Martin Greenland of his discovery in late April 2025 of *M. ater* on Sweet Briar Marshes (TG209097) has stimulated some comment and it is hoped that more male specimens of these flies can be caught there. Please look out for it if you are collecting at suitable Norfolk sites. It would be very reassuring to produce a good gen prep. The same habitat may be replicated in different biotopes and the habitat of *M. ater* seems a good example of this when its distribution in the UK and Europe is considered. There are a number of black or very dark *Molophilus* species. Alan Stubbs named *M. bihamatus, M. czizecki, M.niger* and *M. obscurus* as contenders but these seem to be ruled out by what we can see of the genitalia. Alan also suggests the possibility of a species new to Britain, and there are a number of other dark species found in Europe, *M. tirolensis* Hancock, being one of them. **John Kramer**

A Different kind of Cranefly trap

Like most kitchen gardeners I have to do battle with cabbage white butterflies and I use ‘cages’ made of 1 cm mesh plastic netting to try and deter them. For reasons of rotation, I moved a large cage and left the netting overnight on the lawn. In the morning about a dozen *Tipula pagana* adults had emerged and were trapped under the net. By using a smaller mesh or two or more layers of netting of any fabric it would be possible to trap smaller species. Several square meters of mesh could be folded and stored in a kit bag. The method could be used on any other fairly flat surface, such as mud, or shingle. A tent trap is a more usual, and perhaps a more reliable method. (See Rob Wolton in p.8, Bulletin 93, Spring 2022). **John Kramer**

An update on the status of the Sullington Tiger *Nephrotoma sullingtonensis* Edwards, 1938. Pete Boardman, Natural England Field Unit (NEFU) and Alice Parfitt (Buglife)

Introduction

Stubbs, 2021 notes this Critically Endangered tiger cranefly (Fig. 1) as having inhabited Sullington Warren SSSI (VC13, TQ095145) near Storrington in Sussex, and we know it was initially recorded there in 1936 (Edwards 1938a, Edwards, 1938b), then not seen again until 1983 by Michael

Edwards (with specimens checked by Alan Stubbs). Following that it was noted on the 10th May 2001 by John Paul, who was very familiar with Sullington Warren and visited it a lot, but only ever saw the fly there on that occasion (John Paul, *pers. comm.*). To the authors' knowledge it hasn't been seen there since, despite searches by the authors, and others including John Kramer and Ryan Mitchell.

A breakthrough occurred in 2023 when Graeme Lyons visited nearby Common (part of RSPB Pulborough Brooks) (TQ069170) on 28th April 2023 and surprisingly recorded multiple specimens of the fly (confirmed by photographs and keying out specimens). (Noted in Cranefly News #41). Alerted by this the second author returned to Sullington and failed to see the fly there but did see it in good numbers at nearby Hurston Warren (TQ069170) and took a male specimen which the first author passed to John Kramer, and he dissected – the results noted in Cranefly News #43). Wiggonholt and Hurston are approximately 4km and 3km to the north-west of Sullington, and it should be noted that both need permission to be accessed.

Fig 1. *N. sullingtonensis* in cop.

The Natural England Field Unit (NEFU) and authors visited all three sites in early 2024 and found the fly in numbers once more at Wiggonholt and Hurston, plus on the adjacent West Sussex Golf Club. It is estimated that on the 30th April 2024, across the three sites a rough total of 500 *sullingtonensis* were seen. A repeat visit by NEFU and authors, in late April 2025 to Wiggonholt again encountered decent numbers of the fly (approximately 100-200), whereas none were seen once more at Sullington Warren. In 2025 it is estimated that the Wiggonholt population was first seen during the first week of April and the final flies of the season were there seen by Joseph Hobden (RSPB) up until the week ending 24th May.

The second author visited Hurston Warren during 2025 on 5 occasions (4th April – 30th May) and had a maximum count of 20 individuals on 11th April and 3rd May, with none seen at all on the 30th May. Here males were noted flying amongst mature heather, presumably searching for females, and several pairs in cop were noted.

In 2024 a male and female *sullingtonensis* were collected by the author and taken live into the Natural History Museum to be part of the Darwin Tree of Life (DToL) DNA barcoding initiative, which relies on fresh material to enable to best possible DNA sequence. The barcode was supplied back to the author in late summer 2025 and is listed below.

As well as revisiting the known sites, a few other places that share similar geological conditions were visited; heathland at Sandgate Park (very close to Sullington Warren), TQ102145, Hesworth Common (TQ005192), Burton Mill Pond nature reserve (SU981176), Iping Common (SU846219), and Bognor Common sandpit (TQ007214), but all without success so far.

Discussion

There are several interesting factors in the case of the Sullington Tiger that warrant comment, and many facts that will never be known. Will we find out more details about the initial discovers of the fly - Miss H. Wright and Miss L. Frederick? Did we assume the fly had a later flight period due to when it was first found (at Sullington it was recorded on 5th June 1936, in June in 1983, and in May in 2001) - almost certainly. It is an early flying species in the south of its range (Morocco - Adghir *et al*, 2018), but was it always an early flying species here in the UK or has its phenology become much earlier due to changes in our climate over recent decades? Is the reason it has only ever had a few sightings due to searching for it too late or was it always genuinely rare?

Has the fly occurred at Wiggonholt and Hurston for decades or is it a recent colonist? Certainly, its current locations seem defined by the geological conditions at the sites. All are on the Folkestone Beds within the Greensands geological layer, these are areas made up of medium to coarse particles of sand with grain sizes of approximately 0.25 mm to 1 mm, but most likely to be 0.5 mm to

1 mm around the Storrington area. The Greensands in this area of south-east England manifests in a thin band, with a rough horseshoe shaped configuration (see Fig 2), and is up to roughly 80m thick. In practice this means that it is generally between 30m and 100m above ordnance datum– any higher in the geological profile and it is Chalk, any lower and fluvial clays dominate. Therefore, is the suitable potential habitat for this species limited to the area outlined in Fig. 2 or could it "jump further north to occur on other heathland sites / geological types on for instance Triassic sands? Has it already done so? Certainly, in France the fly is rare but scattered, and recent work has found it highly localized on sandy sites within the Fontainebleau massif as detailed by Pierre Tillier (2025). It is also known from northern Morrocco (Adghir *et al*, 2018), Spain (Carles-Tolra, *et al*, 2006), (Hancock *et al*, 2015), Portugal, and France (Quindroit, 2020, Tillier and Dehalleux, 2023) (all accessed via Oosterbroek, 2025).

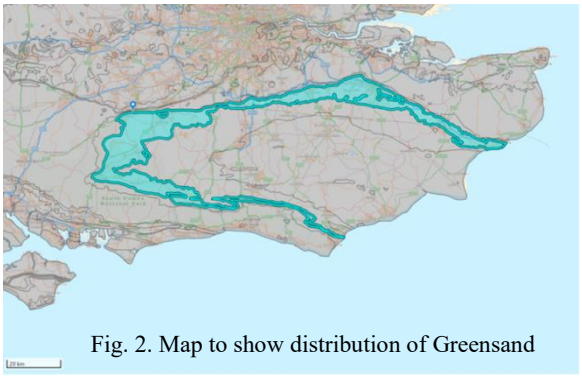

Fig. 2. Map to show distribution of Greensand

The larval stages are still unknown and even though for the NEFU survey work we had plenty of eyes watching at Wiggonholt and saw many pairs in cop in 2024 and 2025, we didn't witness any egg-laying or notice any flies hatching. Do they emerge at night? Do they fly at night? We watched hundreds fly in the bright April sunshine during the day, and saw some rest up on the top of mature *Calluna vulgaris* (common heather), plus the occasional bit of scrub, and in the lowest branches of one tree.

Clearly more work is needed to answer these questions, and to find larvae, a pupal case, and witness egg-laying behaviour. We also need to carry out more targeted searches on other Greensands sites, and probably outside of that geology too on other sandy sites. A full appreciation of the phenology would also be useful.

DNA-barcoding

The team at the Natural History Museum DNA barcoded both specimens they received and apportioned a unique code to them both.
Specimen 1 - SEQUENCE 1 - NHMUK015995498 / Specimen 2 - SEQUENCE 1 -- *Nephrotoma sullingtonensis* 99.85% match with BOLD database. [An excellent explanation of barcoding is to be found authored by Richard Lane in the DF Bulletin #100, Autumn 2025. Ed]

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Impending Change in Nomenclature?

In Cranefly News #43, Spring 2025 there was a brief mention of a paper on the taxonomy of the group of cranefly species comprising the genera *Eloeophila* and *Idioptera*. [The *Idioptera-Eloeophila* complex (Diptera: Limoniidae): a phylogenetic solution to an old taxonomic misunderstanding. Daubian Santos1, Guilherme Cunha Ribeiro. 2023. From Catalogue of Craneflies of the World. http://ccw.naturalis.nl]

A phylogenetic analysis was carried out using 72 characters to produce the groups sharing the most characters. Despite the fact that *Idioptera* species form a clade within the more numerous *Eloeophila* species the older name *Idioptera* must be used to comply with the rules of nomenclature. [This seems to be a case of the tail wagging the dog !!]. *Eloeophila* was described by Rondani in 1856, while *Idioptera* was described by Macquart in 1834. This means that species in the genus *Eloeophila* would now be named *Idioptera*. However, this needs ratification and the authors write :- 'However, it is important to note that this framework should be considered provisional and subject to further validation through additional testing.'

Pupa of *Dicranomyia* from pond-dipping. Photos by Zoe Adams

This pupa was collected by Zoe Adams while pond-dipping in the grounds of the Natural History Museum in London. It was surrounded by a gelatinous case and could have been washed from the surrounding mud into the water of the pond. Unfortunately, the specimen which emerged was a female and of course teneral so absence of leg and wing markings are not necessarily diagnostic. From the evidence available, venation and length of terminal antennal segments, this could be *D. modesta*.

Pupa of *Dicranomyia* to show the gelatinous case. No soil particles appear to be adhering

A view of the pronotal horns from above

Pupa of *Dicranomyia* to show the pair of anterior pronotal horns with an air bubble trapped between them. **John Kramer**