

BULLETIN OF THE



Dipterists FORUM

Affiliated to the British Entomological and Natural History Society

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Identification Workshop, Preston Montford, 7-9 March 1997

There are a few places left on the Fleshflies, Blowflies and Larger Dungflies course and many more for the intermediate level Hoverflies course. See the last Bulletin for more details. Anyone interested should contact Roger Morris. The cost is likely to be in the order of £60-70; please send Roger £30 deposit, payable to Preston Montford Field Centre.

Roger Morris, 3 Lindale Mount, Renthorpe, Wakefield WF2 0BH.

Summer field meeting at Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, 7 - 15 June, 1997

The majority of residential places are now booked for this summer's field trip to Abergavenny. However, if anyone would still like to join us, and stay in B&B accommodation or in the couple of remaining places at the centre, please contact me as soon as possible on 01248 853775.

Liz Howe
address at end of Bulletin

Liverpool Museum entomological meeting - Studying British hoverfly larvae, 1 March 1997

This is one of Liverpool Museum's regular entomological meetings and will be held in the Information Centre of the museum from 2 - 5 pm; the insect collection is available for consultation from 10 - 12.30 before the meeting. Graham Rotheray is the tutor. Admission is free; there is limited parking. If you are interested, please contact Stephen Judd, Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN or telephone 0151 207 0001.

Scottish Entomologists' Gathering 27-29 June, 1997

This year the Scottish Entomologists have arranged their annual weekend field meeting on the glorious Isle of Mull, 27-29 June 1997. Mull is beautiful and well known to hoverfly enthusiasts as the place where Boyd Barr carried out his work on *Microdon*. It is also the most northerly site for that enigmatic but impressive hoverfly, *Doros conopseus*. Full details of the weekend, where there is much of dipterological interest in addition to hoverflies, from Garth Foster, SAC Environmental Sciences Dept., Auchincruive, Ayr KA6 5HW, Email G.Foster@au.sac.ac.uk

BENHS field meetings

The year's field meetings programme is enclosed with this Bulletin.

Field Studies Council fly course, Flatford Mill, 6 - 8 June 1997

David Henshaw is the tutor for "Insect safari: a weekend on flies", a Field Studies Council course at Flatford Mill, 6 - 8 June 1997. If you wish to book, contact the Flatford Mill Field Centre on 01206 298283 for more details.

AGM and Dipterists Day, 1 November 1997

Our usual meeting room at the Natural History Museum has been provisionally booked for 1 November. There is still uncertainty about where the Dinner will be held, owing to the museum's latest building plans which involve the Conversazione Room. The date does not coincide with the BENHS Annual Exhibition which will be held on 25 October.

Fourth International Congress of Dipterology, Oxford, 1998

See the announcement and registration form at the end of this Bulletin.

FORUM NEWS

Dipterists Forum Annual General Meeting, Saturday 1 November 1996 at the Natural History Museum, London

1. Secretary's report:

It is pleasing to report that the Dipterists Forum has had a successful first year. Membership has been at a healthy level and our financial position is strong. We have consolidated the administrative arrangements in running the society and are already taking new initiatives. Since the last AGM, the Executive Committee has met twice and the full General Committee once. The main outstanding issue to be settled is the Constitution, a revised version of which awaits the attention of this AGM.

The programme of events has included a twin-theme workshop at Preston Montford in March, a week-long field meeting at Escrick (York) and an autumn meeting at Southwold (East Suffolk). In addition, BENHS workshops at Dinton Pastures have included one on blowflies and fleshflies, and another on Sciomyzidae.

Our relations with BRC, including the status of schemes, has been revived and we expect shortly to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. The list of schemes and study groups has been revised, including the addition of the Otitidae (+Platystomatidae) record card and an Anthomyiidae study group. A starter pack is in the late stage of preparation, designed to outline the activities of the Dipterists Forum and how to develop one's studies of flies.

There is now at least one volunteer to start working through journals in order to abstract data for recording schemes. We have negotiated with English Nature to use print-outs of journal titles from their Entscape bibliography which will save the effort of writing out the titles of papers.

The new Diptera Check List, compiled by Peter Chandler, is now virtually ready to go to press. The Forum is in discussion with RESL over publication in their Handbook series to see if criteria of speed of printing and low cost to our members can be met.

We have made initial arrangements for a twin-theme workshop at Preston Montford in March 1997 and have a preliminary booking for our summer field meeting at Abergavenny next June.

2. Treasurer's report:

Finances are good. There will be three issues of Dipterists Digest in this financial year; the York field meeting made a profit of £68.00, interest of £57.00 was made on deposits at the bank, and we expect to end the year £3,500 in credit. Accounts are audited by BENHS auditors.

M Smart proposed that the accounts be accepted, seconded by A. Bainbridge, accepted by the meeting.

3. Membership Secretary's report:

255 people are supporting DF and DD with 239 Forum members and 223 DD subscribers. 30 people have still to pay 1996 subscriptions. 70 people who had not renewed membership were mailed and approximately half re-subscribed. Liz Howe holds the stock of 95/6 Dipterists Digest and will supply.

4. Dipterists Digest Editor's report:

The delay in 1995 was owing to injury to the editor's leg (now recovered). One issue for 1996 is out and

the other is expected before Christmas. From now on, two issues per year are anticipated. Derek Whiteley who started the journal has indicated that he wishes to step down as production manager and it is hoped to do all the work in Edinburgh from now on. The first issue of 1997 will be in May. There have been some good long articles received, but short papers and notes are still needed.

5. Constitution:

Correspondence from Raymond Uffen and Roger Crosskey has been received. Some changes have been made in the light of these. One outstanding issue was the wording of section 2c - whether the Forum should embrace the conservation of all flies including pests. M. Smart suggested that the term Diptera be used. Peter Skidmore proposed that the Forum adopt the term Diptera instead of flies, and this proposal was carried by the meeting. The alternative proposal that the "biodiversity of flies" be used was rejected by the meeting. Other minor modifications to the constitution were made during the ensuing discussion. It was suggested that sections 2b and 2g be reworded using Diptera instead of flies. Proposed R. Uffen, seconded M. Smart, carried unanimously.

6. Election of Officers:

The following officers were elected *en bloc*:

Chairman	Roy Crossley
Secretary	Alan Stubbs
Treasurer	Jon Cole
Membership secretary	Liz Howe
Bulletin Editor	Martin Drake
Publicity officer	Patrick Roper
Unelected members:	
BENHS representative	Peter Chandler
Dipterists Digest Editor	Graham Rotheray

There is still a need for indoor and field meetings secretaries. So far, Alan Stubbs, Martin Drake, Roger Morris and Roy Crossley have organised meetings, but there is a need to find new people to organise them. One vacancy for an ordinary member of the General Committee was required, and John Dobson, JCCBI representative was proposed by Roy Crossley, and carried by the meeting.

Jan Woodward advised the meeting that she could not make weekday meetings of JCCBI as our second representative.

7. Any other business:

The General Committee is keen that members also become members of BENHS - Andy Godfrey is membership secretary for BENHS.

RSPB at Minsmere have expressed an interest in invertebrates and have given an open invitation to members to record on their reserves - details via Roy Crossley.

The 1997 field meeting was pencilled-in for early June. An organiser is needed for the autumn meeting. There are still places on the blowfly/fleshfly and intermediate hoverfly meeting at Preston Montford in March.

Membership matters

If it's February it must be time for your new subscription! You will find a membership form with this issue, please fill it in and return to me with your subscription for 1997 (cheques made payable to Dipterists Forum please). Some of you have already renewed (87 to date) but 156 remain outstanding. This year we intend to send out forms for 1998 with the second Bulletin in order to remind you even earlier. Several members have asked about Direct Debit arrangements. This would certainly make my job easier and you would not have to remember your renewal each year. Unfortunately, it is not possible for the Forum to use such a system because our bank account is too small to cover the necessary handling charge.

If your subscription is not received by the end of June 1997, you will not receive the August Bulletin. Please send a stamped addressed envelope for return of your membership card.

Liz Howe, Membership Secretary
address at end of Bulletin

Memorandum of understanding with BRC

Now that the dipterists have taken on a greater responsibility for running their own affairs, the links between the Forum and BRC need clarifying. We have therefore drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding whose purpose is to clarify our respective roles and responsibilities to each other and to members of the Forum. We are indebted to Paul Harding at BRC for drafting this document. It runs to three pages of rather dry material so is not reproduced in full here. Anyone wanting a copy should contact Alan Stubbs.

It defines the roles of the Forum and BRC, and our working relationships in the areas of:

- the status of recording schemes and study groups,
- maintenance of mailing lists,
- production and mailing of the Bulletin, newsletters and Dipterists Digest,
- record cards,
- identification of priorities for publications that involve BRC, e.g. atlases,
- data inputting and management,
- publication of atlases,
- liaison between the two organisations.

Dipterists Digest

Papers and notes are coming in at a healthy rate with thanks to all authors and contributors. The second issue of volume 3 is now full and should be published in a couple of months followed closely in May/June by the first issue of volume 4 which is also just about full. Potential authors please note, we are still accepting papers for volume 4 issue 2 due to be published in November 1997. Various changes to the production and marketing side are underway and I hope to have finalised details in time for the next Bulletin.

Graham E Rotheray
address at end of Bulletin

BENHS link

Last year BENHS sold 187 copies of *British Hoverflies* and 412 copies of the Supplement. This is an encouragingly steady flow of revenue to BENHS and an expression of the continuing strong interest in

hoverflies. See last Bulletin, p 16, for where to buy it.

The BENHS Council recently decided that the Dipterists Forum's representative on the Council needs to be a member of BENHS and be voted a full member of Council, not merely co-opted. Martin Drake has been the co-opted representative and becomes a full council member in February. As council members serve for a maximum two years, notice is given that someone else in the Forum will be needed in two years time to take on this role.

The Constitution

The Constitution was finally agreed at Dipterists Day on 2 November 1996. A copy is enclosed with this Bulletin. Discard the previous drafts.

Secretary's Post Bag

This new slot seems a good means of reporting miscellaneous snippets of news or ideas that come to the Secretary's attention.

Mike Bloxham feels more could be done to encourage exhibits at the AGM (last November, the clash with the BENHS exhibition meant that some boxes of flies were at the latter event instead). Firstly he suggests that members be invited to display boxes of flies for which they seek names. Clearly a 1mm black fly is not an ideal but there are plenty of species big enough to display. We already run a rather ad hoc identification service, and sometimes some remarkable specimens are within the room, but no one need feel bashful about inviting help in the fashion Mike proposes. Secondly, he feels some invited exhibits on given themes, such as a complete set of *Phaonia* (Muscidae), with notes, would be helpful. So, both beginners and specialists have about 9 months to think ahead, and we shall be happy to have volunteer 'invited' exhibits before arm twisting becomes necessary.

Adrian Pont reports that he is working on-and-off on new keys to the British Muscidae, with the aim of completing a new Handbook. Meanwhile, note that the existing Handbook has been reprinted which will bridge the gap.

Patrick Roper has reported on the effects of recent drought summers in East Sussex. Most of the woodland streams that were permanent now run for only a few weeks in winter and nearly all the aquatic fauna has gone.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

Suffolk, 16-20 October 1996

The meeting was held at Southwold, based at a sea-front guest house. Ten dipterists attended. We visited a wide range of sites and obtained about 45 craneflies and nearly 100 fungus gnats. RSPB Minsmere was very welcoming and proved to be one of our most productive sites. Quantities of craneflies collected during the season were identified in addition to those caught during the meeting. The very dry summer had, as expected, limited the abundance of flies but we certainly had a very enjoyable time (Fig.1).

Alan Stubbs

The honeypot challenge

It is well known that dumb animals can be trained to do simple tricks by offering them a small reward,

but would the same approach work with people as intelligent and sophisticated as dipterists? The experience of the July 1996 Escrick meeting would suggest the answer is an emphatic yes! For many years now I have been attending the main summer field meeting and offering to identify any sawflies collected by other entomologists as they pursued their particular interests. Some do take the trouble to look out for sawflies but the number and range of species is generally small. In order to spice things up at the Escrick meeting, I announced that a prize, in the form of a pound of honey, would be awarded to the person bringing in over the week the best selection of sawflies. Points ranging from 1 to 5 were to be awarded per species, according to my perception of its rarity, so collectors could be rewarded for quality as well as quantity.

Although the prize was modest, it had the desired effect with most people proffering at least one sawfly. Some participants became quite competitive, with tension steadily rising during the week until the final reckoning was made. The winner, due to sheer dedication and probably visiting more sites than anyone else, was Alan Stubbs. Mid to late July is quite late in the season for many sawflies and so the number of species recorded at these meetings is usually 40-70. 1996 was particularly cold in May and this may have helped to extend the sawfly season. This factor and, as Roy Crossley never fails to tell you, the superb quality of Yorkshire sites enabled me to identify 95 species during the 14-20th July. Thirty-two of these would not have been recorded without the help of all those extra pairs of eyes and hands. Among the more interesting species recorded were *Xiphodria camelus* and *Trichiosoma vitellinae* (Skipwith Common, the latter collected by Ivan Perry), *Cephalcia lariciphila* (col. Ken Merrifield at Scugale Beck, near Heathwaite), *Selandria sixii* (col. Mike and Liz Howe at Wheldrake Ings), *Dolerus triplicatus* (Strenshall Common), *Rhadinoceraea micans* larvae on *Iris pseudacorus* (Queen Margaret School, Escrick), *Tenthredo mandibularis* (Scarwell Wood, Forge Valley), and *Tenthredo vespa* (Mike and Liz Howe, Ray Uffen and Rita Merrifield at Raincliffe Wood; Mike and Liz Howe at Hayburn Wyke and Haugh & Sundale Slacks; Chris Spilling at Haughrigg, Haugh Wood).

Whether a similar inducement will produce results at Abergavenny remains to be seen. Prize inflation might set in with Alan Stubbs offering a bottle of whisky for crane flies or perhaps Peter Chandler might like to pledge a car for the greatest number of fungus gnats new to Britain!

Andrew Halstead

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES

Several new groups have emerged recently while others are slowly sinking out of sight. New or recently appearing study groups cover Anthomyiidae and Picture-winged Flies. Some minor nematoceran families have been shunted out of the crane fly scheme, and dixids are, for the moment, in the doldrums.

Anthomyiidae study group

As announced in the last Bulletin, this group is now fully fledged. Mike Ackland's third newsletter accompanies this Bulletin.

Cranefly Recording Scheme

A new Test Key to Limnophilinae (ex Hexatomini) accompanies the Bulletin. This is an important group of short-palped crane flies at seepages, wet marsh and fen, carr and water margins (most larvae are aquatic or semi-aquatic). Two terrestrial species are widespread in woodland, breeding in rotting wood.

Geoff Hancock has identified *Ormosia fascipennis* new to Britain among samples taken by David Horsfield quite high on the Cairngorms. He will be formally publishing the details shortly. A male *Tasiocera* taken by Ivan Perry at Asnberry Pastures (on the York field meeting) proves to be something

odd; the aedeagus seems similar to *T. collini* (known in the world from only a very few specimens in England and Ireland) but the styles are very different, most closely resembling *T. halesus* (known from only a few specimens in Switzerland).

The North Midlands Crane-fly Recording Group has made a good start (see last Bulletin). Millers Dale was chosen as a focused study site, with good results, and recording from wider within the Peak District yielded a number of species new to the area. Record cards assembled by the national recording scheme have been transferred to the group for incorporation into the Recorder database at Sheffield Museum.

The scheme is officially dropping Anisopodidae and Mycetobiidae which look nothing like crane-flies. The scheme will be restricted to Tipulidae sl, Trichoceridae and Ptychopteridae which all look like crane-flies (though now placed in very different parts of higher classification). Hence one can rapidly key out a crane-fly with the minimum of fuss. Geoff Hancock has a strong interest in Anisopodidae and Mycetobiidae so will act as national specialist (*Mycetobia*, with three British species, is now his priority for recording). Records placed on crane-fly cards will still be accepted within a national database.

BENHS publications committee have expressed interest in publishing a book on crane-flies after the Larger Brachycera one is out of the way.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

A newsletter appears with this Bulletin.

Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme

Newsletter No. 15 appears with this mailing. The highlight of 1996 was the recognition of three new species to our asilid fauna. The purported *Machimus arthriticus* caught by both Alan Stubbs and Steve Falk in the Breck (*L. Brachycera Newsletter* No. 14) may be a new species although the latest specimens may just indicate that *arthriticus* is more variable than current keys suggest. In *L. Brachycera Newsletter* No. 13 we reported a "*Machimus*" taken by Mike Edwards in Devon; this is *Neomochtherus pallipes*. Roger Hawkins found *Leptarthrus vitripennis* on the North Downs, in very similar habitat to *L. brevirostris*, so please check your specimens to see if the hind metatarsus is orange (*vitripennis*) or black (*brevirostris*).

The book is progressing but it may not now be in print until autumn '97 or early '98. BENHS have confirmed their willingness to publish.

Martin Drake

Picture-winged Flies Recording Scheme

No sooner had I produced a definitive list of scheme and study groups than a new one appeared. Dave Clements, already organiser of the conopid scheme, has taken on this group of flies covering the families Pallopteridae, Ulidiidae and Platystomatidae. If you're wondering where otiids are, read David's first newsletter circulated with this Bulletin.

Tephritidae Recording Scheme

Lawrence Clemons has produced his provisional atlas which is being posted with this Bulletin. We should congratulate him on this effort. Lawrence hopes that this atlas will stimulate the flow of more data from notebooks and databases so that a fuller BRC atlas can be produced in the not-too-distant future.

OTHER NEWS

Malloch Society

The saproxylic project that has occupied so much of our time in the past four years is just about completed and in 1997 we will concentrate on publishing the results. Nonetheless, over the winter we have added another species new to science (a fungus gnat - thanks to Peter Chandler) and two more species new to Britain! We are studying the puparial stages of groups like lonchaeids and clusiids and have found excellent species-level characters (identifying puparia is helpful because empty puparia are frequent in dead wood). We are in discussion with SNH and WWF about progressing the work which might include a saproxylic leaflet, a workshop on saproxylic insects and/or support for more fieldwork.

Our AGM and Dinner was held in November at Perth as usual. We were delighted to have the Chairman of the Dipterists Forum and his wife to the meeting. There was an interesting afternoon of talks and discussion about various matters dipterological followed by the dinner at which Geoff Hancock was presented with the DOTY Award (Dipterist of the Year).

The Malloch Society Research Reports are soon to be made more widely available. The likely cost is in the region of £3 - 5 each. If anyone would like one or more of the following, please would they register an interest with me:

- 1 *Insects from Shingle Banks and Riverside Habitats in Strathspey* by Graham Rotheray & David Robertson.
- 2 *The Entomological Value of Aspen in the Scottish Highlands* (revised and updated edition) by Iain MacGowan.
- 3 *The status and ecology of montane Brachycera and Cyclorrhapha (Diptera) in Scotland* by David Horsfield and Iain MacGowan.
- 4 *John Russel Malloch (1875-1963), his early life and contribution to entomology in Scotland* by Geoff Hancock.
- 5 *The biology and conservation of saproxylic Diptera in Scotland* by Graham Rotheray

Graham E Rotheray
address at end of Bulletin

Biodiversity Action Plan : selection of middle list species

Firm news is still awaited from DoE about the means of getting the Short List species projects underway. The agencies have a lead role for some species, in particular over the relationship between their funding and that to be sought through sponsorship. It rather looks as though the coming season could be lost unless something happens soon since it will take a while to designate champions (now called "lead partners"), confirm that funds can be raised, and appoint someone to do the detailed work. The flies concerned are *Asilus crabroniformis*, *Callicera spinolae* and *Chrysotoxum octomaculatum*.

Meanwhile, the Middle List (the next tranche - to use DoE speak), has been substantially revised. These are the species for which Action Plans will be written over the next two financial years, leading to work on these species starting in 1999/2000 if all goes well.

The reselection process has been undertaken by BURD, co-ordinated by JNCC at Peterborough. BURD is a joint agency/Biodiversity Challenge partnership that looks set to become central to future species criteria and strategy. For the Middle List revision there were two entomologists, one from CCW as lead agency for invertebrates UK (normally Adrian Fowles or Mike Howe) and one from Biodiversity Challenge (myself). Between meetings I have been liaising closely with the English Nature entomologists, in the case of flies with Martin Drake.

As usual, these things are quiescent, then suddenly happen in an urgent rush. There are plenty of choices that could have been made. If it is not your choice, then please be mindful that no one responded to an earlier Bulletin item inviting recommendations.

We were boxed in by criteria that DoE expect to be met. In brief these are to do with global status and rate of decline since 1970. If one took this too literally, very few invertebrates have the hard information. Hence it was successfully argued that some pragmatism was called for. Interestingly, species with 'global status uncertain' qualified for inclusion but those with 'unfavourable global status' did not! Hence the former category was rather useful. Rate of decline may be difficult to quantify since recording effort and collation pre-1970 is not comparable with recent times, and 1970 is a stupid line to draw in the middle of the immense intensification of agriculture. Thus habitat loss and other pragmatic assessments were permitted. The Large Blue butterfly became extinct because the serious action was left too late, with only one weak population that collapsed during study, so the lesson is that it is best to act on species while they still have some healthy populations left.

In all probability a sponsor will have to be found for most species. Hence the species ideally need to be interesting and, for good measure, act as a flagship for conservation issues affecting invertebrates. Bee-flies will be one of the few representatives of parasitic insects, with all the implications of higher tier ecological webs.

Now for the list, which has yet to be ratified by the Targets Group (a committee appointed by DoE with only one Biodiversity Challenge representative).

Blera fallax (hoverfly), is confined to the ancient Caledonian pine forests, but is apparently on the verge of extinction before we understand its ecology and management needs.

Doros conopseus (hoverfly) is a spectacular species whose ecology is not understood. It occurs in very low numbers and is exactly the sort of species that could be lost by default.

Eristalis cryptarum (hoverfly) was feared extinct but has been found on Dartmoor. Before we lose it again, it seems sensible to understand its needs and the actions required.

Hammerschmidtia ferruginea (hoverfly). This promotes the cause for the fauna of over-mature aspen in the Scottish Highlands and the need for action to ensure continuity of the resource (such habitat with continuity is absent England and Wales, and scarce in much of Europe).

Myolepta potens (hoverfly) has records for only the 1940s (Somerset) and is seemingly a rare species in Europe. Strictly speaking it does not qualify since it has not been seen in the UK during the last 10 years. However, the related *M. luteola* is rarely seen as an adult and yet can be found more easily as larvae in rot holes. The use of artificial rot hole containers may prove an efficient means of survey and in recovering population levels. Even if the target species is not found, there could still be considerable spin-off for other elements of the fauna of this habitat. The choice of *potens* complements that of *Callicera spinolae* in East Anglia. STOP PRESS: On 7 February, Alan Stubbs was told of a probable 1990 sighting, supported by photographs.

Bombylius discolor (bee-fly) has undergone a marked decline. In some districts it did well in 1996, for unknown reasons, but that advantage may just as quickly evaporate.

Bombylius minor (bee-fly) A heathland species that has become very localised and in very poor population levels on most sites. It ought to be possible to help this species reach a more satisfactory status.

Thyridanthrax fenestratus (bee-fly). A species of bare sandy ground on heaths with a complicated and poorly understood host relationship.

Chorismia rustica (stiletto fly, ex *Psilocephala*) represents the problems for the semi-terrestrial fauna of sandy river banks in lowland Britain. There were various potential candidates, but this is a very attractive species with silver males and silver-banded females.

Tipula serrulifera (crane-fly) This is the most enigmatic of the extant *Tipula* species. There are very few single specimen records. A species that could become extinct by default. It is a moorland and upland species.

Lipsothrix nervosa (crane-fly) is seemingly endemic in southern Britain. The idea was to take the four scarcest species as a group to be a flagship for wet rotting wood on seepages and in streams. In fact *L. nervosa* is not the rarest and the other species give a wider GB context. At the eleventh hour the choice was to drop the rarest species or list them individually (with no option for substitutes). Hence the list continues.

Lipsothrix ecuculata (crane-fly) is confined to Scottish seepages and known from very few sites, some of which are very vulnerable.

Lipsothrix errans (crane-fly) has scattered records along streams in the north and west but appears to have become much scarcer..

Lipsothrix nigristigma (crane-fly) was described as new to science from Lancashire over 60 years ago and was seemingly extinct until it was recently re-discovered in Shropshire at a few rotting logs in two streams. The species could easily be lost by default, including a break in continuity of suitable logs.

Rhabdomastix hilaris (crane-fly) has been chosen as a flagship for the fauna of sandy rivers with aquatic larvae. There are problems to be addressed on a number of its sites. This is a rare but widespread GB species.

Dorycera graminum (Otitidae) has seriously declined and may now be reduced to only one or two dry grassland sites. Whilst there are other species of the same status, this is a large species with mildly marked wings and it ought to be possible to resolve the larval ecology which as yet is unknown.

The Biodiversity Action Plan has a published Long List, which was seen as the third tranche selection about 5 years ahead. There seems general acceptance that this is a dog's breakfast. BURD is coming to the view that the best thing is to largely ignore this list but to regard all species on the proposed BURD database as eligible. This database will include all species that are of conservation concern, either because they are included in a Red Data Book or legislative lists, or because they are facing marked decline.

Alan Stubbs

Biodiversity Action Plan : habitats

It is very important not to allow a distortion of effort towards particular species. Most invertebrates will have to be catered for indirectly via habitat plans.

JNCC has recently consulted Biodiversity Challenge members during its revision of the published BAP Broad Habitats Classification. This lists the major types of habitat, e.g. rivers and streams, and, from these Broad Habitats, a subset of Key Habitats, e.g. chalk rivers, were selected for action. Only the agreed habitats will have Action Plans which will include habitat restoration. Hence we want to be sure to have got the crucial invertebrate habitats into the priorities for action.

I have pointed out that the published version of the Native Pine Woodlands Action Plan makes no reference to the importance of veteran trees, one of the very features for which this habitat is of international importance because of its associated invertebrate fauna. Not an impressive start for the first tranche - it is possible to maintain pine woodland in a commercial plantation!.

In brief, the following Key Habitats need recognition in far more Broad Habitats.

- Bare ground and vegetation-deficient habitat, including pioneer communities and river shingle.
- Veteran trees / saproxylic faunas, including Scottish aspen and birch with continuity of habitat/faunas, and native black poplar within alluvial forest. Only parklands (important for beetles) and pasture woodland are recognised so far, as one Habitat.
- Springs, runnels and seepages. At present, petrifying springs are recognised but not the wider ecological range in open and wooded habitats.
- Urban/post-industrial ground. Although listed as a broad habitat, no key habitat (and hence action plan) is proposed. Currently there is no provision for maintaining that element of UK biodiversity which is essentially urban. There is huge potential for habitat creation on suitable sites.

An additional Broad Habitat that should be included is Habitat Mosaic. Many invertebrates require edges or multiple habitats.

There is a priority need for an overall classification of the aquatic and terrestrial river and stream faunas as a basis for a conservation strategy.

Alan Stubbs

The Millennium bid for the National Biodiversity Network

In autumn 1996 a consortium (including the wildlife trusts, NERC and the Natural History Museum) placed a bid in the final round for Millennium lottery funding. The concept was to get Local Record Centres properly resourced, together with better resourcing of BRC and national recording schemes. This is all consistent with the needs of the Biodiversity Action Plan. The bid also included resources for the NHM to develop and maintain check lists of the British fauna and flora and to develop a public gallery on biodiversity. NERC, in addition to the BRC component, looked for funding for a more comprehensive inventory of the biodiversity of three locations.

The stop press news is that the bid failed (as indeed did the earlier Butterfly Conservation bid for its Millennium atlas, revamped within the latest bid). Possibly the bid had become too complex and large (at c.£35 million, half of which would come from the lottery). However, the impression will be that science is not publicly popular enough and that the committees on the lottery have poor comprehension beyond the arts and social issues.

Clearly the bid should have been written in poetic rhyming couplets and couched in terms that would provide drama and operatic opportunities to Gay-Lesbian single parent arthropods with delinquent larva in deprived urban areas where schools are under-performing. That would have been politically correct and win the sympathies of any lottery committee.

We now have to see what alternative plans the consortium can envisage, and also ask government how it proposes that its action plan can be resourced.

Alan Stubbs

English Names for Diptera

Alan Stubbs wrote an article in Bulletin No 40 about the use of English names for flies ("The Llanfairpwllgwyngyll syndrome"). Only Roger Key replied to Alan's article (Bulletin No 41, p15), and his comments can be summarised as English names should be applied to distinctive families and to big, pretty, conspicuous species that naturalists notice and admire. I concur with this view. Several dipterists have in private expressed their opposition to the blanket application of English names.

Dipterists are behind the times, it would seem, as arachnologists in North America have not only been promulgating vernacular names since at least 1908 but have a whole Committee on Common Names of Arachnids of the American Arachnological Society (Breene, R. G., 1996. Arachnid common names in North America. *British Arachnological Society Newsletter* No. 77). Anyone good at Scrabble should be able to turn those seven initials into yet another name. A series of guidelines has been established which Breene summarises and discusses in some detail. As a contribution to the debate, the deliberations of the august CCNAAAS are summarised here.

- 1 The first condition is that the species should inhabit the USA or Canada; we could substitute Europe.
- 2 Assigning a common name to an arachnid species must be justified. Qualified species should meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a The species is abundant or conspicuous.
 - b The species is frequently encountered, at least by segments of the general public, or is maintained in captivity in significant numbers.
 - c The species is economically significant, such as a pest of agricultural crops or gardens, or is a predator of arthropod pests.
 - d The species has medically significant venom, or is a predator of medically important arthropod pests.
 - e The species is threatened, endangered, or qualifies for any other sufficient reason.
- 3 Common names should consist of three or fewer words. The use of four words is acceptable with sufficient and suitable reasons.
- 4 The family, or group, and modifier words should be joined or separated according to whether or not they are systematically correct. Modifying words not associated with systematics should be joined where appropriate. Hyphens will not be used in common names unless the meaning cannot be successfully widely conveyed without them.

Guidelines 3 and 4 are dealt with in some detail in Breene's article. For those who like common names, guideline 2a allows all common species to be named, while 2e allows all rare species to be included. Only inconspicuous, uncommon and otherwise unnoteworthy species cannot be given common names using these guidelines; this must cover the bulk of the British Diptera.

Martin Drake

Internet

The Editor is happy to receive information about Internet pages of potential interest to members of Dipterists Forum.

Asilid page of Fritz Geller-Grimm (Frankfurt, Germany): <http://www.th-darmstadt.de/~fgeller> contains information on present and future publications, data base for downloading, addresses, new literature...

Hoverflies. An electronic mail bulletin board has been set up for those interested in discussing all issues connected with Syrphidae, based in Nottingham but open to other countries. majordomo@nottingham.a.c.uk contains the message *subscribe syrphidae* for you to register. You

will then be automatically added to the list and will receive details how to send messages to the list (whose address is *syrphidae@nottingham.a.c.uk*).

The Royal Entomological Society's '*Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects*'

The following is part of a text to be published soon by RES; the full more detailed version will appear in *Antenna*.

Through its recently established Standing Committee on the British Insect Fauna, the RES is seeking to reaffirm its *Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects* as a high quality series of works of real practical importance in the study of British insects. In particular, a revised funding structure has been agreed, and it is now hoped that Handbooks can be produced with a substantially lower selling price than hitherto. It is also recognised that the time manuscripts had to be 'in press' in the recent past has been a deterrent to potential authors, but the technical problems causing this are now solved so that production will be a good deal more rapid in the future. What we want now is a good supply of manuscripts so that much more of our fauna can be covered.

The area of coverage is GB, Ireland and the Isle of Man. There will be flexibility of format, designed where possible for ease of use by non-specialists. Keys must be tested by non-specialists and refereed before publication. It is essential to consult the editor before embarking on the preparation of a manuscript.

If you would be willing and able to write an RES Handbook [you do not have to be a member] on a particular group of insects in the near or middle future, please get in touch with the RES British Insect Fauna Committee through its Secretary (Dr W A Foster, Dept Zoology, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ) or the editor (W R Dolling, Brook Farmhouse, Elstronwick, Hull HU12 9BP) [in the case of Diptera you may have a preliminary discussion with Alan Stubbs if you wish]. You should briefly set down on paper the group you propose to cover, the approximate number of species, the likely time scale, and say how the illustrations will be dealt with. This will help the Committee to adopt suitable proposals formally, and the Instructions for Authors will then be sent to you.

Peter Barnard, Peter Credland, Bill Dolling, Roderick Fisher, William Foster, Michael Morris, Mark Shaw and Alan Stubbs (comprising the RES British Insect Fauna Committee).

British Simuliid Group

This group has been in existence for a long time, but I have only recently heard of it. It held its 19th Annual Meeting in September last year. Anyone interested in the group's activities should contact Jon Bass, Institute of Freshwater Ecology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Cambs PE17 2LS.

REQUESTS

The Robber flies (Asilidae) of Europe

Malcolm Smart is working on a book with the above title. The objective is to produce an English language reference containing workable keys to, and descriptions of, all species species found in Europe (including Turkey, the Canary Islands, Madeira, the Mediterranean Islands and the N. African/Eastern Mediterranean Coast) with photographs illustrating individual habitus and differences wherever possible. He would like to hear from anyone with collections of specimens from the area and who would be

willing to allow him to access or borrow them for the purpose of checking keys/descriptions and/or for photography etc.

Anyone willing to help is requested to contact him by phone at 01902 700228 or at the following address: "Southcliffe", Pattingham Road, Wolverhampton WV6 7HD.

Compilation of keys - an idea

The following project may appeal as a winter activity. Colyer & Hammond (1951, *Flies of the British Isles*) list many important papers on identification which are still relevant. The forthcoming Starter Pack will give more recent papers. However, a problem facing amateurs with limited access to good libraries is getting hold of those keys published in journals rather than in books, which tend to be more available. Even for those with all the literature to hand, numerous reprints can be cumbersome.

What is needed is a compilation of these keys, with figures and annotations to improve them or add new species, but without all the accompanying text. This could be produced and made available by the Forum. I produced such a compilation of manuscript and published keys for ephydriids and find it considerably easier to use than a file full of reprints. Alan Stubbs has long had his own compact 'cut-and-paste' file. Problems over copyright will need to be investigated as this will influence how the job is done. The simplest way is to use photocopies and the tedious method is to type them out from scratch. The preferred high-tech solution is to scan text into a computer so the output can be made neat and uniform, and figures can be included in the modern way as thumb-nail sketches.

If anyone is interested in taking this forward, I suggest they form a working group. Contact me initially so I can put people in contact with each other and update progress in the Bulletin.

Martin Drake

Subscription 'secretary' for European journals on Diptera

There are now two German journals devoted exclusively to Diptera - *Volucella* (discussed below) and *Studia Dipterologica* (advertised in Bulletin 38). As there are probably several subscribers in Britain, it would save costs by sending subscriptions as a single transaction. If anyone is prepared to act as the coordinator, please would they contact Alan Stubbs. This job concerns only collecting and forwarding money, not receiving and distributing the actual journals.

Studia Dipterologica may be ordered from Dr A. Stark, "Studia Dipterologica", Seebener Str.190, D-06114 Halle/Saale, Germany.

Collecting at Minsmere, RSPB reserve.

In the last Bulletin, I advertised Richard Wilson's request for surveyors to flock to this site. He has written repeating the request, so here it is, to be kept in mind for the forthcoming season. Perhaps Richard needs to offer free Walls icecream and chocolate for a devastatingly successful uptake from the dipterists.

LITERATURE

Blowflies by Zakaria Erzinçlioğlu, 1996, Naturalists' Handbooks No. 23, Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd, Slough.

This is the third in the series of Naturalists' Handbook devoted to flies (Hoverflies and Mosquitoes being

the other two). It gives an excellent account of the biology of the Calliphoridae, especially those associated with carrion. The accounts become luridly distasteful when blowflies in wars and in forensic applications are covered. Their value in archeological studies are also discussed. The key covers all species except the females of *Lucilia* and *Bellardia* and the six species of *Pollenia*, and this seems a pity since it is admitted that almost nothing is known about the biology of all but the common *P. rudis* (an earthworm parasite). There is a key to the larvae of carrion-feeding species. A representative species from each of the ten genera are illustrated in the colour plates, together with examples of some related families, although it has to be admitted that these flies do not lend themselves to artistic treatment. If you cannot find what you need in this book, the bibliography of just about 200 references is bound to help. The few shortcomings I noted were the omission of distribution data (despite a promise of their inclusion), no mention of the health hazards of collecting from carrion (perhaps the author knows this is slight), and the failure to mention *Dipterists Digest* as suitable journal in which to publish findings on these flies. My copy cost me £8.95.

Martin Drake

Volucella

This journal is devoted to European Syrphidae (see Bulletin 42, pp. 14-15 for subscription advice). Vol 2, pt ½ was issued in November 1996. It comprises 132 pages and is well produced. There are 13 papers, including a list of recent literature, plus reviews of some publications. Three parts are in English, the rest in German with brief English summaries. Martin Speight includes a review of the French fauna compared with that of Ireland and GB. Another paper includes the separation of *Dasysyrphus pinastri* (= *lunulatus*) from *lenensis* and *pauillus* - check British material. Two *Eumerus* new to science are described from Corsica. There are several papers on *Cheilisia* food plants and two papers on *Brachyopa scutellaris* (it seems the latter can use sap runs on the conifer *Abies alba*). Overall this is becoming a very useful publication.

Alan Stubbs

Identification of Bee-flies

British Wildlife magazine is to publish an article, accompanied by excellent colour illustrations of most species drawn by Denys Ovenden. Text and keys are by Alan Stubbs. This should be out in March in time for the appearance of *Bombylius major*. The journal has a large circulation to naturalists and those interested in conservation and habitat management. With luck we can get a wider audience interested in the needs of these flies.

Alan Stubbs

European handbook series

At least two naturalists booksellers have recently listed
There are useful books on flies in European series.

Britain is not alone in producing identification guides. Several countries produce series covering nearly all the species found in Britain and these are often useful because they provide good figures that are unavailable in equivalent British works. This is not an advertisement, but Pendleside Books (359 Wheatley Lane Road, Fence, Burnley BB12 9QA) are offering *Insecta Helvetica* (in German), Vol. 10. Tephritidae by Merz, and Vol. 11. Asilidae by Weinberg & Bachli (both c. £20), and seven dipterological titles in *Fauna entomologica scandinavica* (in English) covering Stratiomyidae (Vol. 1), Tachydrominae (Vol. 3), Agromyzidae (Vol. 5), Empididae, Hybotidae (Vol. 12), Sciomyzidae (Vol. 14), blowflies (Vol. 24) and Empididae, *Empis* s. str. (Vol. 29). No doubt these titles can be obtained from other dealers.

AND NOW.....PORTENTOUS OCCASIONS

Sitting snugly at home, you simply have no idea the careful planning that goes on behind the scenes.

For example, how did the Sciomyzid Recording Scheme organiser select a date for a workshop at Dinton Pastures? Free diary slot? Out of peak season when people are not involved on too many other things? Still a few scios to be seen on a quick foray for half an hour? Yes, all these were taken into account. But last autumn few of us realised the unique means of selecting a date.

Never in the whole history of recording schemes, yea, quite possibly British Dipterology, has a meeting been chosen because of a predicted alignment of the heavens. This is the stuff of the ancient civilisations, astronomers looking for portents of mystical forces being favourable for planning the great events in human endeavour. Even the modern oriental practitioners of the craft have not thought of arranging a sciomyzid workshop at the conjunction of Sun, Earth and Moon have they?

Thus on 12 October 1996, there was a partial eclipse of the sun at Dinton Pastures while the workshop took place, regrettably interrupting total concentration on scios, and, one would have thought, reducing light levels to make field work less than optimum and a demonstration of field work under typical conditions hardly tenable.

So, what now? Is Saturn yet on a course that will result in the production of the long awaited key to female *Tetanocera*? What are the portents for the total eclipse of the Sun in Cornwall in 1999? Ian, we now expect something pretty dramatic, something unique in Dipterology. Will it be publication of a Royal Ent. Soc. key to Sciomyzidae, celebrated by field work in the dark at Falmouth?

Alan Stubbs

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