

Diptera Recording Schemes Bulletin No. 5

This Bulletin gives some news of the Annual Meeting in London and outlines some of the events for the coming season. Please ensure that the field meetings and Annual Meeting dates are registered in your diaries.

THE ANNUAL MEETING: NOVEMBER 1977

Attendance increased again. There were 56 people in the lecture hall in the morning and a few more came just for the afternoon. The Dipterists Dinner had 50 people of whom a good fraction were not present during the day. It is estimated that the two events combined saw about 80 in the Museum.

There seem to have been plenty of favourable comments about the morning session of talks. One hesitates to summarise two hours of ideas in a few lines but a few comments seem called for. Dr G Parker presented some most interesting observations on the mating behaviour of Scathophaga and Sepsis on cow pats - it is worth watching the different strategies of mated and unmated individuals and the ways in which a copulating male fends off take over bids. Mr M Jervis showed how plotting the emergence periods of Pipunculids revealed the presence of one or more broods and revealed evidence of previously unrecognised species. It was good to hear that parasitised homopterous bugs are easily recognised, because of their inflated abdomen - and some of the easiest to find are those small black and green mottled Homoptera (Eupteryx) on nettle which often have high infestation with Chalarus. Dr A Irwin presented a photo of his bandaged thumb (see last Bulletin) and egged us along that there are plenty of observations to be made on biology plus the lure that more species should yet be added to the British list. Mr J P Dear gave such an interesting review of studies on Calliphorids that there is wide demand to see him publish an account.

It was very welcome to see quite a variety of exhibits. The afternoon session on hoverflies was a joint venture between Dr M C D Speight and A E Stubbs which despite the lack of rehearsal miraculously avoided major clashes in view point.

Matters arising:-

(a) Dipterists Handbook

It was announced that the Central Panel is preparing a Dipterist's Handbook in the Amateur Entomologists' Society series. It is hoped to publish by next September. The idea is to provide a field craft and techniques book as a companion volume to 'Colyer and Hammond'. The draft contents is too long to repeat in detail but if anyone has strong wishes for subjects to be included or interesting unpublished observations which should be taken into account, please write in. We are, incidentally, including a fairly complete summary of plant associations for phytophagous species - a field where much unpublished data must be lurking in peoples heads.

(b) National Fish Skin Week

This is designated as 16-22 July 1978, but you are reminded that samples or records of Calliphorids from bait are welcome for any time of year and from anywhere. The trial is being extended to involving local health authorities

and a wide variety of other potential sources of information. Possibly the poor weather in the week concerned in 1977 resulted in a poor response from dipterists. Lets not be out done by the LHAs and so resolve that every dipterists lawn will have a fish skin - whilst showing infinite wisdom in outwitting the local cats. Mr Dear is standing by with eager anticipation.

(c) 50 Km grid maps

The mapping unit of the European Invertebrate Survey is on a 50 Km square UTM grid (Universal Transverse Mecator, GB being one of the few countries without national maps showing this grid). Following an outline proposal from Dr Speight, the Central Panel will be trying out the idea of using the 50 Km scale for maps of common species as an initial means of gaining uniform quick coverage. An application of such maps is focussing attention on areas of apparent absence so that special effort can be made to determine presence or absence. It is perhaps on this scale that we can most realistically record absence as reasonably firm negative information, one constant criticism of current maps being that all effort is concentrated on recording presence and one does not know whether anyone has specifically looked in the blank areas or not. Existing UTM grid arrangements rely on an overlay of the 10 Km grid, so the implementation of this concept will need further thought.

In mentioning the idea at the Annual Meeting and here, it should be emphasised that 10 Km square maps remain the aim for all species. A map is no more than a cartographic summary of data and an index to a data bank. The important thing is to have accurately located data, using 6 figure grid reference or at worst 1 Km grid since it is only at a site level that one can interpret a record.

(d) Recording our Rarest Hoverflies

An idea already under consideration with BRC is that the rarest species should be given special treatment. Coincidentally this concept was put forward with good effect by Dr Speight at the Annual Meeting when he took the opportunity to introduce his habitat recording chart.

The underlying premise is that we know so little about some of our rarer species that a special effort should be made to record habitat and other aspects of the circumstances of occurrence. The discipline of a standard form (a sort of questionnaire) is perhaps the best means of prompting the most useful information being recorded. The scheme organisers can then assess any trends in records which could lend to recognition of the best means of looking for these species. Some of these species are possibly not rare, it is just that we do not know how and where to look - and once we can advise recorders it will be more likely that the true distribution of a species can be discovered. It is thought that very few people are likely to make more than one or two records a year which require a habitat form, though there is no reason why you should not use it on the not quite so rare species as well.

Dr Speight has produced a draft list of rare hoverflies which, having sorted out further views on which ones should be included, will lead to a list being circulated to hoverfly recording scheme recorders. It is proposed to give this arrangement a trial run.

ANNUAL MEETING - 23 SEPTEMBER, 1978

Yes, the date for this one year is being changed with good reason, so get out your diaries out straight away.

The preceding week the Royal Entomological Society is arranging the first European Congress of Entomology at Reading. This is likely to be an occasion when a good number of European dipterists come to Britain and no doubt others will come from North America and possibly other parts of the world.

The Annual Meeting and Dinner will therefore be arranged for the Saturday just as the Congress finishes since most of the dipterists will almost certainly welcome the chance to join our annual gathering of British dipterists in London.

You can be assured that the aim will be to maintain the same level of informality and non-technical talks. We hope everyone will recognise this as a unique gathering of people interested in diptera so please make every effort to attend and help make the venture a success.

FIELD MEETINGS 1978

South Devon, May/June 1978

A provisional booking has been made at Colehayes Park, Bovey Tracy (just to the east of Dartmoor) for Saturday 27 May to Sunday 4 June. As the most suitable accommodation for a full party, this will be the main summer meeting.

Bovey Tracy is well placed as a strategic base. Dartmoor will provide moorland, upland streams and bogs. There is a great variety of woodland in the valleys around Dartmoor and in the lowland terrain beyond; three National Nature Reserves for this habitat include Bovey Valley Woodlands and Yarner Wood on the doorstep. There are important lowland heaths in the Bovey Basin and towards the coast. A great variety of coastal habitat is within range, including dunes at Dawlish Warren, rocky shores, salt marsh and the enclosed lagoon at Slapton Ley.

South Devon has been chosen since it has been very neglected by dipterists. What old records and more recent ones that exist indicate that this is a particularly interesting area. The time of year should be ideal for the west country, especially for hoverflies and craneflies. The moorland fauna is particularly good early in the season in most parts of the county so it should be possible to sample both upland and lowland faunas during peak conditions.

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Colehayes Park is offering a bargain rate which is too good to miss. The eight nights period, Saturday evening meal to Sunday breakfast, will cost £34.25 - that is £4.28 per day full board. You may care to compare that with 7 nights for £52 with the Field Studies Council and the doubling of the Snowdonia field centre prices to £47 for 7 nights. This is as good a reason as any to do Devon this year. Accommodation is mostly in twin bedded rooms rather than dormitories.

Bookings should be via A E Stubbs (address at end of Bulletin) enclosing a £5 deposit. To be sure of a place, letters must arrive by February 28 1978 since that is when the provisional booking has to be converted into a firm one.

It is hoped that the party size will be about 20 dipterists. Since there is space for a larger party, the Aculeate Hymenoptera scheme may join us with a small group under their own leadership. Aculeates and their mimics are a common interest, so this arrangement may boost the hoverfly records as well as assisting another recording scheme in starting its own field meetings on our pattern.

This is to be a recording meeting. For those who have not attended before, the format is informal with the experienced people more than willing to assist those still finding their feet with diptera. If there should be a patch of bad weather, instruction sessions, either formal or informal, will be on offer - whilst perhaps some of the experienced people check the reputed 28,000 specimens in Torquay Museum! Though Colchayes Park calls itself a field centre, it is not equipped as such but this sort of situation is readily overcome. Everyone will need to be self equipped, with their own table lamp if possible and their own microscope if they envisage using one. As usual advance arrangements will be made to give access to a wide range of sites including the National Nature Reserves.

This time it has been possible to arrange for the Shell Grant fund to help cover petrol costs entailed in day trips from the field centre.

Breconshire: July 1978

This field meeting caters for those who cannot manage the S. Devon dates, though anyone is more than welcome to book for both. The party size will be twelve since the accommodation is limited.

A provisional booking has been made at the Brecon Beacons National Park field studies centre, assembling the afternoon of Saturday 8 July and dispersing about mid day on Saturday 15 July.

This was the venue of the October 1977 meeting. The catering and accommodation was excellent and the field centre is in the heart of good country. A considerable range of upland and lowland habitat is available, with plenty of excellent spots for diptera. As a tried and tested location, the fact that a second meeting has been arranged reflects our confidence that this will be an ideal base. The time of year is suitable for most groups of diptera, including all those covered by recording schemes.

Accommodation is in small unit rooms with bunk beds; separate wash rooms. There is a very pleasant lounge/dining room. The laboratory has spacious working surfaces, but you will probably need your own table lamps. Microscopes are not available so it is useful to bring one if you can.

The cost is £40 which, though higher than we would wish, is a reasonable charge by current prices and worth it for the location. The meeting will probably be led by Dr A Irwin, but all bookings should be directed to A E Stubbs by the end of February and enclosing a £5 deposit.

Shell grant money will be available to assist with refunding petrol costs on day trips from the centre.

Newbridge on Wye, October 1978

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 week-end if you cannot manage a longer stay. Advice on B & B accommodation can be provided on request.

Other Field Meetings

It is hoped to announce several smaller meetings in a few months time.

HOVERFLY RECORDING SCHEME

LARGER BRACHYCERA RECORDING SCHEME

The organisers for these two schemes are now anxious to start assembling data. Species list cards are enclosed as samples since these act as check lists. If you are in a position to provide data, please write and give some idea whether you have large numbers of species for a few sites or a few records for each of a large number of sites; Also whether you need material checking (take special care if your key does not include all the species in the checklist for a given genus and note that extreme caution is required with Pipizini and Cheilosia). This information will enable the scheme organiser to judge the best way to forward data or specimens.

Most dipterists are interested in both schemes. To save letters and postage you may cover both schemes when writing to either J Ismay (Hope Department, Oxford University) about hoverflies or Dr A Irwin (Castle Museum, Norwich) over Larger Brachycera.

SCIDMYZIDAE RECORDING SCHEME

A key to genera is circulated with this Bulletin to those registered with the scheme.

MICROSCOPES

A perennial problem is providing advice on microscopes and in particular how to obtain a good one at rock bottom price. Dr Irwin is currently writing to manufacturers and will be very glad to hear from anyone with experience of good or bad microscopes. Anyone interested in purchasing a microscope is invited to write to him at Castle Museum, Norwich since it may be possible to get a quote for ordering several in one go.

ADDRESS LIST SUPPLEMENT

Ely, W	The Museum, Rotherham, Yorks	T
Falk, S	20 Felbridge Avenue, Stanmore, Middx.	H
Fielding, E H	83b Hale Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire	T
Glazer, A E	2 Garden Cottages, Old Surrey Hall, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 3PR	Bull
Hanson, M	160 Princes Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 SDJ	
Janes, Dr N F	105 Montrose Avenue, Luton, Beds LU3 1HP	H
Kirby, P	75 Wilmington Avenue, Alvaston, Derby	T
Large, L H T	Tole House, Broadhill Farm, Keymer, Hassocks, Sussex	H
Rushton, S	19 Hilary Avenue, Plumstead Road, Norwich	T,H

Changes of Address

Aldridge, Dr M C	7 New Park Drive, Hemel Hempstead, Berks
Brown, A J	40 Valette Road, Moordown, Bournemouth
Price, G V	Jeager Farm, Holywell Row, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk

ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE GETTING TO SLEEP

No self respecting entomologist is going to count sheep. Why not think instead of the 12,626 specimens of hoverflies in the British Collection at the British Museum. And there are species where no material or only a few specimens are present - now those are worth dreaming about!

The seasons greetings.

Co-ordinator

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