



# BULLETIN OF THE **Dipterists** FORUM

Affiliated to the British Entomological and Natural History Society

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## DIPTERIST'S ANNUAL MEETING, SATURDAY 2 NOVEMBER 1996 THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON.

### Programme

Chairman: Dr Mike Howe

11.00	David Iliff	Hong Kong hoverflies
11.30	Alan Stubbs	Looking for flies on soft-rock cliffs
12.00	David Skingsley	Vision in flies
12.30	Graham Rotheray	The Malloch Society's saproxylic fly project.
1.00	Lunch - Bring your own or forage in local pubs and restaurants.	
2.00	Informal exhibits session.	
2.30	Annual General Meeting of the Dipterists' Forum.	
5.30	End of afternoon sessions. The museum closes at 6.00.	
6.30	Dipterist's Supper	

### Résumé

It is essential to have a talk on hoverflies, and this year we are moving abroad to hear about David Iliff's experiences with this family in Hong Kong. David edits the newsletter of the hoverfly recording scheme, so is well up in the group. Alan doesn't need any introduction; he has spent much time in recent years looking

at the fauna of coastal cliffs, and his talk will discuss some of his finds. More than once in the Bulletin, Alan has mentioned how little we know about flies' eyes. These comments have resulted in David Skingsley from Stafford University coming to tell us more about what and how flies see. Finally, Graham Rotheray is an old favourite at Dipterist's Day talks where he is normally prevailed upon to talk about hoverflies. This time, he is diverging from his usual theme (although hoverflies will get a mention!), and telling us the results of the Malloch Society's most successful project (I've heard this talk before, and it's not to be missed! ed.).

### **Procedure for the day**

The annual meeting will be held at the Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington. We are using the Palaeontology Room for the whole day because the cost of hiring any theatre in the museum is now likely to deter all but the diehard enthusiasts. The entry fee will be £3.00 which you will pay when you reach the Palaeontology Room. Please show the receptionist this Bulletin or your membership card as proof that you are attending Dipterists Day otherwise they will charge you the full entry fee to the museum.

There is an unfortunate clash of dates with the BENHS Annual Exhibition. This was discovered too late to be rectified. However, as the two meetings are being held within 10 minutes walking distance of each other, perhaps both will get higher attendance at some time in the day. The BENHS exhibition venue has a bar with lunch snacks, although the service may be slow at peak period. There is effectively a 1½ h lunch-break. See below for details of the BENHS exhibition.

Do please bring your exhibits for the afternoon of Dipterists Day (you could also display them at the BENHS exhibition in the morning, at a pinch). The afternoon is so much more enjoyable when there is a full room of exhibits. We are not looking for only rarities, or even only specimens. Photographs, news of projects and any new techniques you've discovered are all welcome. Microscopes are available so you can get someone knowledgeable to identify awkward specimens.

The museum bookshop kindly offers a 10% discount to us. Show your dipterological credentials to be eligible.

Parking is not available in the museum grounds but you can park in Imperial Institute Road (the first road north of and parallel to Cromwell Road) and in Imperial College car park (between Queen's Gate and Museum Road). It is not cheap but you won't have to keep running to a meter every two hours.

## **DIPTERISTS FORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Dipterists Forum will be held at 2.30 pm on Saturday 2 November 1996 at the Natural History Museum, London.

### **Agenda**

Secretary's report

Treasurer's report

Membership secretary's report

Dipterists Digest Editor's report

Confirmation of the Constitution

Election of officers. The following people have agreed to stand for these posts.

Chairman

Roy Crossley

Secretary

Alan Stubbs

Treasurer

Jon Cole

Membership secretary

Liz Howe

Meetings secretary (indoor)	<b>VACANT</b>
Meetings secretary (field)	<b>VACANT</b>
Bulletin Editor	Martin Drake
Publicity officer	Patrick Roper
Ordinary members	<b>VACANT</b>

**Unelected members:**

BENHS representative	Peter Chandler
Dipterists Digest Editor	Graham Rotheray

Nominations for the vacant two Meetings Secretary and the one Ordinary Member posts need to be received by the Secretary at least four weeks before the AGM and nominees must have agreed to stand before being nominated. We would be very pleased to have volunteers for the Meetings Secretary posts. Under the draft Constitution, the following Ordinary Members may stand for another two years so their posts are not up for election: Stuart Ball, Steve Falk, Roger Morris, Brian Pitkin and Chris Spilling.

**DIPTERISTS SUPPER, SATURDAY 2 NOVEMBER 1996**

The Supper is one of the Dipterist's highlights of the year. It may be possible to allow access to the Conversazione Room before 6.00 pm but this will depend on whether the Museum will allow the door to be left unlocked before the public have left.

Please use the slip at the bottom of this page for ordering your ticket.

**FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

**BENHS Annual Exhibition, 2 November 1996**

The Annual Exhibition is held in the Sherfield Room at Imperial College, London SW7 off Queen's Gate which is along the west side the Natural History Museum. Doors open at 11.00 and the event starts to wind down by 4.00 and closes at 5.00.

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The 20th Dipterists' Supper will be held in the  
Conversazione Room of the  
**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**  
on: **2nd November, 1996**  
From **6.00 for 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm**

If you wish to attend this function, please detach this part, enter your name/s below and enclose a Stamped Addressed Envelope and £13.50 PER PERSON and return to:

David Henshaw  
34, Rounton Road, Waltham Abbey, ESSEX  
EN9 3AR. U.K.

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Your ticket/s will then be posted to you as acknowledgement of monies received.

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## **Identification Workshop, Peston Montford, 7-9 March 1997**

Preston Montford has been booked for the weekend of 7 - 9 March 1997 (arriving by 6 pm Friday, finishing tea time on Sunday). We are being ambitious by booking two labs holding 20 each for parallel courses. One workshop will be on Fleshflies, Blowflies and Larger Dungflies (in essence the families Sarcophagidae, Calliphoridae, Pollenidae, Rhinophoridae and Scathophagidae - which is a big enough bite of the calyptерates). Course leaders will be Stephen Falk and Stuart Ball. The other workshop will be intermediate level Hoverflies. We ran an advanced course a few years ago but take the view that there must be many more people having a go at hoverflies who need a hand. This course will be led by Roger Morris and Alan Stubbs (you will detect a certain amount of interchange of leaders during the weekend). Noting that Forum members did not fill all the 1996 places, we are going for wider publicity, including an open invitation to the general membership of BENHS, many of whom have bought the hoverfly book published by the society, and which furthers the Affiliation concept. If the hoverfly workshop is well subscribed we may expand the numbers so we shall be looking for early bookings in order to compete with other courses for residential space at the field centre.

I will be pleased to receive early provisional bookings for either workshop - remember we had to turn away late comers for one course last time. The cost is likely to be in the order of £60-70. If you would like to attend, please contact me at 3 Lindale Mount, Renthorpe, Wakefield WF2 0BH.

Roger Morris

## **Fourth International Congress of Diptera committee meeting**

A reminder to the Committee that there will be a meeting on 2 November at 3.30 after the AGM, at the Natural History Museum.

## **FORUM NEWS**

### **BENHS link**

We are most grateful to the BENHS for passing a motion that members of Dipterists Forum can receive the discount awarded to full BENHS members on their publications on Diptera. This is a generous offer considering that Stubbs & Falk and the latest hoverfly book supplement contribute a substantial proportion of their publication sales.

Thanks also to Peter Langton for responding to the request to help Gavin Boyd, the BENHS publications officer, with distributing the hoverfly supplement. The Society has suggested that the Dipterists Forum could extend this help when the forthcoming book on larger Brachycera is published. We will advertise for help nearer the time.

### Membership matters

There are still Dipterists out there who either haven't renewed their subscriptions, or who aren't even members. Please pester your entomological friends to join up. On the subject of pestering, would those who have attended any of the Dipterists weeks please send in their lists of recorded species. These are especially required for the Preston Montford trip in 1994 and Ayr in 1995. Unless we send records to the statutory agencies and local trusts, we will not be able to get access permission for sites in the coming years. Please send records for these two trips to Mike Howe at our usual address.

The subscription for 1997 remains as previously:

membership to Dipterists Forum	£5 (UK)	£6 (overseas)
subscription to <i>Dipterists Digest</i>	£7 (UK)	£8 (overseas)

Those attending Diptersits Day in November will be asked to pay then, and the remaining members will be invoiced before Christmas. Those who do not pay will not receive the February Bulletin.

When you next fill in your annual sub form, don't forget to tick the groups you are interested in so that you are on the circulation list for specific newsletters. It is also useful to get an idea of where members' interests lie to help plan courses and information packs. See the full list of schemes and study groups later.

Liz Howe, Membership Secretary

### Dipterists Digest

Following a delay in publishing *Dipterists Digest* in 1995, due to a leg injury sustained by your Editor, the second issue completing volume 2 was published in February 1996. The next issue, volume 3 no.1, is with the printers and should have been received by the time this Bulletin is distributed.

Partly to prevent delays in the future and generally to help produce the journal, Andy Whittington has joined me as co-editor. Andy works in the Entomology Section here in the Museum, so we are in daily contact. To help speed communication, Andy has designed and produced some attractive postcards complete with the *Dipterists Digest* logo for acknowledging receipt of papers, proofs etc.

Other good news is that we have finally caught up with the back-log of papers that had accumulated over the past three years. **We are now ready for more articles and notes!** So please publish in *Dipterists Digest*. Volume 3 no. 2 is filling rapidly, but there is still a little space and we need notes and articles for volume 4. To help tempt potential authors we now provide 20 free reprints (up from 15) for articles, the journal is being printed on higher quality paper and the turn-around time from receipt of publication should drop to under 10 months. Furthermore, we hope that various abstracting services will soon cover the contents of *Dipterists Digest*. All paper and notes are refereed by members of the editorial board or others asked to help.

From the point of view of making submissions to the journal, please follow the style in the latest issue. In particular, give the FULL journal title in the reference (full titles are required until the World List of abbreviated titles is brought up to date).

Regrettably it is possible that in the difficult process of taking over the Editorship, some authors who sent in manuscripts may have been overlooked. Please get in touch if you submitted a paper prior to 1995 and

haven't had it published yet.

Graham E. Rotheray and Andy E. Whittington, Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

### **DD Stop Press!**

At least two faults have been reported with the last issue of *Dipterists Digest* - in one case a page was blank and in the other, the first and last pages were duplicated. Could anyone who has similar faults please contact Derek Whiteley who may be able to supply a replacement for you.

### **The Constitution**

Following discussions at last year's A.G.M. and later submissions, both verbal and written, the Executive Committee has now produced an amended Draft Constitution, a copy of which is enclosed, and which it is anticipated will be acceptable to the membership and will be agreed upon at the November A.G.M.

I very much hope that this year it will be possible to deal with this item without discussion, and to this end may I ask please that any member who will wish to propose any amendment or intends to raise any further points regarding the Constitution notifies me in writing at least four weeks before the meeting.

Roy Crossley, Chairman. 1 The Cloisters, Wilberfoss, York YO4 5RF.

### **FIELD MEETING REPORTS**

#### **Report from the York Field meeting - July 1996**

Our Chairman did us proud in his home county. His choice of Queen Margaret's School at Escrick as a base worked out superbly. In this private girl's school (yes, it was vacation) we had single rooms, two labs, a common room, the staff dining room with bar and super food (with seconds for those with capacity). This must have been the first field meeting where we have had table cloths and waitress service, hors d'oeuvres, cheese & biscuits and coffee with the evening meal. The staff treated us marvellously, even though they had never met dipterists en masse before. In short, we lived in a style to which we were not accustomed.

Roy Crossley, together with Roger Morris and his English Nature colleagues, had gained access permission for a seemingly huge number of sites and we found some more for ourselves. Although the list of sites visited may be incomplete, we recorded in at least 59 10 km squares extending from north Lincolnshire to the southern half of the North York Moors National Park, and from near Harrogate in the west to the North Sea coast at Ravenscar, Spurn Head and near Cleethorpes.

The weather was good throughout, and started to get over-hot only on the last day or so. The extended drought led to some normally wet areas having dried up but mercifully the late spring meant that mid July was still productive. Everyone seemed to finish up with an enormous amount of material, although hoverflies were very scarce, as in so many other parts of the country.

Provisional figures show that 135 species of fungus gnats were taken despite very low numbers of individuals. This includes two species new to Britain from just one wood near the south-west corner of the national park. There were at least 137 species of crane flies, including *Dicranomyia frontalis* (4th GB record) and *Idiocera bradleyi* (about 8th GB record). Springs and flushes in the national park yielded *Orimarga juvenilis*, *Ellipteroides alboscutellata*, *Ptychoptera longicauda* and many other goodies. Indifferent country in north Lincolnshire produced *Tipula helvola* and a hedgerow had *Tipula peliostigma* which was also found near Harrogate. Both these *Tipula* are well beyond their previously confirmed ranges.

The area is not known to be particularly rich in Larger Brachycera but we finished up with a good array of species. Most importantly we gained two new sites for *Chrysopilus erythrophthalmus* and, on the Yorkshire Wolds, found three sites for *Symphoromyia immaculata*. The wolds chalk grasslands are not a write-off since they also yielded *Leptogaster guttiventris* and *Leptarthrus brevirostris*. Sandy river banks had single sites for '*Thereva lunulata*' and '*Psilocephala rustica*'. Acrocerids turned up on several sites, especially if your name was Liz Howe. *Villa modesta* was found at Spurn Head and *Phthiria* was also reported during the meeting. A good list of aquatic strats included *Odontomyia hydroleon* (at one of its two known GB sites), and *Oxycera dives* from at least four new sites.

Among the hoverflies, the main spectacular find was within the grounds of the school. Here a *Mallota* was seen ovipositing in a rot hole in a tree. *Lejogaster splendida* was found on the Humber Estuary, *Xylota xanthocnema* in woodland, and *Platycheirus sticticus* in a Forestry Commission plantation on the North York Moors. As yet there is no species total, but overall a pretty reasonable list should be assembled.

There must be many useful records among other families of flies. By the next Bulletin it should be possible to give news of what is in the collated lists.

Alan Stubbs

### **Report on the Preston Montford Workshops, March 1996**

As advertised, in March 1996 we held two parallel workshops. The cranefly workshop, run by Alan Stubbs, was attended by 20 people, indeed there were more who would like to have come had there been space. It was essentially a beginner's course. New test keys to long-palped craneflies and wing illustrations of short-palped craneflies were handed out, as well as previously circulated keys to families, Cylindrotomidae, Pediciidae and *Molophilus* (everyone registered with the recording scheme should now have received all these keys). A fairly comprehensive reference collection was laid out on the tables and various collections of spare material made available for study. Some people had brought box-fulls of material and these were identified by the end of the session. People had come from far and wide, but some of those present have formed a North Midlands Cranefly Recording Group (see separate item).

The beginner's course on Families of Diptera had only six attending under the direction of Stuart Ball and Roger Morris. We were very surprised at such a low take-up, which cannot be entirely due to the competing lure of craneflies.

In future we shall make a service charge of a few pounds to cover costs in handling bookings and in the provision of photocopied material.

Alan Stubbs

### **NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES**

#### **Conopid Recording Scheme**

The national scheme organiser's address has changed once again. All correspondence should now be directed to: 7 Vista Rise, Radyr Cheyne, Llandaff, Cardiff, CF5 2SD. Correspondence already sent to the previous address will be redirected for the next few months.

David Clements

#### **Cranefly recording scheme**

The preparation of illustrated keys to long-palped craneflies was the main advance over the winter period. This addresses the major problem with the Royal Ent. Soc. Handbook, where *Tipula* is poorly treated although the rest of the cranefly keys are workable. A hand-out on wing venation has been circulated to

everyone registered with the scheme, as well as a set of wing illustrations, so it should be much easier to follow keys than in the past.

The only correction to the long-palped key that has been drawn to my attention is the presence of some hairs on the postnotum in *Nephrotoma scurra*. To correct for this, in the *Nephrotoma* key to males, at couplet 7A, add '+ strong black marking on pleurae' and at 7B add 'or pleurae without strong black markings on pleurae'. If there are other difficulties with the keys please let me know.

In the Norfolk Broads this year some new localities have been discovered for *Prionocera subserricornis*, all in typical shaded ditches choked with saturated black organic material. *Triogma trisulcata* would seem to be new to East Anglia, in wet cut fen close to the edge of a broad, although the very similar *Phalacrocera replicata* proved more widespread. *Limnophila pictipennis* was found at grazing levels ditches on an RSPB reserve.

In early July the Second Congress on Tipulomorpha was held in the Swiss Alps. I gave presentations which included the taxonomy of the *Dicranomyia mitis* and *Brachylimnophila nemoralis* complexes in Britain, both of which need resolving for the new British check list.

Present thoughts are to run another cranefly workshop in March 1998 by which time an intermediate level course may be in demand. See more on craneflies in the reports on Preston Montford and the North Midlands Cranefly recording Group.

Alan Stubbs

### Hoverfly Recording Scheme

322,589 records are on file at the time of writing from 2,316 10km squares (2,232 in GB, 5 in the Channel Isles and the rest in Ireland) and 56,538 records have been received since the requests were made, at Dipterists Day and in the last Hoverfly Newsletter, for any outstanding records to be submitted. Substantial progress on the Provisional Atlas has been made, although we are well behind schedule in submitting text to BRC for their editing and refereeing. This was due by the end of March, but has not yet been submitted. A draft was sent to regional co-ordinators and others and many useful comments were received for which we are most grateful. The text has been revised in the light of these comments and the introduction has been considerably expanded. A substantial number of records were questioned by regional co-ordinators and, especially, by Alan Stubbs. Any records that have been questioned, and we cannot resolve ourselves (e.g. data entry errors), will be excluded from the maps for the moment. Roger has begun to contact individual recorders to try and resolve outstanding problems.

Two species have been added to the British Isles list in recent publications (and after the publication of Alan Stubbs' Supplement to *British Hoverflies*!):

- *Helophilus affinis* was taken by Sir A.B.Duncan in August 1982 on Fair Isle. The specimen, in the collection of the Royal Scottish Museum, had been previously identified as *H. hybridus* and was recognised as *H. affinis* by a visitor from Germany (Stuke, 1996, *Dip. Digest*, 3(1), 45-46). This species is believed to be migratory in Europe and is expanding its range in our direction, so we can expect more records in future, most likely from 'migration hot-spots' like Fair Isle and North Norfolk. Martin Speight predicted its occurrence in 1988 (*Dip. Digest*, 1, 2-35) and gives a key to distinguish it from other British members of the genus.
- *Cheilosia psilopthalma* results from a recent revision of a species complex around *C. proxima*. Martin Speight (1996, *Ir. Nat. J.*, 25, 178-182) re-examined Irish specimens previously identified as *C. proxima* and found that they were all *C. psilopthalma*. GB specimens available to him were, however, true *C. proxima*. More GB material needs to be checked, but the distinction is extremely subtle! Speight's paper gives a key and Claussen & Kassebeer (1993, *Ent. Z. Franf. a. M.*, 103, 420-427) illustrate the male terminalia.

Stuart has put information about the British Hoverfly Recording Scheme on the World Wide Web. Point your web browser at "http://members.aol.com/hovrecschm/index.htm". The pages include pictures of hoverflies, sample maps and phenology histograms, information about identification, references and contact details.

In Norfolk a good population of *Anasimyia interpuncta* has been found in *Glyceria maxima* at Wheatfen NR and *Neoascia obliqua* was common at a roadside stand of butterbur at Brampton (not the Cambs one) [Alan Stubbs].

Andrew Grayson is starting a review of the hoverflies of Yorkshire (following his acclaimed review of horseflies). He now has a copy of the 25,000 records so far computerised by the Hoverfly Recording Scheme. The records from the York field meeting will also come in handy.

The second supplement to British Hoverflies is available - see Literature for details.

Stuart Ball & Roger Morris

### **Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme**

The book has now reached the stage when draft chapters are being circulated to a few people for refereeing and their comments have included valuable new information. There are still loose ends to tidy up (such as drawings for asilid genitalia and stratiomyid patterns) but the keys are nearly in their final form. Without raising hopes too high, we intend to get the draft to the printers by the New Year. Any snags with the keys need to be reported by the end of September please.

A newsletter and the latest Tabanidae key is circulated with this Bulletin.

Martin Drake & Alan Stubbs

### **Tephritidae Recording Scheme**

See the recording scheme update at the end of this Bulletin.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Malloch Society**

In December 1995 we held our annual meeting and dinner, once again in Perth. Thanks to the effective organising powers of Ken Watt, the week-end was another success. There was a crowded but enjoyable programme of talks in the afternoon and a lively, pleasant dinner to follow. The DOTY award (Dipterist of the Year) was won by a blushing David Robertson.

Highlights in 1995 were, in our montane project, David Horsfield and Andy Whittington finally tracking down the larva of *Cheilosia sahlbergi*, and, in our saproxylic project, Iain Macgowan discovering a *Systemus* (Dolichopodidae) new to science.

Both these projects continue into 1996, following up various leads. One of these is the breeding site and larva of *Blera fallax*, the last of the big three Scottish RDB1 saproxylic hoverflies that the Malloch Society has yet to study (the other two being *Callicera rufa* and *Hammerschmidia ferruginea*). In June 1996, after many efforts over the past few years, we have at last had some success: we found a *Blera* puparium! This is a big step forward which should lead us into a more detailed study.

We also have a new project funded by Scottish Natural Heritage: looking at saproxylic flies in the Clyde

Valley woodlands. In the main these are mixed woodlands in steep-sided gorges. Little work has been done on the flies. One recent record from the area was *Mallota cimbiciformis* by Boyd Barr (see *Dipterists Digest* 3 (1)), which is new to Scotland and greatly extends its northern distribution in Britain. What else is in these woodlands? Watch this space.....

Graham E. Rotheray  
Research Co-ordinator

### Dipteran research at Manchester

Some excellent projects for dipterists have already been suggested in the Bulletin. I am writing to draw attention to the dipteran research currently underway at Manchester Metropolitan University, and more importantly to the plentiful resource of MSc students in Behavioural Ecology and Conservation Biology here who are in need of projects.

The Behavioural and Environmental Biology Research Group at the MMU conducts research and teaching in conservation, ecology and behaviour at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Numerous formal research links are established in the UK and abroad. Fieldwork is currently underway in Madeira, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia as well as sites around the UK including the Outer Hebrides. All usual laboratory facilities are available as well as controlled environment rooms, glasshouses and a well equipped boat. 23 PhD students and research assistants are currently engaged in research based in the UK and abroad.

In 1986 The Behavioural and Environmental Biology Research Group began the first MSc in Behavioural Ecology in the UK, and in 1991 developed a sister MSc in Conservation Biology. Since their inception, both these courses have emphasised the application of behavioural ecology, and the contribution of behavioural ecology to conservation. These courses provide full training in theoretical, experimental and field techniques. A residential field course is included and all students undertake a substantial research project. Over 60 of these MSc projects are currently in progress, many based overseas. Full-time or part-time enrollment are available for all postgraduate work.

Dipteran research at the moment has mainly a behavioural theme. Jamie Sutherland (see Hoverfly Newsletter, February 1996) is looking at the sampling and decision-making behaviour of adult *Episyrphus balteatus*. This BBSRC-funded PhD is lab and field based, and includes a placement with our collaborator Dr Guy Poppy at IACR Rothamsted. Still on *E. balteatus*, we are looking at what components of the floral signal are important to adults when selecting flowers to feed on. By manipulating numbers of petals and anthers on oil-seed rape flowers, it seems that *E. balteatus* males at least do not pay attention to petals, but just go straight to the ones with the most anthers. (So what are petals for?). Other projects in their early stages include measuring variation in syrphid wing-beat frequency in the field; species communities and niche separation of syrphids on umbels; UV reflectance patterns of Diptera, with Dr David Skingsley, Staffordshire University (following up Alan Stubbs's suggestions); courtship and mate choice behaviour of *Bradysia* sp. (Sciaridae); and host location behaviour of a parasitoid of *Bradysia* sp.

I would like to extend the scope of these projects into the conservation side too. Our MSc students are often prepared to travel anywhere in the UK or abroad to tackle their projects. So, please everyone, feel free to send me suggestions for projects that I and our students could get involved in. Every year I have to persuade our students that they don't really want to work on rhinos or chimps, so all projects gratefully received.

Matthew Sullivan

Department of Biological Sciences, The Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester Street, M1 5GD, UK

tel 0161 247 1164 (direct line) or 1234 departmental office; fax 0161 247 6325

email M.Sullivan@mmu.ac.uk.

There should be a home page for the group by the time this goes to press; try <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/>

## Biodiversity Action Plan Update

In May HMSO published the *Government response to the UK Steering Group Report on Biodiversity*.

In essence the government has taken on board much of the Steering Group Report. One may quibble over some watering down and apparent omissions within a differently structured document, but the 59 steps make a lot of sense in their review of existing and further commitments. Fine words, although it remains unspecified to what extent government is ready to grasp the nettle and redeploy some of the vast sums of taxpayers money that goes into countryside subsidies (the Common Agricultural Policy is specifically mentioned along with some national policy areas). Overall, if this is what the government is prepared to do (and John Gummer, Minister for Environment, has been very reassuring) then it is a very useful package of commitments with many ramifications through government departments.

Whilst the report represents a major turning point in the government's vision for nature conservation, there is concern at the resource commitment to effect the measures (the plan does not need an increase in overall public expenditure providing there is a better targeted and balanced approach to countryside public expenditure). Inevitably the government has endeavoured to keep a tight check on spending implications, and has coincidentally reduced the budgets of English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage (with resultant drastic down-sizing of the Joint Committee for Nature Conservation) whilst expecting the agencies to fulfil new Biodiversity Action Plan commitments within existing budgets. Despite these mixed signals, there is enough momentum to keep the programme in sharp focus. Firstly, government has made an international commitment (Rio) that it is proud of (and bound into an EC-wide commitment) and secondly the published response document has a Command number, which makes it about as strong as one could hope for, short of new legislation.

Further, the Biodiversity Action Plan is a partnership programme that is not the national government's alone. There will be a UK Biodiversity Group, with NGO representation (Non-governmental Organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, societies etc), and Support Groups comprising National Targets Group, Information Group and a Local Issues Group. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are being devised, involving local government and local NGOs. There is the watchful Biodiversity Challenge Group (of NGOs) that was the first to publish a plan with targets, the groundwork being the basis of major areas of the Steering Group Report. It will be very difficult for government to now quietly back-slide on its commitments, but it is up to all concerned to make sure politicians are kept in tight focus at both national and local level.

One of the most heartening things is that the Biodiversity Action Plan, which is a ten year strategy, has the support of both the Labour shadow government and also Liberal Party spokesmen. On 4 June, the Biodiversity Challenge Group gave a presentation to the All Party Conservation Group at Parliament. The basic issues, including the need to redirect agricultural subsidies, seem well understood.

As dipterists, we may note that the Species Action Plans include Diptera (see last Bulletin) and we should all be alert to chances to gain more information on the listed species (it is accepted that the Long List may need revising and additions made to the Middle List). The Habitat Plans (more to be written), including opportunities for habitat creation, could make a major difference to the countryside and there should be opportunities to influence what happens on the ground. The Agenda 21 Committees (the local Biodiversity Action Plans) are a useful locus for influence; there is specific encouragement to Local Authorities to provide more Local Nature Reserves and natural green space, for instance. The importance of biological data is recognised (there are related initiatives to address some of the outstanding issues that need resolution).

Thus we have a major break-through in national policies, with an acceptance that all wildlife is important, including the maintenance of biodiversity of flies. How, in practice, one particularly maintains biodiversity of Diptera will depend on those who know something about flies.

Alan Stubbs

## Somerset Hoverflies

We have been collating records for an atlas of Somerset hoverflies, as announced in the March 1995 Bulletin. We hope to be ready for publication next autumn and now have records from over 500 locations. We have extended the area of our maps to include parts of Avon that come within the boundaries of the "new" Somerset (just south of Bristol and Bath), and these are the main targets for this season. We have done historic searches at the Hope and Natural History Museum, London, and, as far as we know, there remains only the H. Audcent collection in Bristol Museum to check. The format will follow that in *Dorset Hoverflies* with a few improvements. We are delighted to have sold about half of the 500 print run for that book. We would be pleased to receive any records from Somerset not already sent to the national scheme or other local record centres that we are likely to have tapped.

Ted and Dave Levy

### I would come on field meetings and workshops if .....

It is a curious fact that in years 2 and 3 of running field meetings, when about 80 people were on the circulation list, the attendance was 20. Now that we have around 200 members, the attendance is still about 20 (although we have occasionally had over 30). The weekend workshops, which are a fairly new venture, are attracting anything between 25 and 40, depending on the themes, including a fair number of people who do not come to field meetings.

There may be many personal and domestic reasons why you do not come on field meetings. Perhaps you have been on one but are not enthused to come again. If you are potentially interested, but are holding back, then we shall be happy to hear so that we can try to cater for your needs.

#### *Residential Field Meetings.*

The primary purpose is recording so we keep moving venue to new under-recorded districts. However, the meetings are also good social events and valuable occasions to learn field craft and get help with identifications. We welcome both novices and experienced recorders, taking the view that everyone has to start somewhere; today's novice becomes tomorrow's recorder. We have a good track record of blending everyone in, regardless of their experience.

The most usual format is a week-long event some time between late May and mid July. If possible, we obtain single room accommodation, but sometimes rooms sleep 2 to 4. The price tends to run at £25-30/day which seems to be the bottom price for what we get (B&B plus evening meal in farms and private houses is about the same but we have to find group accommodation with lab space). It is very difficult to find suitable accommodation at a low price.

In mid October we have a long weekend, based either at a field centre, guest house or farm. Over the years, only six to ten people have attended.

#### *Workshops*

We have now held a succession of residential weekend workshops, so far all based at Preston Montford, Shropshire. These have been held in March, timed to give stimulus to the coming field season.

There is also a series of Saturday workshops at Dinton Pastures, Reading, run under the BENHS programme.

#### *Response needed*

By now you will have seen events advertised and reported on in the Bulletin. If you are potentially interested, or have hesitated to book, or its does not sound exactly what you are looking for, we shall be pleased to hear from you. Is it, for instance, cost, location, limitations of the experience offered, or feeling that you might not fit in that is putting you off? If you cannot afford the time or cost of a week-long field meeting, what

shorter length would you prefer (bearing in mind that travel to a location is less efficient if for a short period).

The Dipterists Forum is trying to cater for its members' needs. The ball is in your court.

Alan Stubbs

### **North Midlands Cranefly Recording Group**

The formation of this group is especially significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is the first local recording scheme group for Diptera to arise other than from the hoverfly scheme. Secondly, it is possibly the first recording scheme group of any sort to define its boundary by Natural Areas.

At the cranefly workshop at Preston Montford it became clear that there were some enthusiastic people from the north Midlands. It was an ideal opportunity to float the concept of a mutual support group that would provide encouragement to record in this area. It does not matter that no one yet has specialist knowledge, all the more important that the group should share their knowledge and help each other.

The initial core of dipterists live in or close to the Peak District National Park so the group have selected this as their initial focus of recording. They have decided to take 3 Natural Areas as their boundary:- the White Peak (limestone) and Dark Peak (gritstone and peat moorland) and SW Peak. English Nature has been promoting the Natural Area concept since natural ecological/landscape areas are more logical conservation evaluation boundaries than the county system; there are equivalent developments in Wales and Scotland. By concentrating on these Natural Areas, which include altitude variables, some worthwhile ecological patterns in cranefly distribution should emerge quite quickly.

The group will be pleased to hear from anyone who wishes to join. They are promoting participation from people who have no previous experience with craneflies, for instance involving entomologists in the Sorby Recording Area, and seek samples from those running moth traps. Derek Whiteley at Sheffield City Museum is building up a reference collection for the group (anyone with spare named material to note) and he will act as record co-ordinator using the Recorder database (records welcome).

In due course the geographical scope of the group may expand, particularly if clusters of dipterists living outside the Peak wish to focus on further Natural Areas in the north Midlands.

The main hope, however, is that this initiative will encourage dipterists in other parts of Britain, including those whose interests are in other sorts of flies. We seem to have been at something of a plateau as regards extending county/area hoverfly recording groups, for instance. By a small group of dipterists getting together for a local objective, the catalytic effect can lead to more satisfying recording than simply chipping away at the task in isolation. As the Peak example illustrates, enthusiasm can overcome all hurdles.

The joint Organisers for the group are Ashley Leftwich (The Nook, Main Street, Taddington, Derbyshire SK17 9TU) and Rhodri Thomas (c/o Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbys, DE45 1AE).

Alan Stubbs

### **World Wide Web**

Details of Dipterists Forum membership and purpose can be found on the web at "<http://www.ex.ac.uk/~gilramel/dipfor.html>". Equivalent details of the BENHS can be found at "<http://www-dept.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/A.Young/benhs>". See the News from the schemes - hoverflies - for yet another web page.

## Vice-county maps

It has been brought to my attention that the information given in the last newsletter about obtaining VC maps from the Linnean Society was way out of date. BRC have the sole stock.

## Anthomyiid study group

Mike Ackland started this study group last year by contacting half a dozen that he knew to be interested in the family. However, others have heard about it so it seems a good idea to widen the membership. So far, one newsletter has been produced and a large (very large) pack containing a check list, genitalia figures and an amalgam of existing keys and new ones was circulated via a chain. Each person paid for the postage and undertook the photocopying themselves (so access to a copier was essential for this to work). As relatively few people will want the pack, it is proposed to repeat this method of circulation. The postage will be about £4 parcel post. Another newsletter will be circulated to those already on Mike's list and a third may be circulated with the next Bulletin.

Anyone interested should contact Mike Ackland at 24 The Moors, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2AJ.

## REQUESTS

### Recording on RSPB reserves

Richard Wilson wrote recently to say that he has started a contract with RSPB to study the invertebrates on the RSPB reserve at Minsmere, Suffolk. He suggested that dipterists may like to undertake recording here, and is very willing to arrange access to parts not normally open to the public, either for single recorders or groups. If field work does not appeal, he has material collected from traps and is in need of identifying. Can anyone who is interested please contact Richard at Minsmere RSPB Reserve, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2BY, tel. 01728 648701.

I was sent an excellent newsletter on invertebrate recording at RSPB reserves in their East Anglia region. This certainly shows that they not only have some fine invertebrate sites but that they take invertebrates seriously in their management. I'm sure that Richard's suggestion would be echoed by other RSPB reserve managers eager to improve their reserves for insects.

### DNA of Diptera

In the last Empid & Dolichopodid news sheet, Peter Chandler forwarded a request from Brian Wiegmann for specimens of *Atelestus* for his research into the molecular phylogenetics of Diptera. Brian wrote again to Peter with a request for specimens from a wider range of families. His main requirement is for more *Atelestus* but he can also use most Brachycera, with an emphasis on the Empidoidea and Platyppezidae. Other families he specifically mentions are Therevidae, Bombyliidae, Scenopinidae, Rhagionidae, Stratiomyidae and Coenomyia (but if you get one of the last in Britain, you'd do best to keep it!).

DNA is difficult or impossible to extract from dry specimens so they need to be preserved in ethanol. Methylated spirits is no use because the traces of methanol denature the DNA.

Please send your specimens to Dr Brian Wiegmann, North Carolina State University, Department of Entomology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Box 7630, Raleigh, NC 27695-7630, USA.

### *Volucella* - a new hoverfly newsletter

I (Martin Drake) received the following letter from Ulrich Schmid. I have a subscription form if anyone is

interested in subscribing; alternatively, write direct to Herr Schmid.

We (Dieter Doczkal and I) are editing the hoverfly-journal "*Volucella*". *Volucella* publishes original papers, review articles and short notes on taxonomy, determination, ecology and distribution of Palaearctic Syrphidae. Contributions may be in German (with an English summary) or English.

The first issue (68 pp.), containing articles about identification of females of *Sphegina*, information on Bavarian hoverflies, a list of new species and synonyms described since the publication of the *Catalogue of the Palaearctic Diptera* (Peck, 1988), and a survey of recent literature, is out of print unfortunately.

The next issue containing articles about *Eumerus* (including description of new species), distribution of Syrphidae in France and Germany (with tips for determination of difficult species), some papers about ecological observations concerning species of *Cheirosia* and *Brachyopa*, and a survey of recent literature, is in press.

The cost is DM 25 per year + postage. [about £10.75 at June exchange rates]

Ulrich Schmid, Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Rosenstein 1, D-70191 Stuttgart, Germany.

### Data inputters wanted

Several recording schemes are getting close to producing maps, either for a provisional atlas or for a book (hoverflies, larger Brachycera, sciomyzids, tephritids, tipulids). One problem is capturing the data we know that exists in recorders' note books yet is too daunting a task for the recorders themselves to transcribe to cards. One solution is for copies of the raw data to be sent to an army of data-inputters and then have the computerized records transferred to the scheme organisers' databases. This would ease the burden on the scheme organisers. The five schemes listed above use Recorder and it makes transfer of data far more simple if this database is used for inputting. However, this is not essential. Anyone prepared to undertake this task should contact Stuart Ball or Martin Drake.

### Gall-Midge Study Group

The gall-midges (Cecidomyiidae) are arguably the largest family of flies in Britain. They are certainly among the most neglected despite their ecological interest and occasional economic importance. Gall-midges not only provide the largest group of gall-inducers - at least a quarter of those known in Britain - but also much the largest number of unsolved problems. One of the difficulties that cecidologists have to contend with is that whereas we find galls, it is their inducing organisms that are officially recorded, and the latter is only possible when the biology of the species is adequately known. With most taxa this does not present much difficulty, but with the gall-midges, not only are there at least 100 species (not all gall-inducing) that have been recorded in Britain as either galls or larvae (or both) but have not yet been named, but, even with some named species, there are inconsistencies and perhaps synonymies in the literature.

On behalf of the British Plant Gall Society, I have taken responsibility for looking into the problems of recording galls and their inducers. As cecidomyiids form a large and challenging part of the problem, it seems appropriate to form a study group. Within the B.P.G.S., we are naturally chiefly interested in the gall-inducing species, together with inquiline and some predatory midges (c. 75% of the British fauna), and to solve the many problems relating to these will require rearing midges from the larval stage. The more robust species (chiefly Lestremiinae), whose larvae are non-galling and live on fungi, are captured by netting. Within the B.P.G.S. we can provide the cecidological knowledge, but for a study group to be viable, there must also be persons willing to deal with adult flies. Someone who can get hold of obscure and far-from-recent papers in the continental literature would also be very useful.

If anyone is interested, please could they contact me at 123b Parkgate Road, Coventry, CV6 4GF.

As an example of what can be achieved, may I draw your attention to two reports I wrote for the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre entitled *General introduction to Warwickshire gall-inducers* (90p + 40p post & packing) and *Gall-midges* (same price). Alternatively, a pack of eight reports covering all groups of gall-inducers can be had for £7 + £2 p&p. They can be obtained from Mrs Pam Copson, Warwickshire museum, Market Place, Warwick CV34 4SA. Cheques payable to Warwickshire County Council.

John Robbins.

## LITERATURE

*British Hoverflies: Second Supplement* was published in May, with 150 copies going straight out to those who had made advance orders. It costs £4.00 to members of Dipterists Forum or BENHS, and £6.00 to non-members (postage & packing £0.50, £1.00 overseas). See the last Bulletin for the price of the parent book (if you buy both together, the postage is £3.00 - £3.80 overseas - a massive saving of 30p on p&p over buying them separately!). Make cheques or postal orders out to "British Entomological and Natural History Society" and order from The BENHS Sales Secretary, G. Boyd, 17 Gainsborough Close, Cambridge CB4 1SY, UK. Overseas payment must be in £ UK Sterling.

*Acta Zoologica Fennica* 199 (1), 1995. This journal is running a series of issues on the fauna of the northern Palaearctic. This one is devoted mainly to Diptera, with papers on Sciaridae, Mycetophilidae, Rhagionidae, Sphaeroceridae (*Crumomyia*), Ephydriidae, Pipunculidae (*Eudorylas*) and Tachinidae. Most of the papers are about the distribution and ecology in Siberia and northern Europe, with some on the northern Palaearctic. There are also several papers on Hymenoptera.

**Royal Entomological Society Handbooks.** The latest issue of *Antenna* announced that Fonseca's muscid and dolichopodid handbooks were to be reprinted. No timescale was given.

## AND NOW .....WHEN IS A DECLINE NOT A DECLINE ?

The development of the Biodiversity initiatives has brought into play a whole series of conundrums, not least the definition of "favourable conservation status".

Wouldn't it be marvellous if, like the ornithologists, we could give pretty good figures for GB population levels of species of flies. The list of birds in rapid decline, and hence deserving of Species Action Plans, includes many 'common' birds such as the song thrush. So what implications are there for the associated flies, such as *Tipula pediostigma* whose only known breeding site is in birds nests, especially those of the song thrush with its mud-lined nest. The cranefly is found mainly in hedgerows (a declining habitat over the qualifying last 25 years), the shaded parts of which can be difficult to sweep and population levels are so low that the presence of the species is difficult to detect. Then of course there are the hippoboscids and other bird associates whose status is often poorly known.

Decline in habitat ought to give a good lead as to declining species status. However, it depends in part on what has been classified as a habitat. We are often concerned with niche or management style. It was left to the Malloch Society to reveal the rarity of stands of old aspen in the Scottish Highlands, and there would appear to be no national survey data on the status and quality of sand and gravel shoals along rivers, as but two examples. Habitat management style on chalk grasslands, as with other habitats, can make a huge difference to the fauna; apart from the stature of grassland, changes in stocking have lead to changes in the dung fauna, such as the decline of the robberfly *Asilus crabroniformis*.

Those factors are relatively easy to comprehend. The more difficult problem arises with species whose status is stable or increasing despite a decline in habitat (or increasing in records because there are more dipterists recording). In fact, stability is probably exceptional for flies and other invertebrates. We all know from experience that hoverflies, or whatever flies we study, fluctuate considerably in their population levels and observable local occurrence. Does the fact that, in 1996, there are scarcely any hoverflies in my garden mean that these insects are in more serious decline than the song thrush which is seen as frequently as before? These hot summers may mean more records of tachinid flies that are parasites of bugs that like hot summers (the cool wet summers of the 1960s was especially poor for these flies) but can the Atlantic fauna cope with the exceptional run of droughts and hot summers? Common woodland craneflies such as *Ormosia nodulosa* are now rarities in southern England. Virtually the entire fungus gnat fauna of southern England has suffered a massive crash in abundance due to all the droughts.

So long as fly species remain widespread, they should have the capacity to bounce back from declines due to climatic variables. By the same token, species that are commoner during these hot summers may be living in a false paradise if the climate reverts to classic cold wet conditions. Climatic variables have always characterised our climate, but the degree of fragmentation of habitat is now far more extreme. Local extinction is now far more likely to be permanent.

If one issue emerges as critical in these last few years, it has to be the widespread local extinction of drought-prone species. Site after site is so dry year after year that it is very difficult to envisage the survival of assemblages of species that require wet or moist soil, or standing or running water, since only relatively few species are adapted to seasonal drying up. The effect is often insidious but cannot be denied at springs and seepages that are being tapped (perhaps indirectly) for water supply. The problem is already fraught in the south, and during our York field meeting we came across some disastrous examples of abstraction in the North York Moors National Park, one seriously impacting on an SSSI. Yorkshire Water, and other privatised water companies who are desperate for extra water supplies, will no doubt be assessing every spring before we have assessed the fly fauna.

So how many 'song thrush' status species are there among the Diptera? Without the national population data that BTO, RSPB etc can muster for birds, can we dipterists speak more clearly about species that will not bounce back easily? A partial solution to the song thrush decline may be to establish more hedgerows (research in progress), but to reinstate hydrology for flies may be too little too late.

Alan Stubbs

### Diptera Recording Schemes and Study Groups

**Anthomyiid study group:** Mike Ackland at 24 The Moors, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2AJ.

**Chironomid Study Group:** Patrick Roper, South View, Sedlescombe, Battle, East Sussex, TN33 0PE.

**Conopid Recording Scheme** (incorporating the Lonchopteridae Study Group): David Clements, 7 Vista Rise, Radyr Cheyne, Llandaff, Cardiff, CF5 2SD

**Cranefly Recording Scheme:** Alan E. Stubbs, 181 Broadway, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. PE1 4DS.

**Dixidae Recording Scheme:** Dr R H L Disney, University Department of Zoology, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3EJ. [temporary custodian]

**Drosophilidae Recording Scheme:** Dr Brian Pitkin, Entomology Department, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD.

Paul Beuk, Zoological Museum, University of Amsterdam, Plantage Middenlaan 64, NL-1018 DH, The Netherlands.

**Empid and Dolichopodid Study Group:** Roy Crossley, 1 The Cloisters, Wilberfoss, York, YO4 5RF.  
Dr Anthony Bainbridge, 33 Compton Avenue, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5DA.

**Fungus Gnat Recording Scheme:** Peter J. Chandler, 43 Eastfield Road, Burnham, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 7EL.

**Hoverfly Recording Scheme:** Dr Stuart G. Ball, 255 Eastfield Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 4BH.  
AND Roger Morris, 3 Lindale Mount, Renthorpe, Wakefield WF2 0BH.

David Iliff, Newsletter Editor. Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 4HN.

**Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme:** Dr C. Martin Drake, English Nature, Northminster House,  
Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 1UA.

**Mosquito Recording Scheme:** Dr Keith Snow, Dept. Environmental Sciences, University of East London,  
Romford Road, London, E15 4LZ.

**Pipunculid Study Group:** Alan E. Stubbs, 181 Broadway, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. PE1 4DS.

**Sciomyzid Recording Scheme:** Dr Ian F. G. McLean, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough,  
Cambridgeshire, PE1 1UA. AND Andy P. Foster, 61 Pittsfield, Cricklade, Swindon, Wilts, SN6 6AW

**Sepsidae Recording Scheme:** Dr Adrian C. Pont, 38 Gatehampton Road, Goring-on-Thames, Reading, Berkshire,  
RG8 0EP.

**Tephritis Recording Scheme:** Laurence Clemons, 14 St John's Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4NE.

**Bulletin Editor:** Martin Drake, 22 Park Road, Deeping St James, Lincs, PE6 8ND.

**Forum Secretary:** Alan Stubbs, 181 Broadway, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 4DS, tel. 01733  
346648.

**Membership Secretary:** Liz Howe, Ger-y-Parc, Marianglas, Tynygongl, Benllech, Gwynedd, LL74 8NS.

**Record cards:** Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton,  
Cambridgeshire, PE17 2LS.