

The Annual Meeting on 29 November 1980 raised a number of matters which require reporting. This Bulletin also announces the date for the autumn field meeting in 1981 and next Annual Meeting. Reminders for the 1981 summer field meetings are included.

ANNUAL MEETING 31 OCTOBER 1981

Yes, put that date in your new years diary now before you forget. The meeting, followed by the Dipterist's Dinner, will be on the traditional format at the British Museum (Natural History).

Further details of the programme will be issued later.

DISCUSSION POINT - MATTERS ARISING

At the last meeting, the main topic was 'the future needs of Dipterists in Britain'. With such a broad theme we could not cover every aspect in an hour, but a few issues emerged as the dominant ones.

1. Publications. At present information on Diptera is dispersed through a wide range of journals. Few dipterists are able to keep track or gain access but there would be strong interest in subscribing to a 'journal' devoted to Diptera.

Those with experience of journal publication advised that printed journals struggled on 600-700 subscribers (ie main British journals) and became really viable at 1000+. It is probable that litho production would be economic. Stencilled versions are cheapest but also rather tatty.

Contents envisaged were keys, observational notes, local lists and news items. The 'Entomologist's Monthly Magazine' has a suitable format. The Balfour-Brown Club Newsletter (water beetles) was also cited as a model, though this covers a much smaller group of insects and is currently a stencilled production.

It was recognised that the more experienced dipterists might be reluctant to place papers in such a journal unless it were seen as something more than a stencilled newsletter. On the other hand, as a stencilled newsletter one might attract pre-publication material as happens with the Balfour-Brown Club. It would be essential to maintain a format where the amateur feels entirely comfortable as both reader and contributor rather than embracing a high flown professional editorial policy as has happened with some journals.

It was clear discussion could not be furthered without facts on the economics of alternative production methods. Dr H Disney and Dr M Speight agreed to investigate these matters - their follow up report appears later in the Bulletin.

2. Keys. The greatest problem confronting most people, especially those finding their way into Diptera, is the difficulty of finding keys. Colyer and Hammond 'Flies of the British Isles' gives a bibliography as starters but this is not comprehensive. 'The Dipterists Handbook' was to have included a bibliography but at a late stage it transpired that the page space could not be afforded. Dr Irwin (Castle Museum, Norwich) has been keeping his draft manuscript updated, largely based on the British Fauna section of 'Antenna' (the house journal of the Royal Entomological Society) and he will be pleased to answer queries of a not over extensive nature. All published keys and other references are available through the national lending library - ie ask your local public library to obtain on loan what you want or ask for a photocopy in the first place.

There was a call for informal manuscript keys. Infact in the past various such keys have been offered via the Bulletin and Dr Disney had tabled a key to Phorid genera at the meeting. It was accepted that more could be done, though it was in part a production costs question (as per item 1).

Some newcomers to Diptera have run into difficulties by latching onto unduly awkward groups of Diptera before they have the experience to cope. A list of recommended families, with suggested keys is required.

One enquiry sought advice as to which group to take up to find scope for discovering new species. The straight answer is that everyone who has looked into a group of flies with even moderate perservance (even superficially in some cases) has found more species. The hoverflies are a case point - Coe's Handbook seemed to have everything wrapped up in 1953, yet we are now in a period of such flux that we are adding about 2 species per year. However, it will be possible to make suggestions.

3. Recording Schemes. Fair comment was raised on two needs in particular. Firstly the feedback to recorders has been sparse amounting to relatively few maps. Some of the schemes are young and with the craneflies some atlases are in the pipeline. One of the reasons for apparent inactivity is the considerable amount of behind the scenes work in reaching map stage, especially where large numbers of obscure localities from collections and the literature have to have grid references worked out (any volunteers!). However, the point is well taken and we will try to speed up the flow of maps.

The question arose as to whether there should or should not be a move towards further schemes at this stage. The overall feeling was that a workable key was the necessary precursor of a scheme. This is of course why some schemes have to take a low profile while keys are prepared. There are a number of people running their own unofficial record bank and this needs to be more widely known. No new schemes were proposed, apart from mosquitoes (see below).

A new address list is required since the present one is out of date.

4. Conservation. This topic cropped up as a use of recording scheme information. It was pointed out that naturalists trusts reserves needed recording - but please gain permission first before launching in with nets and traps.

Dr N Burgess outlined the encouragement the Ministry of Defence is giving to the survey of its ranges. There are many excellent sites which are totally inaccessible without permission but he would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like him to assist with obtaining permits.

Attention was drawn to the Nature Conservancy Council's exhibit on the Invertebrate Site Register. The pressures on the countryside over the next 10-20 years are going to substantially reduce the remaining areas of wildlife interest. It is therefore essential that NCC knows which areas are important for invertebrates. Even on reserves, most of which are very inadequately recorded, it is easy to make the wrong management decision simply because the importance of a particular spot for invertebrates is unknown. Dipterists were invited to contribute to this register.

FIELD MEETINGS

You are reminded that bookings for the summer field meetings are needed by the end of March so that the accommodation can be confirmed.

The purpose of these meetings is to record in poorly known areas so as to provide information for recording schemes, as well as to add to knowledge of a broader range of Diptera. However, perhaps the most important function is to enable the beginner and the specialist

to spend a period with each other. There can be no better way of picking up hints on field craft and how to handle material back home. The number of people registered with the recording schemes has been substantial in recent years but we are seeing very few of you coming to the field meetings. So however new and uncertain you are about joining in, please realise that these events are just as much for you as for the seasoned recorders.

Teesdale, Pennines

See Bulletin 9 for details.

Ashford, East Kent

See Bulletin 9 for details. Numbers are limited to 20, so you are advised to book soon to ensure a place is available. A deposit of £10 is due on booking (cheques payable to Ian McLean).

Autumn Field Meeting at Monmouth, 15-18 October 1981

The field centre at Caer Llan, Monmouth has been booked for the traditional Autumn foray in pursuit of craneflies and fungus gnats. Other Diptera will also be recorded, though obviously there are few Hoverflies or Larger Brachycera at this time of year. The centre is close to the woodlands of the Wye Valley, and there are plenty of other excellent woods nearby including the grounds of the field centre. We shall be within range of the Monnow Valley, a source of many unusual species in Collin's day.

A booking fee of £8.50 should be enclosed when reserving your place on this meeting (cheques payable to Ian McLean) to arrive before 4 September 1981 please. The accommodation costs are £7.70 per day for full board (additional to the booking fee ie total cost for 3 nights is £31.60).

Bookings and enquiries concerning these field meetings should be addressed to

Dr I F G McLean
Nature Conservancy Council
19/20 Belgrave Square
London SW1X 8PY

Field Courses run by Field Studies Council

Dr Henry Disney is running two courses on Diptera this summer. These courses aim to introduce students to the collection and identification of Diptera, and to the incredible diversity of the order in both the adult and the larval stage. All families are tackled, only giving up on identification when the literature proves inadequate. Experience is gained with pinning and slide-mounting specimens.

The more experienced Dipterist is as welcome as the beginner - in fact some students have become regulars!

29 July - 5 August 1981 'Diptera diversity' at Malham Tarn Field Centre, Settle, N Yorkshire BD24 9PU.

12-19 August, 1981 'Flies, midges and gnats' at Flatford Mill Field Centre, East Bergholt Colchester, Essex, CO7 6UL.

For full details write to The Warden of the relevant Centre.

JOURNAL OF DIPTERA - A REPORT ON PROGRESS WITH THIS PROPOSAL

At the annual gathering of Dipterists on 29 November 1980 the idea of a Journal to meet the needs of British Dipterists was discussed. A group of us undertook to investigate the feasibility of this and to report our findings. We are now taking the opportunity of putting forward a specific proposal with a view to discovering how much support there might be for such a venture.

There appeared to be room for a Journal (provisionally entitled Diptera) specifically concerned with advancing knowledge of the taxonomy and natural history of the Diptera of Britain and Western Europe. At the same time such a Journal could usefully provide a means for exchange of views and information for the benefit of those interested in Diptera. The concern of some that such a Journal would encroach unduly upon existing journals appears to be unjustified. The ecological importance and the size of the Order Diptera is not currently reflected in the number of outlets for publication available.

Our investigations indicate that a Journal produced on A4 paper from camera-ready copy and bound with gum and tape could be produced as follows. Two issues of 50 pages (25 sheets) each per year could be produced for an annual subscription of £5 (including postage) provided we had a run (sale) of at least 150 per issue.

Would anyone with an interest in this proposal, or strong views regarding it, please write to Zakaria Erzinclioglu, 257 Woodfield Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

Dr R H L Disney & Dr M C D Speight.

NEWS FROM THE SCHEMES

The discussion point session suggested that it was frustrating for readers to hear of goodies that they have not found. However, it is hoped recorders will be spurred on by the knowledge that it is still possible to find rare species rather than such beasties being something confined to books as with Greek mythology.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Philip Entwhistle, the scheme organiser, will welcome records. If you want some feedback of maps, he needs records to work with.

For his lecture on the fauna of Ireland, England and France, Dr Speight had a special piece of news lined up. One of his predicted species was announced as new to Britain. The captor was R Crossley who is among that intrepid band of Yorkshire dipterists who are out to prove to southerners that it all happens north of the Watford Gap. This is among the species which Dr Speight predicts should colonise Britain since man is now creating an abundance of their spruce forest habitat. Mr Crossley and Dr Speight are preparing a joint paper. There's about another dozen or so potential spruce species to find (Arctophila bombiformis, Brachyopa testacea, B. vittata, Cheilosia canicularis, C. pictipennis, Epistrophe melanostoma, E. melanostomoides, E. ochrostoma, Meligramma cingulatum, Metasyrphus lundbecki (very like Scaeva!), Neocnemodon latimanus, and Pipiza quadrimaculata).

We knew it had been a cold summer, but Metasyrphus lapponicus in Kent was to say the least unexpected. It was casually sitting in a box of assorted flies which E Philp had brought to the annual meeting for identification. The species is very poorly known in Britain, P Entwhistle's material from Wales being the main recent records. In Kent it was in a deciduous forest with spruce and other conifers.

Sepsidae Recording Scheme

Adrian Pont is writing a paper on the swarming phenomenon in Sepsidae, which includes a review of all the published and unpublished records of swarms together with a suggested explanation for this behaviour. He has observations of 20 published and 17 unpublished swarms. If you have seen such a swarm, or know of a published record which you think he may not have seen, please contact him at Department of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

Sciomyzidae Recording Scheme

P Withers has been going through the Morley Collection at Ipswich. There are some males of a very dark Antichaeta which seems to be new to Britain. A E Stubbs has a dark female from Ross-shire and Dr Speight has possibly a similar specimen from Ireland. If anyone else has problem Antichaeta then please report in.

D Smith and J Cole have recently contributed valuable records to the scheme.

Dr I McLean who is now the scheme organiser would like to trawl in records from those who are confident of their identifications. Once the handbook is finished it will be possible for more people to tackle this group. If you are relying on Knutson's key to Danish species, please note that there are several British species missing (Limnia paludicola, Tetanocera freyi).

Mosquito Recording Scheme - A New Scheme Emerges

Several years ago Dr G White spoke to an annual meeting about the possibility of setting up such a scheme and this proposal has reached fruition.

A group of a dozen or so people interested in mosquitoes held a meeting in another room after the Discussion Point session. Paul Harding of the Biological Records Centre joined in (he individually spoke to all the recording scheme organisers and we were very pleased that he could come to the meeting). Towards the end of a nearly 2 hour session (!), the Central Panel co-ordinator also took part.

A 'British Mosquito Group' has been formed. Dr N Burgess is the recording scheme organiser, supported by several taxonomic specialists. In essence there is a group of professional workers who will be developing a recording format, which may include a record card with a fair bit of detail for larval habitat and hosts bitten. They will be able to identify material caught by non specialists. Such material really needs to be pinned and in mint condition. Thus either adults need to be tubed individually in the field or bred. Those who are pooter addicts and work with large samples of varied groups really need a key to bald mosquitoes since all the scales fall off! A few species can only be identified on the basis of chromosomes, but that is no reason why progress should not be made with the other species.

This is not a group for the amateur to tackle without professional back up. The recording scheme will now enable the amateur to record mosquitoes and there is a great deal of original study which could be done both in terms of rearing and location of larval habitats plus seasonal and national distribution.

A meeting will be held at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on Thursday 2 April, 1981 beginning at 10.30am. The programme will briefly consider the operation of the recording scheme and then concentrate on talks on British Mosquitoes. The Secretary of the meeting and for the scheme as a whole is Dr K Snow, The University of Sussex, School of Biological Sciences, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex. The address of Dr N Burgess, the scheme organiser, is the Royal Army Medical College, Millbank, London SW1P 4RJ. He will supply details of the meeting programme on request.

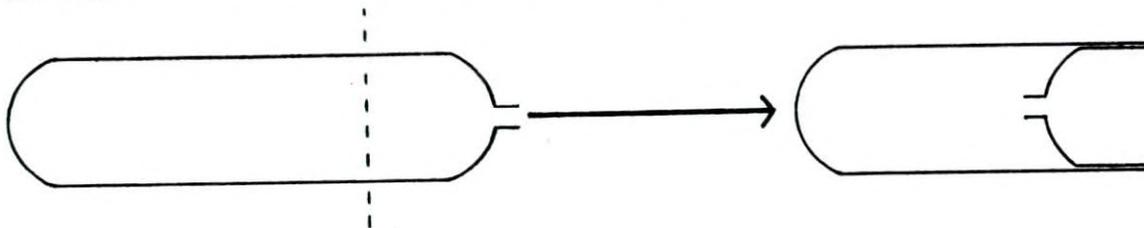
NEW ADDRESS LIST

A new list is circulated with this Bulletin. Please check your own entry and ensure that the schemes that you are interested in are accurately shown.

BAIT TRAPS

At the Annual Meeting, Dr Irwin demonstrated an easy to construct bait trap. Take a plastic squash bottle, cut off the top third and turn it round so that the bottle top is now inset into the base. Place old banana skin or other fruit in the bottle and flies will breed in there. Obviously other bait media (eg for fish skin weeks) can be inserted. 1½ litre plastic 'Corona' bottles are ideal (the black base unglues in hot water).

Dr Irwin pointed out that these traps can be placed in the countryside or the garden (preferable not so that mice and voles will get trapped) in order to study the ecological distribution of species. Also many Drosophila species and other flies have still to be described in their early stages.



NATIONAL FISHSKIN WEEK - 22 -28 JUNE 1981

The first National Fishskin Week was a great success, though less so the second time. Lets do even better this time.

Place a fish skin on your garden lawn, or just about anywhere that a policeman is not about to pounce, and capture a sample of the Calliphoridae and other Diptera. Why not use the bait trap above? Record the habitat, time of day, weather conditions and whether in light or shade. By co-ordinating the effort to a particular week, the collated data on distribution and habitat will be all the more valuable. If you don't eat fish, or the cat got there first, then try an alternative lure.

For those with a regular supply of fishskins a second week from 31 August to 7 September 1981 has been suggested by James Dear for sampling the late summer fauna.

Advice and samples please to James Dear, Dept of Entomology, British Museum (Natural History), Gromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

CYRIL HAMMOND'S BEQUEST

Under the terms of his will, most of the estate is to be divided between the three national societies. His library and collection is left to the British Entomological and Natural History Society. His hoverfly collection (also dragonflies) provides a very valuable addition to the extensive collection of Diptera (arranged by Peter Chandler) held by the Society. This material may be referred to on meeting nights, which are generally the second and forth Thursdays of each month (except August) at the Alpine Club, 74 North Audley Street, London W1, doors open at 6pm. Dipterists attend most meetings, including three members of the Central Panel.

AND NOW - ITS THE FLY SHOOTER

Own up . How many of you got one in your Christmas stocking? If advertisements in the national press are to be believed, this is the greatest invention of the century. For those dipterists ignorant of this revolution in technology, the 'secret' weapon (now known to millions!) consists of a gun which shoots a spring loaded disc at flies.

There is obviously considerable skill and stealth involved. The weapon is ideal for flies on a flat surface where the disc can shoot flat on, but how many flies are so co-operative? An advertisement of American origin gives a lead - the gadgets are available in red, blue and yellow. Thus the answer is to have a yellow disc which attracts the fly and you then shoot it against a flat surface. For horseflies perhaps dark grey would do. All sorts of refinements may be possible, such as replacing the disc with a pin and data label.

The manufacturers claim that fly shooting is fast becoming a 'great new sport'. Of course responsibilities ought to go with hunting. Adherants of grouse shooting rear their target species, so the great British public ought now to be rearing huge numbers of flies for the glorious twelfth - piles of fish skins in every garden for instance!

No cheating with nets, please.

The Central Panel of
Diptera Recording Scheme Organisers

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