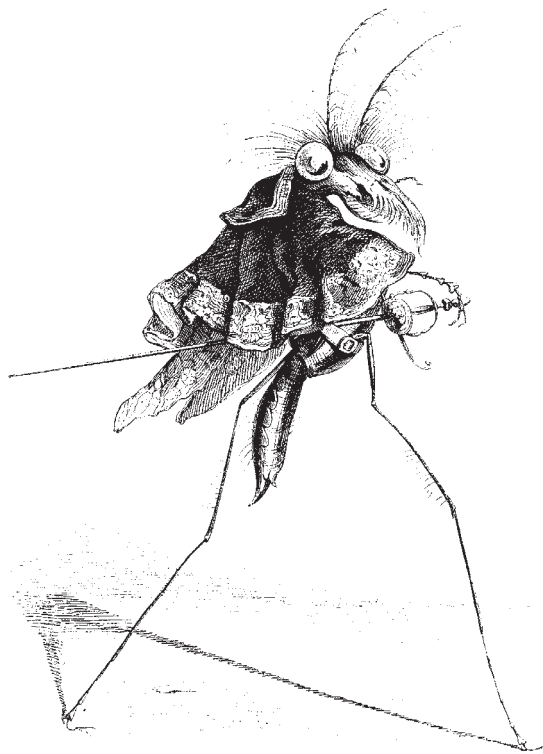


# Fungus Gnats Recording Scheme

Newsletter Spring 2008



During 2007 several thousand recording scheme cards, submitted to them towards the end of the previous year, were processed by BRC and data entered from these cards represented about 70,000 records. From this input preliminary maps were prepared and some examples of these were exhibited at both the BENHS exhibition and at the DF AGM, including those of the two BAP species, the “fen flower gnat” *Asindulum nigrum* and the “giant wood gnat” *Neoempheria lineola*, with the invitation to adopt a gnat.

From the preliminary maps it was possible to identify some errors and omissions and these will be dealt with during the production of final maps. The cards already processed were kindly arranged by BRC in order of grid square within 100km square batches and have now been returned to me to aid in the checking. BRC now have about 1500 further cards to process while a residue of about 220 cards remains with grid reference as yet unconfirmed. Nearly 20 people have been contacted recently to clarify the precise locations of their sites and I

am grateful to them for their rapid responses to this request. Several collectors have kindly supplied their records in electronic form and about 5000 records have consequently been passed to BRC in xl files, assisting with data entry.

If anyone has records that have not yet been submitted to the scheme could they please let me know as soon as possible so that they can be included in the next phase of data entry, which is expected to take place this year.

Thanks to the collecting efforts of many people a good coverage of Britain and to a lesser extent Ireland has been achieved so that the resulting maps give a good idea of the distribution of most species and differing patterns of distribution among the fungus gnats have become apparent. A distinction is made on the maps between pre- and post-1980 records, which shows a decline in some cases but this is to some extent masked by the more intensive recording, covering many previously unrecorded areas, that has taken place since 1980. I am grateful to all who have submitted specimens and records over the years that have contributed towards the preparation of these maps.

It was reported last year that a female specimen of the genus *Greenomyia*, a genus new to

Britain, had turned up in Surrey, a visitor to Graham Collins' house during 2006. In the autumn of 2007 males of this genus were found at two sites, in Essex (Colin Plant, determined by Del Smith) and Oxfordshire (Judy Webb). These males show variation in the extent of the narrow yellow margins to the abdominal tergites and it now seems possible that the entirely dark bodied female found by Graham is an example of infraspecific variation and that these gnats all belong to the same species. The male genitalia agree with the widespread European species *G. mongolica*. This is a distinctive gnat (compared to known British species) with body and mid & hind coxae mainly black, legs otherwise yellow and the wings with a well-marked dark brown tip. It seems unlikely that it could have been overlooked in Britain before 2006 and its occurrence in three well-separated locations suggests that it is a recent immigrant, perhaps introduced with plant material, but it is possibly already established here. The biology of the genus is unknown. In Fauna Europaea ([www.faunaeur.org](http://www.faunaeur.org)) *G. mongolica* was omitted and its records attributed questionably to *G. theresae*, described by Loic Matile from the Italian Alps. However, material examined agrees better with his figures of *mongolica*, which he had previously described from Mongolia (together with Petr Lastovka) and it may be that these are not distinct species.

Other gnat news is that Jostein Kjaerandsen and five co-authors have produced a checklist of the fungus gnats of Sweden (2007. *Insect Systematics and Evolution Supplements* 65). This brings the number of species known from Sweden to a remarkable total, exceeding 750 of which more than 30 are yet to be described. There are a few nomenclatural changes affecting the British list, which will be reported in the Digest. They begin with a quotation on the naming of insects from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), where Alice has a conversation with a Gnat: "What's the use of their having names?" the Gnat said, "if they don't answer to them?" "No use to them," said Alice; "but it's useful to the people that name them, I sup-



pose."... "I can't say," the Gnat replied. "Further on, in the wood down there, they've got no names." They continue, commenting that the study of fungus gnats has been very much a taxonomic story of naming the unnamed further on in the woods. Evidently Carroll recognised, even before Verrall, that there was still much to be done in the gathering of gnatty knowledge.

**Peter Chandler**