

THE COLEOPTERISTS' NEWSLETTER

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During mid May I was able to spend two weeks in the Dordogne with day trips to neighbouring areas within 100 to 150 miles. Having not been abroad for several years, I was greatly pleased to see such a wealth of insects. The meadows, which if in Britain would be declared SSSI's (or should it not be S'sSSI ?) on account of their botanical richness, were full of butterflies - swallowtails, black-veined whites, fritillaries and lycaenids. Beetles too were much in evidence, I once took 11 Anthaxia in one sweep in a meadow in the Lot valley, Cerambycids were plentiful at flowers, most notably a metallic blue Agapanthia. Dead timber, though scarce often produced a rich haul - Cerambycids in pupal cells and some very unfamiliar Histerids - one about the size of our H.unicolor but as flat as Pediacus.

On returning to Herefordshire, great sadness befell - the umbellae supported a few drab flies, sweeping produced nothing more alarming than 'tennis elbow' and searching dead timber produced only the usual species. Fair enough you may comment, our fauna is not as large as the French, nor the climate as good. But I can recall the days of my youth (only about 15 years ago) when I could find umbellae with one or two Strangalia maculata, common but spectacular, and a host of Cantharids. My thoughts brought to mind the paper in EMM (vol.113: 136) by B.Verdcourt entitled 'A dearth of insects'. It begins 'I used to write occasional notes for this magazine concerning interesting insects I had seen but have been so silent in recent years that Dr.Hobby was constrained to ask Mr. Airy-Shaw if I were still alive! The answer for the lack of notes is simple - it is due to the lack of insects.'

Surely Mr. Verdcourt and I am not imagining this lack of insects - have you noticed it too ?

J.Cooter.

The 'Sorby Record, No.18 (1980)' - available from the City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield, s10 2TP (85p + 24p post) - contains 56 pages about the Coleoptera of the area. 'Beetles of the Sheffield Area' summarises historical records and progress in present day recording; 'A Provisional Fauna of an Upland Pennine Valley' presents the work of detailed survey in the Peak District.

BRAMPTON BRYAN PARK FIELD MEETING, 20th - 21st JUNE, 1981.

This meeting was a spin-off from the successful Coleopterist's Weekend held at Monks Wood, May 1980, and once again proved to be a very enjoyable two days. The participants assembled in Brampton Bryan Park at 10am on the Saturday and the rest of the day was spent collecting there and along the River Teme nearby. Although small parties had dispersed in different directions during the day, all managed to find their way back to the Compasses at Wigmore in the evening where the second Coleopterist's Dinner was held. With a choice of Steak or Salmon Flatter supplemented by adequate liquid refreshment this rounded off a fine day together with talk of insects taken on that day or in the past and of notice of yet another change in the specific name of an already much name changed water beetle. The Sunday was much a repeat of the Saturday save that people were gradually departing throughout the day depending on the distance to travel home.

Brampton Bryan Park proved to be an ideal setting for such a meeting, a fine parkland rich in old trees. This was born out from the species that were recorded which included no less than 13 species of Cerambycidae of which pride of place was to go to the discovery of Pyrrhidium sanguineum. However, the main benefit of these meetings is to meet fellow Coleopterists, to learn new techniques and share your own, to meet old friends and to make new ones, and in all these the weekend was most successful. For this to have been possible our thanks must go to Jonathan Cooter who had so carefully and meticulously made all the arrangements so that everything ran perfectly, even down to planning it to be held on one of the few fine sunny weekends of the 'summer'. It was unanimously agreed that this Coleopterist's Meeting and Dinner must now be an annual event.

Eric Philp, Maidstone Museum.

(Thank you for such a flattering notice ! I hope to arrange a similar event for 1982, and will keep readers informed. One of the main obstacles in organising such events in rural areas is the lack of 'study centre' type accommodation. While having everyone staying under one roof is most desirable, this summer's meeting has shown that it is not absolutely necessary (for weekend ventures). The good weather and good collecting at Brampton Bryan were most fortuitous to some extent I was making a 'blind bet' on the venue - although I have collected there many times over the last three years [I have never found the desirable old woodland beetles that one might expect from such a place. The week before the meeting I was much cheered to take Lymexylon navale in the Park, and having a number of assiduous collectors in the area for two days resulted in a decent number of species being brought to light. The proprietor, Mr. C.C.Harley is conservation minded and is interested in identifying those areas of the Estate which are of most value for conservation. I sincerely hope that our two day exercise may be of some benefit).

A USEFUL CARD FOR ROUGH MOUNTING COLEOPTERA.

Not many Coleopterists have the time and not many have the inclination, to rough mount all their captures. It is useful, however, to be able to rough mount some Coleoptera, for example Coccinellidae, especially if one wishes to degrease them in order to make a clean cabinet mount. Purely by chance I stumbled upon an extremely useful and cheap material for such rough mounting. It is sold in art shops as 'mounting board' (not, I need add, with Coleopterists in mind !). The sheet I purchased was about 100cm x 75cm and about 2mm thick. It is brown, coarse, stiff cardboard covered on both sides with paper - one side coloured, the other creamy white. It cost about 35p a couple of years ago. Having cut the board into strips, mounted your specimens and left them to dry, the time arrives to soak them off. It is then that the advantage of this board (apart from its cheapness) over Bristol Board becomes apparent. Wetting the area around the specimen secures its release in seconds. This is brought about even when considerable gum has been used, because the paper covering the card absorbs water so readily. For anyone who does any rough mounting this card is well worth trying. It has certainly speeded up the rate at which I can deal with material and it is plainly cheaper than any other card of which I am aware.

D.R.Nash, Lawford, Essex.

(I can confirm David's findings having used off-cuts of mounting card over the years. I also find it good for carding large beetles such as Dytiscus or Lucanus. During rough mounting the body can be glued to the card with UHU or similar, the legs etc. pinned in position after the glue has set. When dry remove pins and put whole card in degreasing solvent - this also releases the glue. - J.C.).

ELUSIVE SPECIES. I am sure that I am not alone in having searched for a particular beetles for a long time without any success, then by chance or good fortune find a specimen, and noting its habitat am able to find plenty more. My most recent example of this has been Georissus. For years I had searched for a small slow moving black beetle on wet mud at river sides, for years I had no success. Then one day when searching in a known haunt - the River Teme at Bransford, Worcestershire, my wife asked if I wanted these little specks of mud that move. She had found Georissus. The beetles were always on dry mud, not at all sluggish in their movements and always covered with a cake of dry mud just a fraction larger than the beetle - from above not one bit of black chitin was visible. Once seen, the beetles appeared everywhere, and I got 'my series' in a matter of minutes.

J.C.

MOCCAS PARK, HEREFORDSHIRE. This classic hunting ground has been declared a National Nature Reserve, and to get permission to collect there one has to apply to the Nature Conservancy Council for a permit. To gain access to the Park one has to get permission from the game-keeper Mr. D. Chandler, at the Lodge opposite the Park gate. It should be born in mind that the Park is still private property, and is from time to time closed to all, especially when shooting parties or deer culls are in progress.

J.C..

CERAMBYCIDAE MAPPING SCHEME. Paul Harding has asked if I would be prepared to run a mapping scheme for the British Cerambycidae, and I have agreed. Matters are at present in the embryonic stages - the card has not even been prepared yet, but it is hoped to get it started as soon as possible. The Cerambycids have been, to me, a group that one likes to have in ones collection, generally large, often strongly coloured - good to show the non-Coleopterist. However, there are several species that today one never hears of being taken and it will be interesting to see if any decline in species can be traced back over the years. Has anyone taken Pachyta collaris recently ? Is Strangalia aurulenta spreading eastwards ? Pyrrhidium sanguinaum is now known from four 10km squares - how many more will follow and is it confined to the Welsh Marches ?

Details of the scheme will be distributed in due course.

J.C.

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