

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

Number 13

May 1983

In all probability I am not alone in receiving, unsolicited, a copy of "CURCULIO" - for anyone that has not heard of this "semiannual report devoted to dissemination of knowledge of the Curculionidea, including information on current research activities, literature, collections, methodology and students of the group" here is some information.

Editors = Horace R. Burke and Wayne E. Clark, Department of Entomology, Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas 77843, U.S.A., the publication deals with the world Curculionidea and lists current research projects with brief details (pages 1 - 4), News and Notes (pages 4 - 8) includes notice of a meeting of Curculionoid specialists in Toronto (Dec. 1982), pages 8 - 13 contain a list of Curculionidea publications for the latter part of 1981 (among which it is good to see several papers by British authors, the list is an abstract from "Abstracts of Entomology" and "Entomology Abstracts").

For details of subscription contact the editors.

— ° —

Quedius nigrocoeruleus Fv in a birds nest - Whilst collecting on the edge of the extensive sand-dunes at St. Owen's Bay, Jersey, 27.ix.1982, I rooted out an old disused birds nest from an evergreen tree no more than twelve feet high. It was a large nest about as big as a rook would build. Either the nest or a nearby branch had been used as a roost for a barn-owl as I disturbed the bird and found ten pellets under the tree. When I broke the nest open and sieved it I found three specimens of Quedius nigrocoeruleus a species that is, in my experience (and the literature available) is confined to mole nests. Its occurrence in a birds nest was most surprising although moles occurred nearby.

S.A. Williams, 79 Cedar Drive, Sutton-at-Hone, nr Dartford, Kent.

— ° —

Editor - J. Cooter, 20 Burdon Drive, Bartestree, Herefordshire, HR1 4 DL.

Treasurer (& subscriptions) P.J. Hodge, 8 Harvard Road, Ringmer, Lewes, E. Sussex,

BN8 5HJ

Collecting Coleoptera from corrugated card - I cannot recall any references in the literature which advocate the use of corrugated cardboard sheeting for attracting Coleoptera. I have discovered that the small enclosed tunnels formed by the corrugations attract Coleoptera, especially Curculionids and also the smaller Coccinellids as well as Pselaphids and the like. Rubbish tips and salt-marshes are good places to search, particularly in winter, as beetles such as Hypera use the card for hibernation. Likewise, casual stops in lay-byes can be profitable thanks to the untidiness of the human species!

The easiest method to collect the beetles is to hold the card over a tray or white polythene sheet and carefully tear away the flat backing in small sections. Often the card is damp, so peeling is no problem. Perhaps other readers will write in and tell us of their experiences after testing the method? Alternatively, who has already had success with the "four C's"?

David Nash, 266 Colchester Road, Lawford, nr Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2EU

— o —

Beetles from Faggots - In view of the correspondence on the question whether faggots can form a productive trap for beetles worthy of the collector's attention, or whether this claim should be treated as "just another good Masee story", perhaps I may be allowed a few observations on the subject, which, I hope, will confirm Dr. Morris's cautiously expressed views and vindicate my late friend just named.

There can be no denying that faggot-working is far from easy. A large sheet is necessary, and, unless one is so favourably placed as to be able to prepare and lay out one's faggots and return to work them after a suitable interval, finding them in good condition to work is normally a chancy business. A reasonably fair substitute, however, is to gather on to the sheet a pile of dead twigs and small gnarled branches found lying under oaks and other trees, and beat or shake them smartly over the sheet. Either way it is best done in autumn, the principle time for faggot-dwelling Anthribids - though it might also be worth trying in spring, or even winter if practicable.

I was fortunate enough to accompany Dr. Masee on one of his faggot-beating trips to Ham Street Woods in September 1950. I was led to expect some worth-while results and was not disappointed. Among many less notable species, the following were obtained - Platystomos albinus (the larger males are quite spectacular), Tropideres niveirostris (less frequent), Diplocoelus fagi, Tetratoma ancora, Orchesia undulata (these in some numbers), Lissodema quadripustulata, Sepedophilus littoreus, Cis hispidus (a large dark form), Trachodes hispidus in plenty, Acalles ptinoides (five examples), Masee told me that Tropideres sepicola also occurred there, but we did not see it. A visit to Church Woods, Blean, in October of that year produced (by the substitute method already described) the two Anthribids as above, Trachodes again, a single Acalles roboris (to me much scarcer than ptinoides) and a pair of Epuraea rufomarginata. This last is a typical faggot species not often taken by other means, and the same might perhaps be said of Trachodes.

I think that the experience related here, along with similar accounts scattered through the literature, will set at rest any lingering doubts about the possibilities of this mode of collecting.

A.A.Allen, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London, SE7 8QG

— o —

A simple diffuser for microscopy - John Read writes that he has found a simple and totally satisfactory diffuser which anyone should be capable of making. It consists simply of a disc of polythene about 2mm thick fixed into the lamp-holder of the microscope. (If your model does not have a built in lamp-holder, this can be substituted by a free-standing holder, or even a loop of wire. The microscope lamp used for illumination is a free standing type, and can thus be moved to give different lighting effects). Best results are obtained if the diffusing disc is about 10 - 15mm from the specimen, magnification between x32 and x80, but it does work at higher powers. It is excellent for studying surface ornament especially in shiny-surfaced beetles. John also has found that a better image with greater definition results if the beetle is soaked off the white card mount and placed temporarily on a piece of black velvet - the light being absorbed by the dark cloth, not reflected back as before.

A list of references (mainly key works) to the British Curculionoidea
(except Scolytidae and Platypodidae).

Nemonychidae and Attelabidae

Dieckmann, L., 1974 Beitrage zur Insektenfauna der DDR, Coleoptera
Curculionidae (Rhinomacerinae, Rhynchitinae, Attelabinae,
Apoderinae). Beitr. Ent. 24: 5-54, figs 1 - 103 tables,
and references.

Apionidae

Dieckmann, L., 1977 Beitrage zur Insektenfauna der DDR, Coleoptera
Curculionidae (Apionidae). Beitr. Ent. 27: 7 - 143,
figs 1 - 151, tables and references.

Smreczynski, S., 1965 Klucze do Oznaczania Owadow Polski, Coleoptera,
Zeszyt 98a. Curculionidae, Apionidae.

Curculionidae

- Bruce, N., 1968 The Nordic species of the beetle genus Bagous (Coleoptera
Curculionidae) with a key. Ent.Tids., 89: 229 - 241,
plates 1 - 4, plus references.
- Dieckmann, L., 1964 Die mitteleuropaischen Arten aus der Gattung Bagous
Germ. Ent.Blatt., 60: 88 - 111, figs 1 - 51, keys, refs.
- Dieckmann, L., 1968 Revision of westpalearktischen Anthonomini (Col.,
Curculionidae). Beitr. Ent., 17: 377 - 564, figs 1 - 114,
maps, keys and references.
- Dieckmann, L., 1972 Beitrag zur Insektenfauna der DDR, Coleoptera - Curculion-
idae; Ceuthorhynchinae. Beitr. Ent., 22: 3 - 128, figs.
1 - 141, keys and references.
- Dieckmann, L., 1980 Beitrag zur Insektenfauna der DDR, Coleoptera - Curcul.
(Brachycerinae, Otiorhynchinae, Brachyderinae). Beitr.
Ent., 30: 145 - 310, figs 1 - 172, keys, tables and refs.
- Freude, Harde & Lohse, 1981 Die Kafer Mitteleuropas, vol.10 pages 1 - 3100
50 figs (includes Bruchidae, Anthribidae, Scolytidae,
Platypodidae and Curculionidae).
- Hoffmann, A., 1950 Coleopteres Curculionidaes, 1. Faune de France (52): 1 -
486, figs 1 - 304.

- Hoffmann, A., 1954. Coleopteres Curculionides, 2. Faune de France (59) : 488-1028, figs 226 - 663.
- Hoffmann, A., 1958. Coleopteres Curculionides, 3. Faune de France (62): 1290 - 1839, figs 664 - 1305.
- Kevan, D.K., 1959. The British species of the genus Sitona Germar (Col., Curculionidae). Entomologist's Monthly Magazine, 95: 251-261, figs 1 - 41.
- Kevan, D.K., 1960. Further Scottish records of Phytonomus diversipunctatus (Schrank)(=elongatus Pk.) and its comparison with allied sp species; also notes on the identification of P.rumicis (L.) and P.adspersus (F.)(Col.,Curculionidae). Entomologist's Monthly Magazine, 96: 35 - 38 + 8 figs and key.
- Morris, M.G., 1965. Ceuthorhynchus unguicularis C.G.Thomson (Col., Curcul.) new to the British Isles from the Suffolk Breckland and the Burren, Co.Clare. Entomologist's Monthly Magazine, 101: 279 - 286 + 6 figs (contains a key to s.g. Ceuthorhynchus s.str).
- Morris, M.G., 1976. The British species of Anthonomus Germar (Col., Curcul.) Entomologist's Monthly Magazine, 112: 19 - 40 plus 28 figs., 3 tables and list of references.
- Smreczynski, S., Klucze do Oznaczania Owadow Polski (the Polish equivalent to our RES Handbook Series, but going into the subject in more depth).
1966. Zeszyt 98b Otiorhynchinae, Brachyderinae. 130pp + 216 figs.
1968. Zeszyt 98c Tanymericinae, Cleoninae, Tanyrhynchinae, Hylobiinae. 106pp + 166 figs.
1972. Zeszyt 98d Dryopathorini, Cossonini, Bagoini, Tanysphyrini, Notarini, Smicronychini, Ellescini, Acalyptini, Tychiini, Anthonomiini, Curculionini, Pissodini, Magdalini, Trachodini, Rhynchophorini, Cryptorhynchini. 195pp + 373 figs.
1974. Zeszyt 98e Barini, Coryssomerini, Ceutorhynchini. 180pp + 293 figs.
1976. Zeszyt 98f Nanophyini, Mecinini, Cionini, Anoplini, Rhynchaenini. 115pp + 268 figs.

Many of these key works are well illustrated with good habitus figures and line drawings of genitalia etc.

R.W.J.Read, 43 Holly Terrace, Hensingham, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA26 8FF

ELATEROIDEA RECORDING SCHEME.

The Elateroidea, comprising the Elateridae, Throscidae and Eucnemidae (of the British fauna) are an attractive and distinctive group of medium sized beetles. It is surprising, therefore, that satisfactory up-to-date keys to the British species are not as yet available. I am hoping to produce keys to the more difficult genera, and notes to aid identification, towards the end of 1983. In the mean time contributors will have to make do with: Fowler (Vol. 4 and supplement, vol. 6), and Joy, unless they have access to Leseigneur (Coleopteres Elateridae de la Faune de France Continental et de Corse. Suppl. Bull de la Soc. Linn. de Lyon 41, published in 1972) or Lohse (Fam. Gruppe Sternoxia, in Freude, Harde & Lohse, Die Käfer Mitteleuropas, 6:101-201) and can cope with their own translation. The nomenclature used on the species recording card (RA50) follows Kloet and Hincks (Handbook for the identification of British Insects, XI(3) Coleoptera and Strepsiptera, revised edition, 1977) except that the family and generic names are in alphabetical order. All species listed by Kloet and Hincks appear on the card, even those indicated as being of uncertain status or extinct. A single additional species - Panspoeus guttatus - has yet to be formally added to the British List.

I shall be pleased to identify and return any specimens sent to me. Please ensure that they are securely pinned and well packed. Tragacanth is not strong enough for gumming the larger species to their mounting card. Leprieur's or a strong propriety water soluble gum is recommended, if specimens are likely to be subjected to the rigours of the GPO.

If you would like to receive further information about this Recording Scheme, and a supply of recording cards, please write to:

Howard Mendel,
 Elateroidea Recording Scheme,
 c. o The Museum,
 High Street,
 IPSWICH,
 Suffolk,
 IP1 3QH

My Methods for collecting Ptiliidae

The minute size of the Ptiliidae does mean that specialist collecting techniques are necessary, and Jonathan Cooter thought that it might be helpful to others if I were to explain the methods I use. Ptiliidae are to be found in a wide range of habitats including rotting vegetation, dung, fungi, moss, rotten wood, under bark, etc., frequently in large numbers, the sole criterion for most species being the presence of moisture. Victoria Taylor has shown, for example, that Ptinella is happiest under bark when the relative humidity is 100%. They may be taken from these habitats using the well-tried methods described in most volumes on insect collecting, so that what follows is essentially a record of adaptations I have made to standard equipment to cope with small size.

General note. As Colin Johnson has recently pointed out Ethyl acetate and other vaporous killing agents should not be used for Ptiliidae. They disturb pubescence, obscure sculpture, etc. and often damage the specimens. The insects should be killed in 70% alcohol (I use Iso-propyl which can be obtained without a licence. I buy mine from BDH Chemicals, POOLE, Dorset BH124NN) in which they may be kept indefinitely. Most of my collection is stored in this way. The method has great advantages in that it prevents internal structures from becoming distorted through drying out, it permits the use of temporary slides, and it allows a large number of specimens to be stored safely with the minimum of effort and space.

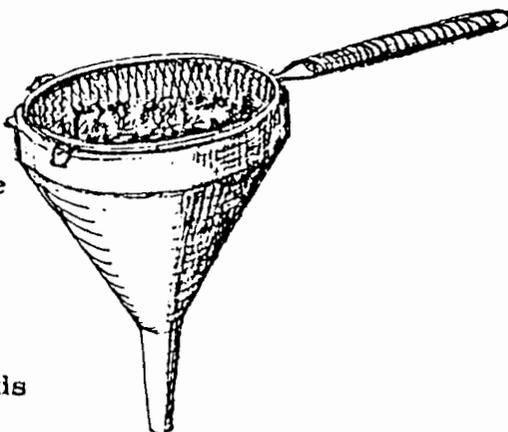
This paper does not deal with techniques of study, but remember if insects are dry mounted to ensure that no glue comes into contact with the upper surfaces, and make sure that the insect is orientated precisely, and that the antennae are straight and lightly glued at their tips only.

Berlese Funnel. This is undoubtedly the most satisfactory method of collecting since it gives the greatest control and provides the most information. More specimens may be collected than time usually permits to be pootered up in the field, and a funnel reveals stationary and sluggish species which are difficult to spot by eye. Furthermore it facilitates the collection of larvae and allows live specimens to be studied at home. The main disadvantages are that the bags of samples can be heavy and cumbersome to manage in the field, and that one does not know what has been taken until one gets home. For this last reason I tend to combine the collection of samples for Berlesing with on-the-spot checks too.

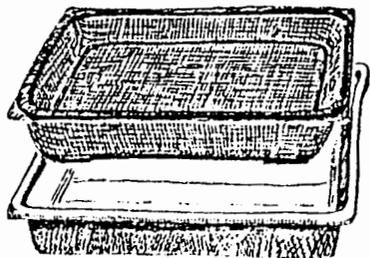
Preliminary sieving of material ensures that the largest number of specimens are taken, but tends to make the identification of specific habitats difficult, particularly if material from two or more sievings

is combined.

I prefer several small funnels rather than a single large one and fit these into a home-made wooden rack beneath the light source. The plastic funnels I use are sold in most hardware shops and conveniently take an 8" kitchen sieve into which I put the material to be Berlesed. The sample bags I use in the field are of the self-sealing polythene variety and have opaque white bands which will take biro inscriptions.



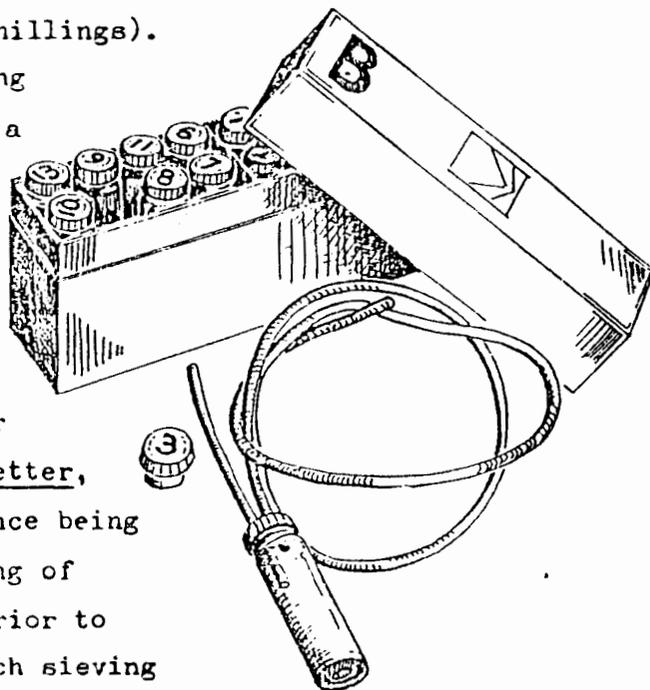
Sieves and trays. Most collectors will probably prefer to use a sieve in the field rather than resort to a Berlese funnel. Sieving works well for Ptiliidae which are more easily spotted than one might think



simply because most species move in a characteristic jerky manner. This movement is most easily spotted on a white surface and for that reason I use a fine metal sieve, again sold for use in kitchens, and a white photographic developing tray. Shopping around produced a sieve which exactly fits over the tray. The size of

these is 13" x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Bag sieves are useful for obtaining a large quantity of material quickly but can make the identification of specific habitats difficult if used for more than one collection at a time. I have found mine most useful in the tropics when I have wanted to avoid using my hands to pick up litter etc.. (Bag sieves may be purchased from Hildegard Winkler, A1180 WIEN, Dittesgasse 11, Austria. Ask for a 'Kafersieb nach Reitter 8mm Maschenweite' and an 'Einsatzsieb hiezu 4mm Maschenweite'. Approximate cost is 728 Austrian schillings).

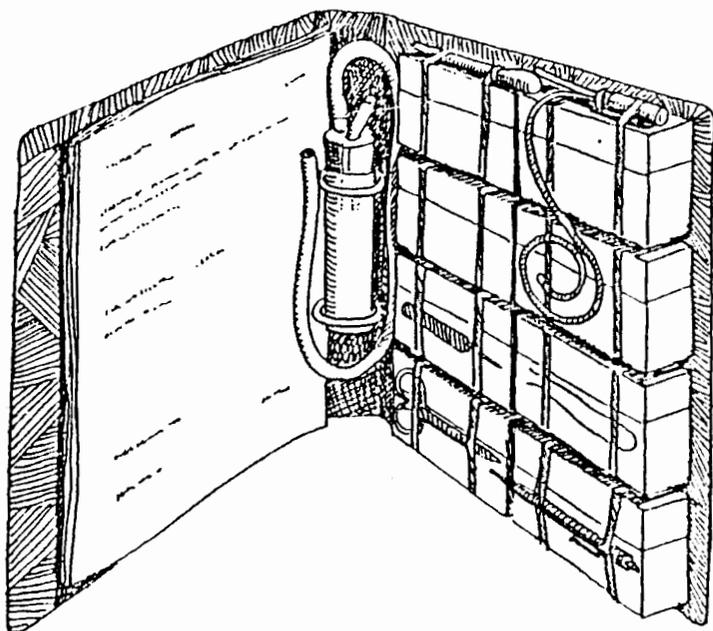
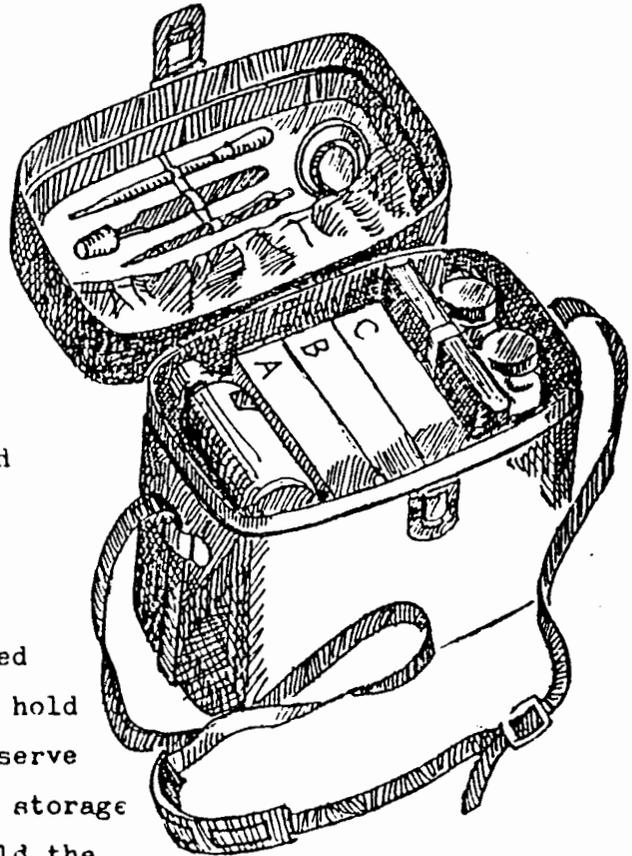
Pooter and glass bottles. Collecting from the tray is best achieved with a pooter (not a moistened finger!) Although a standard pooter fitted with a 3" x 1" glass tube may be used, I prefer a micropooter using inter-changeable smaller tubes. Mine were made in the manner described by David Nash (Col. Newsletter, I, Aug. 1980, 4-5) the only difference being that I found the the plastic covering of standard telephone cable (2mm) superior to other wires. I use one tube for each sieving



and store them sixteen at a time in plastic Kodak colour slide boxes. Each box is given a letter and the tubes numbered in enamel paint. In hot weather expansion of air in the bottles can cause the tops to 'pop' off. I use expanded polystyrene foam in the lids to prevent this or alternatively fit four 2" x ½" glass tubes into this space.

Hold-alls. I have found a bag of the sort sold for photographic use preferable to a 'soft' bag since it has the great advantage that bottles etc. are kept upright when it is placed on the ground. Furthermore they are better protected and are less likely to break when on the move.

For travelling abroad when space and weight are at a premium I have tried several methods and found an A4 sized plastic covered ring binder most useful. One cover is pierced and threaded through with dress maker's elastic to hold the slide boxes, and the metal rings serve the dual function of providing a safe storage compartment for a large pooter and hold the forms I use for making collecting notes. Other equipment is safely kept



in place by the elastic over the boxes. Sufficient alcohol for each box of tubes may be kept in the tubes in the lids (this has the advantage that one does not lose it all if a bottle is knocked over!). This binder will fit into the side pocket of a standard shoulder bag leaving room in the rest of the bag for a sieve and tray with pyjamas, toiletries, etc., In place of wellington boots I have found rubber over shoes

useful. These can be folded into a small space and are very light in weight.

Odds and ends. Added to this basic equipment I usually carry with me: a length of fine wire for unblocking my micropooter; a chemical dropper for