

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

August 1987

Number 29

CALKE PARK, DERBYSHIRE. The ancient trees which cover about 40 acres of Calke Park in Derbyshire are almost certainly descendents of an original wildwood which was partially cleared between 1115 and 1120 when the Park was established near the then newly founded Calke Abbey. A preliminary survey of this new National Trust estate was carried out during 1984 by myself and colleagues on the Trust's Biological Survey Team, and the deadwood fauna was identified as being potentially of outstanding quality and scientific interest.

During 1986 further investigation of the deadwood fauna was carried out for the Trust by Colin Johnson and Tony Drane, and their results have exceeded all expectations. I don't intend to go into details here as I know Colin intends to publish the more interesting records from amongst his captures, and Tony has already exhibited some of his material at the BENHS Exhibition last November. I think it is sufficient to say that 38 mature timber specialities (see list in Harding, P.T. & Rose, F., Pasture Woodlands in Lowland Britain, ITE, 1986) and 9 Red Data Book listed species (Shirt, D.B., in press) were found. These results clearly show that Calke Park ranks highly in the National series of mature timber sites, and is currently only bettered within the NT ownership by the well studied Dunham Park, near Manchester.

Calke is evidently one of the most important sites to be discovered in recent years, and, since it is of such great interest, we felt that its existence should be brought to the attention of interested coleopterists. However, this note is also to remind would-be visitors that un-authorized collecting is forbidden by the Trust's by-laws, and this will be strictly enforced by our wardens. The Park is open to the public, and everyone is welcome to walk around and be amazed by the magnificent, and hitherto unknown, parkland, but collecting is very definitely by permit only, and permits will be limited to those entomologists already helping the Trust, and who will be continuing to investigate the site.

Keith Alexander

(Apologies for not including this in the May issue - J.C.)

Editorial Due to your editor's inefficiency entirely, I'm afraid the "sale/wants" sheet prepared by Howard Mendel was not issued. I apologise for any inconvenience suffered by contributors; the blame for this falls solely upon me. J.C.

The Brazilian Society of Entomology celebrates its 50th anniv. on July 17th. Formed in 1937 and publishing the Brazilian Magazine of Entomology since 1954. The Brazilian Post Office is marking the event by issuing two stamps at Cz3,00 each showing the mantis Zoolea lopiceps Ol. and the lantern-fly Fulgora servillei Spin. Its a pity the GPO ignored the RES anniversary of last year. J.C.

DROWNED SORROWS. Many terrestrial beetles bemoan wet sunless weather as much as those that seek them: some pay the ultimate price but in expected ways.

During Worcestershire's "flameless June", the teasel's connate leaves have remained permanently water-filled, and fatal for a wide range of insects, including amongst beetles Athous haemorrhoidalis (F.), Cantharis nigricans (Mull.); Rhagonycha fulva (Scop.); Malachius bipustulatus (L.), Pyrochroa serraticornis (Scop.), Alosterna tabacicolor (Dg.), Clytus arietis (L.), Anaglyptus mysticus (L.) and Cassida rubiginosa Mull.

One wonders whether the teasels benefit from such decomposing ensnared insects. A small beetle, Atomaria linearis Stph. drowned in the lachrymal fluid of my son's eye on June 24th, ironically one of June's few bright sunny days. What inferences can be made with regard to the optical efficiency of humans and beetles is not clear!

P.F. Whitehead.

URBAN CONSERVATION AND CARABIDS. Areas of waste ground are becoming rarer and rarer. But they are often surprisingly diverse in their fauna, however unsightly they may be soenically.

The following species of Carabidae were taken from a disused railway embankment in the heart of Cardiff between 1972 and 3.

Carabus violaceus L

Amara plebeja Gyll.

Nebria brevicollis (F.)

Pterostichus melanarius Ill.

Harpalus aeneus F.

Abax parallelepipedus P&M

H.rubripes Duft.

Agonum dorsale (Pent).

H.rufipes Dg.

A.mulleri (Hb.)

Amara aulica Pz.

Dromius linearis (Ol.)

A. lunicollis Sch.

Certain of these species are well-known as cosmopolitan: but others are considered somewhat local, and it is heartening that they were to be found in a large city surrounded on all sides by roads (though they probably aren't all there now: the area has been substantially redeveloped and houses stand on some of it).

Most of the carabids were under large flagstones near a factory. Anara aulica was on a plant stem with mandibles gripping the stem.

The railway line was substantially littered with rubbish consisting of the track balast bordered by steeply descending embankments covered with bramble, blackberry bushes and plants such as nettles and dock.

Amongst the beetles, Cantharids, Cionus and Cleopus and Cassida also flourished within this urban squalor. Regarding other groups, I cultured small tortoiseshell larvae and the Garden Tiger Moth as well as Cionus weevils and parasites emerged from some specimens of all three species (now mostly donated to David Edwards).

In the conflict of interest between conservationists and planners/developers the latter hold most of the trump cards. As far as the former are concerned, I'm sure carefully planned parks with trimmed lawns, roses etc are not any answer, and I believe just leaving ground waste may cultivate a flora and fauna which will educate many and enrich their existence.

Dr Martin Luff identified all the difficult species of carabid here listed, for the purposes of the Biological Recording Scheme, in June 1984. The entomology Department, National Museum of Wales (Adrian Amsden and John Deeming) have helped enormously in my curation of the collection.

Martin Henderson.

RHYNCHAENUS PSEUDOSTIGMA Tempere IN BRITAIN - A.

PRELIMINARY NOTE. Both British and German coleopterists appear to have overlooked a paper by Gaston Tempere (1982, Nouv. Rev. Ent., 12(3):245-54) in which a species distinct from the common R.stigma (Germar) is figured and described. The new weevil, R.pseudostigma, appears to be widely distributed in the Palaearctic and comprised over 30% of the 550 specimens of R.stigma s.lat. examined by Tempere.

The author refers to a male R.pseudostigma labelled "Orton, 15.vi.01, F.H.D." in the Hustache collection. The initials are those of F.H.Day and the Orton referred to is no doubt the Cumbrian village (though there are Ortons in other parts of the country).

I have examined my own series of British R.stigma s.lat. (25♂♂, 24♀♀) but all are R.stigma s.str. I have taken R.pseudostigma only in France, (Depts. Haut Rhin and Haute Saone).

I would be very grateful to see any material of "R.stigma" to check for the new species, particularly any specimens which are narrower than average. It seems unlikely that the Orton specimen was an isolated occurrence and R.pseudostigma may be expected from any part of the range of the composite species. It is hoped to produce a more detailed and informative note in due course.

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LILY BOTTOM AND OTHER RECOLLECTIONS. To even begin to understand the changing and local status of beetles one has to persistently scrutinise a manageable area for a long time - 10 years is almost certainly not enough. At Broadway Worcestershire, on three days in June small numbers of Scopaeus sulcicollis (Stph.) and Leiodes turned up as novelties.

In September 1986 I watched numbers of Phacophallus parumpunctatus (Gyll.) dropping into a fountain, and thought at the time that they may have been gathered up by convection currents resulting from the farmers pastime of stubble-burning, then in full swing. During late May, a London Christening enabled us to take in Chiltern Country, and a forgotten time-capsule of rural England, Lily Botton, with a topography belieing its name. Here fallen hard spirally-grained beech produced Melasis buprestoides (L.) and a spring encounter with Quedius lateralis (Gr.). In south Worcestershire Ischnonera sanguinicollis (F.) was on Roas 'Nevada' in June, with Staphylinus ater Gr in Cheltenham town, and a specimen of Tachyporus obtusus (L.) over 5mm long from Bredon's Hardwick. Also at Broadway, where Quedius schatzmayri Grid. and Q.boops (Gr.) are frequent in flight, I at last found their niche, in thin short turf grassland with the ant Lasius flavus (F.). This association seems clearly defined, but it may be facultative - I welcome comments.

Another seeming affinity in Worcs/Gloucs. is that of Othius laeviusculus Stph. for the burrows of sand martins. Near Hailes (Gloucs.) Malthinus frontalis (Marsh.) was at Douglas Fir resin, and Aspidiphorus orbiculatus (Gyll.) under sappy poplar bark. When lightning strikes large Wellingtonias they sometimes explode throwing out javelin-like spears of heartwood up to 20ft in length. Two months after such an event at Toddington, Gloucs., Ptilinus were actively burrowing into the ragged stump, with Aridius nodifer (Westwood), A.bifasciatus (Rtt.) and Orthoperus atomus (Gyll.) attracted by moulds on the timber.

NAMING TACHINIDS. Work has just started on British Tachinidae with the aim of producing a new identification Handbook (247 species). For this project to make a real contribution, your help is vital. There are no host records for 30% of the species and confirmation of many existing records would be highly desirable. Please send any reared or parasitised material (including puparial trappings, bits and pieces etc.), identified or not, together with full host data. I am also keen to learn of all collections of adult Tachinidae with locality data so that the distributions of species can be recorded comprehensively.

Paul Williams, Department of Entomology, British Museum
(Natural History), London, SW7 5BD

BETLES AND CRISPS. A final accolade in the history of the potato crisp has been its acceptance into the diet of Coleoptera. On coastal sands in Alcudia Bay, Mallorca during April this year I was engaged to find a crisp taken in tow by a tenebrionid beetle Tentyria schaumii Kr.

We eventually adopted these feeding them scraps of apple, but when one found devouring a Silis we accepted that back in return.

During May at Broadway, Worcestershire, I detected the distant sound of crisps being masticated. Hurrying towards it, I was surprised to find a cockchafer being crunched up by a cat, leaving no proof other than a scatter of beetle legs.

In recognition of the catholic tastes of these animals, we should perhaps contemplate the cockchafer-flavoured crisp.

P.F. Whitehead.

On May 25th, 60 Harpalus rufibarbis (F.) were amongst a pile of wet carpets near Aston-on-Carrant, and up to 30 Paralister purpurascens (Hb.) amongst decaying chickweed and sowthistle under a rubber sheet. A cockchafer on Bredon Hill, Worcs., on July 4th was one of the latest in my experience, where also significant were breeding slow worms and wheatears.

Onthophagus joannae Golj. on rabbit droppings there is a local rarity and probably a prehistoric relict, the find site being itself within a late Bronze Age occupation site.

Recent identifications and acknowledgements: Special thanks to Mike Cox for determining Epiphaniis from the Midlands; to Mike Morris for pointing out that my Apion laevigatum (Pk.) were after all only hookeri Kirby; to Martin Luff for considering amongst others inland Calathus mollis-types and to Jon Cooter for dissecting the abdomen of Leiodes ferruginea (F.) (I'm still looking for the head and pronotum!) Also thanks to the small rodent that left enough of Carabus monilis F. on Bredon Hill to permit its identification.

P.F.Whitehead.

(* What I actually said was to the effect that it looks more like the aedeagus of ferruginea than that of polita and the proportions/sculpture of the elytra differ too. Without the head/pronotum and more to the point the antennae some doubt remains in my mind; but then I am overcautious!

J.C.)

REGISTER OF COLEOPTERISTS. I am compiling a Register of coleopterists both professional and amateur. Please send me your details: ie particular interests whether general or specialist; number of publications (if any); collection (dry or in alcohol) and so on.

Information will be confidential unless specified.
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Subscribers might like to know that my book "Common Ground Beetles" in the 'Naturalist's Handbooks' series by Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd. is due out soon (Autumn 1987) and that I have been commissioned to write a feature for BBC Wildlife Magazine for spring 1988. T.G.Forsythe.

HELP!! As many readers will know, I am slowly making progress on a completely revised "Coleopterist's Handbook" to be published by the Amateur Entomologist's Society. The format will be different to the original and the partly revised (limited budget) second edition. Several specialists have already completed various sections covering individual families, collecting through to preservation and disposal of one's collection. Our senior relative, the Balfour-Browne Club have promised to cover the aquatics and there are a few sections which I need to work on. Amongst these will be a revised beetle/plant list. Through the good offices of Dr. Mike Morris, I have been able to use a listing prepared from the Phytophagous Insect Data Bank. Alas, its format makes it unweildy and some have commented it is of less use than the sometimes eccentric list in the first edition. I am a botanical dunce and would welcome help from anyone; I can supply copies of the PIDB list for comments. J.Cooter
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