

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

August 1988

Number 33

HERTFORDSHIRE COLEOPTERA: Trevor James, Keeper of Natural History, North Hertfordshire Museums Service is in the process of updating and revising the List of Hertfordshire Coleoptera.

Does anyone have any information about the following people:

R.Edwards: Recorder for Herts, 1955-59. The Museum has a list of records, but no information on collections.

Sir J.C.F.Fryer, 1886-1948: Mainly a Lepidopterist, possessed a "fine collection of insects" - whereabouts unknown.

C.T.Gimingham (d.1957): Recorder for Herts from about 1935-1957, worked at Rothamstead. Whereabouts of collection not known - this included material from A.Piffard.

G.A.Lewcock: Flourished about 1900, contributed records to the Victoria County History, 1902.

C.J.Pool: Worked in the Cheshunt area of Lea Valley ca 1900; author of one or two notes. Not known if he had a collection of what became of it.

W.O.Steel (1917-1969): Some of his collections, at least, are at the BM(NH), but would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing of the whereabouts of other material.

The resulting publication will be produced by the Hertfordshire Natural History Society. Please write to:

Trevor James, Keeper of Natural History,
North Hertfordshire Museums Service,
Old Fire Station, High Street, BALDOCK,
Hertfordshire, SG7 6AR

TOO MANY BEETLES ? There are, fortunately very few occasions when the beetle hunter encounters too many beetles, so that they almost become a nuisance. This has happened to me twice in the past few months. On the Isle of Grain, W.Kent during last summer Plagioder
versicolora (Laich.) was so prolific over a small area of rich collecting ground that it became a beautiful nuisance, clogging up the sweeping net with a huge ball of blue (and green) beetles. The poplars and willow on which they were feeding was covered with them, millions were present and the leaves almost eaten away, beating was impossible.

In a smaller way the recent swarm of Phyllopertha horticola (L.) encountered on the downs above Shoreham, W.Kent this week was a nuisance. The beetle was in its thousands, again making beating and sweeping difficult. At one time I had delectable Drillus, Choleva etc being churned up with several large vigorous chafers at the bottom of the net. To sit and eat my Marnite sandwich was a challenge. I had not seen so many chafers since the 50's when I remember the Cockchafer in even larger numbers at Hythe.

1st June, 1988

S.A.Williams, 79 Cedar Drive,
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BEETLE COLLECTING MADE EASY. The two things that used to really annoy me was to sit down to set some beetles only to find the glue was mouldy or my fine pen was clogged up. When both conditions happened together it was disaster. All that is in the past with the discovery of a species of clear glue sold in small VG grocers and stationers (not the W.H.Smith sort), non-toxic and cost 40p for a years supply. It comes in a small plastic bottle with a blue cap and is called "CMP" or "GU", one bottle I have is made in Korea. For pens I now use a disposable micro-fine tip

Korea. For pens I now use a disposable, micro fine tip, Edding 1800 profipen 0.1mm, costing about £1.50p and it never clogs. An extra bonus is that it is fast in alcohol. So all my major troubles

Alex Williams.

ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE. In "Newsletter" 32, I listed the fauna from the important dune system at Laganas, Zakynthos. I now know that the Laemostenus is picicornis Dj., a Middle Eastern taxon taking part in the eastern Mediterranean. My specimen was taken under bark of scrubby Ulex carpinifolia Gled. at the back of the dunes.

I also listed an Anomala, determined by L. Jessop. On the dunes above Raf-Raf beach on the Tunisian coast I was able recently to observe Anomala ausonia Er. and am now as convinced as I can be that this is the identity of the Zakynthos species, which may provide an eastward extension to its range.

A. ausonia is a strictly sabulicolous species. Unlike our own A. dubia (Scop.), which I have seen flying as late as August 25th, ausonia appears to be strictly vernal as an adult, and has been seen flying on Zakynthos in May. It is avidly sought by Spanish Sparrows as a food source for their young, in fact my first experience of ausonia was from fragments collected from their nests on Zakynthos which I thought at the time belonged to Mimela.

Go quietly on a pilgrimage to Raf-Raf; should you fail to see the glittering ausonia, never mind. You will have seen one of the most devastatingly spectacular landscapes.

I wish to thank the BM(NH) for confirming the nomenclatural validity of A. ausonia.

P. Whitehead.

PARASITES OF BORING BEETLES: Work has started on an RES Handbook to doryctine braconids which are external parasites on the larvae of wood- and bark-boring beetles. I will be most grateful to receive specimens from any Coleopterist who rears parasites from these beetles or from beetle-infested wood.

T.Huddleston,
Department of Entomology,
British Museum (Natural History),
Cromwell Road,
South Kensington, London, SW7 5BD

BAIT FOR PIT-FALL TRAPS: A friend of mine from the Continent gave me a recipe for a "super cocktail" bait for attracting beetles. He uses this himself for collecting Carabus in Europe. I tried the bait during early summer 1988 and found that it not only attracted Carabus, but lots of other beetles too. These included hosts of Staphylinidae; beetles normally found under bark or at sap such as Pediacus, Glischrochilus and Rhizophagus as well as Agathidium and other carabids.

I pass this recipe on for the benefit of other Coleopterists: put in a container two bottles of ordinary red wine, three bottles of vinegar, half a kilo of sugar, a quarter kilo of honey and four or five apples or pears chopped small. Close the container with a plastic sheet and leave the mixture to ferment for at least six weeks.

Other good baits for Carabus are brown ale, beer with honey, red wine, wine vinegar or malt vinegar. These have the advantage of not having to be left to ferment.

D.Copestake, 22 Meadow View, Banbury.

BEDFORDSHIRE COLEOPTERA RECORDS wanted by Paul Hyman, Keeper of Natural History, Luton Museum, Wardown Park, Luton, LU2 7HA. The county fauna is being recorded on a database. Although rich in beetles, the county is poorly supplied with Coleopterists, all records greatly appreciated. Write to Paul for further details. . J.C.

PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF THE CLICK BEETLES (COLEOPTERA:

ELATEROIDEA) OF THE BRITISH ISLES, by Howard Mendel

Published by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Merlewood Research Station, Grange over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 6JU (1988) available from that address at 25-50p (ISBN 1-870393 11 2)

Howard Mendel has show what can be done through enthusiasm backed up by hard work. The Atlas is the result of five years work amassing and collating records of the Elateroidea (= Elateridae, Throscidae and Eucnemidae). It is as the author clearly states "a summary of progress to date"

The work starts with a Foreward by Paul Harding followed by a very informative introduction which poses some taxonomic questions, which doubtless Howard will attempt to find answers for - Is Ampedus praeustus a British beetle and (black eye time for the reviewer) is Zoroachros flavipes a distinct species ? Nine species are not mapped, these largely are known as British from ancient records from one or a very few localities; the localities for Ampedus nigerrimus have yet to be confirmed.

In excess of 70 maps plotted by hand which just goes to show that if you want something doing, get on with it yourself. Under each map is a chart showing the Vice County distribution, this and the map are marked to show pre-1950 records, 1950-1987, and records for both date classes.

Some curious distribution patterns emerge, some almost certainly reflect people going to known sites for a species - Negastrius sabulicola being a good example, Athous subfuscus occurs on Orkney and in Surrey, the Scilly Isles seem to have a very poor but highly interesting elaterid fauna. It will be interesting to see if any of these distributions shown in the Provisional Atlas will have expanded through the efforts of recorders trying to fill in gaps as shown on the first map in the book (total records received). Some species undoubtedly will remain more or less the same - for example the several species associated with ancient woodland (it is easy to pin-point Windsor, Moccas and Shute Parks from the maps). I had not realised some species - Melanotus punctolineatus, Cardiophorus erichsoni, Dioronychnus equeseti, Agriotes sordidus and Synaptus filiformis for example were known from so very few localities. Others, generally regarded as quite rare seem not unreasonably widespread - Procrærus tibialis for example.

The "Records Received" map shows good coverage of south-eastern England, as might be expected, but even so there are several unrecorded squares. Scotland, Ireland and inland Wales are quite poorly recorded as are parts of the south-west and an area around the Wash, parts of the Midlands and north. Howard is still amassing records with the aim of producing a "final" Atlas in five years, anyone interested in taking part in this project by submitting records or specimens for determination should contact: Howard Mendel, The Museum, High Street, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 3QH

In all a most interesting book and should be on the book-shelf of every Coleopterist; we owe a debt of thanks for the dedicated hard work put into producing this Atlas.

J.C.