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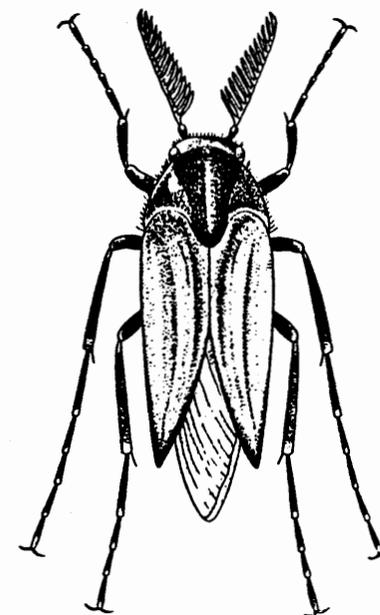
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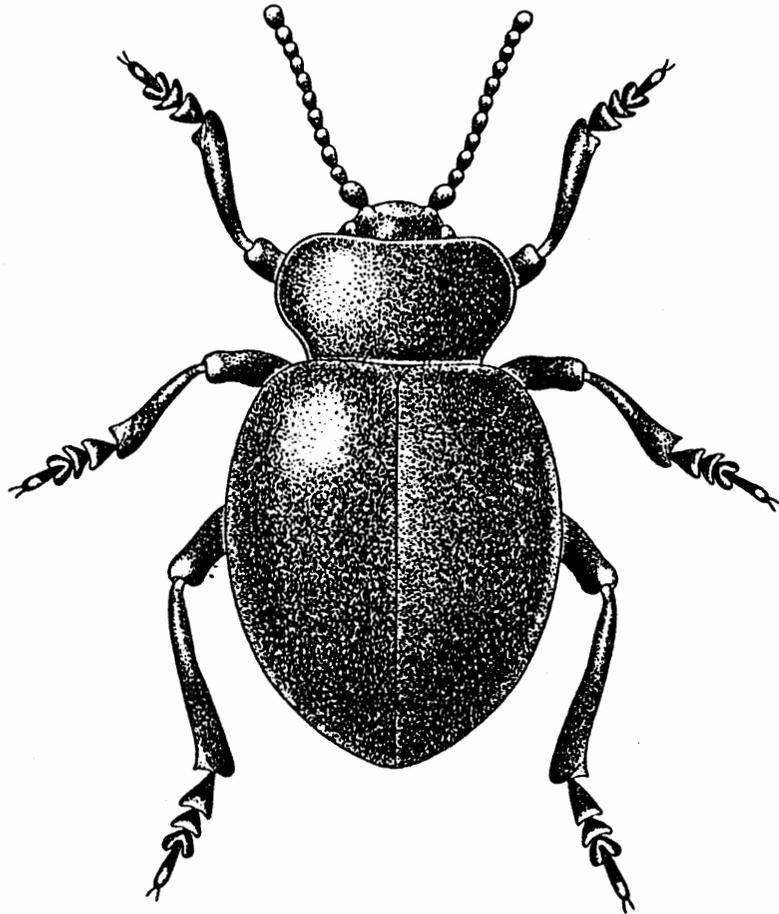
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[Cover drawing of *Metoecus paradoxus* (L.) by John Read]

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

August 1990

Number 40



Timarcha tenebricosa (Fab.)
(Chrysomelidae)

[An original drawing by John Read]

FATE OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON, FORMERLY BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY)

On Monday 23rd April The Natural History Museum announced that 60 posts will be cut from the current staff of 780 by 1992-93. Most of the lost posts will be in the Science Departments and exhibition teams. Some will be lost by normal retirement but the majority of the cuts will be made by compulsory early retirement and redundancy. Additionally, there will be a revolutionary restructuring of the Museum's scientific activities and the terms of employment of the remaining staff.

As scientists we are deeply concerned for the future of our disciplines within the Museum and our contribution to the scientific community, both national and international.

The problems we face are caused externally by lack of Government funding and, internally by failure to stress the fundamental importance of collection-based research. The Museum's plan is to concentrate our research in six areas; biodiversity, environmental quality, living resources, mineral resources, human health and human origins. These fields obviously imply an attempt to raise funds from sponsorship and

contract-based research, with less emphasis on the fundamental and continued taxonomic research for which the Museum has established its international reputation. But the impact on the scientific community will be far reaching. The impact on the Museum's libraries, in terms of funding and collection building, will also be long lasting and may be irreversible.

Despite the aim to continue studying diversity, the Museum proposes to cease research on Recent and fossil mammals, archaeozoology, testate amoebae, sponges, diatoms and bryophytes, taxonomic computing, fossil plants and fossil birds, modern bees and non-parasitic wasps, hemiptera (heteroptera) and weevils, building stones and gemstones, among others. This is in addition to research already closed on modern birds and spiders, coelenterates, bryozoans, echinoderms and annelids. It is a chilling thought that research into land vertebrates except primates is now reduced to two people in the wake of a powerful tradition begun by Richard Owen. Some of our major information bases and advisory services are being severely cut, such as host-parasite catalogues and parasite identification. The Museum's libraries face the prospect of a 20% cut in current staff numbers. Coming at a time when vacant posts already remain unfilled, and the Library is undergoing a vital and comprehensive automation programme, this may dictate a savage reduction in the services that this national resource can offer. Thus the cuts are inconsistent with stated policy.

We fear that research areas, once closed will never be reopened. The resources in this Museum, working from such a wide base, have meant that cooperation internally has been very fruitful. By narrowing the research we feel that quality may suffer.

Several people who are expert in their subjects and have built expertise in certain areas have been commanded to change their interests completely. Most of the staff remaining will be held at fixed

'BIOGRAPHY SHEETS' - AN APOLOGY

Michael Darby is unable to produce any 'Biography sheets' this quarter. We apologise for the omission, but things should be back to normal for the next editionEds.

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MORE ABOUT STAPHYLINUS L. SPECIES

[This is one of several letters received on this matter - Eds.]

Referring to Mr Whitehead's article (May 1990, *Coleopt. Newsl.* No. 39), the late W.O. Steel (1948, The British species of *Staphylinus* subgenus *Ocypus* Steph. (Col., Staphylinidae), *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 84: 271-277) published a very useful paper with illustrations of head, pronota and, importantly, the aedeagi which, as far as males are concerned, are the basic criteria for identification.

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SOMERSET RECORDS WANTED

An updated list of the Coleoptera of Somerset is now in active preparation and anyone with records for the old county of Somerset (i.e. including what is now south Avon, or V.C.s 5 and 6) is urged to send in their records. Within each species records are being sorted by 10km grid square in order to make the finished work of maximum use to the various national recording schemes, and because it can be very difficult for someone unfamiliar with the county to locate a particular place name. Records which cannot be located within a particular grid square will still be listed but with an approximate grid reference. Details of date and place of capture are also required. Casual records are wanted as well, as there are still many gaps in the recorded distribution of our most abundant species. All contributions will be gratefully received.

A.G. Duff.

curatorial or research assistant grades, giving no opportunity for promotion without a complete change of job. This demoralises staff and divides them into two distinct bands with little overlap between the two. Until now our strengths and individuality have lain in the blending of curation and research, with individuals understanding both and developing research careers from original employment as curators. Researchers need full knowledge of the collections. 'Curators' will not be allowed to develop scientific expertise or knowledge of the material in their care. Thus they will not be able to provide constructive support for visiting specialists.

These job losses and restructuring are detrimental to the future of this Museum and we urge your support. We suggest that letters of protest be sent to the Minister of Arts and to the Chairman of Trustees of The Natural History Museum, The Museums and Galleries Commission and The Royal Society. Such letters will show the strength of views of our colleagues in other institutions. Our Corporate Plan still has to be reviewed by the Office of Arts and Libraries and it may not be too late to encourage them to provide the relatively small additional money to continue to uphold our international reputation for the excellence of care of our collections, the research which stems from them, and the Library which supports these activities. Please help.

Please address letters to those below:

The Right Hon Richard Luce MP,
Office of Arts and Libraries,
Horse Guards Road,
London SW1P 3AL.

Sir Walter Bodmer FRS,
Chairman of Trustees,
The Natural History Museum,
Cromwell Road,

Sir Hugh Leggatt,
 Museums and Galleries Commission,
 17 Duke Street,
 London SW1Y 6BD.

Prof. Sir George Porter,
 President, The Royal Society,
 6 Carlton House Terrace,
 London SW1.

with copies to

Dr Neil Chalmers,
 The Director,
 The Natural History Museum,
 London SW7 5BD.

[A press release from the IPMS Secretary, Department of Public Services,
 EM(NH) J.C.]

SOME RECORDS OF WATER BEETLES FROM CUMBRIA

The following water beetles were collected during the course of survey work carried out on aquatic Heteroptera at various important ecological sites, mainly in West Cumbria.

Mirehouse Pond, Whitehaven (NX9814), 6.7.1985:

Hyphydrus ovatus (L.), *Hygrotus inaequalis* (Fab.), *Ilybius fuliginosus* (Fab.), *Helophorus brevipalpis* Bedel.

Lank Rigg Tarn, Calder Valley (NY0911), 2.5.1986:

Hygrotus quinquelineatus (Zett.), *Hydroporus planus* (Fab.), *H. pubescens*

Quedius schatzmayri Grid. and *Q. semiaeneus* Steph. are a 'difficult' pair of species in subgenus *Raphirus*, the former being the smaller of the two. Atty in his *Coleoptera of Gloucestershire* gives a good, concise statement of *Quedius* habitats. He regards *Q. schatzmayri* as occurring on grassland and *Q. semiaeneus* as occurring in damp places. More information is needed on these species. I have summer records of *Q. schatzmayri* on short-turf grassland at 300m in Worcestershire, numerous flight records in September/October at 100m, and one or two winter records in tussocky grassland at 11m O.D., so it may well be a seasonal migrant. *Quedius semiaeneus* may be eurytopic. I have one from under a dead gull on the beach at Walney Island, Cumbria, and another from a wet ride in Tiddesley Wood, Worcestershire. In the words of Dr Madge, "Food is where you find it!".

Quedius nitipennis Steph. is another instance of a species in which rationalisation of habitat is not easy. I know it from beneath a mat of *Aubrieta* on flagstones in Worcestershire, on a 'saltmeadow' (with *Q. obliteratus*) on the inner estuary of the Cheshire Dee, and in sterile gravel at Buttermere, Cumbria, as well as in compost in Worcestershire between June and August. The essential point of course is the question of the larval habitat in all these species, but this in no way detracts from the need for further knowledge of the imagines of this interesting group.

I would be particularly pleased to receive any comments or recent observations on *Q. aridulus*, *Q. boopoides* Munst. and *Q. fuliginosus* (Grav.). My notion that *Q. fuliginosus* is a rare insect may be entirely misconceived.

P.F. Whitehead

undertaken by examination of the male genitalia; slight differences in elytral puncturation of the females may not be entirely constant. My experience of *Q. maurus* is limited to ancient coppice/pollard woodlands with a long history of management, on the English Jurassic scarp, but the matter is complicated by the occasional appearance of *Q. mesomelinus* as a woodland insect. I have a male from high cavity debris from oak, and others from hollow oak with *Q. brevicornis* Thoms. and *Q. cruentus* (Oliv.). This latter species is frequently seen with *Q. mesomelinus* in compost heaps, although in the innermost areas of British cities only *Q. mesomelinus* appears to be successful in this habitat. Interestingly, in the Alps, the subspecies of *Q. mesomelinus* known as *skorazewskii* Korge seems to be a true forest insect, as *Q. maurus* appears to be here. In Britain *Q. mesomelinus* varies greatly in its general conformation, which may be expected in a species favoured by human activities and which is now almost cosmopolitan. There appears also to be a reddish form of the species, and I have a bicoloured female with the abdomen almost as bright as *Q. ventralis* (Arag.).

Quedius microps Grav. is a comparatively small arboreal species which seems to be genuinely rare and in parts of its British range may be actively declining. I know it only from Norton-juxta-Kempsey, Worcester, where it was found on ash on 20.2.1988.

Some time ago I had an interesting discussion with Mr A.A. Allen on the status of *Q. nemoralis* (Baud.) and was able to satisfy him that it did occur in compost heaps, whilst he was able to satisfy me that it was also a woodland insect. Shortly after this I took *Q. nemoralis* in leaf litter in ancient woodland in Worcestershire with *Q. nigriceps* Kraatz and *Q. scitulus* (Grav.), confirming his view and suggesting also an ancestral habitat for the species. The crucial factor with regard to *Q. nemoralis* is its preference for low substrate humidity. In compost heaps it invariably favours high drymatter niches, and I have taken one in dry conditions under a mat of cultivated *Alyssum*.

(Gyll.), *H. tristis* (Payk.), *Agabus arcticus* (Payk.), *Rhantus bistratus* (Bergs.), *Gyrinus substriatus* Steph.

Whin Rigg Tarn, Wastwater (NY1503), 3.8.1985:

Hydroporus gyllenhali Schiödte, *H. pubescens*, *H. tristis*, *Agabus arcticus*, *A. bipustulatus* (L.), *A. congener* (Thun.), *Rhantus bistratus*.

High Nook Tarn, nr Loweswater (NY 1219), 21.2.1988:

Gyrinus minutus Fab.

Dent Fell nr Egremont (NY0312):

Hydroporus pubescens.

Styhead Tarn, Wasdale (NY2209):

Hydroporus obscurus Sturm, *H. palustris* (L.), *H. pubescens*, *Agabus bipustulatus*, *Gyrinus substriatus*.

Near Stoneside Hill, Bootle (SD1488), 4.9.1985:

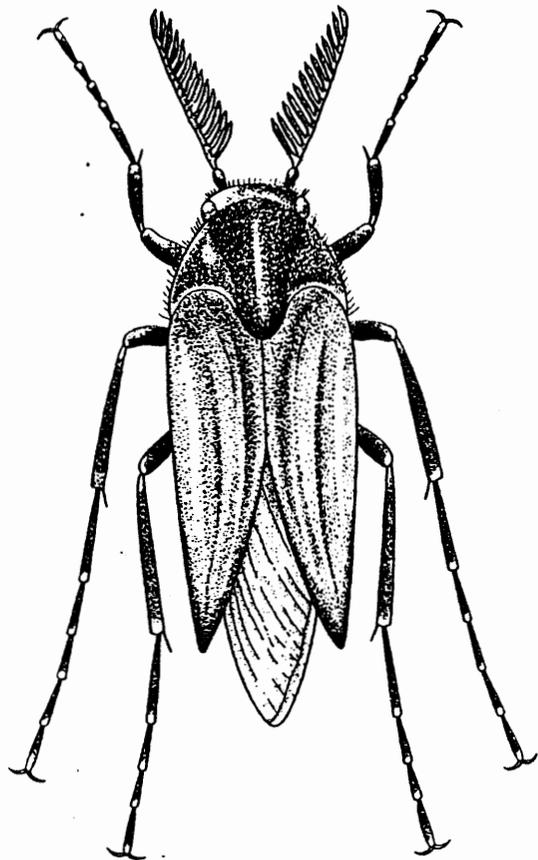
Halipilus flavicollis Sturm, *Hydroporus longicornis* Sharp, *H. morio* Aubé, *H. pubescens*, *Agabus bipustulatus*.

Woodhouse Tarn nr Foxfield (SD2385), 28.9.1985:

Hygrotytus inaequalis, *Coelambus impressopunctatus* (Sch.), *Hydroporus palustris*, *H. planus*, *H. pubescens*, *Ilybius fuliginosus*, *Hydrobius fuscipes* (L.).

I wish to thank Andy Foster for his kind assistance with identification of the beetles.

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Metoecus paradoxus (L.)
(Rhipiphoridae)

[An original drawing by John Read]

(Herbst) as reported in my article - (1985) *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 121: 111-118.

R.W.J. Read.

RANDOM PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE ECOLOGY OF THE GENUS *QUEDIUS* STEPHENS

As the genus *Quedius* Steph., particularly the subgenus *Raphirus*, is a 'difficult' one, it will do no harm to mention some personal observations on the ecology of the beetles.

It may be possible to apply to many of the species the concept of a preferred, primary or ancestral habitat, but the genus is made particularly interesting by the ability of many of the species to turn up in unexpected or man-made habitats.

The separation of *Q. aridulus* Jans. from *Q. boops* (Grav.) is a notoriously difficult matter which appears to be dependant upon scrutiny of the aedeagus; even then the median lobe may have to be revolved and scrutinised minutely. My only specimens of *Q. aridulus* to date are from open sandy sites - Aston Mill in Worcestershire and Llandwyn Bay, Anglesey (this last with *Q. obliteratus* Erich. and *Q. semiobscurus* (Marsh.)). *Quedius boops* occurs much more widely, but appears also to prefer well-drained sediments; I have taken it often between February and May with the ant *Lasius flavus* (Fab.).

Quedius cinctus (Payk.) is a similarly wide-ranging species from the lowlands to over 950m O.D., in Wales frequently in dung; often at badger latrines in Worcestershire.

The separation of *Q. maurus* (Sahl.) and *Q. mesomelinus* (Marsh.) is best

itself is rather eurytopic occurring in dry to wet pastures, river edges (alluvial sediments) e.g. Mersey, Wye, and also not infrequently on coastal dunes, often with *S. ossium* Steph. *S. clavicornis* may also overwinter socially in dense aggregates (Coleopt. Newsl. No. 32, May 1988).

P.F. Whitehead

FOODPLANTS OF *PHYTOBIUS QUADRITUBERCULATUS* (FAB.) (CURCULIONIDAE)

Some time ago, while searching for weevils on the Ravenglass Nature Reserve near Drigg in West Cumbria (SD09), I came across a number of adults of *Phytobius quadrituberculatus* (Fab.) on curled dock, *Rumex crispus*. The weevils were feeding mainly on the edges of the leaves, and also, to a lesser extent, on the flowers and developing fruits. All the main works dealing with the biology and habits of Curculionidae give *P. quadrituberculatus* as feeding on *Polygonum hydropiper* and *P. persicaria* with no mention of *Rumex*. Perhaps this is a new hostplant for the weevil and I would be interested to hear from any other coleopterist who may have taken it on *Rumex* or any other plant apart from *Polygonum*.

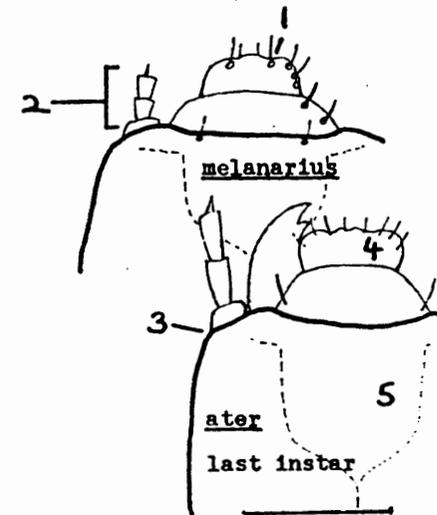
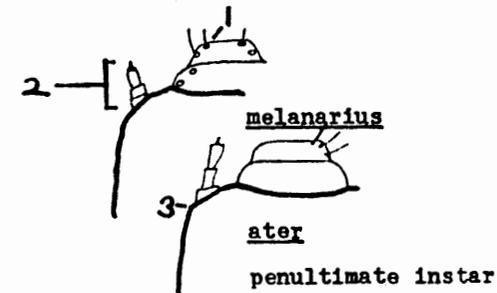
I must just mention that *P. quadrituberculatus* has been recorded in the literature as being associated with *Glaux maritima*. This is interesting as this plant is in the Primulaceae and as such only distantly related to *Polygonum* or *Rumex*. I have on several occasions found the weevil on *Glaux* here in West Cumbria and it occurs not uncommonly on the saltmarshes around the Ravenglass estuary. One particularly good site is the stretch of marsh along the River Esk near to Waberthwaite Church.

I have successfully reared *P. quadrituberculatus* on *Rumex crispus* in captivity and the biology is very similar to that of *Phytobius comari*

POINTS OF DISTINCTION IN THE LARVAE OF *PRIONYCHUS ATER* (FAB.) AND *PRIONYCHUS MELANARIUS* (GERM.) (ALLECULIDAE)

The purpose of this article is to convey as simply as possible means to separate larvae of *Prionychus ater* (Fab.) and *Prionychus melanarius* (Germ.). Field separation of last instar larvae is perfectly feasible, and as they achieve full-grown lengths of up to 30mm, they are unlikely to be overlooked. To anyone entirely unacquainted with the larvae, they are of the shiny, cylindrical tenebrionid type exemplified by mealworms.

Identification is achieved by examination of the head, and the accompanying figure illustrates the crucial features, i.e.



1. Setae of *P. melanarius* arise from pits with clear raised annulae; these defined pits are lacking in *P. ater*.
2. Antennomeres of *P. melanarius* are always substantially shorter than those of *P. ater*.
3. Angle of frons beneath antennal socket more conspicuous in *P. ater*.
- 4 & 5. Labrum and frons of *P. ater* somewhat dull, channelled, appearing strigose and/or rugose. Labrum and frons of *P. melanarius* comparatively smooth, shiny and finely punctured.

These features, especially 4 & 5, work well with the last and penultimate instar larvae. Immature larvae of *P. melanarius* may be extremely active and mobile, retreating backwards with ease and speed. Further work is required to determine how the two species compete with each other if at all. It is well known that *P. melanarius* is a species of primary woodland habitat where it now occupies the same niches which *P. ater* does elsewhere.

The possibility of hybridisation may be unlikely but I would not dismiss it out of hand. In the English Midlands I have located larvae (and sometimes adults) of *P. melanarius* in the following tree genera: *Betula*, *Fraxinus*, *Quercus* and *Ulmus*. Larvae of *P. melanarius* have also been found by myself in debris beneath the nest of a carrion crow.

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ANOTHER NAME CHANGE

Readers may be unaware of a recent name change which affects a British species. In a recent note (Nelson, 1990, *Coleopt. Bull.* 44(2): 233-

234), the dryopid specialist Harry G. Nelson has reassigned *Helichus substriatus* (Müller, P.W.J.) to the genus *Pomatinus* Sturm, 1853, since it now appears that *Helichus* should be restricted to species from the New World. At the same time, the remaining Palaearctic *Helichus* are assigned to three genera raised from subgeneric rank. Distinctions between *Pomatinus* and *Helichus* are clearly described in the note, and it is likely that the new arrangement will be generally adopted.

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SIMPLE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN *STENUS CLAVICORNIS* (SCOP.) AND *S. PROVIDUS* ERICH. (= *S. ROGERI* KRAATZ) (STAPHYLINIDAE)

Many existing keys based on somatic features of adults of *S. clavicornis* (Scop.) and *S. providus* Erich. are extremely subjective, and many characters e.g. leg colour, are often quoted but lack absolute consistency.

In the median area of the first two abdominal tergites of *S. providus*, the punctures are sparse, and do not extend across continuously from one side to the other. In the case of *S. clavicornis* the median area of the first two tergites is punctured uniformly. In *S. providus*, the punctures near the mid-lateral edges of the elytra appear to coalesce around a focus, producing an almost concentric effect, not seen in *S. clavicornis*. These key features can be seen in the field and are reliable.

Stenus providus may be somewhat more localised than supposed, and I have encountered it infrequently. One encounter was in Cranham Wood, Gloucs., a habitat not favoured by *S. clavicornis*. *S. clavicornis*