

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

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To my surprise the next issue will be the 21st*- come of age, a thing I never really expected. The meeting at Monks Wood seems a long time ago. The membership seems to have evened off around 90-95 and I'm pleased to report I now get material from subscribers on a more regular basis. Gone are the days of asking folks to write or wracking my brains for space fillers. Please keep it up. (* due to an error there was no No.12!)

Harpalus dimidiatus Rossi in Worcestershire.

During May 1983, after floods in the Avon Valley, I was searching beneath mats of Salix twigs rafted onto the floodplain at Birlingham, Worcestershire. My attention was immediately focused on a large carabid which, from the distinctive violet reflections at the base of the pronotum, I regarded as Harpalus dimidiatus. I am grateful to Martin Luff for confirming this, and for providing me with a distribution map. At that time, the Worcestershire specimen was the most northerly recorded from Britain.

Associated carabs were Agonum obscurum, Pterostichus cupreus, P.macer, P.nigrita, P.strenuus, Harpalus rufipes and H.aenea. Although this is clearly, in general, a hygrophilous assemblage, it must not be assumed that it is absolutely autochthonous, and H.dimidiatus may have been introduced by flood water from further up river.

In the summer of 1968, prior to my developing interest in beetles, vast numbers of them were transported along the Avon Valley in this way, and at night thousands sought refuge on the rivers old packhorse bridges.

P.F.Whitehead, Little Comberton, Pershore.

Industrial tips.

In July 1984 the Botanical Society of the British Isles met at St. Helens, Lancashire (now part of Merseyside) under the leadership of Dr Hilary Ash.

The object of the meeting was to examine the vegetation of environments created by the dumping of industrial waste in this still intensely industrialised area, largely during the last century. The object of this short note is to record the beetles, and some other insects, which I noted during the visit.

It is typical of such extreme environments that invertebrates occur in large numbers, but species diversity is low.

Burghy Banks: 33/525973. Huge, flat-topped hills of plate glass making waste, largely of fine textured sands (with pioneer Salix-Betula thickets developing) rich in oxides of iron. Probably also sodium carbonate waste, with marine sand (Anthyllis vulneraria L., Carex arenaria L., Elymus arenarius L.). At the base of the 15 metre scarps, waterlogged bare areas, products of leaching with high pH10, with facultative halophytes Chenopodium rubrum L., Puccinellia distans (L.) Parl. Here Elaphrus riparius L., Pterostichus anthracinus Pz., Agonum marginatum Pz and Anara aulica Pz. with one Staphylinus olens Muell.

These beetles evidently have wide amplitude with regard to the ionic status of their substrate (which in none of these cases has been sampled). Other factors are obviously important. Agonum marginatum may be dominant and abundant at the margins of oligotrophic Welsh lakes.

Lyons Yard: Leblanc process waste 33/517951. Undulating herb dominated waste heaps, intensely basic, pH unknown, large unvegetated patches, deeply canalised drainage. Curious mixture of dwarfed Eupatorium with other moisture loving plants (eg. Scrophularia) and calciphiles (Centaurium Blackstonia). Ground surface dry and parched, but probable

high colloidal moisture retention (?waterlogged in the winter). Hygrophilous cicadellid Cicadella viridis L occurs Calathus fuscipes Gz. frequent (cannibalism noted), otherwise only Harpalus rufipes Dg. Vast numbers of the Meadow Grass-Hopper Chorthippus brunneus (Thunb.).

Ravenhead Pond 33/515943 backed by "marine band" colliery waste. Pond mud pH7, with halophyte Scripus maritima L. Damselfly Ischnura elegans (v.d.Lind.) and large specimens of aquatic gastropod Bithynia tentaculata (L.) suggest "good" conditions, no significant pollution, Elaphrus cupreus Duft. on mud. Although the total number of species is small, it is felt that they should be recorded, because of the problems faced by beetles colonising sites that are unlikely ever to conform to natural sequences of development and progression.

Dr Hilary Ash kindly provided the pH readings.
P.F.Whitehead, "Moor Leys", Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcs.

Gardens.

The garden fauna of Liverpool City, Merseyside, is characterised by particular invertebrate taxa, mostly, but not always, synanthropic species. On May 30th 1984 a specimen of Asaphidion flavipes (L.) was found under a stone in a small (ca 130m sq) back garden at Mossley Hill (33/392863) in the shade of an outgrown privet hedge. The site is on the Keuper Sandstone, which makes a strong visual feature in the area.

As far as is known this is the only record of Asaphidion from the City, and it may represent a population that pre-dates the gardens, which are about 45 years old. Carabus violaceus L. also occurs here as an elongate form marked in blue, not violet. This form also occurs in nearby Otterspool Park, with abundant Calathus piceus Marsh. probably an indigenous population, in an area of sandstone outcrops and

pools in the flow of the old Oskelbrooke. Asaphidion could be looked for here as well.

Our own garden in the Chilwall district of the City (33/399894) was notorious for the beetles (not beatles!) which appeared faithfully year after year under the same flagstone from about 1953 at least to 1956, as larvae and adults. They were an unusual bronze form of Carabus nemoralis Mull. They were really childhood pets, and although the typical form hangs on in the county, C.nemoralis of the City must surely be extinct.

P.F.Whitehead, "Moor Leys", Little Comberton, Pershore.

CERAMBYCID RECORDS - AN APPEAL

Dr R.R. Uthhoff-Kaufmann, Bedford's Cottage, Pharisee Green, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1JN is preparing the first supplement to his "Notes on the Distribution of the British Longicorn Coleoptera" (Ent.Mon.Mag., 1948, 84:66-85) and would be most grateful to receive readers detailed lists and records of this group of beetles; all replies will be acknowledged and postage refunded.

LETTER from Fanny Owen to Charles Darwin, 27th January 1830:

"What a horrid disgusting thing money is - I hate the name of it - don't you - it is fit for vulgar souls - not Beetle Hunters - and Paint brush Drivers!!!"

sent in by Michael Darby (Darwin Archive at Cambridge. Quoted in "The Correspondence of Charles Darwin, 1, 1821-1836. Cambridge, 1985).

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEXT "NEWSLETTER" ARE NEEDED - PLEASE SEND TO J.COOPER (ADDRESS ON P.8 (by mid-October no need to type if hand writing is clear!))

COLEOPTERA IN HEAPS OF OLD BONES AT HORTON WOOD TQ5766.

In the country lanes in this part of Kent one sees plenty of dumping - old mattresses etc., all of which is an eyesore and of little interest to the Coleopterist. However dumping of a different sort has recently occurred with at least two heaps of rotting bones mostly of sheep (or should we say mutton?) thrown out by pig farmers after they have been boiled for their nutrients. The larger of the heaps must weigh in excess of 10 cwt. The bones dry out gradually and the soggy parts (always the best for beetles) turn mouldy before becoming bleached and useless. My attention was first attracted to the heaps by the hundreds of Necrobia rufipes (Dg) crawling over them. This is a rare insect in Kent, the only place that I have seen it before is at the bone works on the Isle of Sheppy.

Sieving of the heaps on several occasions in April and May of this year produced the following species:

Carcinops pumilio (Er.)

Cercyon lateralis (Mm.)

C. lugubris (Ol.)

Xylodromus concinnus (Mm.)

Gyrophypnus fracticornis (Mull.)

Philonthus discoideus (Grav.)

P. jurgans Tott.

P. politus (L.)

P. nigriventris Thoms.

P. succicola Thoms.

P. tenuicornis M&R

Quedius cruentus (Ol.)

Atheta laticollis (Stph.)

A. nigricornis (Thoms.)

A. nigripes (Thoms.)

Oligota picipes (Stph.)

Necrobia rufipes (Dg.)

N. violacea (L.)

Omosita colon (L.)

O. depressa (L.)

O. discoidea (F.)

Ahasverus advena (Waltl)

Atomaria fuscicollis Mm.

Lathridius minutus (L.)

Most of the species are common and would be expected in such a habitat. However, I have no previous record of Oligota picipes from bones or carrion, whilst Ahasverus and Omosita depressa were both new to me

S.A. Williams.

BEE TL ES OF CALCAREOUS GRASSLANDS.

Mr Alexander has made a commendable start to the worthwhile and by no means simple task of compiling a list of the British calcicole beetle fauna. Since he requests comments, I venture to suggest certain additions and deletions, preceded by a few general remarks.

I take it that the criterion for inclusion is whether the species in question (as indicated by the records) occurs on calcareous soils clearly more often than on others, and my comments will be based on that assumption. Were the list to be restricted to those apparently confined to such soils, it would of course be very much shorter (see below). The difficulty as so often in studies of this sort, lies in the multitude of "borderline" cases with no really clear bias one way or the other - compounded by a shortage of data for the rarest or least well known species. Thus, several of the suggestions offered can only be tentative at this stage. Of course, the primary determining factor in the case of phytophagous species must normally be the soil-preference of their host foodplants.

A number of chalk grass-land beetles, particularly Carabidae, favour sandy soils also; examples are Amara equestris, perhaps A. montivaga, Harpalus attenuatus (about equally often on sand), Licinus depressus, Panagaeus bipustulatus. In fact those which appear strictly, or virtually, confined to the chalk form a small minority, of which a preliminary list might include Callistus lunatus (apparently only on the North Downs and a few spots on the Berkshire Chilterns), Licinus punctatulus, Harpalus dinidiatus, Dacrila pruinosa, Alevonota aurantiaca, Colon

rufescens, Bythinopsis glabrata, Neuraphes carinatus,
Stenichnus pusillus (?), Drilus flavescens, Meligethes erichsoni
M.corvinus (no record this century), Mordellistena
brevicauda, Bruchidius canus (quite distinct from cisti,
despite the "Check List"), Trachyploeus spinimanus,
T.digitalis, Tychius polylineatus (South Downs and Chilterns,
very scarce). Those of the above not on Mr Alexander's list
could be added to it.

The following, also, might be added to the general list:
Stenus asphaltinus, S.ater, Ocypus pedator, Atheta pervagata,
Benick (= dilataticornis auct. Brit; breeds in truffles)
Agaricophagus cephalotes, Silpha laevigata (at least in the
south), Claviger testaceus, C.longicornis (also on limestone),
Meligethes bidens, Leiosoma pyrenaeum, Smicronyx reichi,
(S.coecus ?), Tychius squamulatus, T.lineatulus, Phytobius
quadrinodosus. Many species of Leiodini and perhaps all those
of Colon have a strong calcicole tendency, but it is hard to
particularize further.

The species I would be inclined to omit are: Platyderus
ruficollis, Aphanisticus pusillus, Longitarsus pellucidus
(definitely), Apion sedi (-ditto), Cionus hortanulus,
C.longicollis, Miarus micros, M.plantarum, Phyllobius
viridicollis (definitely). Nor am I quite happy about
Ceuthorhynchus resedae, C.geographicus and Miarus campanulae
(perhaps true borderline cases). Harpalus ardosiacus and
others of the sub-genus Ophonus (at least melleti, rupicola),
and Brachinus, occur also on alluvial soils; the latter rarely
on sand.

In my experience, several species show a strong preference
for chalk in the south-east and perhaps more widely, but not,
or not clearly, over the whole of their range. Such are Lebia
chlorocephala, Stenus ochropus (erichsoni), Dascillus servinus,
Agrypnus murinus, Cryptocephalus noraei, Batophila aerata,
and doubtless others.

A.A.Allen.

E.A.J.DUFFY - It is sad to report the death in May of our acknowledged authority on the Cerambycidae. Obituary notices will doubtless appear in the Entomological Press.

J.C.

CARABIDAE AND CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Mr Ernest Lewis drew to my attention Thiele's "Carabid Beetles in their Environments" (1977). Thiele regards "limestone beetles" as a false category - pages 212-214 giving a brief summary of researches by Lindroth (published in "Die Fennoskandischen Carabidae", vol 3; 1949, Lindroth, C.H.) The over-riding factor it seems are the temperature and humidity gradients; limestone species were shown to be either strongly thermophilic or xerophilic.

J.C.

BOOKS - Michael Darby has a number of duplicate books on Coleoptera. For details please write to Michael at 52 Avenue Gardens, London, W3 8HB and enclose SAE.

(I just about manage to fit in the typing and duplicating of the stencils, addressing envelopes and making up/stapling the "Newsletter" each quarter. One thing I do not want to get involved in is advertising in any great detail. The above notice I think is perfectly acceptable; certainly I would not have the time and the "Newsletter" not the resources to give complete listings of all items anyone has to offer. However, I think there is a need for adverts like this and am prepared to include further offers or requests from any subscriber) J.Cooter.

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