

ENTOMOLOGICAL SUB-SECTION

RECORDER'S NOTES, 1954-1955

LEPIDOPTERA (BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS),

1954

Memories of "bad" weather are inclined to linger much longer than those of the "good," and so 1954 will be long remembered, particularly by field naturalists. Apart from April, most of the months were very wet and lacking in sunshine, in fact the year's total of 1,538 hours bright sunshine at Bickenhall was the lowest on record. Add to this the persistently low maximum temperatures, and one does get a miserable picture. The highest temperature recorded was 76 deg., and surely one must go back many years to find a maximum below 80.

January—the first three weeks were very mild, but the last week very cold: both rainfall and sunshine were somewhat below normal. The only record of note was a further specimen of **Exapate congelatella**.

February started with snow and severe frost, but became milder towards the end: sunshine was near the normal. Among the usual early moths at light was a single **Phigalia pilosaria**, (Pale Brindled Beauty).

March was exceptionally wet with heavy snow in the early part: in spite of this, sunshine was slightly above the average. Apart from the few early butterflies, nothing of interest was reported.

April in most parts of the county was the driest and the sunniest for over 30 years, but the clear skies gave very cold nights, which delayed the appearance of many of the spring months. **Xylomyges conspicillaris** (Silver Cloud), **Orthosia miniosa** (Blossom Underwing) and **Lycia hirtaria** (Brindled Beauty) were well out before the end of the month.

May was on the whole a dull and cold month, with sunshine only about 85% of the normal. It was gratifying to see a large increase in the numbers of **Hemearis lucina** (The Duke of Burgundy) in woods near Taunton. The light-traps were taken "out of hibernation," and among the small catches were **Notodonta anceps** (Great Prominent), **Polyploca ridens** (Frosted Green), the immigrant **Nomophila noctuella** and **Semioscopis steinkellneriana**. **Chesias rufata** (Broom-tip) was taken at North Petherton, last reported from Weston-super-Mare in 1952.

June was again cool, cloudy and very wet, with sunshine only 77% of the normal. Nevertheless some interesting captures were reported: **Aegeria formicaeformis** was recorded from Meare, the last record for the Red-tipped Clearwing was from neighbouring Shapwick in 1933. **Calostigia salicata** (Striped Twin-spot Carpet) was taken at Cannington, mainly a northern species, it has been recorded in the past from Exmoor. The uncommon **Selenia lunaria** (Lunar Thorn) was also taken at Cannington. The Tortrix moth (**Argyroploce salicella**) which bears a strong resemblance to a bird dropping was taken at North Wootton, and **Ernarmonia splendana** was beaten from Oak at Holford: last recorded many years ago from Haselbury Plucknett. In addition the light-trap produced **Diacrisia sannio** (Clouded Buff), **Drymonia dodonaea** (Marbled Brown), **Stauropus fagi** (Lobster), **Polia advena** (Pale Shining Brown), **Pylarge fumata** (Smoky Wave), **Scoparia mercurea** and **Ernarmonia aurana**. **Atolmis rubricollis** (The Red-necked Footman) was bred from old logs.

July was decidedly cold and dismal, with very low maximum temperatures and sunshine about 75% of the average. A single example of the immigrant moth **Laphygma exigua** (Small Mottled Willow) came to light at Cannington, together with the "Pug" **Eupithecia succenturiata** and **Euphyia unangulata** (Sharp-angled Carpet). **Eupithecia goossensiata** (Ling Pug) was taken at Holcombe. The "Micros" **Eucosma solandriana** and **E. hohenwartiana** were taken at light.

August provided the same dismal picture, with lack of sunshine, persistent rain and low temperatures. **Endothenia nigrocostana** was recorded at Wembdon (the first for many years), and the rare **Ypsolophus scabrellus** was taken at Cannington. The best from the light-trap were **Pheosia gnoma** (Lesser Swallow Prominent), **Drepana falcataria** (Pebble Hook-tip), **Zenobia subtusa** (Olive), **Eurhodope advenella** last recorded from Ashcott years ago, and **Argyrotoza forsskaeana**.

September gave the highest temperature of the year, 76 deg. on 1st, but it only lasted one day! Then back to the cool type of weather, although the month's sunshine was above the average. No captures of particular note were reported, although **Trichiura crataegi** (Pale Oak Egger) turned up at light in greater numbers than usual; the rather uncommon Tortrix **Peronea boscana** also came to light.

October was wet and lacking in sunshine, but the temperature was above the normal by one or two degrees. The rare immigrant Pyraustid moth **Margaronia unionalis** was taken at light at Weston-super-Mare. A single specimen of **Depressaria pallorella** was taken at light—this moth has not been recorded for over 30 years.

November was, like that of 1951, excessively wet, but it was on the whole mild. The Winter Moth (**Operophtera brumata**) put in an early appearance, and **Conistra ligula** (Dark Chestnut) came to light in numbers.

December was rather mild and sunshine was above average. The only moth perhaps worth recording was **Erannis aurantiaria** (Scarce Umber).

N.B. The above records refer to Bickenhall, unless otherwise stated.

1955

After the wintry conditions which prevailed during *January*, *February* and *March* (March was the coldest recorded for very many years in Somerset), *April* was a fine and warm month, and outdoor work began in earnest.

The only moth of interest at Bickenhall in *April* was **Depressaria heracliiana**, which, although generally a common species, had not been reported for many years.

May was very wet and cold, actually with snow in the middle of the month, and nothing of special interest was reported.

June was rather cold and wet, but nevertheless many uncommon species and migrants were reported: **Colias crocea** (Clouded Yellow) began to arrive, and has been in fair numbers throughout the summer, last seen at Bickenhall on 4th November. **Anaitis eformata** (Short-clasped Treble-bar) was recorded at Compton Dundon (J. C.), and **Nycterosea obstipata** (The Gem) came to light at Weston-super-Mare (C. S. H. B.). Other immigrants at Weston included **Heliothis peltigera** (Bordered Straw) and **Margaronia unionalis**, a Pyralid, previously considered a great rarity, but which is now taken regularly at mv. light. Light at Bickenhall produced **Celerio lineata livornica** (Striped Hawk), two further specimens of **Cerura bicuspis** (Alder Kitten), **Drymonia dodo-**

naea (Marbled Brown), **Cosmia diffinis** (White-spotted Pinion), **Hadena conspersa** (Marbled Coronet), **Hepialus fusconebulosus** (Northern Swift), **Hydrelia flammeolaria** (Small Yellow Wave), **Selenia lunaria** (Lunar Thorn), and the uncommon "Longhorn" **Adela croesella** was taken from Privet. The most interesting capture of the month, however, was a specimen of the Tortrix **Eulia formosana** at mv. light at Taunton School: this is a Pine feeder, and has only recently been noted in Britain, mainly in the State Forests of East Anglia. It is, of course, a new county record. **Leucania pudorani** was also taken at Taunton School.

From the weather point of view, *July* was nearly perfect, in fact it was probably *too* dry for many insects. Two new county records were made—**Oria musculosa** (Brighton Wainscot) was taken by (C. S. H. B.) at Weston-super-Mare: this moth is common in some parts of Wiltshire, from whence it may have spread. **Mythymna turca** (Double-line), three specimens came to light at Taunton (E. G. N.). The month will be remembered by entomologists for the invasion of **Celerio galii** (Bedstraw Hawk), which was recorded all over the country: several were taken at mv. at Weston-super-Mare by (C. S. H. B.): it has not been seen in Somerset for very many years. The moths taken at Bickenhall included **Ectropis bistortata** (Early Engrailed), **Cosmia pyralina** (Lunar-spotted Pinion), **Itama wauaria** (V-moth), **Eurhodope advenella**, and **Scoparia resinea**.

Apart from some heavy rain associated with thunderstorms locally, *August* was also a dry and very sunny month. Some most interesting captures were reported: the trap at Weston-super-Mare (C. S. H. B.) produced **Actebia praecox** (Portland Moth), a coastal species once reported many years ago from Burnham-on-Sea, **Eremobia ochroleuca** (Dusky Sallow) last recorded from Taunton by H. Doidge, **Calostigia salicata** (Striped Twin-spot Carpet), a northern species, which has been reported from Exmoor, and was taken at Cannington (R. C.) last year: **Perizoma taeniata** (Barred Carpet) another northern moth, which was taken at Bickenhall in 1953: the migrant **Rhodometra sacraria** (Vestal) came to light at Bickenhall, also **Plusia festucae** (Gold Spot), **Semiothisa liturata** (Tawny-barred Angle), and **Depressaria apiella**, last recorded from Minehead in 1918. A noteworthy appearance at light at Taunton (E. G. N.) was the coastal species **Agrotis vestigialis** (Archer's Dart).

The summer weather went on for most of *September*, and the migrant species continued to be reported: **Herse convolvuli** (*Convolvulus Hawk*) and **Acherontia atropos** (*Death's Head Hawk*) were taken at Cannington (R. C.), and further Vestal Moths were seen at Cannington (R. C.), Bridgwater (N. H.) and Minehead. **Cirrhia gilvago** (*Dusky-lemon Sallow*) came to light at North Curry (C. C. C.).

October was rather cold, but migrants still occurred from time to time: another coastal species **Eumichtis lichenea** (*Feathered Ranunculus*) was taken at light at Taunton (E. G. N.), and several **Dasypolia templi** (*Brindled Ochre*) at Weston-super-Mare (C. S. H. B.): the "Plume" **Platyptilia acanthodactyla** came to light at Bickenhall.

November produced two contrasts—the first half was very wet, and the second half very dry, with northerly winds and frequent frosts. **Operophtera brumata** (*Winter Moth*) was much in evidence, and **Plusia gamma** (*Silver Y*) was about until 12th.

December was very wet at first, then dry with much sunshine. Apart from the usual Winter Moths and December Moths, there was nothing of great interest, but on the last day of the year another specimen of **Exapate congelatella** came to the lighted window at Bickenhall.

A. H. TURNER,

Recorder.

COLEOPTERA (BEETLES)

1954

Owing to the unfavourable weather conditions prevailing throughout the greater part of the summer and autumn it was not possible to undertake very much beating or sweeping work.

The following list contains Coleoptera of mainly local distribution that were found during the season.

*Indicates new County records, as far as is known.

CARABIDAE

***Dyschirius salinus** (Schaum). Chilton Trinity, running on the edge of pool, April. Widely distributed. A characteristic of the genus is the broad, strong, dentate anterior tibiae, with which to dig and burrow in the sand or clay in which the insects live.

***Harpalus dimidiatus** (Rossi). Walton Hill, under stones, April. Apparently confined to the southern and south-eastern districts of England.

Agonum gracile (Gyll.). Porlock Marshes, under stones, April. Rather local, previously recorded from Holford, May 1953, J. C. det. W. A. W.

SILPHIDAE

***Sciodrepa watsoni** (Spence). Minehead, on dead bird, May.

STAPHYLINIDAE

***Micropeplus fulvus** (Er.). Minehead, in vegetable refuse, March. Not uncommon. The peculiar ribbed appearance of the whole upper surface of the body is a distinguishing feature of the genus.

***Philorinum sordidum** (Steph.). Minehead, on gorse flowers, March.

Cafius fucicola (Curt.). Blue Anchor-Dunster coast, under seaweed, July. Very local, the genus is confined to the sea coast and the margins of tidal rivers.

***Falagria sulcata** (Pk.). Minehead, in vegetable refuse, May.

PSELAPHIDAE

***Tychus niger** (Pk.). Minehead, in vegetable refuse, April. Confined to the southern and midland districts of England.

TRIXAGIDAE

- ***Trixagus dermestoides** (L.). Minehead, on low vegetation, June. The legs are retractile and when gathered up, the insect looks very much like a seed and is easily overlooked.

NITIDULIDAE

Laria dulcamarae (Scop.). Blue Anchor-Dunster coast, on *Solanum dulcamara* (Bittersweet), July. Very local. previously taken on the Turf Moors near Shapwick, June 1933, C. Morley.

Epuraea melanocephala (Marsh). Minehead, in abundance on bramble flowers, July. Local, previously recorded from Stratton-on-Fosse district between 1931-32, A. A. Allen (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 71).

- ***Epuraea pusilla** (Ill.). Minehead, under pine bark, August.

EROTYLIDAE

- ***Dacne bipustulata** (Thunb.). Minehead, one in house porch, May. Rare, the usual habitat is in fungoid growth on beech and elm.

COCCINELLIDAE

- ***Chilocorus bipustulatus** (L.). Minehead, a number found on path under pine trees, May. Rather local, probably feeding on the Aphides on the trees.

ANOBIIDAE

Hedobia imperialis (L.). Minehead, one dead specimen found in elm branch, August. Not common, previously taken on the wing at Long Ashton, between 1914-16, C. T. Gimingham (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55).

MORDELLIDAE

Mordellistena abdominalis (F.). Bickenhall, beaten from hawthorn, May. Not common, previously recorded from Long Ashton, between 1914-16, C. T. Gimingham (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55).

SCARABAEIDAE

Trox scaber (L.). Minehead, on old bones, June. Rather local, sometimes found among the detritus in owls' nests.

CURCULIONIDAE

- Caenorhinus tomentosus** (Gyll.). Minehead, on birch, June. Local, previously beaten from willow, Stratton-on-Fosse district, between 1931-32, A. A. Allen (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 71).
- Deporaus mannerheimi** (Hum.). Minehead, on birch, August. Local, previously recorded from Stratton-on-Fosse district, between 1931-32, A. A. Allen (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 71), also from the Turf Moors near Shapwick, June 1933, C. Morley.
- Trachyploeus bifoveolatus** (Beck.). Selworthy, on low vegetation, May. Local.
- Pentarthrum huttoni** (Woll.). Minehead, in decaying wood, July. Very local.
- Mesites tardii** (Curt.). Minehead, a number emerged from pupae found in dead ash bough, August. Very local.
- Cossonus parallelopipedus** (Hbst.). North Curry, in decaying willow, June. Very local.
- Phloeophagia spadix** (Hbst.). Blue Anchor-Dunster coast, very numerous in wood piles of breakwater, July. Locally common, a coastal species.
- Tychius pusillus** (Germ.). Minehead, under bark of dead gorse, February. Not common.
- Magdalis armigera** (Geof. in Fourc.). Selworthy, on hawthorn, May. Minehead, Alcombe, on elm, June, Local.
- Alophus triguttatus** (F.). Beer Crocombe, under wooden board on the ground, May. Not uncommon, but never very abundant, previously recorded from Long Ashton, between 1914-16, C. T. Gimmingham (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55).
- Rhynchaenus rusci** (Hbst.). Minehead, fairly numerous on birch, August. Not uncommon in the south, but rarer further north, previously recorded from Stratton-on-Fosse district, between 1931-32, A. A. Allen (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 71).

SCOLYTIDAE

- Scolytus multistriatus** (Marsh.). Minehead, swept from under elm, June. Rather local, previously recorded from Long Ashton, between 1914-16, C. T. Gimmingham (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55).

Hylesinus crenatus (F.). Buncombe Woods, under ash bark, September. Rather uncommon, but sometimes abundant where it occurs. Previously recorded from Long Ashton, between 1914-16, C. T. Gimingham (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55), and Turf Moors near Shapwick, June 1933, C. Morley.

Hylurgops palliatus (Gyll.). Minehead, under pine bark, August. Local. Previously recorded from Stratton-on-Fosse district, between 1931-32. A. A. Allen (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 71).

Dryocoetes villosus (F.). Minehead, under bark of old chestnut stump, September. Fairly common in the south, rarer further north. Previously recorded from Dunster, under oak bark, April 1919, J. E. Boack (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 55).

***Onthotomicus loricatus** (F.). Minehead, under pine bark, August. Local.

W. A. WILSON,

Recorder.

1955

The year gave a very promising start and several uncommon beetles were taken during May and June, but when the dry weather set in about the middle of July, there was a steady decline in the beetle population. This became more marked as the period of drought was prolonged.

The following species have been selected from the total captures as being of unusual interest or of local occurrence.

*Indicates new County records, so far as is known.

CARABIDAE

***Acupalpus luridus** (Dej.). } Minehead, numerous under cut
 ,, **exiguus** (Dej.). } reeds and at roots of grass near
 brackish pond, April. Rather local. Apparently not recorded from the extreme North of England.

Bembidion unicolor (Chaud.). Minehead, on edge of brackish pond, April. Local.

SILPHIDAE

***Ptomaphagus subvillosus** (Goez.). } Minehead, fairly com-
 var. **sericatus** (Chaud.). } mon in carrion and old
 bones, the variety being quite as plentiful as the type form.
 May and July. Local.

STAPHYLINIDAE

- ***Stenus geniculatus** (Gr.). Minehead, one swept from heather. August. Local.
- ***Stenus flavipes** (Steph.). Charterhouse on Mendip, one swept from pond side vegetation. July. Generally distributed in the southern and midland districts, not so common further north.
- Omalium oxyacanthae** (Gr.). Minehead, in vegetable refuse. April. Local.
- Philonthus quisquiliarius** (Gyll.). Porlock Marshes, running on mud at the edge of pool. August. Somewhat local and confined chiefly to the south.
- Tachyporus scutellaris** (Rye.). Minehead, in vegetable refuse. April. Local.
- ***Oligota apicata** (Er.). Minehead, a number in old dried bones. July. Rare.

MALACHIIDAE

- ***Malachius marginellus** (Ol.). Edington, on flowers. July. Very local.

DRYOPIDAE

- Elmis maugei** (Bed.). a. **aenea** (Mull.). } Minehead, clinging to the under-
Latelmis volkmari (Pz.) } surface of stones in running water. August. Somewhat local.

BYRRHIDAE

- Cytilus sericeus** (Forst.). Minehead, on large stones. May. Somewhat local.

NITIDULIDAE

- ***Carpophilus marginellus** (Mots.). Minehead, one under stone near rubbish dump and another taken on window pane inside house. June and August. First recorded in Great Britain in 1943 by Dr. H. E. Hinton from a London flour mill.

CIIDAE

- Cis nitidus** (F.). Dunster, in profusion in *Daldinia concentrica* on dead ash. November. Locally common.

OEDEMERIDAE

- Ischnomera sanguinicollis** (F.). Edington, one swept from Rhubarb flowers. May. Rare.

PYTHIDAE

- Salpingus reyi** (Abeille). Minehead, one swept from under burnt gorse bushes and another from edge of pine copse. June. A southern species.

ANTHICIDAE

- ***Anthicus tobias** (Mars.). Minehead, one swept from vegetation near rubbish dump. April. First taken by Bedwell at E. Malling, Kent. (*Ent. Mon. Mag.* 1944, p. 211); now widely distributed in England; frequently found in rubbish dumps.

MORDELLIDAE

- Mordella villosa** (Schr.). Edington. July. Very local.
Mordellistena pumila (Gyll.). Edington. July. Local, but not recorded from the extreme north of England.
Mordellistena abdominalis (F.). Edington. July. Local, but not recorded north of Lincolnshire.

SCARABAEIDAE

- Aphodius equestris** (Pz.). Adscombe near Over Stowey, in dung. October. Very local.

CHRYSOMELIDAE

- Longitarsus exoletus** (L.). Dunster, on *Echium vulgare* (Vipers Bugloss). June. Local.
 ***Longitarsus tabidus** (F.). Minehead, numerous on *Verbascum thapsus* (Mullein). September. Local.
 ***Ochrosis ventralis** (Ill.). Minehead, by general sweeping. May. Local.

CURCULIONIDAE

- ***Apion confluens** (Kirb.). Minehead, on *Matricaria chamomilla* (Chamomile). August. Locally common.
 ***Phyllobius viridicollis** (F.). Charterhouse on Mendip, one by general sweeping. July. Local.
 ***Tychius stephensi** (Gyll.). Dunster and Blue Anchor, on *Lotus corniculatus* (Bird's-foot Trefoil). June and July. Local.
Rhynchaenus salicis L.). Bickenhall, on Sallow. August. Local.

W. A. WILSON,
 Recorder.