SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

HOVERFLIES IN WOOD: AN EXAMPLE OF MANAGEMENT CONFLICT

The lists of hoverfly species and other insects received by the Somerset Invertebrates Group from two of its members, E.T. and D.A. Levy, illustrate the difficult task reserve managers have in determining appropriate strategies for their reserves. For example, woodland poses a particular problem in that certain taxa flourish in woodland edges, glades and rides, whereas others depend on deep woodland. Hoverflies and butterflies, in particular, require sunshine, cover and nectar sources, whereas the many crepuscular species found in leaf litter, such as millipedes and pseudoscorpions, do not flourish in a disturbed, open environment. Ted and Dave Levy, following a visit to Penn Wood Nature Trail, note that:

> This is an excellent insect wood as can be seen by the butterfly and hoverfly lists, though it still lacks species that were present in the 1970s. One of the big attractions is the large stands of Hogweed and Angelica plus clumps of thistles along the rides. It would be nice to see a few more cleared spaces among the trees which might allow ground flora such as violets to increase from which a better fritillary population could result.

Smith's paper in volume 4 (1996) of this journal examined this problem in his review of current thinking on woodland management, concluding that certain species have an absolute need for deep woodland conditions, and arguing the case for non-intervention management. Possibly one solution to this dilemma is the creation of woodland edge and glades by planting outside the deep wood. This is an argument in favour of larger reserves rather than smaller isolated pockets. It is worth noting that there are grants available for planting and maintaining woodland in which there is an allowance for 20% open ground which can be used for appropriate edge management for species needing light. The Levys also state:

> It should also be borne in mind that fallen timber and tree stumps are the rearing habitats of some of our rarest hoverflies, whose larvae feed in the rotting wood. It is recommended that such timber is left *in situ*, and not burnt or poisoned.

An example is Xylota sylvarum found in Cockroad, Penselwood and Britty Common, Castle Neroche, and which is also quoted by Tony Parsons in his study of *The Saproxylic Invertebrates of Bincombe Hill, Crewkerne*. He writes:

> A single female flying slowly around the hollow base of a beech, including entering the cavity and landing at the edge of a root-pool. It is certain that this insect was seeking a suitable breeding site. The larva feeds in decayed heartwood of various trees including underground and above-ground in rot holes.

These comments apply to deep wood species also and fallen timber should not be removed or burnt 'for tidiness sake'.

The Editorial Board would welcome comments on this or any other environmental issue where management strategies for different species need to be recognised.

PAT HILL-COTTINGHAM