

ENTOMOLOGY IN NORTH HAMPSHIRE.

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Day-flying Lepidoptera.

THE Hampshire Field Club was formed in the year 1885 for the study of the Natural History and Antiquities of the County, and under its revised title of Field Club and Archaeological Society it recognises that the Archaeologists—more praise to them—have nominally obtained at least an equal share in its papers and proceedings.

Until comparatively recent times, it would appear that they had practically swamped the meek Natural Historians, by their very interesting researches in the field, combined with vast catalogues of Church goods and other matters and muniments, which choked out any life that still lingered in the breasts of those “of milder mood.”

There was a complete list of Hampshire insects (Lepidoptera¹), with localities of the rarer species in Vol. I, Pt. 1 (p. 28), of this journal, compiled by the Rev. A. C. Harvey. Later on, in Vol. II (p. 271), there is an interesting paper on the “Entomology of the New Forest,” by the Rev. G. Hughes, also confined to Lepidoptera.

In Vol. IX (p. 136) there is a short account for the year 1920 of the same branch of Entomology, the most interesting to the ordinary man, by that past master, the Rev. G. M. A. Hewett, in which he somewhat plaintively says he has had no report sent in by anyone.

Until Mr. F. H. Haines began his regular reports in 1932 and aroused our members, and the New Forest in particular, to the interest of the subject, there were only three more reports, dealing with Entomology as a whole (and quite shortly with Lepidoptera), by Mr. W. J. Lucas. Not an impressive amount for so long a period in the history of our Society.

It is clear that for insects and birds the collecting instinct is more necessary to arouse an interest in the first place, than in Field Archaeology. This instinct must be kept in bounds and is less gregarious in manifestation by its very nature.

The public Press has of late years shown us how large a number of people are interested; and it may well be that if *Vanessa antiopa* were to appear at a field meeting of the Club in its capacity of Archaeological Society (i.e., the Club not the butterfly), an undignified chase would ensue.

1. This term is restricted here to what Entomologists used to call the macro-lepidoptera, that is, finishing with the Noctuae. The same is true of the other papers referred to.

It appears that the north of the County, particularly the old Clere Country (as T. W. Shore called it), where the writer has lived on and off for fifty years, has not come under the review of entomologists.

It will be best to confine this paper to some of the most interesting members of the macro-lepidoptera, sub orders Rhopalocera and Heterocera (butterflies and moths), and of the latter only to the day-fliers, excluding geometers (a numerous family). The first two and the last but three can hardly be said to fly by day, but are included for their beauty and comparative rarity.

To take the moths first and keep the most fascinating to the last, and following for simplicity and ease of comparison the list in Vol. I and its nomenclature, although somewhat out of date²; we shall not find that species or status differ much from half a century ago. It will appear also that many which were dealt with in the paper on p. 271 of Vol. II on the New Forest are represented in this part of the County. Occasionally my experiences as a school-boy at Winchester, Consule Hewett, have been drawn upon. Winchester after all is more north than south in the whole area covered by the Club.

The old Clere Country has the chalk rib of the North Downs as its principal feature, with well-wooded country to the south and the Berkshire border, and a fair number of streams running into the River Enborne. Several small heather commons exist with a diminishing number of pine trees. The subsoil is gravel where the chalk ceases, not much sand, a declining husbandry, with arable giving place to pasture and many rough fields.

Let us now turn to our list, omitting for the sake of space the primary divisions, but taking it in due order and commenting on each species in turn.

Moths.

Sphinx ligustri. Two caught on the same post near Oliver's Battery, Winchester.

Chorocampa elenor. Two found in my own grounds and house.

Macroglossa stellatarum. Very numerous hovering over geraniums thirty to forty years ago. Of late years seen only occasionally hovering over valerian in my garden, never at all numerous, but as lovely and jewel-like in poising flight as ever. This year conspicuous by its absence.

... *fuciformis*. Many years ago used to frequent lilac blossoms in May in a garden. It was only necessary to stand near the shrub on a sunny May morning and the lovely shining visitant would appear. Since the war only one seen hovering over bracken in a wood. It seems to have entirely lost its taste for lilac, and never have I seen it hovering over Azaleas and Rhododendrons which the text-books give as the main haunt.

... *bombyliiformis*. Seen and taken in a wood hovering over the flower of a bugle in a ride.

2. The Royal Entomological Society issued a list of Butterflies named on the latest principles in 1934, and the new (3rd) edition of *South on Moths* (1940) is the only existing publication dealing with them on the same principles.

The above three moths alone would, if seen in nature, convert the most hardened into a "Bug Hunter," and if he never "collected" he would never be aware of their existence. The more common sphinxes, *Ocellatus*, *Populi*, and *Tiliae*, have never come my way, though an old gardener acquaintance of my boyhood found them all here.

Zygaena pendulae and *Z. trifolii*. On the downs, in fields and by the roadside. Though common, they are distinguished and unlike any other moth outside their genus.

Chelonia plantaginis. A most beautiful black and yellow moth of prehistoric appearance, crouching low in herbage and a clumsy flier, found twice at an interval of forty years, near or in a wood near Winchester.

.... *caja*. Much commoner years ago. The caterpillar or woolly bear of our infancy is hardly met with nowadays.

.... *villica*. Of a lovely green and scarlet, found near the river, Winchester.

Bombyx rubi. The most sporting of all. Flies on our heaths like a flash of lightning. Varies very much in numbers, none seen last year, but several this year.

Saturnia carpi. Both male and female are most lovely and artistic in colouring. Used to fly on our heaths but is now just over the border. Have found them on a common near Yateley. As fast as *rubi*.

Anarta myrtili. The beautiful yellow underwing. Flies like streaked lightning on our heaths, looks like a bee. Sometimes on a good day will settle and give you a chance to take it, particularly if the weather is close. This insect was specially mentioned by the Rev. G. Hughes in his paper. I have seen it stated that it is necessary to breed it, but this is not my experience.

Heliodes arbuti. The Small Yellow Underwing is a tiny edition of *myrtili*. Owing to its size it had escaped my notice till this year.

Brephos parthenias and *B. notha*. Both to be seen and sometimes caught on our heaths. Flitting among and settling on birch trees. The latter the smaller, but very like the former. Its presence on the same heath being due, I think, to some Aspens, bounding the common. *Parthenias* is now well established and was numerous this year.

Five of the last six demand considerable skill with the net, but are well worthy of the chase, and better so obtained than bred and murdered in cold blood. The only difficulty about the sixth, the Small Yellow Underwing, is to see it. All illustrate the thesis that some of the most beautiful creations might never be appreciated without being caught and preserved.

Catocala nupta. Simply must be mentioned owing to the extreme beauty of the red underwing. Found here only on one or two occasions.

Plusia gamma. The well-known Silver Y is noteworthy as an immigrant and quite common.

Euclidia mi. The Mother Shipton. A most beautiful moth to be found in rough fields.

.... *glyphica*. Is found in the same sort of places and is almost more beautiful. Both delight in grasses and flowers and sun.

Butterflies.

Colias edusa. Seen once in my garden, once on Beacon Hill, twice in fields near Hurstbourne Tarrant, in some numbers four years ago, and near Wolverton two years ago. The only chance of catching one occurred this year in early August in a near clover field. It gave me a really stern chase, and a beautiful specimen it is.

Arge galatea. A good locality on the downs.

Satyrus semele. Used to be common on our heaths, now less so, but this year it has appeared in several places, one settling on my trousers. Curiously enough I have never seen *S. egeria* here.

Satyrus megaera. Common in lanes and meadows.

... *hyperanthus*. Nearly as common.

Limenitis sibylla. Several localities within a mile; one of which has always retained them in good numbers. The most graceful of all fliers and one of the most handsome. I can remember them fifty years ago, and have seen them this year in the same place in great numbers. Moreover in the last two years they have tended to spread a good deal.

Apatura iris. Have seen this three times here in the last five years. In the first two cases a most perfect specimen. The first time it was feeding on some cow manure in my own big meadow, and I watched it while a net was brought, but before this arrived the shadow of a dog running up the path was thrown upon it, and it sailed away to the nearest oak tree. The second time, last year, it was sunning itself (a female I think) in the road near an oak wood, but I missed it by a hair's breadth with the net. This year, on July 6th, quite an early date, near the same spot, I saw a specially large-looking White Admiral and, suspecting the possibility, caught it in my net to find I had taken a (male) *iris*.

The only other occasion on which I have seen this fine insect was during the Second Battle of the Marne, as we marched through the Forêt de Rheims. Half a dozen or more had been evidently frightened out of the tops of the oak trees by a strident Italian gun and flew breast-high along the road in front of my platoon.

All the *Vanessidae* except *antiopa* and *polychloros* are represented here.

Vanessa cardui. Has been in evidence both in spring and later, bred possibly from the migrants, or another migration. Perhaps this is the most artistic of all in the blending of colour.

... *c. album*. Since the War has been here in spring and later. Some years in considerable numbers. It never was seen before. This is in accordance with the well-known Eastern spread of this insect of late years.

Argynnis paphia. Is always to be seen in moderate numbers, and this year in several localities, including one specimen of the variety *valesina* (doubtful).

... *euphrosyne* and *A. selene*. Both abundant years ago, but much less so now.

Melitaea artemis. Only seen once forty years ago, in numbers, on our old damp lawn.

Nemeobius lucina. Winchester must be called upon for the Duke of Burgundy, where in a well-known wood it used to flourish forty-five years ago. Last year it was, I think, in the same place, but I cannot be quite certain.

Thecla betulae. On some thorn trees on a common two years ago just over the County border.

... *quercus*. In some numbers near and in an oak wood. Settles on young ashes and hazels and can be caught then, much too high a flyer otherwise. This year I discovered that it was only the females who come to the low trees, and then mostly on a close, thunderous day. In one or two books I have seen this confirmed, but never was it stated that it was only the females who adopted this plan, doubtless for egg-laying purposes.

... *rubi*. Most regular in many localities. Perhaps the prettiest of the lovely hairstreaks. A good instance of protective mimicry with its wings underside up, while it rests on a hazel leaf of the exact colour, the upper side being a sober brown.

Poliommatius phlaeas. Common, but less numerous than it used to be.

Lycæna argiolus. Always a few to be seen in the spring near holly, and this year numbers of the second brood appeared in late July. This is unusual.

... *alsus*. This smallest British butterfly was numerous on the downs near Winchester forty-five years ago, and was still there last year.

... *adonis*. Last year was in the same place as *alsus*, where it was not to be seen forty-five years ago, but G. M. A. Hewett says, in his note in 1920, already referred to, that it was "an old locality unvisited by this brilliant

blue for many years," but seen by him that year. This seems to be very interesting evidence of alteration in status, combined with faithfulness to a locality.

.... *corydon*. Our list in Vol. I gives Highclere as one of the localities, and it still is to this day, and has been there every year that it was looked for. Neighbouring downs also produce it. No blue can beat it for sheen and beauty, and it must have been admired by prehistoric man in his hill fortresses.

.... *alexis*. Is of course everywhere and almost all through the summer.

.... *aegon*. Is on our heaths but till last year I had, for lack of due observation, lumped it in with *alexis*. It is very local here.

Lycaena agestis. Several localities on the downs and elsewhere.

Syrichthys alveolus.

Thanaos tages.

Hesperia linea.

.... *sylvanus*.

} Are all common and widespread.

The three Common Whites and the three insects which used to be called "the Meadow Browns" have been omitted, to save space. In view, however, of the remark by the Rev. G. Hughes in his paper, Vol. II (p. 272), that *Leucophasia sinapis* had not been taken for many years in the New Forest, the only locality given in our list, it should be said that to the best of my belief it was flying near trees on the rocks at Seaview, Isle of Wight, two years ago but, having no net with me, I cannot be sure.

It is not a good thing to organise field meetings and spoil local haunts, but more people might become interested if more space could be given to the subject in our journal, and others were encouraged to give their experiences in their own localities.

Never was there a subject that lent itself better as an all-the-year-round hobby. The excitements of the chase can be varied, in peace time, in the summer, by "sugaring" in the evening; or the use of light. Breeding from the egg or caterpillar, or collection of the chrysalids by digging in the autumn, or continual observation of palings and tree trunks can be carried on in most months of the year.

Migrations to these shores from the Continent are now being studied by Capt. Dannreuther and others. Only last year some writer in *The Times* informed us that a mass of clouded yellows (*Colias edusa*) were gathering on the Continent and would make it a real "clouded yellow year." Besides exciting the writer and doubtless others to concert pitch, the prophecy never materialised. These beautiful flies, together with *cardui*, *atalanta*, and other rarer *Vanessids* may be instanced, as well as *Sphinxes*, like *atropos* and *convolvuli*, as immigrants to be watched for. Hampshire and its island have a very long coast line for this purpose.

Questions of camouflage are numerous and sadly instructive in these days. The Buff Tip moth like a bit of stick, the likeness of numerous moths to the tree trunk surroundings and lichens on which they are at rest may be given as examples. Even so great an ornithologist as Warde Fowler was astonished at this side of entomology, and naively confesses his previous ignorance in one

of his books, when his attention was called to a Buff Tip on a willow leaf, by what he called a *real* naturalist, classing himself as "only an amateur naturalist."³

But to my mind the most important point of all is the vast number of most beautiful creatures which are all around us, at our doorstep, of which we should never be aware, unless we started to study them. Some must be caught and "set" to realise their true beauty, but many can be seen only and enjoyed in their natural surroundings. Even last year—a bad one from the weather point of view—I found in this small district three new and interesting day-flying species, which only careful search and a knowledge of likely localities could have revealed.

It seems clear from observations made in the same district, mostly at the beginning and end of a fifty year period, that the various species have remained constant for the most part, some are rarer, some have come from the West, like the Comma, but there is little to add or subtract.

The natural conditions have also remained fairly constant, a certain increase of population and of pasture can be set one against another. Woodland is about the same, but the small landlord is stricter with the law of trespass than the Big Bad Landlord, or was not he the big, good landlord?

The Downs remain as they were, and the Heaths are still here, though the bracken plague is reducing the heather area. Car-minded people, in time of peace, can get to any locality they like, but they mostly prefer the sea to the countryside. They are more likely to pick and waste a pretty flower than demolish a rare species of insect. The pace is much too great to pause awhile and see *sibylla* or *lucina* dancing down the glade.

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3. *Kingham Old and New* (p. 154).