

Some Notes on Lepidoptera, 1929 and 1930.

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THE early part of the season of 1929 was marked by some exceptionally warm spells of brief duration, but on the whole the spring was late and cold. These conditions produced unusual records of early and late emergencies, at Repton as elsewhere. Perhaps the strangest of these was the capture in Repton Shrubs of a freshly emerged specimen of *Panolis piniperda* on May 20, at least two months after its normal date, whilst specimens of *Ectropis punctularia* were observed there in early April, their normal time of appearance here being in rather late May.

In early June heads of teasles growing in Ticknall quarries were found to be tenanted by a tortricid larva, and as *Endothenia gentianana* was not known to occur in the county, whereas *E. oblongana*, which also sometimes feeds on the seeds of teasle, had been reported, I thought they probably belonged to that species. Upon emergence however, all proved to be *Gentianana*, thus adding another Tortrix to our lists. The colony of *Oxyptilus heterodactylus* (*teucrivi*) discovered at Ticknall last year proved to be more extensive than had at first been thought and larvae, pupae and perfect insects were found in profusion about the extensive clumps of wood-sage. The pretty little skipper, *Hesperia malvae*, was also noted in these quarries, about half a dozen specimens being seen, and it is possible that this may be its headquarters in this district, from which the very occasional specimens observed in Repton Shrubs and at Willington may have come. *Laspeyresia roseticolana* was sought diligently

both at Ticknall and in the quarry at Repton where it was discovered last year, but only a very few specimens were taken.

Very little of interest was observed at Repton throughout the summer, but the season was somewhat redeemed by the occurrence at Willington of a single specimen of *Argynnis adippe* on August 4th. There are no early records of this fine insect within the Repton area, though a single specimen was taken as near as Melbourne in 1894, and there are earlier records from Matlock, Cromford and Dovedale. The most recent record is that of Mr. G. H. Sale at Coxbench in 1917 and possibly it still occurs in that locality. Anyhow, it is refreshing to find that it is not yet extinct here, as so many butterflies, once common enough, have become.

The season of 1930 was again late. As the acquisition of more room had given me an impulse to enlarge my series of some common species, I noted more readily the appearances of many insects. *Pseudopanthera petraria*, usually well out in early May, did not appear until May 28, and *Bupalus piniarius* first on June 2; the earliest I have for this is May 7. As is usually the case in a late year the season was not a productive one, at least as far as my observations go. Almost the only insect that seemed to be commoner than usual was the tortrix, *Eucosma diniana*, of which numbers of larvae were obtained from the larch buds, producing a fine varied series. But most things were scarce. A search for larvae of *Plusia moneta* on the delphiniums in our gardens proved fruitless, other Plusias and such things as *Cucullia umbratica* were far less common than usual over flowers, and this scarcity extended in a marked degree to the larvae in the autumn. I have never known larva-beating in September and early October produce so little. For example the only Notodontid larvae beaten in a long afternoon's work were two *camelina*; in some seasons an

afternoon's beating could be relied upon to produce this species in dozens, and with it at least a few *dromedarius* and with any luck *dictaeoides*; and one could count upon plenty of *Palimpsestis duplaris* from the birch and perhaps one or two *Cerura bifida* from the poplars. None of these were forthcoming. Scotch firs were visited repeatedly in order to get, if possible, a long series of *Semiothisa liturata*, for the sake of the fine variety *nigrofulvata*, but not more than a dozen larvae were obtained in all. I had undertaken to obtain for a friend larvae of the two angelica-feeding Eupitheciae, *albipunctata* and *tresignaria*. I had not searched for these for several years but had paid a good deal of attention to them some time ago and then, in a noted locality near Repton Rocks, where the Angelica grows freely, *albipunctata* outnumbered the other by perhaps 10 to 1. On visiting this locality I found *E. trisignaria* present and in distinctly larger numbers than formerly, but though the foodplant was as abundant as ever, the commoner *albipunctata* had entirely disappeared. I had found formerly that *albipunctata* here was seriously attacked by an ichneumon, which seemed to leave the very similar *trisignaria* alone, and this would seem to be another case of a flourishing colony completely wiped out by a parasitic hymenopteron. *Trisignaria* was always very local and I know of but one other place in which it occurs here. I tried this spot and here *albipunctata* was also present though by no means in its former numbers; indeed it was slightly outnumbered by the other. But *albipunctata* used to occur wherever its foodplant grows throughout the neighbourhood. I tried therefore most of the old spots. It occurred, sparingly, in all but one, but that one had been one of the most productive, and one in which I had also noted a proportion of stung larvae. This seems to raise an interesting question. If a parasite multiplies to such an extent that it exterminates its natural food in a given

area, what do the survivors do? Are they content to die out in turn, or do they migrate in search of fresh victims? It seems remarkable that this particular parasite does not apparently turn its attention to the *trisignaria* larvae, which are of the same size, have the same habits, and are feeding on the same plants at the same time, but I have not yet found a *trisignaria* larva so attacked. And yet it is difficult to believe that there can be any difference of palatability between such closely allied insects.

Sugar was tried for Noctuae in July but produced none but common species and few of these in any numbers. The only noteworthy point was that almost the commonest visitor was *Graphiphora typica* which I had previously regarded as rather unaccountably scarce here. In September and October sugar was far more productive in numbers and one rare species was attracted, *Polia vetusta*. I have never previously seen this fine species here, but there is an old record of a single specimen at Bretby, and doubtless if there were more collectors about who sugared regularly in the late autumn, it would turn up more frequently. Very fine forms of *Miselia oxyacanthae*, var. *capucina* were common and there was the usual abundance of *O. pistacina*, *O. circellaris*, *O. lota*, with a sprinkling of *O. litura* and *O. satellitia*, and crowds of *Conistra ligula*. I have no idea why *C. vaccinii*, universally abundant as it is, will not come to sugar in a Repton garden. So far as I know, it does so everywhere else and it is certainly common enough in the neighbourhood. I have bred it freely from willow catkins and have often seen stray specimens among dead leaves or on trunks of trees: but I can only remember seeing one specimen here at sugar whereas its less abundant ally, *ligula*, swarms on every patch.

A specimen of the Humming Bird Hawk moth, *Macroglossa stellatarum* was noted at Bakewell in July

by Mr. J. N. G. Gibbs. This species is very capricious in its appearances and probably appears somewhere in the county in most years. But I have no record for Bakewell later than 1895, and I have not seen it at Repton since 1912, when there were quite a lot about, and it was reported from several localities. A specimen of *Selenia lunaria* was taken in the Shrubs in May, but this and *P. vetusta* are the only local rarities that I can record for the year.

Mr. H. W. Daltry sends me a record of *Gelechia similis* from Dovedale in 1929, which is an addition to the county list, and he also notes the occurrence in that locality of *Hydriomena taeniata*, a scarce species of which we have only old records. He mentions also the capture of a very rare beetle, *Meligethes symphyti*, which is a new record for the county.