

## ENTOMOLOGICAL RECORD FOR DERBYSHIRE, 1941.

By N. BLACKWELL WOOD.

A survey of the entomological records for 1941 shows the year to have been exceptional for the number of rarities recorded as well as the large numbers of some insects which in normal years are either scarce or absent. I have heard the explanation that owing to the war much of the countryside has become covered with weeds which have favoured the increase of insects generally. I cannot accept this theory for several reasons—in the first place farmers have suffered less from labour losses to H.M. Forces than most sections of the community and in an endeavour to increase food production ploughing and compulsory cultivation orders have resulted in a very great quantity of land being cultivated which was hitherto wild.

It would seem therefore that there would be fewer weeds or natural breeding grounds than ever before. Science has also brought increasing help to the farmer and gardener in recent years to aid the wholesale extermination of harmful insects and weeds and the methods employed have had far reaching results on the reduction of other insects, parasites, etc.

Again the year was heralded by an exceptionally cold winter with much snow and frost, and this was followed by an unusually cold Spring.

The war has very materially reduced the number of entomologists at present able to pursue their studies, and those few who have been able to snatch an odd hour now and again for collecting have been deprived of the material for sugaring as well as the use of light for night

work. Restricted travel facilities made the usual field days impossible and records are mainly due to notes in home gardens and chance observations made in the course of business journeys.

Despite all these difficulties there have been some really interesting finds to record for the county.

This year has been notable for the large number of *Colias croceus*, Fourc. (clouded yellow), and in some parts of the south-west of England the var. *helice* has been very abundant. In such years Derbyshire sometimes gets its quota of this beautiful butterfly. This year a male *croceus* is recorded by Miss K. M. Hollick, on September 7th, near Ashbourne. Two previously unrecorded instances have been given to me by Dr. J. W. Holmes, and they were both taken in the county at Langley Mill in 1919 and 1925.

Another rare Derbyshire butterfly, *Vanessa c-album* L. (Comma), was recorded from Bradley Wood on September 12th by Miss Hollick, and by the Rev. G. A. Evans in his garden on August 31st. *Vanessa io* L. (Peacock), once a rare visitor to the county, appears to have become firmly established during the last few years, and many reports from different localities this year have described it as plentiful or abundant. Mr. C. S. Garnett records a late specimen on the wing at Osmaston Manor on October 20th, and Mr. G. Hanson Sale tells me it was more common than *V. urticae* at Coxbench in early September. I saw it at Allestree, Darley Abbey and Hazelwood on several occasions. Another common visitor to Coxbench this year was *Vanessa cardui* L. (Painted Lady) reported early in September by Mr. Sale. Dr. Holmes also reported this insect as common this year at Langley Mill.

*Gonopteryx rhamni* L. (Brimstone) has been reported by Mr. Hanson Sale on several occasions, and this year he has reported it from the Rev. G. A. Evans' garden on August 31st. This could not be a hibernated specimen

and suggests that this insect may now be breeding in the Coxbench locality.

A single specimen of *Pararge Egeria* L. (Speckled Wood) appeared in my garden at Allestree on valerian on August 28th and 29th. It was a fresh specimen in perfect condition and evidently local bred. The last county records I have of this butterfly are one in Derby in 1923, recorded by the late Mr. H. C. Hayward, and one by Dr. Drabble at Spital in 1915. The next record is for a single specimen at Lathkill Dale in 1892.

Another great rarity in the county is *Pararge megaera* L. (Wall), of which there appears to be no previous record for this century. Dr. Holmes tells me that he has observed this butterfly on rare occasions at Langley Mill in previous years, but that it has been common in this locality during 1941.

The following is extracted from the last list of notes on county lepidoptera written by the late Mr. H. C. Hayward, M.A., F.R.E.S., for the season 1934:—"the very remarkable occurrence in Repton Shrubs in July of *Argynnis paphia*, of which one specimen was captured and three more seen by a boy in Repton School."

*Argynnis paphia* L. (Silver Washed Fritillary) does not appear to have been recorded since 1906, when one was taken near Chesterfield by the late Mr. S. Hooke. I now have a record from Dr. Holmes that he took one at Repton in 1934 and one was captured this summer by Mr. G. H. Storer, F.Z.S., at Rolleston on Dove— $\frac{1}{4}$  mile outside the county border. It was later released and last seen flying in the Bretby direction. Whether it originated from that area or finished its flight into the county cannot be stated, but many years ago it was known in the Repton Shrubs and Seal Wood.

A specimen of *Pieris rapae* L. was resting on a withered valerian stalk in my garden as late as October 24th, the latest date, I think, I have ever observed any of the *Pieridae* flying.

*Coenonympha pamphilus* L. (Small Heath) is reported by Mr. L. Nathan as common on high ground at Chinley on July 12th, when he also saw several *Lycaena icarus* (Common Blue) in the same place. Several of the latter were also seen at Millers Dale on August 16th.

Dr. Holmes list includes *Thecla rubi* L. (Green Hair Streak) on Morley Moor and *Hesperia tages* L. (Dingy Skipper) in the same locality.

In reviewing the above I do not know of any one year when so many species of butterflies have been reported for the county. Much the same may be said of the moths of which a goodly number of rarities can be recorded.

A larva of *Acherontia atropos* (Death's Head Hawk) found at Weston-on-Trent is recorded by Mr. Hanson Sale. It was found on August 16th.

*Deilephila elpenor* L. (Elephant Hawk) has become a common insect and large numbers have been reported from various parts of the county this year. *Smerinthus ocellatus* L. (Eyed Hawk) is also reported from Langley Mill by Dr. Holmes, and two well-grown larvae of *Smerinthus populi* L. (Poplar Hawk) which I found at Hazelwood were feeding on a newly planted stripling of poplar with scarcely any foliage on it.

Three larvae of *Acronycta alni* L. (Alder) are reported by Mr. Sale from Coxbench and Dr. Holmes from Langley Mill. A particularly rare insect at any time, the finding of its larvae in two places in the county in one season precludes any suggestion of a stray having flown over the border and gives it new status as a local insect.

*Panemeria tenebrata* Sc. (Small Yellow Underwing) was taken during the summer at Langley Mill by Dr. Holmes, who secured several specimens in this locality. Another good find was no less than one dozen specimens of *Catocala Nupta* (Red Underwing) at Langley Mill and Shipley by Dr. Holmes. Several other individual specimens of this

handsome moth were recorded this year and it now seems to be established as a Derbyshire insect.

*Odezia atrata* (Chimney Sweeper) at one time common at Elvaston and other restricted localities has been much more general, and this year I saw it in numbers at Allestree, Darley Abbey and Hazelwood. Mr. Nathan found it common at Chinley on July 12th, and it has been found in numbers in other parts of the county.

Two interesting Burnet moths have been taken in quantity on Morley Moor during the season by Dr. Holmes; they are *Zygaena filipendulæ* L. (Six Spot Burnet) and *Z. loniceræ* Esp. (Narrow Bordered Five Spot Burnet). Dr. Holmes also states that he has found *Zeuzera pyrina* L. (Leopard) fairly common this year at Langley Mill, and *Trochilium crabroniformis* Lewin. (Lunar Hornet) common in the same locality although he had never seen it there previous to 1939.

Whilst Langley Mill is on the border line of the county, Dr. Holmes' house is on the Derbyshire side, and many of his records for the Langley Mill area are for insects taken in his own garden; the remainder mentioned for this area are all within the county. This particular district has provided some remarkably uncommon finds for Derbyshire in the last few years. Dr. Holmes' collecting in this area has now extended over a number of years and he has very kindly provided me with a long list of his local captures, all of which have been taken on the Derbyshire side of the border. On this list dates and indication of distribution are given, and the following extracts which I have made are of insects of rare occurrence according to previous recording for Derbyshire.

*Dilina tiliae* L. (Lime Hawk) was taken in the Doctor's garden in 1940, *Sphinx convolvuli* L. (Convolvulous Hawk) in 1919, and *Deilephala porcellus* L. (Small Elephant Hawk) in 1940. *Macroglossa stellatarum* L. (Humming Bird Hawk) was also found in 1936.

*Cerura bifida* Hb. (Poplar Kitten) was taken in 1917. *Hygrochroa syringaria* L. (Lilac Beauty), *Ennomos fuscantaria* Haw. (Dusky Thorn) and *E. quercinaria* Hufn. (August Thorn), have all been taken in odd specimens. *Xanthorhoe cervinata* Schiff. (Mallow) in 1923, *Plusia festucae* L. (Gold Spot) in 1935, *Agrotis occulta* L. (Great Brocade) a single specimen in 1939 and *Polia adusta* Esp. (Dark Brocade) have also been taken.

*Acronycta megacephala* F. (Poplar Grey) is recorded as common, as is also *Melanchria serena* F. (Broad Barred White) and *Euclidia mi* Cl. (Mother Shipton). *Agrotis saucia* Hb. (Pearly Underwing) is sometimes common, and *Eupithecia venosata* St. (Netted Pug) has also been taken.

From this long list of insects taken at Langley Mill it will be seen that Dr. Holmes has contributed a very material addition to our county list, and whilst these insects have been taken previously most of them have not been recorded except at very rare intervals in the present century.

Several other interesting county records have been sent in by Dr. Holmes for other parts of the county, and they include the following:—*Rusina tenebrosa* Hb. (Brown Rustic) at Morley Moor in 1939, and for the same district *Acronycta leporina* L. (Miller) in 1936, and *Brephos parthenias* L. (Orange Underwing), which is apparently now a common find on Morley Moor.

Two more interesting butterfly records are also included to complete the list. They are of two specimens of *Argynnis aglaia* L. (Dark Green Fritillary), one near Cromford in 1935 and the other at Heanor in 1940; the other butterfly is *Thecla rubi* L. (Green Hairstreak) at Stanton Moor in 1937.

Amongst the coleoptera recorded, Mr. Nathan sends me a note of *Corymbites cupreus* F. taken at Mellor on June 7th.

Two records of TENTHREDINIDAE (Sawflies) have also

been sent to me by Mr. Nathan, and he tells me they were identified by Dr. H. W. Miles, Ph.D. They are *Dolerus aeneus* Htg., of which a female was taken at Mellor on June 7th, and *Tenthredo sulphuripes*, Kriechbaumer, of which a male was taken on a flower head of *Angelica sylvestris* in Millers Dale on August 16th.

For many years now Repton Shrubs has provided a very large proportion of the entomological records for the Derby area. The late Mr. H. C. Hayward, M.A., F.E.S., and other members past and present of the Derbyshire Entomological Society have worked this large tract of woodland annually and many new records and occasionally new additions to the county list have been the result from time to time. During 1941 a very large proportion of the pines have been cut down and some of the other trees have also been removed. This will necessarily cause the removal of a number of well established local insects from this area and it will be interesting to try and discover whether the insects affected will become extinct or whether they will turn up in fresh districts near to.