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 emergences, 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 teazles 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 teazle, 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* (*teucrii*) 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 Eupithecia, albipunctata and trisignaria. 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 neighbour-
hood. I have bred it freely from sallow 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.