

## Some Notes on Collecting Lepidoptera at Repton, 1919.

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THE Spring of 1919 was long-delayed, with the result that, even as late as April 6th freshly emerged specimens of *P. Pedaria* were to be found drying their wings on tree trunks in Repton Shrubs and *T. Hyemana* was also seen on that day for the first time. In normal seasons *Pedaria* may be found whenever the weather is mild in January or February and is seldom about later than the end of March, whilst *Hyemana* is usually over early in that month. *Brephos Parthenias* was observed on the same day, not a late date for this species. But when the spring came, it came with a rush, and within a week or two the sallows were well out and insect life abundant. On the 13th, for example, willow bloom in the Shrubs produced all the usual species in some numbers and also *P. Piniperda* and *T. Munda*. The former of these two species has been rapidly becoming less scarce in the wood of recent years, as the fir plantations have been growing to maturity, but *Munda* had not previously been observed here in the imago state, though a few larvae, proving its existence in the wood, were beaten from birch in 1909. Attempts to semble with a captured female of *A. Strataria* proved fruitless, though the weather conditions seemed ideal, and no second specimen was taken, despite a rigorous search on tree trunks on more than one occasion, so that it would appear that this species, never common here, was unusually scarce this season.

In the early part of the year I published a revised list of the Lepidoptera of the Repton neighbourhood. The attention paid to the *Tortrices* and *Tineids* in the last three years had resulted in a substantial increase of the local records, and it seemed worth while to bring the lists published by Mr. Garneys in 1881 in the Repton Flora and Fauna up to date. Mr. Garneys' list contained 593 species and the present list numbers 773, an increase of 180 species, of which 55 are not recorded in the County List published in the *Victoria County History of Derbyshire* in 1905. There can of course be no finality in such lists and indeed the present season has added no less than 12 species, of which 7 are also new records for the County. The most interesting of these is the butterfly *Syrichthus Malvae*, which was observed in two localities, one at Willington, a flowery meadow skirting a small spinney, where two specimens were taken, and the other a clearing in the middle of Repton Shrubs, where a single female specimen was taken and released. In both of these the foodplant *Tormentil* grows freely and it is to be hoped that the insect may establish itself. This is, strictly speaking, not the first record of the species for the county, for it was included in a list drawn up by Mr. F. W. G. Payne in 1895 and published in the *Entomologist*. But apparently the evidence for that record was not satisfactory, for it was rejected by the compiler of the *Victoria History* List, who mentions it in a footnote to his Introduction amongst "species that have undoubtedly been included in error." It seems very possible that the observation of Mr. Payne or his informant was after all well-founded and that it represented an earlier but perhaps unsuccessful attempt on the part of this little butterfly to extend its range into Derbyshire. The same species has this year been reported for the first time from Cheshire, and it would seem that the fine Mays of the last three years have resulted in an increase of numbers in its regular localities

and a consequent migratory impulse. I learn from Mr. A. Simmonds of Nottingham that the insect is well established along the line of hills south of the Trent in Nottinghamshire, running from Barton to Cotgrave. We are so familiar in the Midlands with the gradual disappearance of many butterflies from localities in which they were formerly abundant that it is particularly gratifying to come across an example of the opposite tendency. The other species new to the County List are *Rhodophaea Tumidella* and *Peronea Aspersana*, both from Repton Shrubs, *Lithocoletis Stettinensis* and *L. Spinicolella* from Willington, *Depressaria Conterminella*, a very fine melanic form bred from a larva taken on osier, and *Gelechia Diffinis*. The identification of the *Tineids* has been kindly confirmed for me by the Rev. G. W. Metcalfe, F.E.S., and the two last have been still further certified by Mr. Meyrick. In addition to these the following species have been taken that were not hitherto recorded in the Repton lists, though observed elsewhere in the county: *Eupithecia Coronata*, of which several specimens were taken in an osier bed at Repton, sitting on the trunks of pollard willows; this species was only recently added to the county list from Coxbench; *Tortrix Crataegana*, formerly reported only from Ashbourne, *Peronea Ferrugana*, *Halonota Cirsiana* and *Gelechia Sororculella*. Nine further species were also taken by me this season that had hitherto escaped my own observation here, though they figure in the earlier local lists. Of these the most interesting is *Sesia Culiciformis* taken in Repton Shrubs. Now that some birches have been felled in the wood, it is probable that this species, for which I have repeatedly searched without result, will be obtainable freely in that locality. The allied *S. Cynipiformis* is abundant in the wood and this year a most unusual occurrence was noted in connection with it. A worn specimen of *Culiciformis* had been netted on June 15th when flying round a birch

stump, and examination proved that the stump was riddled with the borings of *Sesiid* larvae, naturally supposed to belong to this species. About a fortnight later two *Sesiid* pupae about to emerge were noticed protruding from this stump and these produced imagines of *S. Cynipiformis*, which has always been regarded as rigidly confined to oak. Moreover the pupae were placed in the larval burrows exactly after the manner of *Culiciformis*, whereas *Cynipiformis* normally spins its puparium either on the solid wood just inside the bark or in the bark itself. It seems probable that the larvae fed in the bark of the birch and merely utilised old burrows of *Culiciformis* in which to pupate and that they did not so far assume an abnormal habit as to feed on the solid wood as *Culiciformis* does, but in any case the incident would seem to show that a *Sesiid* larva is not necessarily so strictly confined to one food as has been commonly supposed.

The fine weather in May and June was naturally responsible for an abundance of the commoner species and for early appearances in many of them. A single specimen of *Coenonympha Pamphilus* was taken in a meadow at Willington, apparently bred on the spot, since it was in the freshest possible condition. It is remarkable that this almost universally distributed and abundant species should be so rare in this neighbourhood. In seventeen years I have only once previously noted it here, a single specimen in 1915 near Repton Shrubs, and Mr. Garneys, in his list of 1881, also records the occurrence of one specimen only "in a meadow near Repton." *Tortrices* were abundant, especially along the Willington railway banks, and it was curious to find *Dichrorampha Sequana* flying in numbers about a few clumps of yarrow, which had been regularly visited in the two preceding years, without yielding any traces of this insect, though other *Dichroramphids* e.g., *Politana*,

*Plumbana* and *Herbosana* had been collected freely from the same plants. *Halonota Pflugiana* occurred commonly in a grassy meadow where no thistles were in evidence, and the pretty little *Stigmonota Perlepidana* was abundant in an osier bed in early May, whilst *Pyrodes Rheediella* danced in the sunshine over high hawthorn bushes and *Coccyx Splendidulana* and *C. Argyrana* were in clouds about the young foliage of oak. Of the last-named species a remarkable aberrant form was taken, which had finally to be referred to Mr. Meyrick for identification. He was able to confirm this, though he remarked that he had never seen a similar form before. *Phtheochroa Rugosana*, *Tortrix Costana* and *Rhacodia Caudana*, none of them previously observed here by me, were all taken in small numbers, and altogether the season proved very productive so far as *Tortrices* were concerned. My colleague, Mr. A. P. Wilson sugared fairly consistently for *Noctuae* throughout the season, but insects were not abundant and few captures of any special interest were made, though *Agrotis Saucia*, not observed here since 1913, again put in an appearance. A visit in June with the Derbyshire Entomological Society to the moors above Matlock produced a series of an unusually large and fine form of *Tortrix Viburnana* and some pupae of *Plusia Interrogationis*, with an abundance of *Acidalia Fumata* amongst other species.

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