

Some Notes on Lepidoptera, 1924.

By H. C. Hayward.

THE Summer of 1924 was not very genial to anybody, but it was particularly unkind to Entomologists.

It was not so much that the rainfall was excessive, for although this was persistent, it was not usually heavy and the total fall for the summer months was rather under than over the average. But the general lack of warmth and sunshine made for one of the worst collecting years possible. Insects were scarce and very late, though the collector who concentrated on the early stages had probably not much reason to complain, for larvae were favoured by the cool and moist conditions that kept their foodplants fresh and succulent.

A few interesting insects did however put in an appearance. Amongst the butterflies a specimen of the Holly Blue (*Lycaena Argiolus*) occurred in Repton Shrubs in May. Only on two previous occasions, in 1912 and 1921, has this dainty little insect been noted here and it is pleasant to find that it still lingers in the locality. The species was also recorded this year from Hulland by Mr. G. H. Sale, but it can only be regarded as a scarce survivor anywhere within the county. Amongst the rarer hawk moths, a specimen of the Death's Head, *Acherontia Atropos*, was recorded from Alvaston by Mr J. Douglas and one of *Sphinx Convoluli* from Beighton by Mr. L. Wyer. A few specimens of *Zeuzera Pyrina* were taken at Repton and two larvae of *Notodontia Ziczac*, always, in my experience, a scarce species here, were

successfully bred by J. O. T. Howard, a boy at Repton School. He was also fortunate enough to take a fine imago of *Acronycta Alni* on a tree-trunk in Repton Shrubs. This is quite an uncommon occurrence, the captures recorded of this rare insect being usually of the larva, which not infrequently turns out to be ichneumonid. Such captures are on record from various parts of the county, notably from Bakewell, where six larvae were taken in 1900, from Repton in 1917 and last year from Somersal Herbert. Two larvae were taken this year by Mr. L. Wyer at Eckington, feeding on beech as late as September. Another capture of some interest among the Noctuae was that of a specimen of *Hadena Adusta* at Repton. This species was recorded before 1880 by the late Dr. Garneys from Potlock Covert, which is not very far distant, but I had not previously come across it here in twenty years experience. It would seem however, to be widely distributed, if scarce, in the county, for we have records from Bakewell, Baslow and Chesterfield. Another species new to the Repton list is *Ellopija Prosaparia*, of which a single specimen was taken in the Shrubs. It has always surprised me that this insect should have been apparently absent from such a suitable locality, and now it has appeared there it may be hoped that it will increase rapidly in numbers, as other pine-feeding species have done, e.g. *Bupalis Piniaria*, now very abundant in the wood, *Macaria Liturata* and its variety *Nigrofulvata*, *Panolis Piniperda* and *Tortrix Cinnamomeana*, all of which were uncommon there twenty years ago. *Melannippe Hastata* was again seen, though in far fewer numbers than last year, but for this no doubt the season was responsible and it may be assumed that this fine insect has come to stay. Other species worth noting were *Cymatophora Duplaris*, the fine melanic form that alone occurs here, and the two beautiful *Melanthias*, *Albicillata* and *Bicolorata*.

At the end of July I collected a large bunch of wild Valerian from a local osier bed and left it in water when I went away for my holidays. On my return I was agreeably surprised to find upwards of fifty pupae of *Eupithecia Valerianata*, of which I had expected to obtain perhaps a dozen.

Turning to the smaller species, this year I bred a long series of *Tortrix Costana*, which produced some fine melanochroic varieties, both of the extreme form *Liverana* and intermediate between this and the type. I had previously found a very few larvae of this species feeding on the Yellow Flag (*Iris Pseudacoris*) and I found some this year also on this rather unpromising looking foodplant. But the larvae were far more numerous on the great Willow herb (*Epilobium Hirsutum*) particularly when I visited the osier bed, in which they occur, after a big May flood had subsided. The bed had been submerged to a depth of at least two feet and this had no doubt driven the larvae into the topmost sprays of these tall plants, where they were easily found. One tortrix was added to the County lists, *Pammene Populana*, of which three specimens were bred from osier. This is the only new species that I have to record this year. *Penthina Sauciana* had been recorded from Breadsall Moor, and on several previous occasions I had sought for it there without success. It is usually on the wing in mid-June and it is indicative of the lateness of the season that when I searched for it in the last week of June, I found no imagines, but one larva nearly full-fed. This duly pupated and did not emerge until July 20. On July 27 I visited the moor again, but a prolonged search only gave me one further imago. *Grapholitha Geminana* was common both as a larva on the first and as an imago on the second occasion. Breadsall Moor is normally a good locality for the pretty little Green Hairstreak butterfly (*Thecla Rubi*) and I was surprised not to see any worn specimens still about in June in this late

season. But a collector whom I happened to meet on the moor told me that this year the species had apparently been entirely absent as he had frequently visited the moor throughout May and June in search of it, without seeing a single specimen. It is much to be hoped that so attractive an insect has not disappeared from a haunt in which it used to be so abundant. This is, I think, improbable, but I would appeal to any local collectors who may read these notes to spare at any rate the females for a few years to come. *Olindia Ulmana*, of which I took a casual specimen in 1920, was taken in small numbers in a very restricted locality. In general the better local Tortrices, such as *Astata Sinuana*, *Astata Ophthalmicana*, *Cnephasia Incanana*, *Amelia Palleana*, *Penthina Corticana* etc., which are usually to be taken as imagines, were more difficult to obtain than usual, whereas *Tortrix Costana*, *Astata Semifusca*, *Antithesia Salicella* etc., which are best obtained as larvae, were at least in their normal numbers.
