

Some Notes on Lepidoptera, 1928.

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THE early spring of 1928 was distinguished by a fairly mild February followed by a very cold spell in March. On February 19th *Hybernia leucophaearia*, with its fine variety *marmorinaria* was about in Repton Shrubs in its usual numbers, but there was a total absence of *Apocheima pedaria*, which usually accompanies it and indeed this species seems to have become much scarcer here of recent years. After the cold spell a good deal of time was spent in the Shrubs in an attempt to find again the scarce *Pammene fimbriana*, which had been taken here for the first and only time in 1920, and though most other species were noted in fair numbers, only three or four *pedaria* were seen throughout the latter part of March and early April, though one of these was a fine melanic form. *Erannis aescularia* and *Polyphoca flavicornis* were noted as early as March 15th, *Ectropis biundularia*, never a common species here, on March 25th, when *Tortricodes tortricella* was in unusual abundance. *Biston stratarius* was seen on April 1st and on that date the first *Chimabache fagella* appeared. I have seldom seen any insect in such numbers as this species in the next few days, Every oak trunk was covered with the moths, ranging from the typical pale form to striking melanics; on one tree alone I counted 64 specimens at rest and this was by no means an isolated case. The first *fimbriana* was taken on April 2nd, but despite a lot of hard work in the following weeks only four more specimens were obtained and the species seems to be present in the wood only in very small numbers. A large

number of Eriocranids were taken in the hopes that some of the rarer species would be found to be represented among them, but all proved upon examination to belong to one or other of the two common species *Mnemonica unimaculella* and *Eriocrania semipurpurella*. In early May larvae and pupae of *Platyptilia gonodactyla* were found in plenty in the heads of coltsfoot at Willington and later in the month a fair number of larvae of *Eucosma diniana* were obtained from larch in Repton Shrubs together with those of *Pandemis cinnamomeana* and *Spilonota lariciana*, the latter a species new to the county list, though it is probable that specimens may have been taken before and passed over as early examples of *S. ocellana*, which it much resembles. On June 2nd *Plemyria hastata* was observed in the Shrubs in fine condition and in quite unusual numbers and *Acidalia candidata*, the re-appearance of which was noted last year was comparatively plentiful. Some insects seem to go through cycles of comparative scarcity and plenty, for which it is difficult to account. A census of insects taken in any particular wood at intervals of 20 years would probably always show very considerable differences. Certainly this is the case with Repton Shrubs, where records shew that many species once common have either entirely disappeared or become very scarce, but a refreshingly large number of apparently new arrivals redresses the balance. Many factors no doubt, contribute to this, among them gradual changes in the relative proportions of the vegetation, the restriction of undergrowth by the larger growth of trees and so forth, but probably the rise and fall of their parasites is the main consideration. I have known flourishing colonies of some localised insects entirely wiped out by a hymenopterous parasite, which in its turn presumably dies out when there is no host left to harbour it. A stray visit from a wandering gravid female may then restart the race in its old quarters and it

may multiply freely until the parasite is also in some way reintroduced. Other interesting insects taken in June were *Eupithecia indigata*, first noted here in 1921, *Dichrorampha sequana*, *Cryptoblabes bistriga*, and *Laspeyresia roseticolana*, a new record for Repton, though it had previously been recorded from near Burton. In early July *Oxyptilus heterodactylus (teucris)* was found to be common about wood sage in Ticknall quarries. This is a new record for the County. It is always an exceedingly local insect and it is significant that it does not occur in the neighbouring Repton Shrubs, where its foodplant grows equally freely. Ticknall also produced in numbers the pretty little *Stephensia brunnichiella*, a species first added to our lists last year by Mr. H. Daltry, who found it in Dovedale. From that energetic collector comes the third and last addition to the County list for 1928, in the shape of *Dichrorampha quaestionana*, taken by him in Dovedale.

Additions to County List during 1928:—

Oxyptilus heterodactylus. Ticknall. H.C.H.

Spilonota lariciana. Repton Shrubs. H.C.H.

Dichrorampha quaestionana. Dovedale. H. Daltry.