

ENTOMOLOGY IN DERBYSHIRE.

NOTES ON THE SEASON 1942.

By N. BLACKWELL WOOD.

For the third year in succession bitterly cold weather and heavy snow in January and February combined to make a particularly hard winter. Spring weather arrived late in the season and the summer was notable for the amount of wet and shortage of the hoped for hot dry days.

Despite this untoward weather, the season has provided a large number of very unusual Entomological records. Had pre-war conditions for collecting been possible, it might have been found that many other records would have been noted. Owing to the difficulties of travel and the fact that most Entomologists are engaged on some form or other of war work, field days have been temporarily discontinued and most of the year's notes are the result of chance observations and captures by different individuals.

Derbyshire used to be considered one of the poorest counties in Great Britain for butterflies and I well remember when *V. io* (Peacock) was considered a great find anywhere near Derby. It is now well established in most parts of the County and during the present season I found it plentiful at Hazelwood in September where a single buddleia often had seven or eight specimens at one time on the flowers. At that period I took a very distinctly marked specimen of the variety *cyanostica*, which in addition had a considerable buff suffusion on the red ground of the fore wings. Hibernated specimens of *V. io*. are reported by Mr. Camden Clarke from Bretby on April 11th and Ticknall on April 25th.

V. cardui (Painted Lady) appeared as an odd specimen at Calke on August 20th, and *V. atalanta* seems to have been locally but not generally plentiful in the County.

V. c-album (Comma) has appeared in several places and is reported by Mr. R. Atherley from Littleover on August 27th and Normanton, August 29th. Mr. C. Collenette reports a single specimen from Parwich village on 27th September and mentions another one found in the garden of Parwich Hall on the 10th October in the previous year.

Several correspondents refer to the abundance of *V. urticae* (Small Tortoiseshell) and a single specimen was seen by Mr. L. Nathan, flying at Marple Bridge on April 11th and two newly emerged specimens at Birch Vale on August 1st.

C. phlaeas (Small Copper) was out in the Repton district in mid-May. I had an interesting experience breeding this insect from eggs all taken from one male and given by Dr. Holmes. The eggs all hatched within a few hours of each other but one larva developed at an abnormal rate, pupated and had hatched out when the remaining larvae were still only half fed. Dr. Holmes has produced some very fine varieties of this insect by breeding from wild females and in a case full of specimens of the year's breeding he has some particularly fine varieties of extreme caeruleopunctata as well as two specimens approaching *var. Smithii*.

C. rubi (Green Hair Streak) an odd specimen of which was seen in the square at Repton on June 3rd, was extremely plentiful at Holmesfield (near Sheffield) on June 4th, where I found several birch and mountain ash with 20 or 30 butterflies darting about round each. They were then well worn but I found considerable variation in the amount of white marking on the green underside in about 30 specimens which I netted for examination. A further specimen reported by Miss K. Hollick at Ashbourne on June 5th had no white markings on the undersides.

P. brassicae (Large White) seems to have been abnormally plentiful in its second brood when the caterpillars constituted a plague in many parts of the County and in my own garden I found several nearly full grown larvae dead after a sharp frost very late in the Autumn. They were on an exposed leaf of a previously cut cauliflower and there seemed no other cause than the frost for their death. Ichneumons have again played great havoc this year and of many hundreds of larvae which I took off the cabbage, quite 95 per cent. had been stung.

E. cardamines (Orange Tip) literally swarmed in many parts, and at Hazelwood where I saw great numbers of males, I did not see a single specimen of the female.

L. argiolus (Holly Blue) seems never to have been plentiful in the County, but this year I came across a colony which were obviously breeding at Idridgehay. On May 14th about a dozen including one or two females were flying round or settling on the flowers of some large holly trees and a few days later I saw even more in the same locality.

The season has been remarkable for the number of records of *P. megaera* (Wall Butterfly) of which no single specimen was recorded for many years. I reported last year that this butterfly had appeared in numbers at Langley Mill during the season, and this year it has spread to many places in the County. It is recorded from Foremark on August 20th by Mr. Camden Clarke; on August 28th twelve specimens at Little Eaton; two or three at Coxbench and one at Littleover, and August 29th abundant near Trent Station; these records were made by Mr. R. Atherley. On August 31st one newly emerged and one worn specimen in my garden at Allestree. On September 6th Mr. Collenette reports one in the garden of Parwich Hall and another one is reported at Fenny Bentley by Miss Hollick on 3rd September. From this I think we shall be able to add this insect to the Derbyshire

list, as it is a very free breeder and it seems certain that most of these specimens must have bred in the County.

I have another record of *P. egeria* (Speckled Wood) supplied by Mr. Camden Clarke, but for a single specimen only and dating back to Spring 1939 when it appeared at Bretby.

Fritillaries, never considered Derbyshire insects, have provided 2 interesting records, namely, *A. aglaia* (Dark Green Fritillary), at Bretby on July 8th, reported by Mr. Clarke and *A. paphia* (Silver Washed Fritillary) which I found at Idridgehay village on August 17th.

Other records supplied by Mr. Clarke are *P. sylvanus* (Large Skipper) at Willington on June 21st, and July 5th, and at Bretby on June 27th and July 8th and also of *S. w-album* (White Letter Hairstreak) on July 14th and 15th at Repton, and also in Foremark and Ticknall area several times during July.

There are several notable records among the moths, including three of *A. alni* (The Alder) sent by Mr. Clarke, the first one on May 24th at Repton and the second one a larva on July 5th, and the third one on July 14th, also at Repton.

There are several records for *A. leporina* (Miller) including two larvae on birch, August 31st in my garden (now pupated in cork) and another larva recorded by Mr. G. H. Sale on birch at Coxbench, August 19th. Also a fresh specimen taken by Mr. H. Britten on June 8th in Goyt Valley, Buxton.

C. Nupta (Red Underwing), a recent addition to the Derbyshire lists, seems to be established in the County and two larvae are recorded from Repton on July 15th by Mr. Clarke as well as two specimens of the perfect insect at rest on elm at Askew Hill, Repton, September 5th; one at rest on a wall on Newton Road near Burton on September 20th, and four others in the same locality and one at Coxbench recorded by Mr. Sale.

On June 22nd I took a female of *P. betularia* (Peppered Moth) at rest in the garden at Allestree, which to my surprise was rather lighter than the normal form. It was in perfect condition and is now in my cabinet. This is the first specimen of the type form I have ever seen in the Midlands where even the usual *melanic* Var. *doubledayaria* seems to have been much less common of recent years. I should be particularly interested to hear of any other recent capture of this insect in the type colouring in Derbyshire or the adjoining counties.

Captures in two new localities by Mr. H. P. Meek recorded by Mr. Nathan, *P. geryon* (Cistus Forester) at Longston Edge and *A. myrtilli* (Beautiful Yellow Underwing) on Eyam Moor.

Further records from Mr. Clarke include the following, all from Repton.

- B. temerata* (Clouded Silver), May 17th.
 - Larva of *A. pyramidea* (Copper Underwing), May 24th.
 - E. hastata* (Argent and Sable), May 31st.
 - E. mi* (Mother Shipton), May 31st.
 - B. prasinana* (Green Silver Lines), June 6th.
 - D. mendica* (Muslin), June 7th.
 - E. dolabraria* (Scorched Wing), June 11th.
 - C. bifida* (Poplar Kitten), on June 14th and Larvae on June 27th.
 - S. ocellatus* (Eyed Hawk), June 15th.
 - D. tiliae* (Lime Hawk), June 21st.
 - E. pustulata* (Blotched Emerald), July 10th.
 - Larva of *P. palpina* (Pale Prominent), July 18th.
 - Larva of *N. dromedarius* on birch at Coxbench, August 20th, recorded by Mr. Sale.
 - D. porcellus* (Small Elephant), taken by Mr. Britten, June 8th, Goyt Valley.
 - L. populata* (Northern Spinach), taken by Mr. Nathan on August 1st at Birch Vale.
- A number of Larvae of the Eyed Hawk, *S. ocellatus* are reported from Littleover by Rev. A. S. Elliott.

A particularly late but perfect specimen of the July Highflyer was captured by myself at Hazelwood on September 7th.

In the course of my professional work, I had to inspect a house which had been empty for 12 months at Brailsford on April 16th. Entomological specimens were confined to the first floor landing where five perfect specimens of *S. libatrix* (Herald), were resting on the walls together with 14 *V. urticae* (Small Tortoiseshell), five of which were resting side by side and seemingly not then roused from their hibernation. The Herald occurred later again in the garden at Allestree.

CRANEFLIES.

A specimen of a handsome crane-fly, *Tipula gigantea* is recorded by Mr. Collenette from Bradbourne district on 16th August.

DRAGONFLIES.

The following notes on dragonflies in Minninglow Sand-Pit are also supplied by Mr. Collenette.

"The four following species of dragonfly were seen at Minninglow Sand-pit during 1942. The sand-pit is in the centre of a limestone area, and I have not found these insects, after considerable search, on the surrounding ponds or streams on the limestone. It is possible that the deep clear water of the sand-pit is less impregnated with lime and more to their liking.

Pyrhosoma nymphula. Large Red Damsel-fly. Common on 24.6.42, scarcer 5.7.42, over 19.7.42.

Ischnura elegans. Common Ischnura. Common on 5 and 19.7.42, scarcer 1.8.42, a single male on 16.8.42.

Enallagma cyathigerum. Common Blue Damsel-fly. Common on 24.6.42 and 5.7.42, fairly common 19.7.42, 1 and 8.8.42, four males on 16.8.42.

Coenagrion puella. Common Coenagrion. Two males 5.7.42, one male 19.7.42, a pair in cop., 1.8.42, over 8.8.42."

BEETLES.

The following notes cover one or two interesting beetles which I have taken during the year.

Malachius bipustulatus, swarming at Hazelwood in June on wild parsnip, when numbers of specimens were to be found on each plant.

H. cadaverinus, very plentiful at Allestree in June, where the lovely little wasp beetles *C. arietis* was common during July.

Among other specimens taken at Repton in June were a fine pair of the handsome longicorn, *S. scalaris* and a specimen of *X. quadripunctata*.