

HETEROPTERA STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 2 - December 1983

As announced in Newsletter No. 1, a meeting took place on Saturday 22 October at the Nature Conservancy Council's offices in Belgrave Square, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. In spite of a strike on British Rail Southern Region, delays and congestion everywhere because of the CND rally, and temptingly-good fieldwork weather, thirteen heteropterists attended. The geographic spread was reasonable with Messrs Kirby and Crossley representing Derby and Yorkshire (no-one from over the borders, unfortunately); but the prize for stamina must go to Bernard Nau, who participated actively all day despite being jet-lagged after a flight from Phoenix that morning.

The following people were present:

Mr J Blackburn
Mr R Crossley
Mr W R Dolling
Mr P Dulwich
Mr B C Eversham
Mr E W Groves
Mr P T Harding

Mr L Jessop
Mr P Kirby
Mr D Lott
Dr B S Nau
Mr E G Philp
Mr A E Stubbs

Before lunch, discussion centred on publications, and the prospect of a replacement for Southwood and Leston's "Land and Water Bugs". After refreshments and informal discussions at a local hostelry, the meeting moved on to the Newsletter, possibilities for a recording scheme, and future meetings of the Group.

It is hoped that the following account includes all the main topics covered and decisions reached. Apologies to any participants who feel their views have been omitted or misrepresented; and to those who were unable to attend the meeting because of the short notice.

Publications

Although public library copies of S & L are available to everyone, and inter-library loans can provide photocopies of necessary papers, usually free of charge, most people felt a new book was needed to stimulate interest in Heteroptera. But the many apparently unused copies of S & L in private hands could be an untapped source of new heteropterists.

Several possibilities for new publications were suggested:

1. A second edition of S & L, to be published by Warne, was not impossible if a new manuscript with re-written keys was produced.
2. Royal Entomological Society Handbooks now have a less rigid format, which could permit easy-to-use artificial keys. Mr Dolling had prepared a shieldbug key relying on the most obvious characters. Going straight to species is easier than via families and subfamilies, as it lets

"green shieldbugs", "brown shieldbugs" etc. key out together. Without colour plates and background information, an RES Handbook would lack popular appeal, though with ample line drawings and genitalia figures it would be welcomed by committed heteropterists.

3. The Field Studies Council's "AIDGAP" project was mentioned. This had the advantages of cheapness, rapidity, and thoroughness of testing, though past projects had suffered administrative problems. AIDGAP had never tackled species-level keys to such a large, and at present unpopular group.
4. A completely new guide with comprehensive colour plates and well-tested keys using easy characters would be ideal. At present, no artist was available who could paint all families and give his time free. Finding a publisher might also be difficult, but the example of Alan Stubbs' new hoverfly guide was cited. Serialising would be possible, eg tackle shieldbugs, squashbugs and a few other popular families first. This could generate a market for other volumes while giving time for keys to be tested and taxonomic problems to be resolved.
5. This first volume could be included in the new Cambridge University Press "Naturalists' Handbooks"; but taking out the most popular part of the fauna would make it much more difficult to find a publisher for the rest. The strict 64-page format of the CUP series could not cover the Miridae, for instance.

After lengthy discussion the only suggestion to find general support was that testing new keys in a newsletter was the first task; in time an artist and a publisher may be found.

The Newsletter

Everyone agreed the Newsletter should continue, and that its main purpose should be testing keys, and passing on collecting and identification hints which could otherwise be gained only through extensive fieldwork. Notes on changing distributions, new foodplants etc. could be included when there was a need for rapid circulation among the active workers. It was stressed that original observations and articles of long-term value should still be submitted to the usual journals, even if an abstract had already appeared in the Newsletter. Otherwise, important work would in time be lost.

The long-term future of the Newsletter is still undecided, and in a year or two a small subscription may have to be charged. The next two numbers (Spring and Autumn 1984) will be produced free at the Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood, as an aid to founding a recording scheme. In the long term, BRC can give each scheme one short newsletter a year (Heteroptera qualify for two, aquatic and terrestrial), which may not be enough printed space for our purposes. The extra help from NCC's Invertebrate Site Register cannot last forever, but should at least see the group firmly established.

In the absence of any volunteers, Brian Eversham will continue to compile the Newsletter, and all contributions should be sent to him at Monks Wood (new address!). There is no "editorial board" but articles will be checked informally by the most appropriate specialist before inclusion.

A recording scheme

The aquatic Heteroptera scheme already exists and is run by John Blackburn, Freshwater Biological Association, River Laboratory, East Stoke, Wareham, Dorset. A recording card is in preparation.

No-one at the meeting was willing to act as national scheme organiser for terrestrial Hets. Paul Harding (BRC) explained that the scheme organiser's job would not be very onerous, a point echoed by Walter Le Quesne of the Auchenorrhyncha scheme (pers. comm.). The organiser would act mainly as a post-box and focus for cards and general enquiries. It is hoped that a national organiser can be found before next summer's meeting (see below).

In the interim, several people have volunteered to take charge of particular areas, and would be interested to receive records and enquiries concerning these areas:

Kent	- Mr E G Philp
Sussex	- Mr P Hodge
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	- Mr D Appleton
London area	- Mr E W Groves
Bedfordshire, East Anglia and adjacent counties	- Dr B S Nau
Lincolnshire	- Mr P Kirby
Yorkshire	- Mr S Foster
Derbyshire	- Mr D Budworth

Although the launch of a terrestrial recording scheme has been postponed, it was decided that a new recording card should be produced, based on an update of the 1964 checklist. To make this usable, a list of synonyms and, where needed, S & L numbers, will be prepared at the same time. Mr Dolling has agreed to work out the nomenclature to be followed, and Mr Le Quesne has a microcomputer program which gives an alphabetical numbered listing. The card and explanation should be ready some time in 1984.

Other developments

To exchange field experience and continue this meeting's discussion, a combined field and indoor meeting was proposed. To coincide with peak numbers of 'difficult' mirids, a weekend in early July (probably 7-8th) 1984 was suggested. The likely venue is Monks Wood Experimental Station near Huntingdon. This has residential accommodation, meeting rooms and limited lab. space, is easily reached by road and rail, and is close to good woodland and fenland habitats. It was also suggested that there could be an indoor meeting, probably in London, the following January or February, an equivalent to the November "Dipterists' Day".

To promote the group, notices will appear in "Antenna", and the Coleopterists' and Dipterists' Newsletters, and in the relevant journals.

Summary of future events

Early 1984	Aquatic Heteroptera recording card
? 1984	Terrestrial Heteroptera recording card List of synonyms and explanation
Spring 1984	Newsletter No. 3
July 1984	Weekend meeting at Monks Wood
Autumn 1984	Newsletter No. 4
Jan/Feb 1985	Heteropterists' Day, indoors in London
Spring 1985	Newsletter No. 5?

Finally a request: the newsletter is only as good as its contents. Please send your draft keys, field identification notes, collecting hints, and other scraps of useful information. Longer items are also welcome if there is good reason - speed of circulation or the need for further refinement - not to submit straight to Ent. mon. Mag. or another journal.

We now have additional referees for Anthocoris (Leslie Jessop), Nabidae (L Jessop), Berytinidae (Peter Kirby) and the fauna of conifers (P Kirby again); offers to help with other tricky groups are still needed. Also, are there any other genera which are causing problems? A list of difficult or unworkable portions of S & L is being compiled in the hope that it will bring forth remedies or offers to check specimens.

All correspondence re. the Newsletter to:

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Articles and keys for Newsletter No. 3 by the end of January if possible.