

Nationally scarce craneflies at Carpenter's Farm in southwest Worcestershire

Martin Skirrow

Carpenter's Farm is a 90-acre pastoral farm situated just off the south end of the Malvern Hills (centroid SO777339). It has a wooded stream (Wynd Brook) running the length of the farm and unimproved species-rich grassland on which cattle and sheep are reared. There are six ponds each with a different character and a few well vegetated marshy areas. The soil is heavy and retains moisture for much of the year. These conditions are suitable for the nationally scarce cranefly species now described. The RDB statuses (2012) are taken from Rarity Indices for the British Craneflies compiled and kindly provided by John Kramer.

***Tipula subcunctans* (Alexander, 1921) (Tipulidae).** RDB status Nb. Four specimens were found between February 2014 and October 2015: two females and a male in light traps, and a male at a lit window (01). The larvae live in marshy soils and the adults frequent marshes and damp places. The species is probably under recorded as it looks superficially like the very common *Tipula paludosa*, but in females the wings are as long or longer than the abdomen (as in the similar *T. oleracea*).



01. *Tipula subcunctans* female. Wing length 21 mm, as long or slightly longer than the abdomen. Martin Skirrow

***Tipula rufina* (Meigen, 1818) (Tipulidae).** RDB status Nb. A male of this species was found in a greenhouse in February 2014 (02). The larvae live in damp mosses on stones and walls and the adults frequent woods and gardens in spring. The remains of an old ruined wall covered in mosses was near the greenhouse. A particular feature of this species is a black stripe running along the pleura from the neck to below the wing root (03).



02. *Tipula rufina* male, wing length 13 mm. Martin Skirrow.



03 *Tipula rufina* male, close-up of characteristic black pleural stripe. Martin Skirrow.

***Trimicra pilipes* (Fabricius, 1787) (Limoniidae).** RDB status Na. Five females and a male of this cranefly were found between June 2014 and early December 2015, most of them attracted to light traps or a lit window, but one netted in a boggy area (04). It is one of the most widespread craneflies throughout the world yet is seldom recorded. It is closely associated with the mud of draw-down zones of ponds and lakes. Males in particular have very hairy legs (05). The only other record for the species in Worcestershire is from Lower Moor near Pershore in 2010 (Mick Blythe, personal communication).



04. *Trimicra pilipes* male, Wing length 11.5 mm. Martin Skirrow



05. *Trimicra pilipes* male, close-up of hairy hind tibiae. Martin Skirrow

***Euphylidorea dispar* (Meigen, 1818) (Limoniidae).** RDB status Nb. A female of this species was netted near a pond in May 2015. Its larvae live in marshy soils and the adults favour shaded marsh. The extensively black femora and head are clues for identification (06).



06. *Euphylidorea dispar* female. Wing length 12 mm. Note extensively dark femora and head. Martin Skirrow

***Euphylidorea lineola* (Meigen, 1804) (Limoniidae).** RDB status Nb. A female was caught in an actinic light trap set by a well vegetated and partly shaded pond in August 2015. The conditions needed for this species are the same as those for *E. dispar*. The general yellow colour of the species is a useful pointer for more detailed examination (07).



07. *Euphylidorea lineola* female. Wing length 12 mm. Martin Skirrow

***Achyrolimonia decemmaculata* (Loew, 1873) (Limoniidae).** RDB status Nb. A specimen was caught in an interception trap set just above a large pile of rotting wood between 27th September and 17th October 2015. The larvae are found on fungi growing on rotting wood in deciduous woodland. This is a small but attractive species named according to the ten dark wing spots (08). There are only two other Worcestershire records, both from the Wyre Forest area (Mick Blythe, personal communication).



08. *Achyrolimonia decemmaculata*. Wing length 7 mm. Martin Skirrow

Trichocera major (Edwards, 1921) (Trichoceridae). This is a winter gnat rather than a true crane fly, but the two groups are often considered together. *T. major* is described as widespread but scarce, mainly in woods and hedgerows in autumn. Several examples of *T. major* were found here during the autumn of 2014 and 2015 (09). One was netted in a boggy area but most were collected from a lit window on the farm. The appearance of the male genitalia of my specimens matched the drawings in the Stubbs identification keys except for the twin stylet structure. Because of this discrepancy I referred specimens to Mick Blythe, who was equally mystified. So he referred them to Julian Small (via John Kramer) who confirmed my specimens as typical *T. major* and explained how the original twin stylet drawing was an error that had been passed down from a 1966 publication (Dahl, 1966). Such is the minefield of insect identification, but at least we have key professionals who offer unstinting help.



09. *Trichocera major* female. Wing length 8.5 mm. Martin Skirrow

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to John Kramer, who identified *Tipula rufina* and *Achyrolimonia decemmaculata* and confirmed the identification of the other crane fly species; also to Julian Small for his help with *Trichocera major*, and to Mick Blythe for past records and advice.

Reference

Dahl, C., 1966. Notes on the taxonomy and distribution of Swedish Trichoceridae (Dipt. Nemat.). *Opuscula Entomologica*, 31:93-118

Images

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 02. *Tipula rufina* male, wing length 13 mm. Martin Skirrow.

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 07. *Euphyllidorea lineola* female. Wing length 12 mm. Martin Skirrow
 08. *Achyrolimonia decemmaculata*. Wing length 7 mm. Martin Skirrow
 09. *Trichocera major* female. Wing length 8.5 mm. Martin Skirrow