

**LEICESTERSHIRE
ENTOMOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

17

September 1996

***Unitary status - what will
be the fate of the natural
history collections?***

Next April will see the separation of Leicester and Rutland from the present Leicestershire County Council. From a political point of view there would seem to be those that think that this is either a detrimental or beneficial move - a matter of view depending upon your politics.

However, the ramifications of the breakup of the county go beyond the aspirations of politicians and government - it will have a substantial impact on the personal lives of many employees, will leave many situations where it will be almost impossible to make a sensible split of resources between the new authorities and will inevitably leave many wondering why the whole exercise was even considered!

One of the areas which is to be severely affected (as far as we know as neither decisions nor definitive announcements have yet been made) will be the Museums Service. Many of us use the facilities offered by New Walk Museum and the Ecology Unit at Birstall and we all have friends who will be directly affected by any changes.

Not least will be the fate of the collections donated to the Museum for over 150 years. What will become of these county reference collections? What will happen to the various recording schemes operated by the BRC? What will happen to the extensive natural history library?

Surely it is about time that societies such as ours were asked how these facilities can be preserved so that they can continue to be used by the enthusiastic amateur from all parts of the county (including Rutland).

Is it possible that any breakup of the collections may infringe any conditions laid down when collections were deposited? Where would, say, the county part of the collection be housed? Can there be a reassurance that the split collections, if such a disaster occurs, will continue to be adequately curated and correctly stored? I feel very depressed about the prospects for the future - but can we do anything about it? Let's have your thoughts!

Ray Morris

Next copy date: January 15th 1997

RDB3 woodlouse new to county!

A new species of woodlouse has been found in Leicestershire. *Armadillidium pictum* was discovered amongst pitfall trap material collected at Buddon Wood on 15.i.1996.

Background

Buddon Wood SSSI is an ancient woodland with open heathy areas, situated on the top of a huge outcrop of granite, on the eastern edge of Charnwood Forest in north west Leicestershire. The wood is mainly sessile oak/birch type with areas of small-leaved lime and alders in the wetter areas. Sycamore is also invading many parts of the wood with the thin soils the wood stands on being slightly acidic in nature. The flora is quite diverse with the wood holding the largest list of higher plants for any woodland in the county.

The wood was clear-felled for the first time in the 1940s and then allowed to regenerate naturally although timber has been extracted from the site for centuries. In the early 1970s Redland Roadstone Aggregates was given permission to quarry the granite. As a result, today less than a quarter of the original wood survives and this is in the form of a fringe, up to 200m wide, on three sides of the quarry.

In the second half of 1995 an ecological survey was made of this remnant woodland as part of Redland's efforts to extend the area of their activities. The survey mainly concentrated on previously studied groups of plants and animals prior to quarrying and included the flora, beetles, spiders and moths.

Pitfall trapping

As part of the 1995 assessment, five lines of pitfall traps, each containing eight beakers set 2m apart, were set in a variety of woodland situations. The fifth line (where *A pictum* was found) was set at the side of a wide ride containing heathy grassland with occasional gorse bushes, adjacent to fairly open oak woodland.

The traps were serviced every month until October 1995, but due to lack of resources the traps were then left in place for three months being changed on 15.i.96. While sorting through the debris and invertebrate bodies, a small

convex woodlouse was noted along with the usual *Oniscus asellus* and *Porcellio scaber* specimens. It was identified as a male *A pictum* which was kindly confirmed by David Bilton of the British Isopod Study Group.

Red Data Book species!

This small pill-woodlouse (9mm) is black and attractively mottled with yellow patches in life but fades to a mottled grey in alcohol. Its usual habitats are ancient woodland, mountain scree and upland limestone areas where it may be found in rotten logs, amongst detritus and under stones. In Britain this is quite a rare species since it has only been recorded from about five sites in the Lake District, two sites in the Brecon Beacons (mid-Wales) and two sites in north west England. Due to its habitat preferences, *Armadillidium pictum* is considered to be a native species and is sufficiently rare to be a Red Data Book (RDB) 3 species.

The species can be extremely difficult to find and collect so part of its scarcity may be due to this. There is no reason why *A pictum* should not be found in several of the other open ancient woodlands within the Charnwood Forest area.

Jon Daws

[It would be interesting to see whether the finding of this RDB species had any influence on Redland's proposals - I would be very surprised! - Editor]

Death's head hawk at Barrowden

Readers may recall the record of the death's head hawk moth reported from Barrowden in Rutland (LES Newsletter 15 page 12) with no details. The moth was found on 22.vi.94 with no records for 1995.

Jean Harvey

Articles (of any length), photographs, drawings, observations, letters etc etc are always wanted and always welcome!
Please send to:
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LE9 8DN

Can you believe it?

On a recent wildlife holiday in Tanzania I saw, admired and photographed in the Ngorongoro crater an exotic member of the lily family, *Gloriosa superba*. This is a glorious flower with red and yellow reflexed petals and long prominent stamens and stigma. When the seed was offered in the Thompson & Morgan catalogue this year, it was a challenge to grow it - under greenhouse conditions.

I succeeded in producing a metre high plant in a pot and witnessed, surprisingly, a flower forming and opening. Imagine my dismay one morning in early September to find a larva of the privet hawk moth esconced on one petal having reduced it from 5cm to 2cm. The larva had to go! Alas strong emotions prevented me from the calm taking of a photograph.

The privet hedge is about a metre and a half from the west end of the greenhouse but a caterpillar route from the hedge via a skylight must be about 4½ metres minimum, assuming it dropped from the open skylight onto the plant.

Dennis Cooper

[Lilac, holly and ash are foodplants as well as privet but the presence of the moth in the city is quite unusual, more often being reported from the Rutland area- Editor]



Glorious Ketton!

Once again, a sunny day brought out the Ketton butterflies. On 6.vi.96 the following were spotted by Brian Crouch of Birstall;

Brown argus (2), grizzled skipper (12), green hairstreak (2), dingy skipper (10), brimstone (14), small heath (5), painted lady (3), meadow brown, common blue, speckled wood (8), orange tip (15), green-veined white (1), plenty of other whites and 2 silver Y.

Hot weather brings out insects - at last!

The sudden burst of hot weather in early June instigated a successful migration of painted lady butterflies (see reports elsewhere in this issue) when they were noted in many parts of the county. Mrs Jean Eason of Ashby-de-la-Zouch was delighted when hummingbird hawk visited her aubretias and pansies for a feed at SK354165 on 6.vi.96.

Cockchafers (ugh!) were noted in Rutland on 1.vi.96 at Empingham Marshy Meadows SSSI (SK956090) by Jenny Harris of LRTNC. At least twenty of these beetles bombarded the mv trap at Holly Hayes (SK594086) on the night of 6.vi.96. Fortunately they had settled by morning when the egg boxes were viewed!

One interesting micro from the trap that night was identified as *Callistro denticulella* (B&F 310). It is a small, dark moth with a partly ochreous head and a distinctive pattern of white markings on the forewing. The most numerous moth was the common swift with 22 individuals, a very high number for this oh-so-slow year.

Jane McPhail

Some very earlies!

Early moths attracted to the kitchen window at home in Groby this year included mottled umber on 7.i.96 and March on 4.2.96!

Ivan Pedley

Down the graveyard!

Having arrived early for the LES investigation of Belgrave Gardens in August, a short time was spent investigating the graveyard at the neighbouring St Peter's church. Surprisingly, there was deadly nightshade, white bryony and thorn apple growing in the hedge and a perfect red admiral on the church wall sunning itself. The micro *Caloptilia elongella* was beaten from a yew tree this catch being only one of a few known county records.

Jane McPhail

On the move!

In the words of "Butterfly Line" (which you can ring anytime to find out the latest in butterfly information) "an unprecedented invasion" into this country began on June 6th when thousands of painted lady (*Cynthia cardui*) butterflies crossed over from Europe along with red admirals (*Vanessa atalanta*) and other species. How this affected my recording of lepidoptera at Shearsby follows.

Painted ladies first stayed awhile in my garden on June 8th and only missed one day the rest of the month. Red admirals began appearing on June 14th although not in the numbers experienced with painted ladies.

With these two immigrants arriving so early I'm sure our buddleias will have many of their progeny on them later in the year. Now that is a prospect to look forward to!



Vanessa atalanta

In the wake of these butterflies came the immigrant moths especially the day flying silver Y (*Autographa gamma*). A dark swordgrass (*Agrotis ipsilon*) arrived at mv on June 16th. Rush veneers (*Nomophila noctuella*) were both in the trap and seen during the day. Hummingbird hawks (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) appeared on the 26th and 27th, inevitably hovering over the red valerian plants and also in the daytime a bordered straw (*Heliothis peltigera*), the first time I have recorded this species at Shearsby.

The year seems to have gone from one extreme to the other with very low numbers of moths in the May mv traps. Recently it has been difficult to cope. For instance, 500+ heart & dart (*Agrotis exclamatoris*) in the trap in 2 hours and grass moths last week were a pain! Another first record here at Shearsby was a scarce footman (*Eilema complana*) around the light on 3rd July.

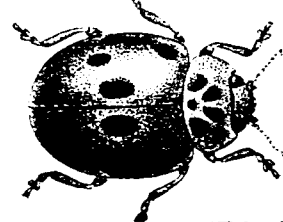
Harold Godsmark

LES field notes

[I am grateful to Maggy Frankum for these notes of various LES field meetings - Editor]

Charley Woods LRTNC reserve 18.v.96

Most interesting was the range of forms of the 10-spot ladybird *Adalia 10-punctata* with the typical form *decempunctata*, the chequered form *decempustulata*, the typical form with no elytra spots and a form with three spots on each elytra. In addition, the *Calvia 14-guttata* was also seen.



Galls were noted on rowan (*Eriophyes sorbeus*), oak (*Andricus lignicola*, *A kollari*, *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, *Biorrhiza pallida*), sycamore (*Eriophyes macrorhynchus*, *Aceria erobia*) and hawthorn (*Eriophyes goniothorax typicus*). An area of Solomon's Seal, about two square metres in extent, was surprising. Michael Archer identified a solitary bee from nesting holes in a bank as *Andrena haemorrhoa* with a second, larger species possibly being present which may have been *A fulva*.

Stonepit Field Moira 15.vi.96

Small heath, painted lady and common blue butterflies were common with the odd small white and silver Y. A *Bombus lapidarius* worker was spotted and also the 14-spot ladybird. Galls were identified from hawthorn (*E goniothorax typicus*), holly (*Phytomyza ilicis*) and oak (*A lignicola*, *N quercusbaccarum*). Roy found a birch catkin with a small parasitic wasp laying eggs - this will be kept to see what hatches out (nothing as of 22.v.96).

Acreford Pit 15.vi.96

Huge numbers of madly dashing about painted ladies greeted us at this site along with many silver Y's on the bird's foot trefoil. Dingy skippers, cinnabar moths and common blues were also seen. A green woodpecker was heard and a couple of patches (one with 85 spikes) of probably southern marsh orchid were just about surviving the heatwave.

Maggy Frankum

Summer in Scotland

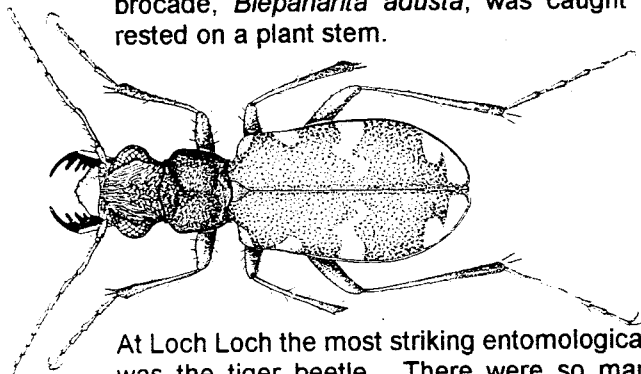
The Mountain Flower Course at Kindrogan Field Centre, Scotland, held many botanical surprises and was fairly fruitful for moths and butterflies as well.

Our first climb up Ben Vrackie afforded long, rewarding views of the golden-ringed dragonfly, *Cordulegaster boltonii*, much at home in the heather-lined ditches in the lower, peaty hillside. Also among the heather we noticed abundant common heath moths (*Ematurga atomaria*) sheltering as the sun went in but being put up in their hundreds by our clumping feet.

Slightly similar to Leicestershire's *Ancylis badiana* was the Scottish version, *Ancylis myrtillana* commonly occurring among the heathers interspersed with bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). *Apotomis sauciana* ssp *grevillana*, another bilberry feeder, was netted here along with the polyphagous grey pug, *Eupithecia subfuscata*.

There be tigers!

On Cairnwell, among the wonderful wealth of mossy and starry saxifrages, dwarf cornel, chickweed, wintergreen, mountain everlasting, alpine saw-wort, Scottish asphodel, moonwort, trailing azalea and many other mouth-watering rarities, a little time was spared to consider the winged populations. Most commonly noted were *Crambus lathionellus*, a grass root feeder, which flitted like unseasonal snowflakes amongst the sun-drenched herbage. Where mats of purple thyme flourished, the brightly coloured *Pyrausta purpuralis* moths were commented upon favourably even by the non-mothers of the party. Many twin-spot carpet moths (*Xanthorhoe spadicearia*) were on the wing here finding larval foodplants in the bedstraws. *Apotomis sauciana* ssp *grevillana* was again noted and one dark brocade, *Blepaharita adusta*, was caught as it rested on a plant stem.



At Loch Loch the most striking entomological find was the tiger beetle. There were so many of these creatures along the track that it was

difficult not to tread on them. They would take regular short flights at human nose level and then land again right in front of a walker's boot and continue on foot for a while!

Lepidoptera already mentioned were abundant on the hillside. New species included a single painted lady (*Cynthia cardui*) and the pyralids *Chrysoteuchia culmella*, *Agriphila straminella* and *Eudonia mercurella*. The day at Corrie An T' Snechdea (apparently pronounced Corrie an Trech!) was so cold, misty and windy that no self-respecting moth or butterfly raised its proboscis from the snow-line. Botanically brilliant, lepidopterally lousy!

Mountain ringlet etc

Ben Lawers, however, proved to be sound on both points. With careful tuition we got our eye in for the different, tiny, alpine willow herb species and the microscopic *Minuartia* or mossy cyphel. Small heath butterflies (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), silver Y (*Autographa gamma*) and *Ancylis myrtillana* moths were abundant. The three best sightings of the day though, making the midge bite itches fade into insignificance, were the small mountain ringlet (*Erebia epiphron scotica*, identified, I hasten to add, by our experienced Ranger guide!), the small argent and sable (*Epirrhoe tristata*) and the micro *Olethreutes obsoletana*. This latter, cited in Bradley, Tremewan & Smith as "a local montane species apparently restricted in the British Isles to the Scottish Highlands northwards to the Shetlands", with Ben Lawers as one of its known localities, was a particularly interesting find. Apparently, when they wrote their Totricid book (1979), the early stages of the species were unknown. I have not read of any progress but perhaps further study has been conducted on this species? It seems to be fairly frequent towards the south west crags of Ben Lawers.

Kindrogan Field Centre runs a nightly killer moth trap. Species identified included clouded border (*Lomaspilis marginata*), ling pug (*Eupithecia goosensata*) brown rustic (*Rusina ferruginea*), silver ground carpet (*Xanthorhoe montanata*), ingrained clay (*Diarsia mendica*), small square spot (*Diarsia rubi*), dusky brocade (*Apamea remissa*) and the shears (*Hada nana*).

The week was superb with hillsides oozing natural history and eye stretching views from every vantage point. The wealth of flora and fauna beneath our feet, despite our heavy walking boots, soon taught us to tread gently!

Jane McPhail

Croft in July

This unusual LRTNC reserve has unusual plants (particularly trefoils) associated with the siliceous grassland and also benefits from a nice stretch of relatively undisturbed and unpolluted river Soar. A good turnout of LES members visited the site on 20th July 1996, yet another hot day!

Hoverflies feeling frisky!

Butterflies, as for the rest of the summer, were fairly plentiful with small skippers, small tortoiseshell, meadow browns, painted lady, red admiral, gatekeepers and various whites being noted. Larvae (?species) were seen on the nodding thistle.

Bumble and cuckoo bees included *Bombus lapidarius*, *B. pascuorum* and *Psithyrus vestalis*. Amongst the hoverflies those identified included *Eristalis tenax*, *E. nemorum* and *Syrrita pipiens*. Neil found a tachinid fly which may turn out to be *Eriothrix rufomaculatus* and an asilid fly (robberfly) which was a *Dioctria* species.



Eristalis tenax

The behaviour of the *Eristalis nemorum* is worthy of further mention. Four males, obviously with amorous intentions, were hovering over a female sitting on yarrow. She avoided them by hiding underneath the flower head and they couldn't find her! Well, it was too hot for that sort of thing!

As were the demoiselles!

Dragonflies and damselflies were quite frequent in the area with the brown hawker (*Aeshna grandis*), a *Sympetrum* (red colour ?species) and *Ishnura elegans* (always a striking little insect). Large numbers of the banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*) held the attention for quite some time with plenty of males and

females about, many in tandem. A sure sign of the cleanliness of the river.

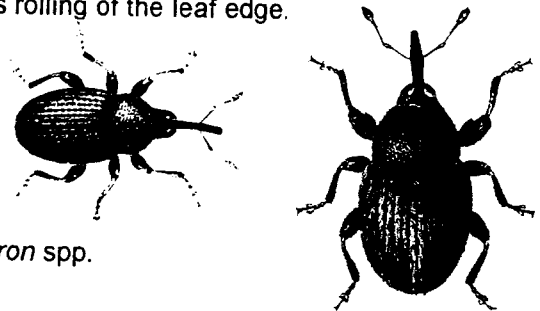
Three ladybirds were identified: the cream spot (*Calvia 14-guttata*), 14-spot "clown" (*Propylea 14-punctata*) and the 7-spot (*Coccinella 7-punctata*).

Galls were of particular interest with many being recorded. On elm the rolled and swollen leaf was caused by the aphid *Eriosoma ulmi* while small pustules on the upper leaf surface were caused by the mite *Eriophyes campestricola*. Robin's pincushion (Bedeguar) on dog rose was caused by *Diplolepis rosae*, a cynipid wasp while on *Polygonum*, a midge (*Wachtliella persicariae*) had resulted in the leaf margin being irregularly rolled downwards, swollen, contorted and yellow-red in colour.

The usual galls of field maple were noted: *Eriophyes macrochelus*, *E. macrorhynchus* and *Aceria erobia*, all caused by mites. An unusual gall was caused by an aphid (*Hayhurstia atriplicis*) on orache where the leaf margin was thickened and rolled loosely upwards. Stinging nettle carried the familiar swellings of the midge *Dasineura urticae* at the base of many leaves while hawthorn carried the usual complement of galls caused by midges and mites (*Dasineura crataegi*, *Eriophyes pyri* var *crataegi*, *E. goniothorax typicus*).

Unusual weevil gall

Another mite (*Eriophyes triradiatus*) had caused a small "witch's broom" on the willow flower and the typical bean-shaped gall of the sawfly *Pontania proxima* was found on the leaves. The mite *Aceria tetanothrix* had resulted in an upwards rolling of the leaf edge.



Gymnetron spp.

The common psyllid gall causer, *Psyllopsis fraxini*, was on ash leaves. An oval mass, which was the result of the affected ovary being swollen by *Gymnetron villosolum*, was found on *Veronica*. The calyx was also inflated, the causer being a yellow weevil larva - a most unusual find!

Maggie Frankum

Chequered skipper memories 1953

In early 1953, Clifford Holt, a prominent member of the Leicestershire Ornithological Society and a keen ciné photographer of birds, discussed with me the possibility of filming butterflies - perhaps something of local interest. Leicestershire being rather poor for butterflies, I suggested the chequered skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) as a species associated especially with the Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire and Rutland.



Carterocephalus palaemon

At that time, this butterfly was plentiful in suitable habitats but has since become extinct in England although surviving in Scotland (Robertson, 1981; Collier & Emmet, 1990; Thomas, 1992). I was familiar with the butterfly in a group of woods near Desborough with a rich flora and insect fauna (Robertson, 1981b). In 1952 I had captured a pure albino specimen if this rare butterfly (Robertson, 1952; Goodson, 1960; Howarth, 1973) in this area.

Rockingham Forest to film!

We arranged a visit to the area in late May or early June, arriving at Bowd Lane Wood (near Stoke Albany, SK867807) at about 1030 on what turned out to be a warm but overcast day, not very promising for our purposes. At about 1100, a weak shaft of sunlight appeared to illuminate the woodland ride we were on and a grizzled skipper butterfly crawled up a grass stem,

opened its wings and posed to be filmed. I watched with some impatience as my companion set up his apparatus, expecting the insect to fly off. However, Clifford obtained a good sequence of this butterfly.

At last - chequered skipper!

A few minutes later, a chequered skipper was also seen with wings open in the weak sunshine and again a good sequence was obtained. The weather then returned to overcast and although we explored some of the other rides in Bowd Lane Wood, Brampton Wood (not to be confused with the well known Brampton Wood of Huntingdonshire) and Stoke Wood, no other butterflies were seen. We met a group of entomologists with nets and Clifford later expressed amusement at the "cagey" conversation I had with them.

Looking over my notes on these woodlands, I see that they harboured white admiral, silver-washed fritillary, Duke of Burgundy fritillary and green hairstreak butterflies. They also held interesting beetles such as *Pyrochroa serraticornis*, *Agapanthia villosoviridescens*, *Grammoptera ruficornis*, *Strangalia maculata*, *Clytus arietus* and *Platyrhinus resinosus*.

I understand from Clifford Holt, who still lives in Leicestershire, that his historic piece of film is still in his possession together with his archive collection of bird films.

Tom Robertson

[Collier, RV & Emmet, AM (1990). In "Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland" edited by Emmet & Heath, Harley Books.

Goodson, AL (1960). Some new aberrations of British Rhopalocera. *Ent Gaz*, 11, 18.

Howarth, TG (1973). South's British Butterflies. F Warne & Co.

Robertson, TS (1952). Albino *Carterocephalus palaemon* *Entomologist*, 85, 160.

Robertson, TS (1981a). The decline of *Carterocephalus palaemon* (Pallas) and *Maculinum arion* (L) in Great Britain. *Ent Gaz*, 32, 5-12.

Robertson, TS (1981b). A former Northamptonshire locality for the chequered skipper butterfly, *Carterocephalus palaemon* (pallas). *Proc Trans Brit Nat Hist Soc*, 14, 82-86.

Thomas, JA (1992). *Butterflies of the British Isles* Hamlyn Books.]

[These historical articles give a wonderful insight into what was around! Any other contributions?]

Winter programme 1996-7

All meetings take place at the Leicestershire Ecology Centre, Holly Hayes, Birstall at 7.30 p.m. on a Thursday evening except for the February joint meeting and March workshop. Exhibits welcome.

October 3rd 1996
Thursday 7.30 p.m.

ANNUAL EXHIBITION EVENING

An opportunity for members to share stories of what they have been up to. Bring along your prize captures of 1996 or anything to illustrate a short report on your recent activities.

November 7th 1996
Thursday 7.30 p.m.

SWEEPING THROUGH THE TROPICS

John Bullock (LES)

Forget those cold November nights! Listen to exotic tales of steaming jungles and African savannah as John entertains us with his entomological experiences in Kenya and Malaya.

December 12th 1996
Thursday 7.30 p.m.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SLIDE SHOW

Get those films to the developers so that you can show us your slides. Local shots and holiday snaps are both welcome.

January 9th 1997
Thursday 7.30 p.m.

INSECTS IN CHARNWOOD

Peter Gamble (LES)

Continuing our popular series on different areas of Leicestershire, Peter will be exploring one of the richest parts of the county. We are lucky to be able to benefit from his long experience and unrivalled breadth of knowledge of the district where he lives.

February 5th 1997
Wednesday 7.30 p.m.

CLIMATE CHANGE, HUMAN IMPACT AND THE BRITISH INSECT FAUNA

Paul Buckland (University of Sheffield)

A chance to hear about one of the most fascinating areas of entomology - subfossils - by one of the leaders in the field. Paul has worked at Thorne Moor and elsewhere on changes in our insect fauna from the Ice Age onwards. His work gives us a whole new perspective on our modern fauna and has big implications for nature conservation.

This is joint meeting with the Leics Lit & Phil NH Section and will be held on a WEDNESDAY at the Rowans, College Stret, Leicester at 7.30 p.m.

March 6th 1997
Thursday 7.30 p.m.

POST-INDUSTRIAL INSECTS

Steven Falk & Steve Lane (Coventry Museum)

Following on from last year's talk on natural insect communities in artificial habitats (Brian Eversham), this will be an informal presentation by the two Steves who have worked extensively on post-industrial sites in Warwickshire. Our speakers are keen to hear of members' experiences in Leicestershire and we hope to provoke a discussion on the importance of post-industrial sites in both counties.

March 15th 1997
Saturday 10.15 a.m.

MEGA IDENTIFICATION SESSION

Bring along all those specimens which you have been meaning to identify but never got round to! An expert panel (members of the Lepidopteran Panel, Derek Lott for beetles, Jon Daws for spiders/woodlice and Darwyn Sumner for hoverflies) will be at your disposal! The session will kick off with a few do's and don'ts and there will be a chance to talk about practical aspects of entomologising.