

Louis G. Gentner

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WHY AND WHEREFORE OF FRENCH COLEOPTEROLOGY

By Dr. R. Paulian

(Tananarive-Tsimbazaza, Madagascar)

While in England, in Germany, in Italy, and in America, the efforts of the entomologists - amateurs or professionals - have been distributed fairly equally between the different orders of insects, entomology, in France, has always been mostly Coleopterology. The reasons for this are numerous and may be of interest.

First, Most French entomologists (at least 99%) are amateurs and belonging to all social classes, many are far from rich. To such the study of a group needing a microscope, or expensive books, is impossible, no specialist of Lepidoptera or Collembola among them. Next, until quite recently, there was no specialized training in entomology, so the study of difficult groups, supposing a knowledge of morphology (the Odonata or the Coccids for example) was not easily accessible.

Then, most amateur entomologists were, first and last, men with the collecting hobby; they collected insects as they collected stamps, pictures or egyptian mummies; they were interested in such insects as were easy to collect, to prepare, to keep, and spectacular. No Diptera for them.

Practical entomology, while France may boast of such men as Marchal, is of very slight interest in an old country where agriculture is nearer gardening than industry. So the study of Aphids appealed to very few.

And the "coleopterization" of the French entomologists was an autocatalytic process. As more French amateurs devoted themselves to Coleoptera, they prepared more keys and monographs, they explored every inch of their country. So Coleopterology became the best known branch of entomology. Many books, from 1781 onwards, have given a general picture of the French fauna of Coleoptera; Mulsant, Fairmaire, Acloque, Fauconnet, Bedel and his collaborators, Barthe and his, Remy Perrier, the "Faune de France", Portevin, or of a province of France, Caillol for example. Only two or three books were devoted to Lepidoptera or to Hemiptera, none till the recent "Faune de France" covered the Diptera.

The French entomologist disposes of an excellent "Catalogue des Coleopteres de France" no other order of Insects has the same. There is in my book "Les Coleopteres" a summary of the biology of Coleoptera; only Orthoptera have been treated on the same plan in France. France

may boast of the first Coleopterological journal: "Le Coleopteriste" which though short-lived, had a serious influence.

The greatest names of French entomology, Latreille, Lacordaire, Mulsant, Blanchard, Bedel, Jeannel were or are Coleopterists, they contributed to the specialisation of the Entomological collections of the Paris National Museum of Natural History.

The Coleopterological collections of that Museum are, with the recent accessions, at least equal to those of the British Museum, the first in the world 'til now. An amateur group, the "Coleopteristes de la Seine" grouping over 200 members in Paris alone, work in connection with the Museum. It has meetings, quite informal but most dynamic, and it arranges collecting trips, either collective, or in small groups. It has organized a general survey of the fauna of caves, mammal nests, and so on...

So the undifferentiated entomologist has every opportunity of becoming a Coleopterist, very few opportunities of becoming something else. Naturally, all the time, some entomologists refused to follow the general direction and worked in other branches. Many of them were quite excellent, but they nearly always have been free-lances; at least, they had no following. At the present time as soon as the young Coleopterist starts working he find help. A series of magazines: local ones, working in connection with a local society or Museum, then elementary ones, the most read being "L'Entomologiste" with over 700 readers. Then, when he begins to know something about beetles, "La revue française d'Entomologie". Le "Bulletin et les Annales de la Société entomologique de France". "Revue de Zoologie, agricole et d'Entomologie appliquée.", etc...

These magazines are not specialized, but as 75% at least of their readers are Coleopterists, they publish mostly Coleopterology; and their columns are open to all workers. All of them, even the most highbrow, publish short notes from young amateurs as well as important papers on the segments of the head by University authorities.

The library of the "Société Entomologique de France" founded in 1832, is the largest coleopterological library in the world. It is open to all members of the Society and can undertake, either to send micro-films or to send the paper themselves, to all members living outside of Paris and needing them for their work. The library of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle is also open to the public. And the microfilm organization of the Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique enables anybody to get practically any paper.

So the young coleopterist finds every thing ready for him; a friendly association, magazines starting from the very beginning, an easily accessible library, a lot of books and catalogues. I believe, from personal experiences, that these last: faunas, books, catalogues, are the most important incentives to the choice of coleopterology by so many young Frenchmen. So I can only applaud the effort of the "Coleopterists' Bulletin" to do the same for America.

DISTRIBUTION IN CERTAIN LUCANIDAE

by

Dorothy McKey-Fender
McMinnville, Oregon

The distribution of the species of the family Lucanidae occurring in Oregon exhibit a close and interesting correlation with some biotic communities of this region. A transect running in a general east-west direction across northern Oregon cuts through a variety of communities, the author's observations including stations ranging from coastal sand and bog seres, across the Coast range forests and the Willamette, the pine forests of the Cascade range, and the forests and watercourses of the Ochoco and Blue mountains, to a wooded canyon tributary to the Burnt river in the extreme eastern part of the state. The role of the larvae of this family appears everywhere to be the same--i.e., distintergration of decaying wood--and each community in which such niches are important may be characterized by one or more species.

At Pacific City, in drift along the strand, the only lucanid found was Platycerus aeneus VanDyke, a species characteristic of the Coast forests. This is as would be expected, since the drift insects are mostly specimens which have been blown to sea by offshore winds and then washed up on the beach. In the zone of driftwood and embryonic dunes an occasional dead Platycerus keeni Casey may be found, but this area is unstable, being influenced by storms, and the soil salinity is still rather high (up to .2%). It is behind the young dunes in the zone of wandering dunes that P. keeni belongs. Such dunes may be largely held by decaying logs (species undetermined), many of which are found to be pulpy and riddled with work of Platycerus larvae and termites. As the dunes become mature and support a coniferous growth (Sitka spruce-lodgepole pine) P. keeni is no longer found. Near Sand Lake, where there is an exceptionally well developed series of old dunes, P. thoracicus Casey has been taken on the xeric faces and tops of these dunes, while P. aeneus is present in the mesic draws between the dunes (Douglas fir-Sitka spruce-hemlock). The more advanced stages of the bog sere at the head of Sand Lake approach the climax forest (Hemlock-cedar) and here also P. aeneus as well as the rarer P. laticollis Casey is found.

Both of these species, together with Ceruchus striatus LeC. characterize the extensive late sub-climax forest (Douglas fir-hemlock) of Saddle mountain near Boyer, Lincoln county, where the larvae of C. striatus have been taken in rotten hemlock logs and those of the Platycerus in humus and soil samples as well as rotten hemlock logs. The occurrence of the larvae in soil is possibly accounted for by the fact that the soil here may contain fragments of rotten wood of hemlock and Douglas fir.

On the eastern slopes of the Coast range as exemplified by

Peavine Ridge and Baker Creek valley near McMinnville, the Douglas Fir-hemlock forests have been much disturbed by logging. Here deciduous trees, especially large-leaf and vine maples and alder along the streams, come into prominence and Platycerus oregonensis Westwood is characteristic. The author has taken larvae of this species in rotten wood of Acer macrophyllum. In the oak savannah of the lower hills and in the farm and pasture lands of the valley floor, Sinodendron rugosum Mann. occurs. It has been reported from oak, alder and willow and the author has also found it associated with aged cherry trees. Along the Willamette river at Dayton (ash-willow-cottonwood) Platycerus marginalis Casey is characteristic and in the valley wood lots, which are the same forest type as the eastern Coast range slope, P. oregonensis again appears. On the west slope of the Cascades above Stayton, a location that is very similar to the Willamette valley as a whole but which has some Cascade elements and is well above the valley floor, P. viriditinctus Benesh has been taken. This species is yet known only from the types.

In the Mt. Hood national forest along the Wapinitia cut-off highway Cerchus punctatus LeC. represents this family, here being found in ponderosa pine logs.

At Maupin, in the Ochoco and Blue mountains, and at Durkee in the extreme eastern part of the state, P. marginalis again is taken. Aside from the occurrence here of Populus, the host tree, other coleoptera indicate a closer relationship between these areas and the Willamette flood plain than would be suspected from their wide geographical separation. The latter location in particular represents, in a cool canyon along Cave creek, a small Douglas fir woods area strikingly resembling Willamette valley woods.

Although each of the above biotic communities is characterized by a multiplicity of floral and faunal elements, the Lucanidae, being closely associated with key species of trees in each, themselves may stand as community indicators.

NEWS

During Spring Quarter 1948 Dr. Melville H. Hatch is giving an informal seminar in the study of the Coleoptera at the University of Washington. Such topics as the nature of the taxonomic categories, the rules of nomenclature, bibliographic methods, coleopterological literature, the origin and evolution of the Coleoptera, and the history of coleopterology are being discussed.

ON COLLECTING BEETLES IN WASHINGTON

by

Melville H. Hatch
University of Washington

The following fragmentary notes have been prepared to provide a few suggestions as to when and where beetle collecting may be profitably done in Washington. The state is unequally divided into dry Eastern and damp Western portions by the Cascade Mountains.

Western Washington

Throughout the lowlands of Western Washington the best collecting month is May, with June almost as good, and July and August progressively less favorable. The gravel beaches of the larger streams provide characteristic Carabidae and the eddies and pools along the margins of streams characteristic fluviatile Dytiscidae. Willows and poplars along rivers frequently furnish characteristic Chrysomelidae, etc. Characteristic Cicindelidae, Carabidae, Staphylinidae, Histeridae, Scarabaeidae, and Curculionidae occur on sea beaches, the beaches facing the open ocean being a bit more productive than those along Puget Sound. Search under rocks in the spray of water-falls for the fine Platysma johnsoni Ulke. I have taken it at Multnomah Falls, Oregon, and at Green River Gorge northeast of Enumclaw, where several small falls cascade over the south wall of the canyon. The collector in the lowlands is encouraged to sample numerous different situations, as a few new things are likely to be added at each place.

Washington is especially notable for its alpine collecting and Paradise Park at 5,000 feet elevation on the south slope of Mt. Rainier is the most famous of its alpine collecting grounds. A collecting permit should be obtained from the park Naturalist at Longmire or by mail before entering the park. Boulevard-like scenic roads lead both to Paradise Park and to Yakima Park (elev. 6,000 ft.) on the north side of the mountain. July is the best month with August nearly as good. Endemic alpine Cicindelidae, Carabidae, Histeridae, Staphylinidae, Elateridae, Scarabaeidae, Etc. are common under stones and logs in and by the alpine meadows, in the animal dung, and under stones by the stream margins. Beat the evergreen trees at Paradise Park in July for Chrysomelidae, Curculionidae, endemic Elateridae, etc. Stop at the Misqually Glacier Bridge and look under stones by the river margin for the beautiful large purple Nebria piperi Van D. Road-side flowers yield Cerambycidae and the meadow at Longmire is worth sweeping. Yakima Park is a good deal drier than Paradise Park, not being on the main slope of the mountain, but collecting is good, including the common endemic Eleodes indentata Blais. not found at Paradise Park. Mt. Baker is likewise reached by a good road and provides worthwhile collecting. Mt. Adams is approached from Toppenish on the east. I have never been there. In the Olympic Mountains most of my collecting has been at Olympic Hot Springs at 2,000 feet elevation south of Port Angeles. It provides interesting streamside and flower collecting in July and August. The

endemic carabid, Scaphinotus angusticollis subsp. olympiae Van D. is common and Platysma (Eypherpes) nigrocoeruleus Van D. is not rare. A stiff three and one-half mile hike takes one to Alpine Meadows at Boulder Lake.

Eastern Washington

Continuing with alpine situations in Eastern Washington there is Mt. Spokane, elevation 5,800 feet, northeast of Spokane and climbed by a good automobile road. There is Goodman Springs in the Blue Mountains east of Walla Walla traversed by a passable road that runs for several miles at about 5,000 feet elevation and there is Mt. Bonaparte east of Tonasket. The latter is climbed only by a long hike, but the collector has the possibility of finding the very rare Miscodera arctica Payk. (Carabidae) just below the 7,267 foot summit. June and July are the collecting months for these Eastern Washington alpine situations.

Late April to Early May is the time to sweep the sage-brush for its characteristic Curculionidae and Chrysomelidae and Chrysomelidae. The same season and later is the time to collect in the river bottoms and along the beaches of the Columbia and Snake Rivers for Carabidae and Cicindelidae on the ground, Chrysomelidae on the willows. Do not neglect the occasional sand dunes for their characteristic Tenebrionidae and Histeridae. Portions of the margin of Moses Lake and other lakes furnish rich collecting, and excellent ground beetle collecting is provided by the shores of Dry Falls Lake just below the Dry Falls in the Grand Coulee. The shores of Soap Lake yield an abundant and characteristic fauna of Carabidae, Histeridae, Anthicidae, etc., and the waters of Lenore Lake and other alkaline lakes in the Grand Coulee yield characteristic Dytiscidae. The lightly timbered areas near Cle Elum (elev. 2,000 ft.) about the first of May have provided plenteous Carabidae and Tenebrionidae under logs and branches on the ground and interesting beating on the conifers. Turnbull slough near Cheney has given excellent collecting the end of May. Newman Lake east of Spokane is famous for the occasional occurrence of the very rare Cychrus rickseckeri LeC. By July in Eastern Washington the lowland collecting will be largely confined to the immediate vicinity of lakes and rivers.

Such is a most fragmentary account of beetle collecting in Washington. Happy hunting to those who come!

DEATH NOTICE

I have recently learned of the death of Karl Wilhelm Verhoeff of Munchen-Posing in his 79th year on December 6, 1945. Verhoeff is known principally for his taxonomic work in myriapods and terrestrial isopods, but was likewise the author of some papers on beetle morphology. - Melville H. Hatch.

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The Society of Systematic Zoologists

The Society of Systematic Zoologists was organized in Chicago on 29 December 1947 at a meeting attended by sixty-six systematists. Waldo L. Schmitt was elected president. A council of seven outstanding taxonomists has been elected by the membership. These are:

Richard Blackwelder
Alfred E. Emerson
E. Raymond Hall
C. F. W. Musebeck
Orlando Park
Alfred S. Romer
Hobart M. Smith

The object of the society shall be to promote the interests of taxonomy and systematic zoology. In carrying out this object it is proposed that the society obtain a voice in national scientific circles; that it exert its influence on taxonomic matters in national and international meetings; that it sponsor discussion or study groups to increase in the fundamental aspects of taxonomy; that it serve as a clearing-house to obtain discussion, study, and support of projects of interest or importance to taxonomists; and that it help bring taxonomists together for mutual benefit by issuing directories and news letters, encouraging the exchange of ideas, and holding an informal annual meeting for personal contact.

At present 286 charter members have been enrolled in the society. At the organizational meeting it was decided to enroll charter members until the time of the next meeting. Any one interested in systematic zoology is urged to request application blanks from the Secretary, G. W. Wharton, Department of Zoology, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

The next meeting of the society will be held at 10:00 A.M., 12 September 1948 in Washington, D.C.

NOTICES

McKey-Fender, Dorothy, Route 3, McMinnville, Oregon.

Study: World Cantharis (Cantharidae) and desire material.
Determine: N. A. Cantharis (except Division I of Green, 1941).

INSECT BOXES: For sale, insect collection boxes, 9 x 13 x 2 1/2 inches, beautiful redwood throughout, dovetailed corners, paper covered composition pinning bottom, hinged and latched, sanded but not finished, excellent workmanship: \$ 2.10 each; \$ 24.00 doz. F.O.B. Beverly Hills, California. BIO-METAL ASSOCIATES, P.O. Box 346, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Vezensky, Professor Jaroslav, M R. G, Benesova 56, Pilzen, Czechoslovakia.

Carabidae - exchange and correspond with American specialists.

ATTENTIONIMPORTANTIMPORTANTI-M-P-O-R-T-A-N-T N-O-T-I-C-E

All correspondence, subscriptions, articles, etc. for the Coleopterists' Bulletin, Systema Naturae, or any business with The Sherwood Press mentioned in these publications should be directed after JULY FIRST, 1948 to the Editor:

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Arlington, Va.
