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Derbid Field-days

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A collecting trip in southern Illinois made during the latter part of August, 1934, provided me with my most interesting hours in the field. The collecting was done in and about a cypress swamp near Wetaug, Pulaski County. During the three days of our stay, an astounding number of specimens of the subfamily, Derbinae, (Homoptera Fulgoridae) were collected. These beautiful little insects are usually rather rare and the collecting trip that yields eight or ten specimens would be exceptional. On this occasion one hundred eighteen specimens, representing nine genera and seventeen species, were collected. This experience was so unusual that I thought it worth while to report it.

The swamp is surrounded by more or less wooded areas containing oak, hickory, maple, with a scattering of ash. The majority of the specimens were taken on hickory and maple.

The most common species of this group, Apache degeerii Kby., which we find generally distributed in oak, hickory forests throughout the State, was represented in our collections by nine specimens.

The genus Otiocerus furnished the most abundant specimens. Four species of this genus were taken, wolfii from hickory, the most abundant, with 25 specimens; signoretti Fitch, 1 specimen; francilloni Kby., from hickory, with 3 specimens; and stolii Kby., 7 specimens from hickory and maple. There is a marked sexual dimorphism in this latter species which I have not yet seen described in print, although it is generally recognized in collections.

Five specimens of Amaloptera uhleri Van D. were captured from hickory. This species is sometimes found on dogwood. A single specimen of Amaloptera fitchii Van D. came to the camp lantern at night. Shellenus schellenbergii Kby. occurred on ash and six specimens were captured.

Perhaps the prize of the collection was a specimen of Euklastus, taken from maple. This specimen does not quite agree with the description of Euklastus harti Metc., but further material is needed before positive identification is possible.

The interesting species Sayiana sayi Ball was represented by two specimens taken from maple. Four species of Anotia were taken in considerable numbers: A. burnetii Fitch (9), A. bonnetii Kirby (4), A. Westwoodi Fitch (2), A. kirkaldyi Ball (5). Several specimens of this genus were also taken which may represent varieties of these species.

Specimens of Phaciocephalus fulvus Van D. and P. uhleri Ball were also captured, as well as a large number of the genus Herpis which have not been worked over and which have not been counted in this report.

From the above list one can appreciate the number and variety of these forms and can understand the excitement occasioned by such findings.

The region was again visited early in August of the following year, 1935. About an hour was spent in collecting over the same territory, with the sole object of collecting these forms. Five species which numbered 18 specimens were obtained in this short period. The species taken at this time, together with the number of each, appear in the following list:

Apache degeerii Kby. (10)
Otiocerus stollii Kby. (3)
Otiocerus francilloni (2)
Shellenus schellenbergii Kby. (1)
Anotia bonnetii Kby. (2)

No sign of the nymphs of any of these forms were found on either of these trips. The writer has been unable to find any reference to the nymphs in literature. The second trip was made about three weeks earlier than the first, in hopes that nymphal forms might be found. The complete absence of any nymphs at either date suggests the possibility that they may have some other food plant and hence occupy an area apart from that in which the adults occur. Such a condition is known in some other members of the Fulgoridae; for example, some of the species of Epiptera, whose nymphs have been found feeding on decaying logs. The writer hopes to spend some days, still earlier in the season, in this region, when further search for the nymphal forms may be made.