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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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As the result of a casual enquiry, some interesting insects have been collected in some numbers near Bolton at the end of November. These are some very large aphids originating from the Middle East which by continuous dispersion/migration have reached England following the remarkable summer we experienced. Tuberolachnus salignus (Gmelin) has been observed in some abundance in this country in 1947, 1955 and 1959. It was so different from any aphid species that I have seen before that it had to be sent to Dr. Stroyan of the Plant Pathology Laboratory who returned the following notes on its distribution and biology:

"The species forms vast colonies on the wands of various Salix species of the willow and osier groups, and these are often much attended by wasps during October. The biology has always been a bit of a mystery, but my own interpretation of it, for what it is worth, and based on what I know of its occurrence both here and in North America, is as follows:

The species probably has a number of 'epicentres' in the eastern and western hemispheres, where it can multiply continuously through the year. As far as Europe is concerned the main centre is probably in the Middle East, perhaps in the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates. By examining the earliest dates in any given year when the species is recorded in a given country we get a picture of progressive waves of migration moving outwards from the Middle East in a northern and western direction. Starting with the Middle East in about February we find the aphids beginning to be abundant in the Balkans by about April, Central Europe by midsummer and north-west Europe from July onwards. The aphids are rarely reported in this country before August, and become abundant only in October and November. When the population peak is reached the whole of the colonies become alate, and thereafter disappear. We have tried keeping the alatae through the winter in a cold house among leaf litter to see if they can hibernate and re-emerge in the spring, but they cannot; the body of the alate is small and the embryos in it are undeveloped; and there is only very little fat-body tissue. In other words, the alatae are adapted for long-distance migration and not diapause. Ideally they would disperse from the willows here in about November and move on to pastures new, but of course by that time the temperature has dropped so far that they simply can't fly, and the population is exterminated. No production of sexual morphs has ever been recorded, and there is no other host but willow. In North America the pattern is rather similar, but there the 'epicentre' is probably in Central America, from which the aphids disperse both north and south, ultimately reaching (for example) the U.S.A. or even Canada in one direction, and Argentina and Chile in the other."

As I have made up about half a dozen tubes containing one alate form and several immature, though large individuals, I thought that some other museums may not have this species in their collections, as we did not. These are available on application, but preferably exchange for any odd lot of crane-flies, with data but not necessarily identified.

E. G. Hancock,  
Bolton Museum,  
Le Mans Crescent,  
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Bolton,  
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#### ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD CENTRES

Members will have seen an announcement in the December Museums Bulletin about a meeting to be held in March on 'Record Centres - their purpose, formation and operation' chaired by K. Barton. B.C.G. Committee will be making appropriate comments in the hope that any resolutions submitted to the next M.A. Conference will have a practical approach to the problem.

Part of the initial impetus behind the formation of B.C.G. was the hope of coordinating the activities of previously independent record centres, and it now seems to be a suitable time to review progress. In the next Newsletter I hope to include a Report on the March meeting, an article from Dr. Perring of the Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood, and news of a forthcoming Conference on Record Centres.

If the network of Centres is going to be effective there is a need for sympathy and commitment from museum staff and museum authorities. We would be most grateful to hear where these do not exist.

Editor.