

The Entomological Society of Manitoba *Newsletter*



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About the ESM Newsletter

The Entomological Society of Manitoba Newsletter is published three times per year. It is a forum whereby information can be disseminated to Society members. As such, all members are encouraged to contribute often. The Newsletter is interested in opinions, short articles, news of research projects, meeting announcements, workshops, courses and other events, requests for materials or information, news of personnel or visiting scientists, literature reviews or announcements and anything that may be of interest to ESM members.

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Editors' Comments

This issue comes with a word of warning! Always, always back up. Back up everything. Back it up every time. Always. One of your editors (PM) did not, and as a result this issue is



late, and produced with considerably more anguish than necessary. Hard drives fail: carrying around a memory stick is not helpful unless you use it. Not much is gone, but who know exactly what or how much. Can you remember exactly what's on your laptop?

This issue has a few items of interest to the membership. As usual **our President, Taz Stuart**, has a few words. Then there's a notice from our Past President and the current **Chair of the Scientific Program Committee Marj Smith**. One of your editors brings you up to date on all the changes in **the Department of Entomology** at the University of Manitoba. **Todd Lawton** describes recent experiences on a collecting trip. Then there's the usual list of **upcoming meetings** and the list of **Society officers and chairs**.

If you have any contributions you'd like to make to the Newsletter or ideas for contributions others might make, be sure to contact one of us. Have a pleasant and successful summer, and we'll "talk" again in the fall.

Pat MacKay & Mahmood Iranpour

The Insect Corner....

Greetings all. I hope all of you are doing well and have not been affected much by the 2011 flood season that seems to be continuing and continuing and hopefully soon to be receding water levels. We need to recognize all the hard work of Manitoba's volunteers and people sandbagging that assisted in protecting your properties, study sites, sampling locations etc. There are still many areas like the Souris River, Assiniboine River, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg where damage to homes, lake front properties and areas surrounding those resort areas that will have water issues for many months to come. This will create some very interesting conditions for insects to respond to. In addition, our Spring in Manitoba being very cool and the official summer forecast saying 'above normal' this will potentially create some very ominous conditions for certain taxa.



On that line of thinking, our 2011 Annual Meeting has been determined and will be happening on October 21st and 22nd, 2011 and is based on the extreme environmental conditions in Manitoba as the theme. My heart felt thanks goes out to Marj Smith, John Gavloski and Bob Lamb for working on creating a great conference this fall based on this extreme environments theme.

I wish everyone a great summer season, may the collections, the experiments, the data the analysis come together and we will see you in October at the Annual Meeting.

Cheers
Taz Stuart
President, ESM

ESM ANNUAL MEETING

21 October 2011 at the Freshwater Institute
&
22 October 2011 at the Department of Entomology, U of M

Theme: Manitoba: A Province of Extremes
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Dale Wrubleski, Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba

Scientific Program Committee:
Marjorie Smith (Chair), John Gavloski, Bob Lamb, Joel Gosselin, Taz Stuart

What's up in Entomology at Uof M?

By Pat MacKay, based on interviews with Neil Holliday

There's tonnes of excitement and loads of changes in Entomology at U of M these days. Most ESM members will have been at least vaguely aware of this, as a result of a couple of flurries of seminar notices and other email messages, but many may not be aware of the whole story.

The Department had been in a period of slow decline for some time. The University administration had refused to replace either Reiny Brust or Pat MacKay after their retirements in 1994 and 2001 respectively, in spite of generally strong support within the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences. Then the Department was devastated first by the illness of Rob Roughley and subsequently by his untimely death in November 2009. At that point many of us had serious concerns that this would be the final blow for the last Entomology Department in Canada. Not so!!

First, in early 2010 the Department received permission to replace Rob, and in September 2010, Barb Sharanowski joined the Department as a systematist and evolutionary biologist. Second, the Department was awarded bridge funding to replace Neil Holliday immediately, although Neil is not due to retire until the end of June 2012. Thus, the new crop protection entomologist, Alejandro Costamagna arrived in Winnipeg with his wife (Marisol) and two daughters (Ailen-9 and Chiara-6), late at night on July 03 2011. Third, the Department also received bridge funding to replace Terry Galloway who is due to retire at the end of December 2013. The new veterinary and wildlife entomologist has been selected and could be here as early as September 2011 but more likely will arrive by January 2012, although the identity of the new Department member will probably not be made public for some time yet. Three new faculty members here or almost here!

And that's not all! The Department is expecting to fill one more faculty position in this round of changes, possibly in early 2012. The position would be in the area of vector biology and would be a replacement, in numbers, for Pat MacKay and, in entomological expertise, for Reiny Brust. On top of all that, the advertisement is just about ready to go out to hire an instructor into a term position to develop distance education courses in Entomology. And the Department has recently hired a third technician, Phillip Snarr, who will be working four days a week, two in the museum along with data entry person Gwen Band, and two in Barb Sharanowski's lab.

You might well ask what stimulated all these changes. Well, all the hard work by Department Head Neil Holliday finally paid off. The Department has received Federal/Provincial funding from the Growing Forward program, as well as additional University support, and has been designated as The National Centre for Entomology. As the Centre, the Department will develop distance education courses to be offered to students at other institutions, particularly the other Agriculture Faculties in Canada, to provide introductory training in Entomology. The Department plans to follow this up with some rescheduling of its course offerings in order to make it possible for such students to come here to take a single term of intensive study of Entomology. These developments have been strongly supported and moved forward by the Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, Michael Trevan, as well as by the Deans of the other Canadian Faculties of Agriculture.

The Department's current undergraduate and graduate programs continue to be very successful and provide an excellent model for the new endeavor. The Entomology Major program disappeared a few years ago when the Faculty revised its curriculum, de-emphasizing the disciplinary or departmental aspects of its programs and shifting toward the interdisciplinary

aspects with more emphasis on for example, Ecology. This fit well with the expertise of Department's academic staff, who were all very supportive of the change. But by 2007 it was clear that a partial return to the old disciplinary approach would be useful, and an Entomology Minor program was introduced. Since then, six students have graduated with an Entomology Minor, and there are currently 13 students enrolled in the program, more than were ever enrolled at any one time in the old Entomology Major program. Among the 13 enrolled in the minor program, are three Agriculture students, five Science students, two Arts students, one Environmental Science student, one Education student and one first year student. In contrast to the higher than previous undergraduate numbers, graduate enrolment is at a low point just now, reflecting the recent uncertainties and ongoing expectation of retirements, however with the recruitment of new academics, recruitment of graduate students is on the upswing, with three new students beginning this past May. Graduate student numbers can be expected to return to the typical level of 20-25 in the not too distant future.

Returning to the topic of retirements, of the three senior members of the Department, Neil Holliday, Terry Galloway and Rob Currie, two have firm retirement plans. Neil Holliday stepped down as Department Head and began a terminal administrative leave on July 01 after being Head for 17 years: three five-year terms, and two year-long leaves. While on leave he plans to do some travelling for professional reasons, some travelling for personal reasons, and the rest of the time he will be in residence at the Cereal Research Centre AAFC in Winnipeg, writing papers and reviewing graduate students' theses. He will retire officially on June 30, 2012, after which he will continue writing papers and reviewing theses, but also hopes to get back to studying carabid beetles on Lake Winnipeg beaches. Terry Galloway plans to begin a final six month research leave on July 01, 2013, possibly in New Zealand, and retire on December 31, 2013. After that he expects to continue his work on ectoparasites here in Manitoba. At that point the Department of Entomology will have not one, not two, but three Senior Scholars in residence. This may or may not be a good thing. You'll have to ask our brand new Department Head, Rob Currie what he thinks. Congratulations Rob! Are we ever glad that you're here to take over!

LOST IN SPIDERLAND

By Todd Lawton*

I wish I could have met *Scaphinotus*, (*Cydrini*, *Carabidae*), under better circumstances. I had strung-out a line of pitfall traps in an old growth forest on Oregon's coast; my plan was to return after dark in hopes of finding *Omus dejeani*, a primitive, flightless tiger beetle. Once in the woods it was immediately apparent that my traps were poorly marked. I had used what I could find at a local convenience store, a spool of sheer white ribbon, and these "flags" became transparent in flashlight light. I soon found myself well into the blackened woods and very lost. I wandered in circles for a couple hours before attempting to sleep in a hollow I created under a huge fallen log. I didn't see any *O. dejeani* that night, just large, stilt-legged *Carabidae*, their spidery movements becoming more unnerving as the hours past.

I was surprised when I was later offered a generous exchange for my small sample of "spider beetles." I was told they were *Scaphinotus velutinus*, and as often happens, the enthusiasm of another beetle collector rubbed-off on me. I have returned to the same Oregon forest several times to collect more.

Scaphinotus are well-known for their narrowed pronota and elongated mandibles, adaptations thought to related to feeding on snails. They are poorly represented in Manitoba; only two species occur: *S. elevatus*, a dark purple beetle with a striking flared pronotum, and *S. bilobus*, which is smaller and reddish purple. Both are rare in the province, especially the latter species. Two species of *Sphaeroderus*, more primitive cychrines, also occur locally. They are considered rare but are actually quite common in suitable habitat in September and October.

During the summer of 2010 I spent several weeks collecting *Cychrini* in Arkansas, principally in the Ouachita Mountains of the Ozarks. My many years spent leisurely netting tiger beetles didn't prepare me for the more intense physical trials involved in trapping *Scaphinotus*! In Arkansas, these beetles are most readily found on the north slopes of mountains. On cool, rainy days the rocky ground became slick making it difficult to stay upright and on sunny days this northerner found the heat oppressive by 10 am. Enough Copperheads were encountered to keep me focused.

Four species of the *Nomaretus* subgenus, (*Scaphinotus*), are found in or near NW Arkansas. I came away with a nice selection of *S. infletus* and *S. fissicollis* but most rewarding was a series of a very large, (18 mm), reddish-purple species that appears to be undescribed. Then, to make things even better, only 12 miles from that site I collected two *Sphaeroderus*, separated from eastern US populations by the Mississippi River! I later found out that an American scientist is working with specimens from that area and may describe a new species!

From there I journeyed northeast, a route that eventually took me to West Virginia, and then south, to Florida. The Appalachians host several large and colourful *Scaphinotus* species. One example is *S. viduus*, a purple beetle that can exceed 30 mm. It's found in the borderlands of Quebec south to northern West Virginia; sister species (*S. irregularis* and two undescribed) extend through the Appalachian complex to Alabama. It's surreal to find one of these nocturnal giants on a hiking trail that's been set with bait. When I caught my first I let out a joyful whoop that must have carried for miles! Populations in West Virginia are a brilliant metallic green and copper that glitter like polished gold when caught in a flashlight beam. These beetles are also arboreal so finding one poised on a tree trunk is especially sweet.

I collected several other intriguing *Scaphinotus* species in the mountains of the SE United States although careful dissection of the male genitalia was required to confirm my field identifications. *Scaphinotus andrewsi* is highly variable in the eastern US and it closely resembles a number of other species; colour and sculpture also vary with elevation making identifications more complex, at least for an amateur like myself. I'll be better prepared and confident in the field on my return to that region, possibly in 2011.

As usual, I spent all six of my 2010 vacation weeks collecting insects. Along my route I set sugar, dung and pitfall traps, checked flowering plants, and employed my black lights to capture beetles for my personal collection and the Wallis Museum. I also exchange about 1000 specimens each year with my European trade partners who are particularly fond of *Cicindela*, *Scaphinotus* and *Calosoma*.

One thing is certain for 2011, come summer I'll be hiking darkened trails, bordering on lost and chasing down "spider beetles." I probably won't sleep under any logs this time!

*Todd Lawton is the founder of a Winnipeg animal shelter and is an avid collector of *Cicindela* and *Scaphinotus*



Rocky woodland habitat of *Scaphinotus fissicollis* and *S. infletus* in Arkansas.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS*

Annual Meeting of the Entomological Society of Manitoba

Freshwater Institute & Entomology U of M, Winnipeg, October 21-22, 2011

Joint Annual Meeting of the Canadian and Acadian Entomological Societies

Westin-Nova Scotian Hotel, Halifax NS, November 06-09, 2011

59th Annual Meeting of the Entomological Society of America

Reno-Sparks Convention Centre, Reno NV, November 13-16, 2011

*If you have a meeting you would like listed in the next ESM Newsletter, contact the editors with the details by September 01, 2011

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