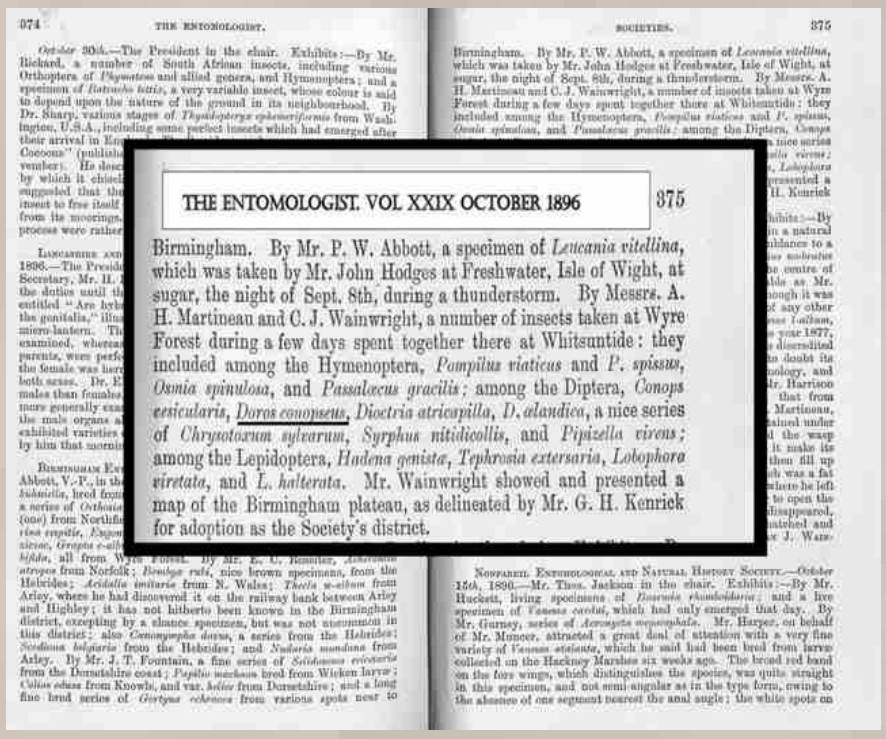
In search of *Doros profuges* in the Wyre Forest

MIKE BLOXHAM



374 THE ENTOMOLOGIST. SOCIETIES. 375

THE ENTOMOLOGIST. VOL. XXIX. OCTOBER 1896 375

Birmingham. By Mr. P. W. Abbott, a specimen of *Leucania vitellina*, which was taken by Mr. John Hodges at Freshwater, Isle of Wight, at sugar, the night of Sept. 8th, during a thunderstorm. By Messrs. A. H. Martineau and C. J. Wainwright, a number of insects taken at Wyre Forest during a few days spent together there at Whitsuntide: they included among the Hymenoptera, *Pompilus viaticus* and *P. spissus*, *Osmia spinulosa*, and *Passaloecus gracilis*; among the Diptera, *Conops cesicularis*, *Doros conopseus*, *Dioctria atricapilla*, *D. alandica*, a nice series of *Chrysotoxum sylvarum*, *Syrphus nitidicollis*, and *Pipizella virens*; among the Lepidoptera, *Hadena genistæ*, *Tephrosia extersaria*, *Lobophora viretata*, and *L. halterata*. Mr. Wainwright showed and presented a map of the Birmingham plateau, as delineated by Mr. G. H. Kenrick for adoption as the Society's district.

Figure 1. Extract from The Entomologist containing the report of finding *Doros profuges* in Wyre.

Some time ago I was browsing through an old copy of The Entomologist from my library and made an interesting discovery. The Journal had a section where meetings of notable natural history societies were reported (Figure 1).

The enlarged extract briefly mentions the capture of *Doros*. Colbran Wainwright, a Birmingham jeweller, was a leading authority on Tachinidae (parasite flies), his magnificent collection of these and other specimens was eventually donated to the Natural History Museum in London. It was most probable that the *Doros* specimen was also there.

In order to follow this up, I contacted Nigel Wyatt (Curator of Diptera (Aschiza & Calyptrata)) at the Natural History Museum and soon received additional information confirming its presence there. The fly was a male with signs of a dissection – a practice often carried out by Wainwright when meticulously preparing Tachinid flies to form the basis for the first comprehensive key produced in 1928 (Figure 2).

The complex array of labels was more intelligible upon receipt of the next photograph (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Photograph of the pinned specimen of *Doros profuges*. Natural History Museum

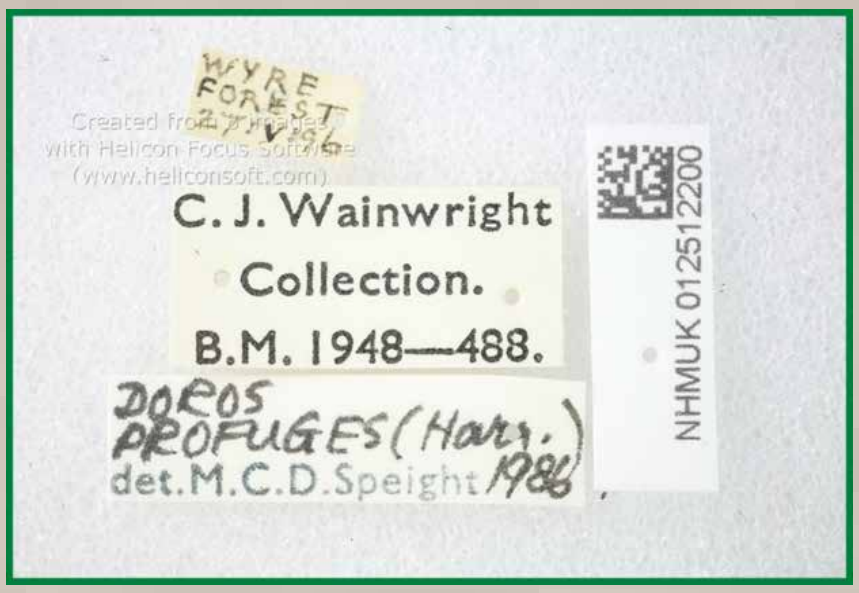


Figure 3. Close-up pictures of the several lables attached to the specimen. Natural History Museum

It seems that this specimen may have lain unidentified for some 90 years until it came to the attention of the notable hoverfly expert Martin Speight at the time when the Hoverfly Recording Scheme was in its infancy.

A number of interpretations become possible when we examine the label. At any rate, the Wyre Forest record appears to have been overlooked in a number of hoverfly publications, maybe because it was 'historic' and also because of the brevity of information on the original label. At that time a precise description of the capture locality was often absent - Wyre Forest possibly having an area of about 3000 hectares at that time - and with Martineau and Wainwright having enjoyed collecting for a few days, we have no idea exactly where they might have been on May 27th 1896.

We are left with some intriguing pieces of information that might help us in our coming efforts to rediscover this Near Threatened and enigmatic rarity.

The (Irish) National Biodiversity Centre website provides more information on this species (Speight and Gittings, 2024) including:

> 'Flight period of *Doros*:
>
> End May/June, and on into July particularly at higher altitudes. Larva: features of the puparium are described and illustrated by Speight (1988c), including distinctions from the puparium of *D. destillatorius* (Mik); the larva is believed to be an ant commensal, probably with *Lasius fuliginosus* (Lat.). A female has been observed ovipositing at the base of a *Fraxinus* sapling.'

As Study Group members may have noted, the locations of many of our *Lasius fuliginosus* nests in Wyre are now known and anyone wishing to have a go at finding *Doros profuges* has a potentially promising starting point. Whilst this edition contains much about our current focus on Wood Ants, members might enjoy this piece about the possible association of a rare Wyre hoverfly with another ant we have studied in the past - the 'Jet Ant' *Lasius fuliginosus*.

Thanks go to Nigel Wyatt for his assistance in providing the basic information and photographs for us and to David Iliff (Hoverfly Newsletter Editor: Dipterists Forum) for checking the text and making valuable comments.

Reference

Speight, M. and Gittings, T. (2024) Hoverflies (Syrphidae) of Ireland, *National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland.* On-line: https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Dataset/159/Species/94412. Accessed February 2024.