

Pontania crassipes (Thomson) (Hym., Tenthredinidae) new to Wester Ross and comments on its local distribution

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During a hill-walking and climbing trip to Kintail, Wester Ross, I had ample opportunity to search for signs of *Pontania crassipes* (Thomson) on a number of summits. Sheet 33 of the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map series shows all the localities mentioned below.

Observations made in 1980

The summit of A'Chralaig (1,120m.), climbed on the 1st of April, was unfortunately, from an entomological point of view, too icy to allow an investigation of its vegetation. This is the highest in the district, however, and the tops of the other hills mostly proved to have a covering of softer snow. On the following day the ridge to the south of Cluanie Inn was walked. Numbers of old *crassipes* galls were found on dried leaves of *Salix herbacea* L. which was growing on north-facing crags on Creag a' Mhàim and along the whole length of the ridge between Creag a' Mhàim (947m.) and Druim Shionnach (987m.). Associated vegetation on the rocky outcrops on the ridge where *S. herbacea* was found contained *Alchemilla alpina* agg., *Lycopodium* sp., *Vaccinium myrtillus*, and the dwarf shrubs *Arcotostaphylos uva-ursi* and *Empetrum nigrum*. The galls were of the typical form: projecting almost equally above and below the leaf-blade, positioned at its base and to one side of the midrib, which it touches. The emergence hole of the mature larva may be either on the upper or lower surface of the gall. It leaves to build its cocoon in the soil. As in the gall figured by Benes (1968: 121, fig. 10a), the distortion of the leaf was marked. On the descent from Druim Shionnach, galls were found as low as 600 metres (above Loch a' Mhaoil Dhisnich, in soil-filled cracks and ledges on boulders).

Despite careful search, on the 4th of April I failed to find any galls on the south-facing slopes of the Five Sisters. It became clear to me that topography is a key factor in the distribution of this insect on the Scottish mountains. The host plant, and therefore the sawfly also, do not appear to occur widely on the slopes that are exposed to the south. Visible evidence of the effect of the longer exposure to sunlight that the southern slopes are subjected to was strikingly obvious from the amount of snow lying on the north-facing and south-facing sides of the same hill. At the time when I was in the area, the north-facing slope of the Saddle (1,010m.) was thickly and fairly evenly covered in snow down to about 700 metres. By contrast, the south-facing side, even near the summit ridge, had only a few small snow patches. Galls of *P. crassipes* were found on the craggy north-facing side of

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Coire Uaine nearly down to the level of the Loch a' Coire Uaine. It would seem that in Britain, where we have mountains only just high enough to support populations of *crassipes*, local climatic differences affect its distribution profoundly.

Benson (1958: 203) records *crassipes* from the arctic-alpine zones of the "mountains in the Lake District, in Snowdonia, in the Grampians, on Ben Laoghal in Sutherland and on the Island of Rhum". This is its distribution on *Salix herbacea*. He added (Benson, 1959) a record from *Salix myrsinites* L. at Inchnadampf NNR, Sutherland. I do not know of any previous published records from Wester Ross. Benson collected on Slioch, by Loch Maree, but does not mention having found *crassipes* there: I regard the fact that Benson collected on the south-facing side of Slioch as significant. Apart from *Salix herbacea* and *S. myrsinites*, *crassipes* is also found on *S. arbuscula* L. and *S. lapponum* L. in Britain.

A few other insects were observed during my visit. The first *Dolerus aeneus* Hartig (Hym., Tenthredinidae) were flying in sheltered spots at sea-level. These were all males and had probably just emerged. Galls of *Euura atra* (Tenthredinidae) and *Rhabdophaga salicis* (Dipt., Cecidomyiidae) occurred together in stems of *Salix atrocinerea* Brot. at Shiel Bridge. On the evening of 31st March, a Sword Grass moth dived into my hair in a wild attempt to evade a bat that was chasing it (I would that all insects were so obliging!). One nymph of *Tetrix undulata* (Sowerby) (Orthoptera, Tettigoniidae), a local species in Scotland, was found on the beach at the head of Loch Duich. While walking to the Saddle, a male *Meloe violaceus* Marsham was taken. It was resting on a sandy footpath at the head of the Allt a' Coire Uaine (500m.).

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References

- Benes, K., 1968. Galls and Larvae of the European Species of Genera *Phyllocolpa* and *Pontania* (Hymenoptera, Tenthredinidae). *Acta ent. bohemoslov.*, **65**: 112-137.
Benson, R. B., 1958. Hymenoptera Symphyta, part 2(c). *Handb. Ident. Br. Insects*, **6**: 139-252.
Benson, R. B., 1959. Sawflies (Hym., Symphyta) of Sutherland and Wester Ross. *Entomologist's mon. Mag.*, **95**: 101-104.

A THIRD SPECIMEN OF RHYACIA SIMULANS (HUFN.) IN KENT. — A worn specimen of this noctuid was taken in my garden trap on the night of 14th September 1980, the third record of this species for Kent. It is interesting that both the other specimens have occurred within the last two years — the first near Faversham (Watkinson, *Ent. Rec.*, 90: 324), and the second at Wilmington (Butcher, *Ent. Rec.*, 91: 316). — PAUL SOKOLOFF, Orpington, Kent.



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