

occurrence of the two beetles at Ankerwycke appears to represent a new county record for each, their presence here is not wholly surprising as the site is located only a few kilometres away from Windsor Great Park where both have been recorded previously. The example of *fuscus* was obtained by beating the lower branches of a large parkland oak, and the *testacea* by beating the young re-growth of a nearby old lime which had had the upper section of the main trunk snapped off, exposing the heart rot. It is also of interest to note that Prof. J. A. Owen (pers. comm.) has reared *testacea* from the heart rot of lime at Windsor.

Both beetles are given *Red Data Book* status in Hyman & Parsons (1992. *A review of the scarce and threatened Coleoptera of Great Britain*, UK Nature Conservation 3. JNCC): *testacea* (RDB Rare category) is the more widespread with a few records spanning much of England; whilst nearly all records of *fuscus* (RDB Endangered category) are from the Windsor area. Allen (*Ent. Rec.* **113**: 1-2) reports the recent discovery of *fuscus* in East Gloucestershire by P. Whitehead, and casts doubt on an historic record from Surrey.

Ankerwycke is a parkland site on the north side of the Thames acquired by the National Trust in 1998. It supports a number of large old parkland trees including oak, field maple, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut and lime, there is also the renowned Ankerwycke yew in the grounds of an 11th century priory – a tree believed to be in excess of 2000 years old. At the time of my visit only a few other common saproxylic beetles were recorded as very little decaying timber was readily accessible for study – a consequence of decaying timber being removed by the previous owners. Even so, one other species of note, the brown tree ant *Lasius brunneus* was common in the old trees over much of the property. In view of the close proximity to Windsor and the occurrence of the two *Scaptia* it is hoped that other scarce saproxylic invertebrates will also be present at the Ankerwycke site – future management of the property will incorporate a more sympathetic approach towards maintaining the old trees and their saproxylic habitats.

I am grateful Mr A. A. Allen and Prof. J. A. Owen for providing relevant literature, details of field observations, and their assistance in determining the specimens. – A. P. FOSTER, The National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1RQ.

Sandhill Rustic *Luperina nickerlii* (Freyer) *gueneei* (Doubl.) (Lep.: Noctuidae): New to Denbighshire (VC 50)

On 11 August 2001, we attended a public moth event in Denbighshire organised for National Moth Night. The event was held at a newly created local natural reserve consisting of a remnant of the once extensive dune system that used to be present along the North Wales coast. The conditions for trapping were poor with a very strong southerly wind blowing across the site. Despite the conditions, two traps were established in sheltered locations. Fortunately, the wind eased as darkness approached and a few interesting

insects were attracted to light. These included Archer's Dart *Agrotis vestigialis* and many Latticed Heath *Semiothisa clathrata*. Around midnight, we organised a search along the proto-dunes at the seaward edge of the reserve by torchlight. This resulted in Alan Wagstaff locating a single, pristine Sandhill Rustic *Luperina nickerlii gueneei*.

On checking with the county recorder and with Adrian Spalding and David Green, it became apparent that this represents the first record of this *Red Data Book* category 2 species for VC 50 and, hence, it also establishes a new site for the insect. The status of the site is under discussion with Countryside Council for Wales and the local Council who own it, in order to arrange protection for the insects. Consequently, the site details are necessarily withheld for the time being.— SAM THOMAS, ALAN WAGSTAFF AND ADRIAN WANDER, 16 Bramhall's Park, Anderton, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6AH.

Hazards of butterfly collecting: We are going to shoot you, Sir — Benin, Nigeria, 1969

In July 1969 I did one of the most stupid things I have ever done. I don't do that kind of thing anymore. I was staying with my parents in Nigeria (my father was director of UNICEF). I had the chance of hitching a ride to Benin City. Now, what happens in Nigeria is that the number of species increases dramatically from west to east. So you have perhaps 700 species in the Lagos area, 900 in the Niger Delta area, and you have 1,100 species in the East.

Benin was very close to the front line of the so-called Biafra conflict and one should not really go there – but the butterflies called and one was young and optimistic. I lodged with a delightful UNICEF Indian family and I had brought their quota of Indian spices sent through the diplomatic pouch; wonderful Indian food for my four day stay in Benin.

During the first two days I had splendid collecting – lots of things not found in the Lagos area. And then back for a convivial Indian dinner. But on the third day things went awry. My host dropped me at a small patch of forest about three kilometres from Benin Airport and a major army base. It was a really rich locality, but after three hours I buckled down to the discipline of photographing butterflies. I did not have a macro lens, so I was using extension tubes. It was a cool and intermittently cloudy day, just fine for photography. I got some very nice images.

Then an army Land Rover drew up. A corporal and a private came out, both with submachine guns. The corporal was very drunk, the private driver somewhat less so; they had obviously been out here to drink too much palm wine during office hours. "You are a spy" – I tried to explain that this was not possible; my camera could only focus at short distance. The driver agreed that the camera was for short distance, but in much of Africa cameras are anyway deeply suspect. I tried to show the corporal, but his alcoholic stupor could not support the effort. But he did see my boots. They were some very nice khaki canvas boots, bought at the Bata shoeshop in Lagos. "You killed



Thomas, Sam, Wagstaff, Alan, and Wander, Adrian. 2001. "Sandhill Rustic Luperina nickerlii (Freyer) gueneei (Doubl.) (Lep.: Noctuidae): New to Denbighshire (VC 50)." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 113, 234–235.

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