

A CURIOUS HABIT OF ONE OF OUR PHORID FLIES.

BY NATHAN BANKS.

One day last summer, while walking in the woods near my home, I saw a myriopod (*Parajulus* sp.) wriggling and twisting on the dead leaves in a most excited and erratic fashion. Bending down, I saw that a number of tiny flies were darting at the myriopod, which was trying to keep them off and to hide in the leaves. I swept with my midget net and caught one of the flies, the others and the myriopod disappearing among the dead leaves. In a moment they reappeared, the myriopod as excited as ever, and endeavoring to escape his tormentors. I swept again and secured a second fly, but this frightened the others away, and I did not see them again.

On examination the flies were found to belong to the phorid genus *Aphiochæta*, near to *A. nigriceps* or *A. picta*, but distinct from both.

The habits of *Aphiochæta* are various. Several have been bred from fungi, others from dead or decaying insects, but there is no record of this or any other phorid attacking a myriopod. It, however, is not certain that the fly breeds in the myriopod, either dead or alive; it may be that it is attracted by the exudation of these myriopods, which they secrete when disturbed.

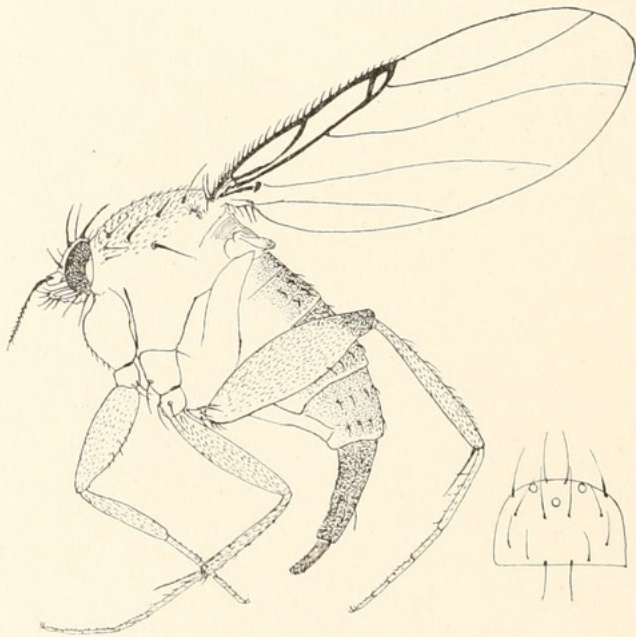


FIG. 1.—*Aphiochæta xantippe* Banks, and bristles on the front of head.

After this I learned that Mr. Barber and Dr. A. K. Fisher had this year also observed the same habit in the same species of fly; Dr. Fisher with the same myriopod; Mr. Barber with a species of *Spirobolus*.

I describe the phorid as follows:

***Aphiochæta xantippe*, new species.**

Female.—Yellowish; head and thoracic notum yellowish brown, abdomen dark brown above, except the tips of segments pale, last two

segments blackish; hind femora dark at tips, hind tibia with a dark line above; the thorax, from above, shows two parallel pale stripes. Antennal arista long, pubescent; bristles on front as figured (fig. 1); stiff bristles below eyes; four bristles each side on thorax from base of wing toward head, and one lower down about midway from wing to head; a bristle each side near base of scutellum, four sub-equal bristles on scutellar margin; bristles on costal edge of wing about three-fifths the width of the costal cell; hind tibia with a row of short bristles above, and lower inner edge of the hind metatarsus with a row of about 15 short, stiff bristles in an even row. Segments of abdomen with two rows of bristles above, and marginal hairs. Length 2 mm.

From Falls Church, Virginia, July 8, pestering a myriopod (*Parajulus* sp.)

Differs from *A. nigriceps* in pale head, and no marks on pleura; from *A. picta* in absence of dots below base of wings, and in the hyaline wings.

—Mr. Barber said that on June 25 he saw a large *Spirobolus* writhing in the little-used wood-road on the Virginia shore opposite Plummers Island, Maryland, with a swarm of ten or a dozen phorid flies alighting upon it whenever opportunity offered. Thinking they were ovipositing, the centipede was saved for breeding, but no flies could be caught and none issued from the myriopod, which died after about three weeks in a breeding-jar. In July this year Dr. A. K. Fisher saw a small julid at Sandy Springs, Maryland, acting strangely, and observed a small fly riding upon its back, except during the worst of its contortions. Both specimens were taken and appear to be the same as those described by Mr. Banks. In September another specimen of the same fly was observed dividing its attentions between a large and apparently healthy *Spirobolus* and a smaller one that had been partly crushed on a path, near where he had seen the specimens in June. Both myriopods were much annoyed by the fly, but the injured one being less able to defend itself, was collected after half an hour's observation, for breeding. Nothing, however, issued.

Mr. Schwarz spoke of the observations by the late Mr. Hubbard on a small black fly, perhaps not a phorid, attacking spiders. Mr. Barber spoke of Mrs. Slosson's account of *Ceratopogon* attacking caterpillars.

Mr. Cushman said that in the work on the parasites of the boll weevil two species of *Aphiochæta* had been bred under conditions indicating parasitism.

Mr. Banks replied, mentioning the long discussion before *Phora aletia* was proven not parasitic, and therefore he hesitates to claim parasitism until positive.

—After a very interesting outline by Mr. Busck of his collecting experiences in Panama, the chair called on Mr. Grovener, of Oxford, England, who made some remarks on his impressions of entomology in this country.

The following papers were accepted for publication:

A NOTE ON A GENUS OF TENTHREDINIDÆ.

BY S. A. ROHWER.

Genus *ENISCIA* Thomson.

Rohwer¹ designated the type of *Eniscia* Thomson as *Tenthredo consobina* Klug, but in so doing overlooked Konow's² remarks on the subject, in which he indicates that the type of Thomson's genus should be the second species, *artica* Thomson. Although Konow does not definitely designate the type, the fact that he indicates such a designation combined with elimination (*consobina* had been placed in *Sciapteryx*) will, no doubt, serve to fix *artica* as the type of *Eniscia*. The *Ischyroceræa hyperborea* Kiaer has been shown to be a synonym of *Eniscia artica* Thomson, so the synonymy is:

ENISCIA Thomson.

Type: *Eniscia artica* Thomson.

Syn: *Ischyroceræa* Kiaer.

Type: (*Ischyroceræa hyperborea* Kiaer) = *Eniscia artica* Thomson.

¹Tech. Ser. 20, pt. 2, U. S. Dep't. Agr., Bur. Ent., 1911, p. 79.

²Zeit. syst. Hym. Dipt., vol. 3, 1908, pp. 87-88.



1911. "A curious habit of one of our phorid flies." *Proceedings of the Entomological Society of Washington* 13, 212–214.

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