



ISoP Newsletter Spring 2019

It may not feel like it for many of those living in the Northern hemisphere but Spring has been with us, meteorologically as of 1st March. Extreme and freaky weather has made it an interesting year so far, with unusual fluctuations and odd extremes of temperature, humidity, and air movement, with my barometer (aneroid type) swinging back and forth like a pendulum. When I was a kid my grandmother regularly came out with a weather mantra about “March winds and April showers” and so far in western Europe March has lived up to the former. That is why I selected images of *Harrisoniella hopkinsi* and *Saemundssonina marina*, lice of storm driven birds, taken from a 2007 publication by Christine Hänel and Ricardo Palma.¹



The weather seems also to have had some effects on lice in our area. The humidity has been consistently low throughout most of the winter period, especially during the high pressure times but also even when depressions have been active. This has made collecting human head lice difficult. We have repeatedly found since around November time that not only were there fewer people reporting with lice, but those that did have some only had a few, and when we have been into schools to screen for lice the number of students with an active infestation has been much lower than normal. Of course there have been a few exceptions but mostly on children with more extensive, thicker heads of hair that could retain humidity. This all may just be a chance set of observations but maybe there is something in it, after all Larada Sciences have made a business out of exploiting extremities of low humidity generated by the AirAllé device, pioneered by the observations made by Dale Clayton and his team on bird lice in their lab.

Of course the local observation of low levels of lice in the community could be as a result of extensive and successful use of treatments to eliminate infestations but, given the apparent failings of certain types of treatment that we have observed and which I briefly mentioned in my pre-print review of the state of play with physically acting preparations,² I doubt that therapy has played a great role.

How these weather conditions may have affected lice of other species that would normally live in the same benign environment as western European humans I have no idea. If any of you have any observations to share that would be really interesting.



¹ Hänel C, Palma RL. The lice of the Tristan da Cunha archipelago. Beiträge zur Entomologie 2007; 57(1): 105-133 doi: 10.21248/contrib.entomol.57.1.105-133.

² Burgess IF. Physically acting products for head lice – the end of the beginning. PeerJ Preprints 2018 <https://doi.org/10.7287/peerj.preprints.27412v1>

Publications

Interest in Phthiraptera continues to grow. In the publication list from 2107 I found 155 articles on lice and 21 on other Psocodea, with 16 from 2016 that lagged behind in showing online until after that year's list had been circulated.

This time around, with the 2018 list, I have found 193 on lice so far plus 35 on other Psocodea. In addition a further 33 publications on lice from 2017 have surfaced, making the current total for that year up to 188. If the 2018 list continues to grow during 2019 we shall likely beat the 2012 highest number (PubMed listed 120 Phthiraptera publications in 2012 compared with 58 for 2018, although the algorithm for selection into a category is somewhat unreliable on that website).

Something new I have added this time around is a little self-explanatory suffix to each of the listings “*pdf available”, which means I have managed to find a download of the article and so, if anyone is really keen to see a copy and cannot find it for themselves, it is in my computer and you can let me know. After all some of these have been published in really quite obscure journals, but to this I must also add the disclaimer that some of the science could be better in the obscure publications.



So, I hope your 2019 is going well and continues going ok. There are no lousy meetings that I am aware of this year so you are going to have to content yourself with catching up with colleagues through their writings, or maybe visiting them.

Best wishes to all

Ian