

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS: INTERESTING RECORDS

HAPLOPHTHALMUS DANICUS - FURTHER NORTH IN FIFE, SCOTLAND

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Further to my article in Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group 18 on *Haplophthalmus danicus* in Scotland, a visit on 12.4.2002 to a Scottish Wildlife Trust "wildlife site" on the north shore of the Firth of Forth at Massney Braes, Lundin Links (of Ladies-only Golf Club fame!) produced a few specimens of *H. danicus* under pieces of wood lying on an abandoned rail track overgrown with trees. Gordon Corbet had kindly introduced me to the site in December 2001 so it is gratifying that he also found the species within 100m on 8.1.2004 in what appears to be an abandoned garden higher up above the shore. The sites (at G.R. NO412025, vc85) are both adjacent to gardens so it is highly likely that *H. danicus* has been introduced via the trade in garden materials.

Whether the species may be near its northernmost limit in the UK has to be considered in relation to the site's geography. The northern climate is ameliorated locally, not only by its proximity to the sea, but also by the high land surrounding the Firth of Forth. I have frequently observed a wedge of clear sky above the Firth which allows the southern sun to warm the north shore, while the trees and other vegetation provide shelter from the wind.

BUDELUNDIELLA CATARACTAE - INLAND IN WALES

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To the end of 2003 *Buddelundiella cataractae* had still been found in only five 10km squares in the UK, four of them on or near the coast. Apart from the records given in the atlas "Woodlice in Britain and Ireland", BRC/ITE 1985, Steve Gregory found it in an Oxford garden centre (SP50) in 1989 and 1991 (the only previous inland records) and Paul Richards found it by the sea at Eastbourne (TQ60) in 1993; I thank both gentlemen for their information.

Thus it was with surprise that I found a single specimen on 16.1.2004 under a large stone against soil (rather than scree) in a limestone quarry in Clydach Gorge, Abergavenny (SO214125 - vc42); over 30km from the Severn Estuary. Since I had found in the same quarry, the previous year, a singleton of the millipede *Cylindroiulus vulnerarius* amongst garden waste, a link from garden centre through to dumped garden rubbish seems likely.

That the species is not often found comes as no surprise as I very nearly overlooked it as a partly curled up small white springtail, *Kalaphorura burmeisteri*, of the lobed springless type (among which it was grouped), but with a surface texture akin to *Haplophthalmus* woodlice. Then, as to whether *Buddelundiella* is appreciably commoner than found, I can only say that I have recently been finding the difficult *Metatrichoniscoides celticus* at several known sites along the coast between Cardiff and Bridgend but have seen no sign of *Buddelundiella* under rocks just above high tide mark where it might be expected.

FURTHER RECORDS OF *GEOPHILUS CARPOPHAGUS* LEACH

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Having read the paper by Arthur, Johnstone & Kettle (2002), I was impressed by its exactness, helpfulness and wide range. Far from being 'subjective,' such a commentary can only act as a spur and invite further work. My few recent observations of *Geophilus carpophagus* Leach, 1814 align with the findings of these workers *viz.*

ENGLAND, WORCESTERSHIRE

Longdon Marsh (VC37, SO83, 12m O.D.), evidently new to VC, one under moribund bark, 1.9m up open-grown pasture oak *Quercus robur* L., 30 May 2002.

Pershore Cemetery (VC37, SO94, 35m O.D.), two together in humified organic litter embedded in fracture scar on primary limb of mature Atlantic Cedar, *Cedrus atlantica* (Endl.) Carriere, 10m up tree, 9 March 2003.

WALES, MERIONETHSHIRE

Llanarth (VC35, SO31, 65m O.D.), three together under loosened bark of cultivated damson tree, *Prunus domestica* L. ssp. *institia* (L.) Bonnier & Layens, in orchard, 11 November 2002.

These records should be read against the findings of Arthur, Johnstone & Kettle (2002). They tend to confirm the affinity of *G. carpophagus* with dry elevated situations. The Pershore site may be comparatively northern for an inland locality, and it could be that this species is in, or is entering, a favourable phase in Britain.

I am grateful to the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and the Countryside Council for Wales for making some of these observations possible.

REFERENCE

Arthur, W., Johnstone, J. & Kettle, C. (2002) Ecological and behavioural characteristics of *Geophilus easoni* Arthur *et al.* and *G. carpophagus* Leach. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group* **18**: 26-32.

SOME INTERESTING PAUROPOD RECORDS

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Some Pauropods found in recent years were identified by Ulf Scheller.

***Trachypauropos britannicus* Scheller**

1 adult female from Ladymoore Nature Reserve, Wolverhampton (Staffordshire – VC 39) SO 942 948, 13 April 1999. Extracted from soil on a smelting slag tip by a Tüllgren funnel. The soil contained very high levels of heavy metals.

2 adult females extracted from *Fagus sylvaticus* litter by Tüllgren funnels from 7 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading (VC 23 – Oxfordshire) SU 711 760, 19 November 1999.

T. britannicus seems to have only been found previously as three specimens from the type locality in Lancashire collected by J. Gordon Blower.

***Stylopauropus pedunculatus* (Lubbock)**

1 adult female and 1 juvenile extracted from *Fagus sylvaticus* litter by Tüllgren funnels from 7 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading (VC 23 – Oxfordshire) SU 711 760, 19 November 1999.

Stylopauropus pedunculatus is a widespread species but this is a new county record.

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS: OBSERVATIONS

A SWARM OF *CYLINDROIULUS LONDINENSIS* IN MONTGOMERYSHIRE

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On 29th June 2003, while botanising in the upper Llyfnant valley, 4 km south of Machynlleth at SN757963, with Sam Bosanquet and Chris Forster-Brown, the former noticed a mass of dead millipedes around an old heap of de-icing salt at the side of the road. These were later confirmed as *Cylindroiulus londinensis* by Paul Lee. There were at least a thousand of them, all dead, some appearing fresh but others more or less decomposed, and in places they were heaped up several deep. Almost all were coiled up or lying in a C shape, and all appeared to be adults. The salt heap was about 2 x 1 m, and about 30 cm high, on the grassy verge of the road, and the millipedes were on and around the edges of the heap. Above the verge was a high hedgebank, with a sloping pasture beyond. The site was at 180m a.s.l., at the end of a minor road in a wild situation, with the nearest house and garden 200 m away.

Paul Lee comments that the reasons for millipede swarms are uncertain, and that each event may have a unique cause; feeding and mating may be among the explanations. As millipedes appear able to detect and avoid potential toxins in food, they would be unlikely to have ingested the salt. If they were mating, it is odd that they should have chosen such a potentially unsuitable site. As they were lying dead all around the salt heap, it seems unlikely that it had acted as a lethal barrier to a unidirectional moving swarm. The fact that the animals were in different stages of decay indicates that their accumulation may have continued for some time, and if so this would suggest that they may have been positively attracted to the salt, but there seems no entirely plausible explanation for what we saw. Roadside salt heaps though may prove to be a habitat worth investigating when they are met with.

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF *CRYPTOPS HORTENSIS* LEACH, 1914

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The ancient settlement of Kemerton (SO93) is one of a number of villages flanking the southern side of Bredon Hill in Worcestershire, into which feature at that point, the Watsonian county of West Gloucestershire makes a marked incision. Immediately to the east of the settlement, the Squitter Brook runs into a mill pool from which it discharges to join the Carrant Brook further south. Much more ancient than the settlement, this drainage is somewhat inefficient in places, with a complex hydrology known to have varied markedly over time. South the of the mill pond, the Squitter Brook passes through an area sometimes known as The John Moore Reserve (VC33), named after the author who lived nearby. This is a curious area of several acres in extent, much of which has been planted up as an orchard and with a variety of amenity trees, and is now rather neglected. There are some interesting areas of *Carex* reed swamp and willow carr, and some very large hybrid willows which are breaking up. Some ash seedlings have reached large tree size. The underlying sediments are, or are derived from, fissile Jurassic clays, and in some places the ground vegetation is dominated by moss. There are a number of vernal swamps and rising springs and lush growths of comfrey and stinging nettle, implying that the sediments are rich in available phosphates. There is a substantial litter of twigs and branches on the ground, and the humidity in the shallow valley at 39m O.D. is always high.

I was invited by the then trustees of the reserve to undertake a bio-assessment of it during 1998. The results of this are indelibly imprinted on my memory as one of the first organisms encountered was a Mute Swan which misguidedly landed in a tree. We have records of over 300 species of invertebrates from this site including the centipede *Cryptops hortensis* Leach, and I was struck during March 1998 how often this species was found there. Usually, in the midlands of England, *C. hortensis* is found in small numbers. Wood mould in trees may typically accommodate from two to five individuals. On the 12 March 1998 I located 19 *C. hortensis* at The John Moore Reserve, mostly not fully mature individuals under the decaying bark of a number of trees. Later, on 1 March 2001, I counted 61 examples of *C. hortensis* at the site. Of these, 46 were found together, apparently in a somewhat quiescent state, in a hairline crack running through a block of Oolitic Limestone measuring 40 x 30 x 10cm by the side of the Squitter Brook.

I have not been able to find parallels for so many *C. hortensis* at one spot, and in my experience it remains the greatest single concentration of this species. Lewis (1963) demonstrated that *C. hortensis* is particularly desiccation, and presumably therefore also temperature, sensitive (in south-west England it lives on maritime cliffs in full exposure), and one can only speculate that assembly at one point might be a response related to that. On the other hand, the large numbers of *C. hortensis* at the site imply that it is highly favourable. Perhaps the key lies in the facts that a) the macroconditions of the site are eminently suitable b) winter niches are somewhat limited and c) the basin-like valley is likely to be a frost-drain. Additionally few 'grain-cracks' (Oolitic Limestone has no bedding planes) in limestone blocks have been investigated as invertebrate habitats. Intriguingly, one still has to explain the mechanism of assembly. I should like to thank the aforementioned trustees and Dr J. G. E. Lewis for suggesting that I produce this note.

REFERENCE

Lewis, J.G.E. (1963) On the spiracle structure and resistance to desiccation of four species of geophilomorph centipede. *Ent. Exp. & appl.* **6**: 89-94.

MISCELLANEA

The following snippets were found by David Scott-Langley while reading about the life and work of Lord John Hunt (of Everest fame). They are written by Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Lord Hunt and refer to an expedition to Mulu, Sarawak.

‘On the Sunday we took the Hunts to our favourite secret place in the park for a picnic, Deer Cave, where we found John Lewis, a myriapodologist (a specialist in centipedes and millipedes), happily crawling through the guano, popping centipedes into collecting bottles as fast as he could catch them, oblivious to the earwigs, cockroaches and spiders that swarmed over his body. John [Hunt] later wrote to me that this moment epitomised the dedication of all our scientists.’

‘...My wife and I spent a fortnight with Robin and his team, consorting with scientists whose knowledge was beyond our understanding, but whose enthusiasm impressed and infected us. We were fascinated by the excitement of one expert in his discovery of a host of centipedes which made a good life for themselves in the guano deposited by millions of bats in a deep dark cave.’