

TRACHELIPUS RATHKII (BRANDT 1833); AN ISOPOD NEW TO WALES

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On 2nd November 2007 I visited a site on the Bridgend Industrial Estate at SS927791, vc 41 (Glamorgan), accompanied by Simon Warmingham, ostensibly to search for spiders. The site is a patch of waste ground c 90m x 50m at an altitude of 18m asl bounded on its northern and western sides by light industrial units and on its southern and eastern sides by access roads. It is covered in rough grassland with a scattering of shrubs and large amounts of industrial and domestic refuse, which provides an abundance of habitats for invertebrates.

Only four spider species were collected: *Phrurolithus festivus*, *Trochosa ruricola*, *Agalenatea redii* and *Stemonyphantes lineatus*, but the site was rich in isopods with *Androniscus dentiger*, *Haplophthalmus mengii*, *Trichoniscus pusillus* agg, *T. pygmaeus*, *Oniscus asellus*, *Armadillidium nasatum*, *Platyarthus hoffmannseggii*, *Philoscia muscorum* and *Porcellio scaber* found. Also present was a woodlouse that, to the naked eye, resembled a small, narrow *Oniscus*.

Microscopic examination of the specimen revealed antennal flagellae composed of two articles and five pleopodal lungs: these and other characteristics led me to determine it as *Trachelipus rathkii*. However, Harding & Sutton (1985), give its distribution in Britain as largely the Northamptonshire/Huntingdonshire block with a scattering of records south-east to Kent and south-west to Berkshire.

During the past two decades, its range has been shown to extend as far west as Gloucestershire (Gregory 2004), but until now it has never been collected west of the River Severn. Its discovery in Glamorgan raises the question whether it was accidentally introduced to the industrial estate or does it occur naturally in the area but has been overlooked due a lack of recording in south Wales.

The industrial estate was built during WWII on an area of marshland on the bank of the River Ewenny. As *T. rathkii* inhabits natural damp sites, as well as synanthropic situations, then it may well be found along the Ewenny and other riparian sites in south Wales. I have collected the species along the banks of the Mill Avon and Severn at Tewkesbury, where it exists in large numbers under flood debris.

The specimen was seen and examined by Simon Warmingham and Mark Winder, who agreed with my determination, and was then forwarded to Steve Gregory. I have since collected at the site but have failed to find another specimen. Simon and I will now carry out searches for colonies on the banks of the Ewenny and other local rivers and Mark intends searching the banks of the Tawe in Swansea.

REFERENCES

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