ARMADILLIDIUM PICTUM BRANDT, 1833, DISCOVERED IN STAFFORDSHIRE, AND COMMENTS ON ITS HABITAT ASSOCIATIONS

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Gregory (2009) suggests that *Armadillidium pictum* may have been overlooked in areas within its British range. It is now possible to add Staffordshire to the counties where it has been found, extending its known distribution at the southern end of the Pennines. It was found on two occasions in one small area in Dimmings Dale in Staffordshire Moorlands District. This dale is a wooded ravine, a tributary stream of the River Churnet cutting through the Bunter Sandstone and exposing several outcrops of the harder Keuper rocks (according to the SSSI citation). The precise location of the records lies on the south side of the ravine, but on the east-facing slope of a small re-entrant valley (SK054428), within Threap Wood. While the slopes are generally heavily wooded with oak *Quercus*, this particular patch is very open, more of a large and apparently permanent glade with bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. the dominant vegetation, with much climbing corydalis *Ceratocapnos claviculata*. While beating this vegetation over a sweep net in search of corydalis weevils, a single *A. pictum* was found in the net on 2 June 2009 and again on 6 August 2009, in virtually the same place. The first specimen was retained as a voucher and identified with the help of Gregory & Richards (2008) .

Gregory's (2009) habitat description – the presence of suitable rocky terrain, such as talus slopes with accumulations of scree, rocks or boulders – is close but in this case the talus slopes are derived from Sandstone and are of a fine sandy material. The species seems to favour sheltered, humid situations, on friable and free-draining soils, but tree canopy does not seem to be important. The species has been provisionally classified as belonging to the *F3 shaded field and ground layer assemblage* in Natural England's developing Invertebrate Species and habitat Information System (ISIS) (Drake *et al*, 2007)[i] but this clearly is incorrect as shade does not appear to be essential – soil drainage characteristics are perhaps the single most important factor for many terrestrial invertebrates and this factor needs greater prominence in ISIS.

The conservation issues here relate to forestry and rhododendron. The site is now owned and managed by Forest Enterprise, although this small re-entrant area appears to be under minimum-intervention management. Rhododendron has been controlled elsewhere in the Dale but this small area has just a few isolated bushes and has not yet been affected. It is not known whether the disturbance caused by rhododendron control would be damaging to the woodlouse, through soil disturbance and/or compaction, but too much rhododendron would probably be worse. Much of the Dale has been designated a SSSI, including the woodlouse site.

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REFERENCES

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[i] ISIS is a computer application that Natural England is developing for the recognition and scoring of invertebrate assemblage types. In particular it addresses the analytical methods needed to interpret survey results, including Natural England's method for implementing the Common Standards Monitoring of invertebrates on designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The assemblage classification is intended to reflect the structural features of the habitat requirements of invertebrates, to link the species with conservation management rather than vegetation types per se. Thus for *A. pictum*, soil drainage and air humidity at ground level are more important than the plant species which form the vegetation, and so lack of disturbance is the key conservation objective - to classify this species as a shade-demanding species misses the point and could potentially lead to damaging conservation management operations.