

THE “IKEA MILLIPEDE”, *XENOBOLUS CARNIFEX* (DIPLOPODA, SPIROBOLIDA, PACHYBOLIDAE) FOUND IN DUBLIN

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In January 2013 I received an e-mail from Eugenie Reagan then at The National Biodiversity Centre, Waterford (now working at the UN World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, England) with a photograph of a striking red and black millipede found in a house plant labelled *Livistonia rotundifolia* which had been purchased in Ikea in Dublin on 10th January 2013 and was described as “made in the Netherlands”. The finder, Derek Brown, had sent the picture (Fig. 1) to Collette O’Flynn of NBDC. As a consequence of its origin it became nicknamed the “Ikea millipede”. The finder enquired as to whether it was native and should therefore be released.

It was clearly not one of the native Irish species, certainly not the only one of which even vaguely like it, *Ommatoiulus sabulosus* with its two orange-red longitudinal lines. I advised the finder not to release it in the hope that we might be able to get it identified and also on the basis that relevant Irish authorities would probably not favour its release as it was clearly a non-native species.



FIGURE 1: *Xenobolus carnifex* in plant pot containing *Livistonia* (image D. Brown)

I circulated the photograph amongst the myriapod community via *yahogroups* and Thomas Wesener of Bonn expressed an interest in looking at the specimen suggesting that it was definitely a spirobolid and a member of the Pachybolidae with the name *Xenobolus carnifex*, a kind of pest species, from India and Sri Lanka coming to mind. He also told us how he had been at Ikea in Cologne looking at the pot plants (which were not very exciting apart from the *Livistonia*). He found two genera of polydesmid millipedes, an ant nest, lepidopterous larvae and a small spider but no further specimens of the ?*Xenobolus*. He described the humid roots and substrate of the *Livistonia* as apparently a perfect habitat for bugs. After looking at about 20 plants, finding living arthropods in almost every one, he discovered “people looking at me strangely”. He also commented that, on the basis of the giant polydesmids found in their Ikea palms they got their stuff from South America rather than India/Sri Lanka.



FIGURES 2-3: *Xenobolus carnifex* 2) ventral view 3) dorsal view (images D. Brown)
Scale = 1 Euro coin

At Thomas's suggestion, arrangements were made for him to examine the specimen and to extract DNA. For this purpose it was first sent to Collette at Waterford where it could be preserved in a suitable form (95% alcohol) before onward transmission to Bonn. The specimen (Figs 2 – 3) was an immature male with 48+1 rings, no tarsal pads and just a trace of elongated coxae 3 & 4. Colour was ventrally red with red appendages, laterally black and dorsally a red stripe; head and anterior collum red and the telson, except for the apical part red also. Henrik Enghoff (Copenhagen), who had also been consulted, compared it with his specimens of *X. carnifex* and agreed with the identification. He commented that *X. carnifex* seems to be quite synanthropic in India/Sri Lanka and would therefore be quite prone to being exported.

In due course, Thomas was able to extract DNA and sequence the CO1 barcoding gene and confirm that it was indeed *X. carnifex*.

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