

MISCELLANEA

Warwickshire Myriapods - Provisional Atlases

Pam Copson has produced, under the auspices of the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre, provisional atlases for both centipedes and millipedes up until December 1989.

The animals are mapped on a 10km National Grid basis for the whole of vice-county 38 (including Coventry). For centipedes, a total of 17 species are mapped and for millipedes 22. Indications are given of occurrence in neighbouring counties and of species that might be found in Warwickshire. There are clearly plenty of "squares" to be filled for the county but these are valuable interim reports and a similar series to WBRC's "Benchmark 1990" would be valuable for other counties. Congratulations to all involved.

Copies of the atlases may be obtained for 50p (one) or 60p (both) from Mrs Pam Copson, Warwickshire Museum, Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4SA.

Isle of Man Records

James Wright, spider recorder for the Isle of Man, has been contributing records of myriapods to the survey schemes and has recently produced his Report on Spiders and Other Invertebrates Surveyed on the Isle of Man during May and August 1991.

No new species are added to our existing list but a useful set of additional records : *T.niger* (9), *G.marginata* (4), *P.angustus*, *C.punctatus*, *L.variegatus*, *L.forficatus*.

If anyone is visiting the Isle of Man, I am sure he would appreciate any spider material as would the myriapod survey schemes welcome any more centipede and millipede records.

James' address is 32 Wythburn Crescent, St, Helens, Merseyside, WA11 7HD.

Of the Scolopendra and Gally Worm

Of these hideous and angry insects we know little, except the figure and noxious qualities. Though with us there are insects somewhat resembling them in form, we are placed at a happy distance from such as are really formidable. With us they seldom grow above an inch long; in the tropical climates they are often found above a quarter of a yard.

The Scolopendra is otherwise called the Centipes, from the number of its feet; and it is very common in many parts of the world, especially between the tropics. Those of the East Indies, where they grow to the largest size, are about six inches long, of a ruddy colour, and as thick as a man's finger; they consist of many joints; and from each joint is a leg on each side; they are covered with hair and seem to have no eyes; but there are two feelers on the head, which they make use of to find out the way they are to pass: the head is very round, with two small sharp teeth, with which they inflict wounds that are very painful and dangerous. A sailor that was bit by one on board a ship, felt an excessive pain, and his life was supposed to be in danger; however, he recovered by the application of three roasted onions to the part, and was soon quite well. Of this animal there are different kinds; some living, like worms, in holes in the earth; others under stones, and among rotten wood; so that nothing is more dangerous than removing those substances, in the places where they breed. 1

The Gally-worm differs from the scolopendra, in having double the number of feet; there being two on each side, to every joint of the body. Some of them are smooth, and others hairy; some are yellow, some black, and some brown. They are found among decayed trees, between the wood and the bark; as also among stones that are covered with moss. They all, when touched, contract themselves, rolling themselves up like a ball. Whatever may be their qualities in the tropical parts of the world, in Europe they are perfectly harmless; having been often handled and irritated, without any vindictive consequences.

All these, as well as the scorpion, are supposed to be produced perfect from the parent, or the egg; and to undergo no changes after their first exclusion. They are seen of all sizes; and this is a sufficient inducement to suppose, that they preserve their first appearance through the whole of their existence. It is probable, however, that, like most of this class, they often change their skins; but of this we have no certain information.

1 *The Great Centipede.*—None of the insect tribe, the scorpions excepted, are so formidable in appearance, as the centipede or giant scolopendra. It is found in the East and West Indies, and in various parts of Africa, inhabiting chiefly the woods, where it is preyed upon by the different species of snakes. It is,

however, sometimes found in houses, and is said to be so common in particular districts, that the inhabitants are obliged to have the feet of their beds placed in vessels of water, in order to prevent their being annoyed during night by these horrible reptiles.

The scolopendrae vary greatly both in size and colour. Some of them are of a deep reddish brown; others of a yellow ochre colour, livid yellow, or tinged with red: and are sometimes seen about a foot in length: they are, however, generally much less. Their legs terminate in very sharp hooks, or nails, of a shining black colour; and all the other legs are furnished with smaller ones of the same kind.

Gronovius says, that all the legs of this detestable animal are venomous; but its most formidable weapons are the two sharp and hooked instruments that are placed under its mouth, with which it destroys its prey. At the extremity of each of these is a small opening from thence extends a tube, through which it is supposed the centipede emits the poisonous fluid into the wound inflicted by these fangs.

Leeuwenhock, desirous of ascertaining the influence of the poison, placed a large fly within reach of a centipede. He seized it between a pair of the middle feet, then passed it from one pair to the next, till it was brought under the fangs, which were plunged into its body, and it died instantly. St. Pierre says, that in the Isle of France his dog was bitten by one of them which was upwards of six inches in length, and that the wound turned to a kind of ulcer, which was three weeks in healing. He was highly diverted in observing one of them overcome by a vast number of ants, that attacked it in conjunction, and, after seizing it by all its legs, bore it along as workmen would do a large piece of timber. Its poison is not more injurious than that of the scorpion, and seldom proves fatal to the larger animals.

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Contributed by Paul Richards, Sheffield City Museums to whom our thanks.