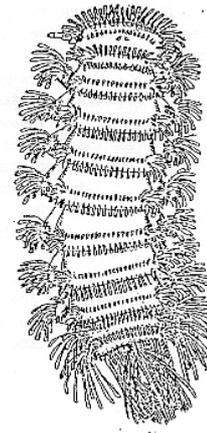




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



Autumn 2009

Newsletter number 19

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

Were you getting concerned that your copy of this vital missive had gone astray in the post? Or had its late arrival not registered at all? The excuse for its lateness is not the usual lack of copy or the other work commitments of an overworked (volunteer) editor. Indeed no excuses are offered as the late publication was planned but that statement itself will require an explanation.

The BMIG committee usually meets during the AGM weekend and again in the autumn. There is a limited amount that can be achieved in these meetings due to the restrictions of time and problems of attendance. At the AGM weekend people don't want to spend a long time in meetings. Travelling long distances for a one day meeting in the autumn is not attractive to those living in more remote locations (the committee includes members from Aberdeen to Devon and from Bute to Kent) and by the time everyone has arrived there is little time for more than nominal discussion of agenda items before people need to start leaving for home. This has resulted in decisions on a number of important issues being postponed for several meetings either because key members were absent or there was insufficient time to discuss the matter fully. In an attempt to address this backlog of issues, Paul Harding invited the committee to meet at his Cambridgeshire home over an intensive two days on 5th and 6th November 2009. Almost all of the committee managed to attend and although we didn't resolve every single question we did make a lot more progress than has been possible in previous meetings. This issue of the newsletter was delayed to report a few of the decisions taken.

1. The problems with the BMIG website (or lack of) are to be addressed. An offer from BRC to host and help design and maintain the website has been accepted. Glyn Collis is working with a sub group to provide BRC with a steer on design and source relevant content.
2. The next issue of the Bulletin, Volume 24, will be the usual hard copy but will also be offered to subscribers on CD. The long term vision is to make the Bulletin into a free, web based publication.
3. The option of electronic distribution of the newsletter was discussed but dismissed for the present. The job of

distribution would fall back on committee members rather than BRC. Previous experience of sending out information by e-mail produced a huge number of undeliverable messages. This would mean a lot of extra work for the secretary and a significantly reduced readership for the newsletter.

4. With the millipede and woodlice atlases published and the centipede atlas in hand the future of the recording schemes was discussed. It was agreed that there was a need to collect more ecological data for all three groups but that the system currently in place for the millipede and centipede record cards was too complex. A sub group will attempt to come up with a workable but valid system over the next few months.
Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingsstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

AGM notice

All BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 8pm on Friday, 9th April 2010. The venue will be St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Flintshire.

The present committee is keen to receive nominations for new committee members from any BMIG member. Nominations for chairman and vice-chairman are also required. Ideally nominations would be communicated to the secretary beforehand but they can also be made from the floor at the AGM.

Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group

You have probably realised that there was no Bulletin published in 2009 and may even have wondered why. Basically this was due to a lack of copy. The good news is that Volume 24 will be published in 2010. This is certain as we have enough copy already submitted or promised. We aim to get back on schedule by producing Volume 24 in time for the field meeting in north Wales. The deadline for copy is 1st Feb 2010 and any further contributions are still welcome!

The Bulletin editors

2010 BMIG AGM and Field Weekend

The 2010 meeting will be held from Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th April 2010 and will be based at St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden in Flintshire. To the west and south of Hawarden the varied landscapes reflect a range of Palaeozoic geology,

including large areas of Carboniferous limestone with areas of grassland and woodland. Arrangements are being made for access to various North Wales Wildlife Trust nature reserves and possibly National Trust properties. There are extensive areas of Access Land and the southern shore of the Dee estuary is a few miles away. Full programme details including evening talks and workshops will be published nearer the time.

The full cost of the weekend including accommodation for three nights and all meals including a packed lunch is £127.50. It is also possible to book for part of the weekend, to pay a supplement for an en suite room, to book half board or to make your own arrangements for accommodation in the area (but you need to let me know if this is your plan). Further information is available on the booking form enclosed with this newsletter. If you need additional information or have any queries please contact me.

Paul Harding, 60 Boxworth Road, Elsworth, Cambridge CB23 4JQ.
Tel: 01954 267218. Email: pha@ceh.ac.uk .

Woodlice and Waterlice (Isopoda: Oniscoidea & Asellota) in Britain and Ireland

This long awaited publication is now available. The production of this updated atlas would not have been possible without the input from BMIG members, whether this was in the form of submitted records, specimens for identification, comments on the draft text, someone to bounce ideas off or just moral support. With this issue of the BMIG newsletter you should have received details of a special offer allowing BMIG members to purchase a single copy of the new Woodlice and Waterlice Atlas at a discounted price directly from the publishers, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. Please note that this offer is only available until the end of January 2010. After this date the atlas will only be available at the full price, either from CEH or through a book-seller.

This full-colour atlas represents a comprehensive synthesis of the information available on the 52 species of terrestrial woodlice and four species of aquatic waterlice occurring in Britain and Ireland. There have been considerable advances in our knowledge of the British and Irish fauna since its predecessor WIBI was published by Paul Harding and Stephen Sutton in 1985. Distribution maps for each species are embedded within detailed species accounts, which provide details of identification, distribution and habitat preference. Additional sections cover collecting, recording, biology and conservation. More details at <http://www.ceh.ac.uk/products/publications/WoodliceandWaterlice2009.html>

Order your copy today!

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, OX14 4QZ

A New record of the Bristly Millipede, *Polyxenus lagurus*, in NE Scotland

It is fairly typical that, having spent lots of time looking for *Polyxenus lagurus* in what I thought were likely places, my first specimen turned up by accident in a collection of spiders during a Grampian Spider Group outing to St. Cyrus N.N.R. (Kincardineshire, NJ7464) on 3rd May 2009. I had collected it from a rocky outcrop, either from behind rock

flakes or by disturbing *Sedum* turf overhanging the rocks. The specimen was not recognised as *Polyxenus* until the material was examined under the microscope.

A further visit on 5th September 2009 produced another single specimen – this time definitely from behind a rock flake, prised from the same area of cliff. Also on the back of the rock flake were the spiders *Segestria senoculata* and *Oonops pulcher*.

The only previous record of the bristly millipede in NE Scotland was from Torphantrick near Ballater (South Aberdeenshire at NO4198) in May, 1951 by C.D. Morison. The habitat was described as: “field woodland, open with herbs/grass”. Other Scottish records are from Fife, Ayrshire, Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire.

There appears to be some debate as to the derivation of the name *Polyxenus* (Slawson, 1996 & Jeekel, 1998). Slawson gave the derivation from the Greek as: *Poly*: many or very & *xenus*: a stranger – combined as a very strange animal! Well it certainly is an unusual millipede with its many bristle tufts. Jeekel pointed out that *Polyxenus* was originally spelt as *Pollyxenus* by Latreille, the author of the name. Latreille’s interpretation was “sly or cunning” referring to its secretive habits. Later, Jeekel tells us, Latzel disputed this interpretation, dropped the extra ‘l’ and suggested “having many guests” as a reference to its gregarious habits. None of that seems particularly satisfactory and perhaps *Polyxenus* simply followed *Iulus*, son of Aeneas (sometimes called Ascanus -but not “son of Ascanus” as suggested by Slawson), from mythology. Polyxena (Po-lyx’e-na), according to Gruber (1938), was the daughter of Priam and sometime floosie of Achilles whose grave she was sacrificed on; quite enough to make your hair come out in tufts.

References:

- Gruber H.A. (1938) *The Myths of Greece and Rome*. 2nd Ed. London.
Lee, P. (2006) *Atlas of the Millipedes (Diplopoda) of Britain and Ireland*. Pensoft. Sofia-Moscow.
Slawson G.C. (1996) The Latin Names of British Millipedes. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* **12**: 53-56.
Jeekel, C.A.W. (1998) Some Comments on the Latin Names of British Millipedes. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* **14**: 34-35.
Mike Davidson, 77 Mile-end Avenue, Aberdeen, AB15 5PS.

Plea for records of the ‘true’ *Geophilus carpophagus*

Geophilus carpophagus was recently split into two species: The ‘true’ *G. carpophagus* Leach, 1814 and *G. easoni* Arthur *et al.*, 2001. The two species are readily distinguished by counting their leg pairs. *G. carpophagus* has 51-57 leg pairs, whereas *G. easoni* has 47-51. *G. easoni* is the widespread species occurring throughout Britain, typically at ground level in rural habitats (e.g. woodland or moorland). *G. carpophagus* seems to have a much more restricted distribution, mainly in southern and eastern England. It is a climbing species typically found on cliffs (both inland and coastal) or on walls and tree trunks in synanthropic (often urban) locations.

Inland records for *G. carpophagus* occur north to Shropshire and Huntingdonshire, but it is known from coastal cliffs further north (most notably in Fife). There is a 400 km gap between the known inland records and those in Fife. It would be good to know whether this gap is genuine or just a product of recorder bias. Experience indicates that the easiest way to locate *G. carpophagus* is to look on mature trees with flaky bark, such as large Yews or Pines, such as those found in churchyards. It is typically found beneath fairly tight bark that is prised from the tree with difficulty. Specimens, often in small groups, can be found from just above ground level to head height. Lifting capping stones on walls is also productive.

So please nip down to your local yew tree and see if *G. carpophagus* is there! I am happy to check specimens.
Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, OX14 4QZ

FSC Myriapod and Isopod courses

Following a break of several years the FSC course led by Paul Lee, "Identifying Centipedes, Millipedes and Woodlice" is being offered again from 29th October - 1st November 2010 at Flatford Mill. Early booking is recommended as places are limited. To book or for further details contact: Flatford Mill, East Bergholt CO7 6UL. Tel: 01206 298283

A new course is also on offer at Kindrogan in Perthshire. Gordon Corbet will be leading "Finding and Identifying Millipedes and Centipedes" from 7th to 10th May 2010. To book or for further details contact: Kindrogan Field Studies Centre Enochdhu, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, PH10 7PG. Tel: 01250 870150

BENHS Workshops

An introductory workshop, led by Steve Gregory, on the identification of woodlice, millipedes and centipedes was run by the British Natural History & Entomological Society at Dinton Pastures, near Reading, Berkshire on Saturday 3rd October 2009. After a presentation on the characters used to identify these groups, participants had the chance to name their own material or specimens made available on the day. The workshop will be repeated on Saturday 2nd October 2010. Advance booking is essential to reserve a binocular microscope. Please contact Dr. Ian McLean, BENHS Indoor Meetings Secretary, (E-mail: ianmclean@waitrose.com).

BMIG Expedition to the Basque Country, 19th -26th April 2009: a preliminary woodlouse report

Successfully organised by Helen Read and under the capable leadership of Des Kime a small, but dedicated band of international collectors (English, German and Norwegian) visited the Basque Country on the edge of the Pyrenees in northern Spain. The Pyrenees are renowned for their species richness and hold many endemic species, but this region is relatively under-recorded, particularly for the millipedes, which was the primary objective.

Excursions were made into a variety of contrasting upland and lowland habitats, including upland forest, limestone pavement, riverine woodland, and further south, some Mediterranean scrub and evergreen Oak forest. The landscape was rather 'lumpy', actually I would say stunning,

being either up or down (or perhaps I'm just a soft southerner?). When we did find some apparently level ground we inevitably found it truncated by some very impressive cliffs, with vultures circling overhead. The region is also one of the few areas in Europe where the traditional management of pollarding trees continues to be practiced (a feature not un-noticed by Helen) and we saw some impressive examples.

Some very familiar beasts were found, including *Oniscus asellus*, *Porcellio scaber*, *Armadillidium vulgare* and *Platyarthus hoffmannseggii*. However, there was a second species of *Oniscus*, *O. simoni*, present, which is endemic to this part of the Pyrenees, but is quite distinct from *O. asellus* in being uniformly pale grey and having very prominent tubercles on each pleonite segment. There were also two *Philoscia* species present, *P. muscorum* (which favours open grassland) and *P. affinis* (which favours woodland). To confuse the picture further a third Philosciid, *Tiroloscia pyrenaica*, was also found at one site.

One particularly interesting woodlouse was the ball-rolling *Sphaerobathytropa ribauti*. Not least that in the field it looked more like a small (3mm) Glomerid millipede, until Paul Richards, and his excellent photographs, indicated that it was a woodlouse. This species is endemic to the Pyrenees, but the only other species in the genus is known from South America. This implies a relict species that evolved before Europe/Africa and America were split by the Atlantic Ocean. For those curious, Paul Richards has drawn my attention to photos of this species at: http://abela.club.fr/Petites_betes/Isopodes_terrestres/Atlas_photos_especes/Sphaerobathytropa%20ribauti.htm.

There were a lot of Trichoniscids, including the familiar *Haplophthalmus danicus* and *Trichoniscus pusillus* agg. However, the large proportion of males in samples of the latter suggests that species other than the parthenogenetic *T. pusillus* seg. are present. These, and several *Trichoniscoides* species, require dissection of male specimens before they can be named. There was also a species of *Oritoniscus* commonly found in wet habitats, allied to our *O. flavus* (this is possibly *O. simplex*, but needs confirmation).

The Porcellionids are well represented on the Iberian Peninsular. The other most frequently recorded species of *Porcellio* (after *P. scaber*) were *P. gallicus* and *P. monticola*, which are both smooth (unlike *P. scaber*) and have an attractive mottled colouration. Luckily, they have very different uropods, making for straight-forward identification. Interestingly these two species, and the Philosciid *P. affinis*, occur in Europe as far north as Normandy in France, but do not seem to have made it across The Channel into England. *Porcellio spinicornis* was found on stone walls, limestone pavement and under bark of Plane trees (not dissimilar from its habitats in Britain). Two further species of *Porcellio* remain to be identified; a small species found in an ants' nest (possibly allied to *P. dilatatus*) and a large species (22mm) mottled with bright yellow patches collected from a dry site further south.

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, OX14 4QZ

Digital images from your microscope

I have been looking for a relatively cheap digital camera to fit on my microscope for many years. I recently came across the "Dino-eye Camera Eyepiece". This is a digital eyepiece which can be easily plugged into most biological or stereo microscopes, and allows you to view the image of your specimens from the computer at a resolution of 640 x 480 pixels (VGA). I purchased one from Absolute Data Services Ltd in Hemel Hempstead (0845 056 0820) (www.absolute-data-services.co.uk) for £206 including p&p. It comes with good software and works very well with woodlice and other arthropods. I thought that readers of the newsletter might be interested in this information.

David Holdich e-mail: david.holdich@ntlworld.com

In the journals

The following publications may be of interest to BMIG members:

Hembree, D.I. 2009. Neoichnology of burrowing millipedes: linking modern burrow morphology, organism behavior, and sediment properties to interpret continental ichnofossils. *Palaios*. **24**: 425-439.

The burrowing behavior and traces of two species of extant millipedes were studied in a laboratory setting. The goal of this research was to determine the connections between millipede morphology, burrow morphology, and media conditions.

Korsos, Z., Geoffroy, J-J. and Mauries, J-P. 2009. The fifth element: reconnection of the disjunct distribution of the members of Siphonocryptida (Diplopoda) with the description of a new species from Nepal. *Journal of Natural History*, **43(7 & 8)**: 435 - 445.

This paper describes the fifth species of the millipede order Siphonocryptida, *Hirudicryptus quintumelementum* sp. nov., from Nepal. With this, the surprisingly disjunct distribution of the order with its four former species from Sumatra, the Macaronesian Islands, Malaya and Taiwan, has become connected through the relatively young mountain chains of the Himalayas.

Schmidt, C. 2008. Phylogeny of the terrestrial Isopoda (Oniscidea): a review. *Arthropod Systematics & Phylogeny*, **66** (2): 191-226

This paper is free to download from <http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/ArthropodSystematicsPhylogeny/contents.html>

A Strategy for Scottish Invertebrate Conservation

For those with an interest in Scottish Invertebrates, the launch of a Strategy for Scottish Invertebrate Conservation on 20th January 2009 was an important event. The European Strategy for the conservation of invertebrates was published in January 2008. That strategy identified the problems faced by terrestrial invertebrates in Europe and provides guidance to decision makers, land managers, scientists and teachers so that they can raise awareness of invertebrates and promote conservation action for them in countries throughout Europe.

The strategy covers all invertebrates from the sea to mountain tops. The vision of the strategy is for a Scotland in which invertebrates are valued and conserved for their key roles in a healthy environment and for their potential to bring people together to better use, understand and appreciate the natural world. This vision will be achieved through: mobilising expertise and data to ensure important habitats, sites and endangered species are recognised and conserved; and by highlighting through publicity and education the importance of Scottish invertebrates and the conservation issues they face.

The strategy aims to develop a strong and vibrant invertebrate recording community in Scotland through the delivery of workshops on selected invertebrate groups and opportunities to network and learn from others. Protocols will be developed to ensure that invertebrate information is made available wherever possible, whether through the NBN, local record centres or recording schemes and societies. The conservation needs of invertebrates will be promoted through a programme of talks, events and workshops and invertebrate interests will be represented on relevant fora.

The Strategy Document can be accessed via:
<http://www.buglife.org.uk/News/newscottishstrategy.htm>
Mike Davidson, 77 Mile-end Avenue, Aberdeen, AB15 5PS.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2010

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by
28 February 2010

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre.

BMIG Hon. Sec.:

Dr H.J.Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3LE

E-mail: Helen.read@dsl.pipex.com

Centipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr A.D. Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

E-mail: abarber159@btinternet.com

Millipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr P. Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

E-mail: paulatarachne@aol.com

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr S. Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, Oxfordshire OX14 4QZ

Tel: 01865 407792 Fax: 01865 407131

E-mail: stevejgregory@btopenworld.com

Biological Records Centre, CEH Wallingford, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford OX10 8BB

Tel: 01491 692424 Fax: 01491 692564 E-mail: brc@ceh.ac.uk

The British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter is printed and distributed for the British Myriapod and Isopod Group by the Biological Records Centre, supported by funding from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

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