

THE BRITISH ISOPOD STUDY GROUP

Newsletter of the Isopod Survey Scheme

Number 26

May 1989

EDITORIAL - TWENTY YEARS ON!

The first edition of the BISG Newsletter appeared in March 1969. Looking back at the contents of the early newsletters, it is impressive to see how the Isopod Survey Scheme has transformed our knowledge of the distribution of woodlice in Britain. Species such as Trichoniscoides saeroeensis (which was considered to be very rare in the Scheme's early days) are now known to be quite common, and of course several species have been added to the British list including one in only the last couple of years (see below). All this is due of course to the efforts of recorders who continue to send in records to the scheme at a healthy rate (c. 1000 cards in the last 12 months from 47 recorders).

If anything, the rate of recording is on the increase as I have already received more than 400 cards since adding records up to the end of April 1989 to the distribution maps. Thankyou for all your efforts. A species to look out for in the coming field season is Eluma purpurascens which Eric Philp has turned up recently in several new inland sites in Kent. It may genuinely be expanding its range and at its current rate may reach Suffolk by the time of the next BISG/BMG meeting!

BISG/BMG FIELD MEETING 1989 - BIDEFORD, DEVON

John Bratton organised an excellent meeting at which many of us were able to renew old acquaintances and indulge in fruitful fieldwork in the delightful surroundings of the Hallsannery Field Centre. A good proportion of the British list turned up (see Table) with many new 10 km square records and a few new Vice County records as well. Despite spirited searching, Oritoniscus flavus failed to turn up and Arthur Chater and I came to the conclusion that it was probably eaten by snakes! The weather was excellent and the staff at Hallsannery provided us with superb food. Hunting for isopods and myriapods is thirsty work. Apparently, we drank a whole month's supply of beer in one night!

BISG/BMG FIELD MEETING 1990

Helen Read has kindly offered to organise next year's meeting. This will be held from 19th to 22nd April at Thornham Field Centre in Suffolk. We hope to include a special event to celebrate 20 years of the Isopod Survey Scheme (or is it 21?). Details will follow later in the year.

| WOODLICE COLLECTED BY BRITISH ISOPOD STUDY GROUP 31 MARCH → 2 APRIL 1989 HALLSANNERY FIELD CENTRE, BIDEFORD, NORTH DEVON ORDNANCE SURVEY GRID REFERENCE (CHECK #) SS(21) | | ANDRONISCUS DENTIGER | ARMADILLIDIUM ALBUM | ARMADILLIDIUM DEPRESSUM | ARMADILLIDIUM NASATUM | ARMADILLIDIUM PULCHELLUM | ARMADILLIDIUM VULGARE | CYLISTICUS CONVEXUS | HALOPHILOSCIA COUCHI | HAPLOPHthalmus DANICUS ♂ | HAPLOPHthalmus MENGEI ♂ | LIGIA OCEANICA | MIKTONISCUS PATIENCEI | ONISCUS ASELLUS | PHILOSCIA MUSCORUM | PLATYARTHUS HOFFMANN SEGGI | PORELLIO SCABER | PORCELLIONIDES CINGENDUS | PORCELLIONIDES PRUVINOSUS | TRICHONISCOIDES SAERDRENSIS | TRICHONISCUS PUSILLUS | TRICHONISCUS PYGMAEUS | |
|---|------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| DIZZARD BAY | 20/16-98-* | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| WIDEMOUTH BAY | 19-02- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| STEEPLE POINT | 199 116 | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | |
| STANBURY MOUTH | 198 135 | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MORWENSTOW | 19-14- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| PINKWORTHY COTTAGE | 28-02- | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| MORWENSTOW | 20-15- | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| STOWE BARTON | 217 113 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| HARTLAND FOREST | 277 194 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| ST. CATHERINE'S TOR | 22-24- | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| BROWNSHAM | 28-25- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| HOLSWORTHY | 34-03- | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| RUNLAND | 307 189 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| MELBURY WOOD | 362 191 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| WOODFORD BRIDGE | 39-12- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| MOUTH MILL (EAST) | 30-26- | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| CLOVELLY COURT | 306 261 | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| CLOVELLY PARK | 310 255 | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| PEPPER COMBE | 38-24- | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| WOODFORD BRIDGE | 40-12- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| HALLSANNERY (FIELD CENTRE) | 45-24- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| R. TORRIDGE (WEST BANK) | 45-25- | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| APPLEDORE (BEACH) | 455 305 | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| CROYDE BAY | 43-39- | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| SAUNTON DOWN | 435 381 | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| BRAUNTON BURROWS | 448 331 | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| CROYDE | 427 401 | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| LEE BAY + WOODS | 48-46- | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| BICKEN BRIDGE | 493 446 | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| NEWTON TRACY | 525 269 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| NEW BRIDGE | 565 281 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| CODDEN HILL | 583 293 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| HELE BAY | 53-48- | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| COLLACOT | 648 278 | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| HEDDON VALLEY | 65-47- | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |

COMPILED FROM RECORD CARDS SUPPLIED BY KEITH ALEXANDER, DAVID BILTON, DAVE BOYCE, STEVE HOYKIN, PAUL LEE, LAULEEN INEMEY-COOK, DOUG RICHARDSON, ARTHUR CHATER, ROGER KEY, JOHN BRATTON, IAN MORGAN, ADRIAN FOWLES.

THIRD INTERNATIONAL ISOPOD SYMPOSIUM

After London and Urbino, a Third International Symposium on the Biology of Terrestrial Isopods is planned in Poitiers, France from 10th to 12th July 1990. Further details can be obtained from Piere Juchault and Jean Pierre Mocquard, Laboratoire de Biologie Animale, Universite de Poitiers, 40 Avenue du Recteur Pineau, 86022 Poitiers Cedex, France.

N.T.B. = MONTIVAGUS

Thanks to a grant from the Omer Cooper Fund of the Linnean Society, David Bilton and I have recently been able to examine reference collections of Haplophthalmus species from Britain and Europe. These have included the original slides which Vandell used to prepare the illustrations in Faune de France Vol. 64, and the type specimens of several species from Verhoeff's collection. We are now certain that the species new to Britain (described in Isopoda, 1, 37-48) is Haplophthalmus montivagus Verhoeff 1941.

Haplophthalmus montivagus can only be separated from Haplophthalmus mengei on the basis of the structure of the genitalia and 7th legs of males. H. montivagus is well-established in at least seven sites in southern England, almost all of which are calcareous woodland. Interestingly, H. montivagus and H. mengei have yet to be found together at the same site. A paper on Haplophthalmus is in preparation. I am grateful to Henri Dalens (Universite Paul Sabatier), Dr. Gruner (Museum fur Naturkunde der Humbolt-Universitat zu Berlin) and Dr. Fechter (Zoologische Staatssammlung, Munich) for the loan of specimens and their help in clearing up this taxonomic puzzle.

ISOPODA

Volume 3 of Isopoda is now available. An order form is enclosed together with a free postcard of the cover illustration. Volume 4 is likely to be a special issue containing Paul Harding's extensive summary of publications relating to the ecology and distribution of British woodlice. This should be available early in the New Year.

ERRATA

A couple of errors crept into the last newsletter. Gordon Corbet's apricot yellow woodlice were in fact Trichoniscus pygmaeus (not Trichoniscus pusillus). Also, woodlice which attach to the pupae of army ants are in the genus Exalloniscus (not Platyarthus). Franco Ferrara (Centro di Studio per la Faunistica ed Ecologia Tropicali del C.N.R., Via Romana 17, I-50125 Firenze, Italy) sent me a reprint of an article which contains a photograph of 'A worker of Leptogenys sp. (processionalis-group) carrying a pupa on which a specimen of Exalloniscus maschwitzi is transported'.

ARMADILLIDIUM ALBUM IN HOLLAND

Reproduced below is the abstract of a recent paper which contains information relevant to our understanding of the distribution and ecology of Armadillidium album in Britain. The authors can be contacted at Delta Institute for Hydrobiological Research, Vierstraat 28, 4401 EA Yerseke, The Netherlands.

VADER, W. & DE WOLF, L. (1988). Biotope and biology of Armadillidium album Dollfuss, a terrestrial isopod of sandy beaches in the SW Netherlands. Netherlands Journal of Sea Research, 22, 175-183.

The supralittoral isopod Armadillidium album Dollfuss is common, although patchily distributed, under driftwood on the foreshore of broad sandy beaches on the outer coast of the Delta area in the SW Netherlands. The isopods are very tolerant of immersion in seawater, but are nevertheless confined to a narrow zone just above normal spring tides.

A. album is a sexually reproducing isopod, with a single well-defined reproductive period in summer and a lifespan of two years. In spite of its very specialized biotope, the life cycle and reproductive strategy of A. album do not deviate substantially from those of related ubiquitous terrestrial isopods.

SPECIMEN TUBES ETC.

Kathleen Goldie-Smith recommends the following suppliers of equipment, consumables etc. for the amateur zoologist. Watkins & Doncaster, Fourthrows, Hawkhurst, Kent, TN18 5ED (Tel. 05805 3133) and Bio-Science Supplies, 4 Long Mill North, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV11 1JD.

A POSSIBLE METHOD OF TRANSPORT FOR PLATYARTHUS HOFFMANNSEGGI

Soon after reading the last BISG Newsletter (no. 25), I was watching a Green Woodpecker in the garden. Our garden is well populated by ants and Platyarthus, and the bird moved up and down the lawn quite slowly and methodically from one nest to another, pushing its beak well into the ground. Since Platyarthus seems to live at the top of the nest, perhaps it could get caught in the feathers at the base of the beak? Although the Green Woodpecker is not a sufficiently frequent visitor to account for the widespread distribution of Platyarthus, many other birds feed on the lawn every day and may provide a means of transport for these 'ant woodlice' from place to place.

Betty Newman, 25 Beech Lane, Reading.

NEW APPLICATIONS OF OLD TECHNIQUES

The recent discovery of Armadillidium pictum in Radnorshire was partly attributed to the fact that atypical microsites were searched by people looking for other invertebrates (BISG Newsletter No. 24). Observer bias is an ever-present problem with regard to the recording of less-conspicuous members of our invertebrate fauna and it is only as the jigsaw-pieces of an animal's ecology slowly fit together that we begin to see the true picture. The addition of new techniques to the isopodologist's armoury will help to complete this picture and hence I offer the following observations.

On 23rd August 1988 I was helping John Owen sieve rotting seaweed from the uppermost strandline on the sand and shingle beach at Aberystwyth, Dyfed (22 579 801) when I noticed Halophiloscia couchi wandering around amongst the debris of the tray. Six weeks later, with Dave Boyce, I sieved seaweed from a similar situation at the top of Borth beach (22 606 889) and found a single specimen of Porcellionides cingendus. I am not aware that either species has been reported from this type of micro-site before and, indeed, it may be that these are isolated occurrences (Editor's note - Halophiloscia couchi was found amongst rotting seaweed at Pen Mon Point, Anglesey during the BISG Meeting in 1985). It will be necessary to investigate many more sites before the success of this method is proven, but it may be that the increased humidity and abundance of decaying organic matter provide ideal conditions for maritime woodlice. Species, like Halophiloscia couchi, which normally retreat deep within the shingle during the day might remain above ground in the dank, dark environment of the strandline.

Sieving is a well-tried technique in the study of isopods and has frequently been used on shingle beaches but perhaps rotting seaweed has been ignored in the past - in the future it may help to improve our understanding of the distribution of some of our lesser-known species.

Adrian Fowles, NCC, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, SY23 3EE.

ADDRESSES

All completed record cards, enquiries concerning the Isopod Survey Scheme and articles for inclusion in the Newsletter or Isopoda should be sent to me at the following address:

Dr. Steve Hopkin
School of Animal and Microbial Sciences
University of Reading
PO Box 228
Whiteknights
Reading RG6 2AJ

Please note that my new telephone number is (0734) 875123 ext. 7063. Information (but not record cards!) can be also be sent by FAX to 0734 310180.

Supplies of blank recording cards are available free from:

Biological Records Centre
Monks Wood Experimental Station
Abbots Ripton
Huntingdon
Cams. PE17 2LS

Please discard record cards which were printed on both sides (the shiny ones). A new card containing all the species name changes since 1982 (and adding Haplophthalmus montivagus!) will be produced when the current stock of cards is exhausted.

Newsletter 27 will appear in September 1989.

Newsletter 26 edited by Steve Hopkin.