

THE BRITISH ISOPOD STUDY GROUP

Newsletter of the Isopod Survey Scheme

Number 29

June 1990

EDITORIAL

This is a special edition of the Newsletter which is being sent out together with an order form for *Isopoda* Volume 4. I have included some recent information on the *Trichoniscoides helveticus/sarsi* and 'new' *Oniscus* stories, and a report and records from the recent BISG/BMG field meeting in Suffolk.

TRICHONISCOIDES HELVETICUS/SARSI

Following the loan of specimens by Eric Philp and John Daws, I can now report that *Trichoniscoides sarsi* does occur in England after all! Male specimens definitely of this species have been found in Kent and Leicester. Thus, present knowledge can be summarised as follows:- *Trichoniscoides sarsi* is known from a garden in Dublin, and synanthropic sites in Kent and Leicester. *Trichoniscoides helveticus* occurs in 'natural' sites (old woodland) in South-east England. If anyone has specimens of *Trichoniscoides 'sarsi'*, I would dearly like to check them. Unfortunately, it is impossible to separate males without dissection (hence the confusion in the past). Females are impossible!

ONISCUS 'BILTONI'

Dave Bilton has recently found intermediates between the two forms of *Oniscus* which he reported in Newsletter 28. The 'western' and 'eastern' forms appear to meet (and hybridise?) in the West Country. They may represent a single species which separated into two populations during the last Ice Age and have since re-colonised Britain from two directions. Dave needs many more specimens from a wide range of localities to sort out what is clearly a fascinating story. Please send your *Oniscus asellus* to Dave at Department of Biology, Alderhurst, Bakeham Lane, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey.

AIDGAP KEY TO WOODLICE

I have recently checked the proofs of this key which should be published in test version very soon. All BISG members on the mailing list will be sent a free copy.

BISG 21st ANNIVERSARY

A very enjoyable time was had by all at this year's field meeting held with the British Myriapod Group at Thornham Field Centre, Suffolk. Many thanks to Helen Read for organising things and to the staff of the Field Centre for the excellent food and comfortable accomodation. This was the BISG's 21st Anniversary (we think!). Steve Sutton gave an excellent after-dinner speech at a celebratory dinner held in the local community centre. The weekend's events were recorded for posterity (in a light-hearted manner) by Maev Kennedy of *The Guardian* newspaper (see elsewhere in this Newsletter).

We did find time to look for some woodlice! Although there were no spectacular finds, several yawning gaps on the distribution maps were filled and a total of 19 species were found (just over half the British list).

BISG/BMG FIELD MEETING 1991

Next year's meeting will be held from 4th to 7th April at Leeson House Field Studies Centre, Langton Matravers, Swanage, Dorset. Jon Delf (Department of Environmental Studies, Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, Woolton Road, Liverpool, L16 8ND) has kindly agreed to organise the meeting and will be circulating a pre-booking form later on this year to everyone on the BISG mailing list. The cost is likely to be about £20 a head (excluding a conference dinner to mark the 21st anniversary of the Myriapod Group). We hope to be able to invite a European myriapodologist to give a guest lecture.

The Swanage area is excellent for invertebrates. I had my first encounter with *Porcellio laevis* on the beach at Swanage (where it is still common) and there are many other interesting species in the region. Please write to Jon direct if you need further information.

WOODLICE SPECIES COLLECTED 19-22 APRIL 1990 ISO/93 STUDY GRP. FIELD MEETING, THORNHAM, SUFFOLK		ORDNANCE SURVEY GRID REFERENCE		SITE		ANDRIMISCU DENTIGER	ARMABILLIUM VULGARIS	CLUSTICUS CONVERSUS	HILARITHALMUS DANICUS ♂	HILARITHALMUS MENEGEI ♂	LIGIA OCEANICA	LIGIUM HYPERBURIUM	FORCELLIOMIDES PRINOSUS	MIXTOMISUS PATIENCEI	ONISCUS ASELLUS	PHILOSCIA MUSCICOLA	PLATYARTHROS HOFFMANNSEGERI	FORCELLIO DILATATUS	FORCELLIO SCABER	FORCELLIO SPINICORNIS	TRICHOMISUS ALBIDUS ♂	TRICHOMISUS SAGRENSIS ♂	TRICHOMISUS PUSILLUS	TRICHOMISUS PIPRAEUS
1	CHAD BROOK	52/88-48					✓		✓						✓				✓					
2	GT WALDINGFIELD	52/903-425											✓											
3	GROTON WOOD	52/977-430					✓								✓	✓			✓				✓	
4	NEWTON (DUNSHARP'S) (SITE-LOTTE TOWN)	52/90-42-											✓			✓							✓	
5	BULLS WOOD	52/975-547					✓								✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
6	FELSHAM HALLWOOD	52/93-57-										✓			✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
7	HOFTON FEN	52/991-799										✓			✓				✓				✓	
8	KNETTISHALL HEATH	52/960-805					✓								✓	✓			✓					
9	SWAFFHAM FOREST	53/784-037					✓								✓	✓			✓					
10	WOLVES WOOD	62/051-440					✓								✓	✓			✓				✓	
11	NEEDHAM CHALKPITS	62/094-541					✓			40					✓	✓			✓					
12	THORNHAM ESTATE (See also 8)	62/099-720						✓							✓	✓			✓					
13	WORTHAM LING	62/088-796													✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
14	SPEARS HILL	62/068-797													✓	✓			✓				✓	
15	REDRAVE T LOFRAM FEN	62/045-798					✓		✓						✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
16	WESTHALL LODGE	62/02-73-					✓								✓	✓			✓				✓	

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17	BLOOM'S NURSERY	62/085-805				✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
18	LITTLE BLAKENHAM	62/4-48-					✓								✓	✓			✓					
19	IPSWICH	62/3-4-					✓								✓	✓	✓		✓					
20	HELMINGHAM PARK	62/18-57-													✓	✓			✓					
21	THORNHAM PARK (See also 12)	62/10-71-				✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
22	DIS'S RAILWAY STATION	62/12-79-					✓								✓	✓			✓					
23	RECTORY FARM	62/12-76-					✓		✓						✓	✓			✓				✓	
24	FELIXSTONE FORT	62/285-315				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
25	BROMESWELL N.A.	62/29-50-					✓		✓	✓					✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
26	BAWDSEY	62/33-38-							✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
27	FELIXSTONE FERRY	62/318-377				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
28	SHINGLE STREET	62/365-425					✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	
29	BAWDSEY CHURCH	62/346-402							✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
30	STAVEYTON TRICKS	62/36-50-													✓	✓			✓				✓	
31	CHEDESTON HALL	62/347-771					✓								✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
32	STREWELL (HMS)	62/47-63-				✓	✓								✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	

CONTACTED FROM RECORDS SUPPLIED BY: KEITH ALEXANDER, TULLEE, DOUG RICHARDSON, PAUL RICHARDS, CHARLES RAYCLIFFE, DICK JONES, TOMY BARBER, JOHN DAVIS, DAVE BILTONI, STEVE HOPKIN, STEVE GREAVY.

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:

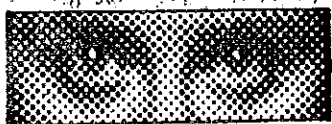
Dr. Steve Hopkin
Department of Pure & Applied Zoology
University of Reading
PO Box 228
READING RG6 2AJ

Supplies of blank recording cards are available free from:

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

Hunters cheered by lousy weekend

Guardian 23/4/90



Eyewitness

Maev Kennedy

It paid to be boring in Suffolk at the weekend. "Oh you're a pretty one," enthused Dr Steve Hopkin, "quite cute really, hold still." And into the killing bottle went the millepede with the lovely orange stripe.

For anything with seven pairs of legs or more, it was a good time to be elsewhere. The massed forces of the Isopod and Mirapod Study Groups were scouring the countryside, no log unrolled, no stone unturned, no nettle patch unruffled. Within a stone's throw of the Thornham Field Study centre they turned up 10 species of woodlice, several rare.

Their view of the world is singular.

At Sizewell the sun blazed, the nuclear power station hummed in the background, and Dr Hopkin, who co-ordinates the national wood-louse survey from Reading University, scowled at the clean sand and dry gravel, the green grass and the solitary bluebell.

"What we really need is for somebody to have dumped a lorry load of rubbish down the bank there. Ah, that's more hopeful!" He dived on an unsavoury newspaper anyone except a bluebottle would give a very wide berth.

He turned up all seven common species of British wood-louse on the beach. Halophilosia, only found in three places in the country, and not at all since 1977, got clean away once again.

"It is very exciting," Charles Rawcliffe said firmly. "It is the sublimation of the hunting instinct."

Mr Rawcliffe, a retired customs officer from Edinburgh, is at 74 the acknowledged senior great white hunter.

He scours a 723 square mile

patch of the Lothians, but made his great find in the glasshouse of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. He posted two strange finds to Dr Hopkin, who sent them to Dr Ferraro in Florence, who said one had only been reported from Mauritius, and one appears to be new.

Dave Bilton, more of a water beetle man himself, made the best find of the weekend, Miktoniscus Patiencei, but then he has form. His namesake scuttles through Asia; not alas, called Dave, but Armadilloniscus Biltoni.

Absent friends included Dr Ionel Tabacaru, represented only by his magnificent prose.

As far as they know he is the only wood-louse man in Romania. Somehow, since "la révolution de 22 décembre qui a renversé l'odieuse dictature communiste," as he put it, he received their newsletter, *Isopoda*.

He was appealing for more literature, but, as he delicately put it, "malheureusement je n'ai pas une modalité de payer une contribution".

The celebrated double act, Dr Paul Harding, director of the Biological Records Centre at Monkseaton, and Dr Steve Sutton of Leeds University, had explored the fauna of Hornbeam Wood.

"Very dull, actually," said Dr Sutton. "Brown, boring and hard to identify," said Dr Harding.

There they came across a man sitting on a treestump, worrying about the iridescent blue beetle which landed on him as he was doing the Times crossword.

"You meet such interesting people wood-louse watching," said Dr Harding.

"But he wasn't one of them," added Dr Sutton.

Affection for their small heroic prey breaks through the scientific detachment of the most hardened hunters. From the wood-louse point of view, the more they are admired the more likely they are to end up pickled in alcohol, but then that's so often true in life.