



British Myriapod Group

Autumn 1997

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Editor: Dick Jones

APOLOGIES

In June I went down with a bug, which went on for ages, and led to what the Doctor said was probably Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome. Consequently I have done little since then except take it easy. It is only in the last few weeks that I feel that I am getting better. This started me thinking, who will take on this god forsaken task after me! You must be sick of my holiday tales, various illnesses and garden millipedes by now. Is there anyone out there who would like to take over? Knowledge of millipedes or centipedes not essential but would be an advantage. I think that I have become stale so how about it!

Several of us went north for the field weekend to St. Johns Town of Dalry in Kirkcudbright-shire. The details have still not been tabulated but they may appear, hopefully, later on. Next spring we are going to Chyvarloe near Helston in Cornwall. (See attached sheet). There are things like *Chordeuma sylvestre* nearby which I found quite easily when I was there and we have to look for some of Turk's 'lost' species like *Polydesmus testaceus* and some centipede species. Also, we have to try and find *Nesoporogaster souletina brevoir* which Ted Eason found in the 1960's and which has not been seen (by a myriapodologist at least) since. There are lots of things like *Geophilus pusillifrater* around the coast and did Rundle really find *Lithobius crassipes* all over the Lizard or was it something else? Who knows, as Tony says we may find a new species of myriapod for Britain if we are lucky.

A riddle. *Question.* What is worse than finding a worm in an apple. *Answer.* Finding half a worm. See below.

Gordon Corbet has written a short paper on *Glomeris marginata* in Scotland (Glasgow Naturalist 23). So far the Forth/Clyde line still marks its northern boundary. Interestingly the only millipede found at Wanlockhead, which at 460 metres is the highest village in Scotland, was *G. marginata*. As it is supposed to be limited by the cold what was it doing up there?

ON THE BEACH

I went to Papua New Guinea in May for a birding holiday and had a great time watching Birds of Paradise etc. On the last day, in New Britain, I decided to forget birding and look for *Tuoba* type centipedes. They are coastal and, bearing in mind that I have not had much luck with Australasian centipedes (BMG Newsletter No 24.), I was not sure that I would find any. There was a sandy beach which stretched for miles with no rocks to turn over and in fact although it looked fabulous it didn't look like centipede habitat at all. Still you know me and I like a challenge. I walked up and down the beach for about two miles in each direction and under small pieces of wood, just large enough to keep a cool microclimate in the hot sun, were seven centipedes! Next time I visit a tropical isle I shall know where to look. Several locals were mystified when they wanted to know what I was doing and I tried to explain. They looked at what I had in my tube and went away shaking their heads sadly and chewing their beetle nut. When I got home I looked at them under the microscope and they were indeed *Tuoba sydneyensis*, bingo! I added them to the paper I had just completed and it will come out in a few months time.

GEOPHILOMORPHS

Prof. Wallace Arthur has made contact with the BMG and after me saying that there is no one in any university who studies myriapods any more! He is from the University of Sunderland and is shifting his research from dipterans to geophilomorph centipedes. His interests are primarily in the relationships (a) between ecology and morphology and (b) between morphology and developmental genetics, for example with regard to variation in segment number. He has penned the request below.

HELP NEEDED WITH GEOPHILOMORPH RESEARCH.

I am just beginning a survey of within-population and between-population variation in the number of leg-bearing segments in several common species of geophilomorphs, specifically *Haplophilus subterraneus*, *Geophilus carpophagus*, *G. insculptus*, *Necrophloeophagus flavus*; and probably also *Schendyla nemorensis* and *Strigamia maritima*. I will be collecting samples mostly from NE England, and also, of course, making use of published data that I am aware of (including Ted Eason's work on *G. carpophagus* and John Lewis's work on *S. maritima*). However, it would be most valuable if any BMG members who have, or are in the process of collecting, samples of these species could send me relevant information.

Unfortunately, only samples of at least 10 individuals of one of the above species from a particular locality will be useful (from a data-analysis viewpoint), and I am aware that this is often difficult. For such samples, what I need is:

- * Location (as accurately as possible)
- * Approximate maximum 'diameter' of area sampled (to nearest 100m)
- * Habitat-type (just broad category: woodland, waste-ground etc.)
- * For each individual, sex and number of leg-bearing segments

If it is easier to send me the animals rather than count the segments, that would be fine! Of course, when I eventually publish something, I will duly acknowledge any help I have had from BMG members.

Also, if anyone is aware of previously-published work on this subject other than by the two authors mentioned above or Sandro Minelli - especially articles published in obscure journals - I would be very grateful for information.

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PLUM IN THE CENTRE.

This year my plum crop is poor, due mainly to the weather, mostly small and those that do develop well have a small hole in the side. When they are bitten into they contain a lot of frass and a small, wriggly pink grub! Consequently I carefully examine all that I bite into. The tree is an old one and under bits of bark can occasionally be found *Glomeris carpophagus* which presumably find good hunting on the insect pests that abound on and around it. I have also found *Protoiulus fuscus* on a neighbouring tree in the crack between two branches when a limb fell off.

Back in August I picked a Czar, a deep blue, yellow fleshed plum, which had no hole in the outside, apparently, and bit into it. It was good and I was glad that at least one had not been got by the moth that lays the grub. Despite this I inspected it out of habit and what I saw made me reach for my spectacles. Around the stone was coiled a purple coloured, geophilomorph centipede. Later I identified it as a *G. carpophagus* with 55 pairs of legs, 45mm long and 2mm wide. There was a small amount of frass from a moth larva which presumably had been eaten by the centipede and was the reason why it was there in the first place. How it got into the fruit I am not sure but it could have gained entry via the stalk attachment. Unfortunately I did not look at this before I bit into the plum, only checking for 'moth holes' in the side! However it gained an entrance it must have been a squash to get inside. Once inside could it have got out again or would it have had to wait until the plum dropped off the tree? Alas we shall never know.

Does this represent a normal habitat for *G. carpophagus* or is it a one off? Do they often eat moth larvae? Certainly I never found one inside the remaining fruit. REJ

NEXT BMG NEWSLETTER.

This will be out in the spring. Material for inclusion should reach R.E.J. by February 28th.

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre (BRC). Changes of address should be notified to Dick Jones, E-mail: rej@premier.co.uk or BRC. If you no longer wish to receive the BMG Newsletter, please notify BRC in writing. Biological Records Centre, ITE, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, HUNTINGDON PE17 2LS Tel: 01487 773 318 Fax: 01487 773 467 E-mail: pha@wpo.nerc.ac.uk

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