



British Myriapod Group

AUTUMN 1998

Newsletter number 29

Editor: Paul Lee

Notes from the editor

Paul Harding may have thought I knew what I was letting myself in for when taking on the Millipede scheme (see Newsletter 28) but I doubt I have comprehended the enormity of the task even now. Pulling together the copy for this Newsletter has been a struggle at times and I can understand why the Dick Jones medical files were prominent in past issues. I have yet to identify a suitable saga to fill those acres of white paper but no doubt something will emerge with time. That is a threat you have to respond to because only by supplying me with sufficient copy can you escape reading details of my daughters' latest exploits or my brother's Texan marriage. The time to put pen to paper is now!

Having managed to complete this issue I can send heartfelt thanks to Dick Jones for all of the time he must have devoted to the BMG/Millipede Recording Scheme over the last ten years. However the task of producing this Newsletter palls into insignificance alongside the effort that

will be required from BMG members to produce a comprehensive Atlas of the Millipedes of Britain and Ireland yet this must surely be our aim for the early years of the new millennium.

Gazing into the crystal ball

So now we have a new scheme organiser where do we go from here with millipede recording? As Dick mentioned in the last newsletter there has already been considerable work in preparing for a Provisional Atlas but there is still a lot more to be done, not least of which is to convince the powers that be to fund both the data inputting still required at BRC and the production of the Atlas itself.

BMG members at the Chyvarloe meeting had the opportunity to debate a number of related matters but in particular Tony Barber, Paul Harding, Helen Read and myself discussed the way forward for the recording scheme and the Atlas. As a result of this a number of issues were

raised and proposals were made which all BMG members need to consider and comment upon.

Before any atlas can be produced a more comprehensive data set is required. This means at the very least we need to try and fill in some of the obvious gaps in the distribution maps and this in turn will require the updating of the maps published in the preliminary atlas in order that the gaps can be identified. **What should we be aiming for in order to achieve "comprehensive" coverage?** For example is it enough if we have at least one record of five species from 60% of the 10km squares in Great Britain and Ireland or should we take into account other factors such as the time of year when the square was visited, the method of collecting used and the time spent searching?

Having decided on a target for comprehensive coverage how do we aim to achieve it? What is certain is that we cannot rely on our annual meetings to fill in all of the gaps. Obviously, individual recorders have a major role to play but should we plan extra one-day or perhaps weekend meetings to under recorded areas also or should we try to encourage local societies to help? In talks with Paul Harding, Declan Doogue has proposed that from the year 2000 he and the Dublin Field Naturalists Club will undertake millipede recording in Ireland. The eventual aim would be the production of an all-Ireland Atlas with a possible target date of 2004. This data would also contribute to the comprehensive atlas as would the data being collected by Roy Anderson in the north. It is therefore essential that any decisions on targets for comprehensive coverage apply equally to data from all parts of the British Isles.

As a group we need a clear idea of what the definitive atlas should contain. Paul Harding has suggested that by the time it is published, Gordon Blower's Linnean Society Synopsis will be at least 20 years old. **Should the Atlas comprise an updated identification guide as well as comprehensive accounts of the ecology and distribution**

of the species? To be in a position to prepare any ecological accounts we need to plan for the analysis and interpretation of the data collected - one problem we have to address is the harmonisation of data from two habitat recording systems as a result of the introduction of the current RA59 card.

Please let me know your thoughts, especially on those issues highlighted above and please do not leave it too long. A suggested target date for publication in 2005 does not leave much time considering the large amounts of work still to be done in collecting and analysing the necessary data and in drafting and editing the species accounts etc.

Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group

Bulletin 14 (October 1998) should be available by the time this newsletter is published. Contents include an article by Paul Harding on millipedes in the Biodiversity Action Plan, accounts of centipedes in Ireland and myriapods in the Orkney by Martin Cawley and Tony Barber respectively and a description of *Schendyla peyerimhoffi* by Dick Jones. All this and more at a cost of just £4 inc. p&p. If you have not yet received your copy please contact Tony Barber.

***Oxidus gracilis* from a pot plant in Devon**

The "hothouse" millipede *Oxidus gracilis* is widespread in temperate climates in suitable conditions, being considered to have originated in the tropics. There are a number of recent records for Britain despite suggestions that it may have become less common since the introduction of effective pest control in glasshouses.

A small orange tree (*Citrus* sp.), purchased from a local shop in Ivybridge was kept in the living room of the house where it soon showed signs of improved health. However, some months later it was found to have a number of flatbacked millipedes on the surface of the soil although without any apparent ill effects on the plant. Some of these were collected on 18 July 1998 and proved to be *Oxidus*. Enquiries suggested that the plant might have originated from a market in Bristol but no further details have been obtained.

At the time of writing (October 1998) the millipedes are not visible and the fruit is beginning to ripen.

One always wonders about how the conservation of such species is to be effected without introducing them into someone's greenhouse.

Tony Barber

1999 BMG/BISG Meeting

The next annual field meeting will be based at Forde Castle in Northumberland over the weekend of 8 - 11 April 1999. Details of the arrangements and bookings forms will

probably have reached you with this Newsletter. If not they will not be far behind. See you there!

Collembola developments

Those of you who attended the Dorset meeting in 1996 will remember Steve Hopkin's talk about Collembolans and the work he was involved in. Well things have moved on since then. Last year an informal Collembola Study Group was established and progress is being made towards launching a recording scheme for springtails in 1999. The major drawback at the moment is the lack of a comprehensive key to the British species in English but Steve is working on an AIDGAP key for testing early in the new year and has also signed a contract to write a Lin. Soc. *Synopsis*. He has recently produced a provisional checklist of the British species which is also available as an annotated list giving brief details of the known occurrence of each species. He has also produced an Index which cross references all the genus/ species combinations which have been used in the British literature. If you are interested in any of these documents or in being added to the mailing list for the Collembola Study Group then contact

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READING

RG6 6AJ

It has been suggested that the Collembola Study Group might join the BMG/BISG for their annual meeting. This would help to bring new blood into the groups and spread the load of organising the meetings a little more. Has anyone out there any views on this suggestion? Please write and let me know

***Arenophilus peregrinus* (Jones, 1989) in Cornwall: a centipede new to mainland Britain.**

Examination of specimens collected during this year's BMG field meeting in Cornwall revealed a small geophilomorph which did not seem to key out easily. I sent the specimen to Dick Jones who promptly named it as *Arenophilus peregrinus*, a species previously only known from the Isles of Scilly. This is the first recorded occurrence of the species in mainland Britain.

The specimen was collected at Lamorna Cove (10/45-24-, VC1, 17.iv.1998). It was found under a small stone at the base of a rocky sea cliff, well above the high water mark. Vegetation was very sparse with a few tufts of Fescue grass (*Festuca* sp.) and Sea Thrift (*Armeria maritima*). The terrain was such that it was very hard work to find anything at all (solid rock!). An hour's searching revealed four centipede species: *A. peregrinus*, *Geophilus carpophagus* (large grey form with 57 leg pairs), *Haplophilus subterraneus* and a few *Lithobius melanops*. The millipede

Cylindroiulus latestriatus was the most commonly encountered myriapod.

As *Arenophilus* is a North American genus this species is probably introduced to Britain but who knows? It is possible that *A. peregrinus* will occur at other coastal sites in the south-west but, like many small geophilomorphs, it may prove to be rather elusive.

Steve Gregory
The Northmoor Trust
The Manor House
Little Wittenham
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Oxon. OX14 4RA

Request for specimens

Harald Hauser has written from Gorlitz in Germany. He is working on the morphology and systematics of the *Craspedosoma rawlinsii* - complex and requires male specimens of the species from Britain. Ideally he would like samples of about ten specimens from ten different localities around the country but would be grateful for any specimens we can provide. He needs to receive the material by the end of 1998. If any one can help the address to send material to is:

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Gorlitz
PF 300 154
02806 Gorlitz.

Craspedosoma rawlinsii Leach new to Herefordshire

Three individuals of this rare millipede were taken by sweep-netting in the Fishpool Valley SSSI (SO508628) in north Herefordshire on 11 October 1998. The vegetation cover is secondary ash-sycamore woodland. Two specimens were swept on the lower valley sides from *Mercurialis* and *Tryopteris filix-mas* on freely draining soils. The third was taken from moist flushed ground in the valley bottom where *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* is the dominant plant. This latter situation is much the more typical for the species. To my knowledge it has never before been reported by sweep-netting!

Keith Alexander
The National Trust
33 Sheep Street
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Centipedes from Cornwall

The list of species on the next page is based on the records of only four of the meeting's participants so there are almost certainly other records to be added because cards have either not yet been sent in or have been submitted but mislaid somewhere in my filing system.

The most outstanding records are of the discovery of *Arenophilus peregrinus* on the mainland (see the article by Steve Gregory in this Newsletter) and the rediscovery of *Nesoporogaster souletina brevior* in Devichouys Wood, a CWT reserve in the same general area as Ted Eason's original specimens were taken. Its persistence and existence in a separate site suggest that it is probably well established in the locality but a planned further visit to that part of the county has not yet taken place. The species resembles *Haplophilus subterraneus* in the field and would be easily mistaken for it (as it was at the time). However the sternal fossae are very distinctive and a check of leg number gives a much higher value than for *Haplophilus*, more than 90 pairs.

Interestingly, although *Lithobius pilicornis* turned up on several sites it was not present in all and the number of *Lithobius* species recorded in total is only five despite the fact that there are certainly others in West Cornwall. Also notable was the difficulty in finding *Strigamia maritima* when trying to demonstrate its presence - the only one I found turned out to be *Hydroschendyla*! The commonest geophilomorphs were, not unexpectedly for the South West, *Haplophilus* and *Brachygeophilus* although *Geophilus osquidatum* was only found once and several species that might have been expected to be widespread were not found very often. *Brachyschendyla dentata* would appear to be a new vice-county record, giving some 29 species in total from VC1.

Tony Barber

Millipedes from Cornwall

Records from the Chyvarloe meeting have been slow to appear - a number of recorders have not sent their records in as yet and one (I wonder who?) has even managed to lose all his records due to technological malfunction! Steve Gregory managed to produce his usual list of goodies with *Brachychaeteuma melanops* and *Ophiodesmus albonanus* both new to VC1. Keith Alexander collected a single specimen of *Chordeuma* from Lamorna Cove but the specimen turned out to be a juvenile (stadium V) and so could not be identified to species. Interestingly, in his 1985 *Synopsis*...., Blower writes of returning to Trelil in north Cornwall in April 1962 to collect adults of *Chordeuma sylvestre* and also finding a wide range of immatures from stadia II to VII. Were the adult *Chordeuma* still around in April 1998 and we just failed to find them or have climatic changes over the last 35 years been sufficient to alter the reproductive biology of the species such that adults are no longer around by April in this part of the country?

Please make an effort to send any outstanding records from the meeting to Paul Lee (millipedes) or Tony Barber (all other records) in order that details can be given to the Cornish Biological Records Centre. This is only fair considering the help they gave in identifying suitable sites to visit.

Myriapod Records from Cornwall, Easter 1998

Key to sites visited

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|---------|----|--------------------|---------|
| SC | Sennen Cove | 10/3526 | CY | Chyvarloe | 10/6523 |
| PV | Porthcurno Valley | 10/3822 | GW | Gunwalloe | 10/62 |
| TR | Treen | 10/3923 | PW | Pendarves Wood | 10/6437 |
| LC | Lamorna Valley | 10/4424 | CR | Crowan | 10/6434 |
| LV | Lamorna Cove | 10/4524 | TW | Tehidy Woods | 10/6443 |
| GE | Gear | 10/4632 | KS | Kennack Sands | 10/7316 |
| LM | Loggans Moor | 10/5739 | CK | Coverack | 10/7818 |
| GP | Godvrey Point | 10/5843 | GG | Glendurgan Gardens | 10/7727 |
| GT | Godvrey Towans | 10/5842 | DW | Devichoy's Wood | 10/7737 |
| PC | Predannack Cliffs | 10/6615 | DQ | Devoran Quay | 10/7939 |
| | | | PH | Pendennis Head | 10/8231 |

Centipede records supplied by: Wallace Arthur, Tony Barber, Steve Gregory and Dick Jones.

| Sites | LC | GP | GW | CR | PW | TW | GG | DW | DQ | PH |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 10km squares 10/ | 42 | 54 | 62 | 63 | 63 | 64 | 72 | 73 | 73 | 83 |
| SPECIES | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Haplophilus subterraneus</i> | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Nesoporogaster souletina brevior</i> | | | | | | | | * | | |
| <i>Schendyla nemorensis</i> | | | | | | | * | * | | |
| <i>Brachyschendyla dentata</i> | | | | * | | | | | | |
| <i>Hydroschendyla submarina</i> | | | | | | | | | | * |
| <i>Arenophilus peregrinus</i> | * | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Geophilus carpophagus</i> | * | | * | | | | | | | |
| <i>Geophilus osquidatum</i> | | | | | | | | | * | |
| <i>Brachygeophilus truncorum</i> | | * | | | * | * | * | * | | * |
| <i>Lithobius variegatus</i> | | | | | * | | * | * | | |
| <i>Lithobius forficatus</i> | | * | | * | * | | | | | * |
| <i>Lithobius pilicornis</i> | | | | | | | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Lithobius melanops</i> | * | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Lithobius microps</i> | | * | | | * | * | | * | * | |

Millipede records supplied by: Keith Alexander, Steve Gregory, Dick Jones.

| Sites | SC | LC | GE | LM | GP | PC | CY | PW | TW | KS | GG | DW | PH |
|----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | PV | LV | | | GT | | | CR | | CK | | DQ | |
| TR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 km squares 10/ | 32 | 42 | 43 | 53 | 54 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 83 |
| SPECIES | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Blaniulus guttulatus</i> | | | | * | * | | | * | | | | * | * |
| <i>Brachychaeteuma melanops</i> | | | | | | | * | | | | | | |
| <i>Brachydesmus superus</i> | | * | | * | | | | * | * | * | * | | |
| <i>Brachyiulus pusillus</i> | * | | | * | | | | * | | * | * | | |
| <i>Cylindroiulus britannicus</i> | | | | | | | | * | | | * | * | |
| <i>C. latestriatus</i> | * | * | | * | * | * | | | | * | | | |
| <i>C. londinensis</i> | | | | | | | | | | | * | | |
| <i>C. punctatus</i> | | * | * | * | | | * | * | * | * | | * | * |
| <i>Glomeris marginata</i> | * | * | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | |
| <i>Julus scandinavicus</i> | | | | | | | | * | | | | | |
| <i>Leptoiulus belgicus</i> | | * | | | | | | | * | | | | |
| <i>Nanogona polydesmoides</i> | | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ommatoiulus sabulosus</i> | | | | | * | * | | * | * | * | * | * | |
| <i>Ophiodesmus alb.</i> | * | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ophiulus pilosus</i> | | | | | | | | | * | | | | |
| <i>Polydesmus angustus</i> | * | | | * | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | |
| <i>Polydesmus denticulatus</i> | | | | | | | | * | | | | | |
| <i>Polydesmus inconstans</i> | | | | | | | | * | | | | | |
| <i>Polyxenus lagurus</i> | | | | | | | | | | * | | | |
| <i>Proteroiulus fuscus</i> | * | | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | |
| <i>Tachypodoiulus niger</i> | | | | | | | | * | | | * | * | |

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 1999

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 28 February 1999

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre. Please notify either Paul Lee or BRC of any change of address. If you no longer wish to receive the BMG Newsletter, please notify BRC in writing.

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