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British Myriapod Group

SPRING 1999

Newsletter number 30

Editor: Paul Lee

Notes from the Editor

Apologies for the late arrival of the Autumn issue. Despite the production being completed in October a glitch in the distribution process at Monks Wood resulted in the long delay. I trust this issue arrives with you before the Annual Field Meeting in Northumberland. As well as the usual mix of fieldwork and socialising, decisions on the future of BMG and the Millipede and Centipede Recording Schemes will be taken at the meeting so I look forward to seeing you there. The previous Editor got into the habit of predicting what rarities would be collected at the field meetings. I intend to avoid risking any credibility I may have in this way but Gordon Corbet has offered *Melogona voighti* as a possible trophy for the rarity hunters. Are you up to the challenge Steve Gregory?

At Chyvarloe last year there was some discussion around the need to put the BMG on a more formal footing. Tony Barber agreed to look at this with a small group comprising the scheme organisers, Bulletin editors and Dick Jones (who was appointed Treasurer at Chyvarloe). This group, along with John Lewis, met recently and as a result proposals for a formally constituted BMG will be put forward at this year's Annual Meeting. These include members paying a small annual subscription in return for a significant discount on the price of the Bulletin and it is hoped there will be other benefits for members in future. The immediate benefit to the organisation would be an increased chance of gaining funding e.g. to help with producing the millipede atlas. Also considered were the future of the Bulletin and this Newsletter, the setting up of a BMG library and the production of a provisional millipede atlas; more issues to be discussed when we meet at Ford Castle.

How many of you are still referring to *Geophilus oligopus* as *G. insculptus*? Well if you are one of those clever so-and-sos who did change your record cards / database entries it looks like you may have to change it all back again! Our esteemed centipede scheme organiser tells me that although

G. oligopus is a valid species, research suggests it is not the species which occurs here. Look out for more details in the Bulletin.

Myriapod Course

The Field Studies Council are running a weekend course on "Myriapods" at Slapton Ley from 27-29 August 1999. The course is led by Sandy Hill, a tutor at the centre and is listed by the FSC as an intermediate level course. If anyone plans to join this course I would be very keen to have a report on it for the next issue of the Newsletter.

Report from the JCCBI meeting - November 98

As you may remember, I represent the BMG on the JCCBI (Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates). Relative to other societies and organisations the BMG is a rather small group and it does not usually take me long to report on our activities throughout the year. However, the meetings are often interesting for the gleanings that can be picked up about what is going on elsewhere. One main point of interest from the last meeting is worth highlighting here.

Some of you may be familiar with the concept of short, middle and long lists with relation to Biodiversity Action Plans (now referred to as "Priority Species" and "Species of Conservation Concern"). These lists represent the species that are considered to be globally threatened or declining. In his recent (1998) article in the Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group, Paul Harding gives details of how the species were selected and why seven millipede species are included on the list of Species of Conservation Concern (previously the long list).

In the last year Action Plans have been drawn up for those designated Priority Species. At some stage in the future action plans will probably be needed for the Species of Conservation Concern. It was pointed out at the JCCBI meeting that the species in this category would probably be

reviewed at some stage. Since, so far, the deadlines given in order to respond to queries of this nature have been extremely tight it was recommended that societies be ready with their comments before they are approached. Also it is recommended that we should consider whether any species of myriapod ought to be in the higher priority groups. There is likely to be some funding available for writing action plans and it now seems more likely that there will also be a chance of funding being available to implement them.

The species of millipede listed as Species of Conservation Concern are:

Chordeuma proximum
Chordeuma sylvestre
Melogona scutellare
Metaiulus pratensis
Nanogona polydesmoides
Polydesmus coriaceus
Trachysphaera lobata

(for details of the reasoning behind this list see the article by Harding).

Questions which the BMG needs to consider include:
 Should all of these species be included?
 Are there other species of equivalent concern?
 Should any be upgraded to the Priority Species list?
 Are there any species of centipede which ought to be included?

At the meeting the value of European distribution maps in helping to determine the status of species was stressed. Thanks to the work by Desmond Kime these maps are likely to be available for millipedes greatly in advance of other invertebrate taxa.

Helen Read

Update on Myriapods from Cornwall

Whilst the last issue of the Newsletter was sitting at BRC waiting to be distributed I received further millipede records from the field meeting at Chyvarloe. I also received updated centipede records via Tony Barber. These records increased the number of species found and the number of sites recorded so rather than try and give the additional data alone I have revised the tables from the Autumn 1998 newsletter to include all of the records received to date.

Record contributors: Keith Alexander, Wallace Arthur, Tony Barber, Steve Gregory, Dick Jones, John Lewis, Helen Read, Paul Richards.

Key to sites visited					
SC	Sennen Cove	10/3526	CY	Chyvarloe	10/6523
PV	Porthcurno	10/3822	GD	Godolphin Cross	10/6031
TR	Treen	10/3923	PW	Pendarves Wood	10/6437
LA	Lamorna Valley/Cove	10/42	CR	Crowan	10/6434
GE	Gear / Trevaylor	10/4632	TW	Tehidy Woods	10/6443
PS	Praa Sands	10/5827	KS	Kennack Sands	10/7316
GC	Germoe Churchyard	10/5829	CK	Coverack	10/7818
LM	Loggans Moor	10/5739	FC	Frenchman's Creek	10/7425
GP	Godvrey Point	10/5843	KE	Kestle	10/7525
GT	Godvrey Towans	10/5842	TM	Tremayne Wood	10/7225
PC	Predannack Cliffs	10/6615	MC	Manaccan Churchyard	10/7624
GW	Gunwalloe	10/62	GG	Glendurgan Gardens	10/7727
BR	Breage	10/6128	DW	Devichoy's Wood	10/7737
LB	Loe Bar	10/6423	DQ	Devoran Quay	10/7939
CC	Church Cove	10/6520	PH	Pendennis Head	10/8231
			CG	Cam Galver (roadside)	??

Anti-pollution Millipedes

A species of tropical millipede, *Oxydesmus gracilis*, was found in the Netherlands in huge numbers (millions of individuals) in a bark and twig bed used as a filter for flume gas cleaning and odour removal in a large ignition oven used for destroying animal cadavers. The company operating the furnace asked Matty Berg to identify the animals after their filter came alive!

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Following on.....

In the last Newsletter Keith Alexander noted the addition of *Craspedosoma rawlinsii* to the Herefordshire list as a result of sweep netting. Gordon Corbet reports he has taken the same species in Fife also by sweep netting. Has anyone else collected *Craspedosoma* using this technique? It might be worth getting your entomological colleagues to do some work for you.

Also in the last Newsletter Tony Barber wrote of finding *Oxidus gracilis* in Devon. Shortly before Christmas I discovered a specimen of the same species in the pot of an orchid (*Oncidium* sp.) I had purchased earlier in the Autumn from a Notcutts garden centre in Woodbridge, Suffolk. Although I have not been back to the garden centre to check, the label in the pot indicates that the plant was propagated in Holland. As Notcutts operate a number of garden centres across East Anglia, the Midlands and the South East it is possible that *Oxidus gracilis* has been introduced to a large number of homes in these areas and is probably worth looking for in a garden centre near you!

Paul Lee

Further comments on the millipede atlas and recording scheme

I have had little response to the issues raised in the last newsletter regarding the millipede atlas but Gordon Corbet did send in some very useful comments and I have discussed some of the issues with other recorders I have spoken to recently. One common point which has emerged is a desire to see some results, now, from the last 30 years of recording effort even if a comprehensive publication is a few years away yet. There is a view that an up to date set of maps would be the best way to stimulate further recording in any case.

It is important that we involve more people in our recording efforts both by encouraging them to collect for us and by encouraging them to learn identification skills. Gordon Corbet is doing his best to spread the message in Scotland and has offered to identify material from collections made there (but he reserves the right to give priority to material from poorly recorded areas). Are there other recorders who would be willing to take on a similar regional role to try and improve coverage in under recorded areas? If so it may be possible to encourage local natural history organisations to contribute to our work as Tony Barber has tried in the Shetlands. It could also help if recorders are willing to offer talks or identification workshops to such organisations. As national scheme organiser I am happy to identify material from anywhere in the UK (but this is not an open invitation to consultancies and national agencies) and it would be useful to know what help anyone else is willing to provide in this way.

At the "committee" meeting referred to in the editorial a number of these issues were discussed. Tony Barber has drafted a single page introduction to the myriapod Recording Schemes which can be sent to individuals and organisations requesting information and he has also made progress with a more comprehensive text which could form the basis of a handbook for recorders. The production of more accessible keys to myriapods was discussed and the feasibility of providing reference collections of the commoner millipedes for new recorders was considered as was the possibility of publishing distribution maps

independently. These are points we can consider further when we meet at Ford Castle.

Paul Lee

Australian Myriapod Gossip

The one-man Tasmanian recording scheme is slowing a bit due to the sole recorder having landed a full-time job outside zoology. I now have more money but less time to spend on myriapods. For one blessed week I was allowed by my employer, the State Forestry Agency, to look for a rare velvet worm in forestry plantations. The field study found that the rare species, more common velvet worms and a host of native centipedes and millipedes were indeed living in plantations, even those of the exotic Monterey Pine. It was especially encouraging to see thriving populations of forest species on ground that had been grass pasture fifteen years earlier.

Recently I began recording life stages of Polydesmida. My Tasmanian myriapod databases now have fields for stadia 4 to 8 for each sex (polydesmids younger than stadium 4 are almost never collected). When I publish descriptions of new species in future I hope to convince the journal to print "Material Examined" as a table with these tallies from a particular site rather than e.g. "3 males, 5 females, 16 juveniles". Tasmanian collections are now large enough and sufficiently well spaced through the year to allow insights into life histories through the examination of such data.

The best news is that palaeontologist Greg Edgecombe of the Australian Museum in Sydney, has fallen deeply in love with the southern temperate Hemicopidae. I thought it might just be a passing infatuation but Greg is now spending both work and leisure time on the beasts: collecting, anatomising and molecular-phylogenising. He can be contacted by e-mail at greged@amsg.austmus.gov.au. Not unexpectedly he is finding there are more species out there than we previously knew about.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 1999

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 30 September 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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