

HAPLOPHTHALMUS MONTIVAGUS VERHOEFF 1941 NEW TO WALES

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On 2nd November 2001, in the company of Mike Kilner, I investigated a small limestone quarry at Abersychan, in the valley of the Afon Lwyd, north of Pontypool, Torfaen (G.R. SO2703) and in vice county 35 (Monmouthshire). Within a radius of 20m all three species of *Haplophthalmus* were found, namely *H. danicus*, *H. mengei* and *H. montivagus*.

This would seem to be the first record of *H. montivagus* from Wales. The nearest previous site is given by Hopkin (1991) as near Bath; Oxford and Luton; also further sites near Oxford (Gregory & Campbell, 1995).

At least eight characters of the male 7th pereopod and the 1st endopod were used to confirm the identity as described in Hopkin (1991) and Oliver and Meechan (1993). Particularly useful were the lateral view of the pereopod, the tapered (not bulbous) spines on the ventral side of the propodus and the absence of the prominent bulbous spine on the posterior face of the carpus; these could be seen in seconds once the animal had been aligned suitably in transmitted light under the x40 binocular; otherwise the identification of all the males would have been tedious. The differences in the ventral distal bulge of the carpus in the Abersychan specimens was best represented in Oliver and Meechan's figures.

As the three species are found in such close proximity at this site, I have commenced a study into their comparative ecology, and have notes on about 60 *H. mengei* males, 110 *H. montivagus* males plus 190 females, while *H. danicus* is less common at 30 individuals.

Preliminary observations suggest that *H. danicus* is largely associated with wood as I would expect from extensive experience with this species; however, they were with an equal number of *H. montivagus*. The rest of the *H. mengei/montivagus* occurred in apparently similar situations (under stones or wood, plus the top 1cm of soil where the majority were found) but appeared mutually exclusive.

Previous statements (Hopkins, 1991) have suggested that *H. mengei* and *H. montivagus* are not found in the same habitat. However Gregory and Campbell (1995) do record both together at a riverside woodland at Little Wittenham near Oxford. Clearly, at the Abersychan quarry, all three species occur in the same habitat, and microhabitats overlap to some extent; that *H. mengei* and *H. montivagus* behave exclusively to one another within a few metres (at least in the autumn) is interesting.

One point that does agree with previous reports (*op. cit.*) is that the Abersychan limestone quarry is just within extensive ancient woodland with several molluscan ancient woodland indicators such *Limax tenellus*, *L. cinereo-niger* and *Phenacolimax*

major. Thus, it is likely that *H. montivagus* may have been present for a long time rather than to be a recent introduction. The same I would argue for *Lithobius piceus*, (see also Harper 2002) which I found on the same day within a few metres.

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