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THE BRITISH ISOPOD STUDY GROUP

Newsletter of the Isopod Survey Scheme

Number 30

October 1990

EDITORIAL

Running the BISG Recording Scheme for the past five years has been immensely enjoyable. However, the time has come to hang up my hat and pass the stewardship of BISG on to a younger man. Dave Bilton has agreed to take over with immediate effect. Therefore, all recording cards and tricky specimens should be sent to him at his address in Oxford given at the end of this Newsletter.

I would like to thank sincerely all recorders for their patience and good humour. I hope that you will continue to contribute records to the Scheme. There are still many avenues to follow and I'm sure, new species to discover in Britain. I look forward to reading of such discoveries in future editions of the Newsletter. In Dave's capable hands, I'm sure the Scheme will go from strength to strength.

AIDGAP KEY

Everyone on the mailing list should have received a copy of the test version of my AIDGAP key to woodlice. Please forward your comments to Steve Tilling as soon as possible, and by the end of 1990 at the latest. If all goes to plan, the Field Studies Council hope to publish the key (with colour plates) towards the end of 1991.

ISOPODA

Although I have relinquished responsibility for the recording scheme, I intend to continue to publish *Isopoda*. There are plans afoot to change the style/content, to increase international coverage and possibly to include the annual list of Oniscidea researchers (compiled by Paul Harding) and their publications (similar to the CIM Bulletin produced in Paris for myriapodologists). Watch this space!

Volumes 2,3 and 4 of *Isopoda* are still available at £3.00 per copy plus postage, as are postcards of *Armadillidium pictum* and *album* at 10p each. Please make cheques payable to ISOPOD SOCIETY and send orders direct to me (not Dave Bilton) at my Reading address. Volume 1 is out of print.

RECENT RECORDS

Porcellionides cingendus in Essex

This species has been turned up in large numbers by Peter Harvey in a grazing marsh at Howlands Marsh, St. Osyth, North Essex (OSGR 62/1--1--). This is some way outside its known range and it is clearly worth searching for all the way up the east coast of England.

Haplophthalmus - mengei and montivagus found together

Steve Gregory has found these two species in the same site at last. They both occur in Little Wittenham Wood on the Berkshire side of the River Thames downstream of Oxford (OSGR 41/572931, Vice County 22 Berkshire). Steve writes...

"So far, *Haplophthalmus mengei* seems to be confined to riverside flood plains. *Haplophthalmus montivagus* seems to be confined to the wood above the flood plain. The two species were found together at the boundary between the wood proper and a narrow strip of poplar plantation planted on the flood plain (old meadow) in the 1950's."

This distribution fits with known information on the habitat preferences of the two species. *H. montivagus* is a species of calcareous (probably 'ancient') woodland whereas *H. mengei* has a much less restricted distribution. Indeed, *H. montivagus* and *Trichoniscoides helveticus* may be the nearest we have to ancient woodland 'indicator' species.

Porcellio dilatatus in Leicestershire

John Daws writes.....

"*Porcellio dilatatus* has been found at over 30 sites in the County over the last few months. The best places to look are farms with dairy herds or stables with old brick buildings. I generally spend about 30 minutes wandering around the outside of the outbuildings pulling old manure off walls and out of seldom cleaned corners, or looking under stones and farmyard junk. The woodlice are often only found in ones or twos, and usually just as I'm about to give up. Other species turn up quite regularly, so most good mucky farms will turn up between 6 to 10 species including *Cylisticus convexus*, *Haplophthalmus mengei* and *danicus*, *Porcellio spinicornis* and of course the ever-present *Porcellionides pruinosus*.

So to find *Porcellio dilatatus* in your area, all you have to do is go to your nearest dairy farm/stable, knock on their door and tell them you would like to look at their

woodlice. I have been questioned by the police six times this year and had two refusals to look around farms. Not a bad average for 50 farms!

Good luck!"

Other Leicestershire finds

John Daws has also sent the following note.....

"While rummaging around the dungeon at Leicester's Natural History Museum, I uncovered some records for unusual woodlice for the County (made by A.J. Rundle) of *Trichoniscoides sarsi* and *Armadillidium depressum*. Leicester Museum wouldn't lend me these specimens to post off to prove my case to a doubtful Steve, so off I went to wreak havoc in someone's back garden and on consecrated ground.

Trichoniscoides sarsi was found in the over grown back garden of a large Victorian House (turned into flats). I found it under concrete slabs adjacent to the house in association with *Trichoniscus pusillus*. Unfortunately the residents wouldn't let me lift the cover off an adjacent capped well which they said kept the garden damp, so off I went to find *Armadillidium depressum*.

The record at the Museum said 'common on mortared stone wall, amongst ivy'. What ivy? The vicar had had some E.T.'s (commonly known as morons from outer space) in to tidy up (!) the churchyard. I think they also filmed 'Apocalypse Now' at the same time. After about 15 minutes of hand searching under fallen headstones etc., I found a single specimen under a few stones which had fallen out of the wall. I had been to the churchyard on a previous occasion and found nothing of note. I plan to look harder in the future."

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ISOPOD SYMPOSIUM

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the Third Symposium on the Biology of Terrestrial Isopods in Poitiers, but by all accounts, it was an excellent meeting. A session on terrestrial isopods is to take place during the Fourth European Congress of Entomology (when isopods will presumably be honorary insects for a few days!). The Congress is to be held in Godollo, Hungary from 1st to 6th September 1991. Further details may be obtained from Dr. Erzsebet Hornung, Department of Ecology, Jozsef Attila University, SZEGED, Egyetem u.2 Pf.:659, H-6722, HUNGARY.

REDUCTONISCUS COSTULATUS Kesselyak, 1930

Franco Ferrara and Stephano Taiti sent a reprint to me recently which sheds light on the taxonomy and origins of

Reductoniscus costulatus. The species is often found in heated glasshouses in Britain. It is now known in the wild from Singapore, Malaysia and the Hawaiian Islands although the original description was based on specimens collected in greenhouses of the Botanical Garden in Berlin. The reference is:

FERRARA, F. & TAITI, S. (1990). Two new species of *Reductoniscus* Kesselyak, 1930 from New Guinea (Crustacea, Oniscidea, Armadillidae). *Revue suisse Zool.*, 97, 489-497.

BISG/BMG FIELD MEETING 1991

John Delf is organising next year's meeting. Please see the booking form enclosed with this Newsletter for further details.

So now its over to Dave.....

All completed record cards, enquiries concerning the Isopod Survey Scheme and articles for inclusion in the Newsletter should be sent to me at the following address:

Dave Bilton
Room E10
Department of Zoology
South Parks Road
University of Oxford
OXFORD OX1 3PS

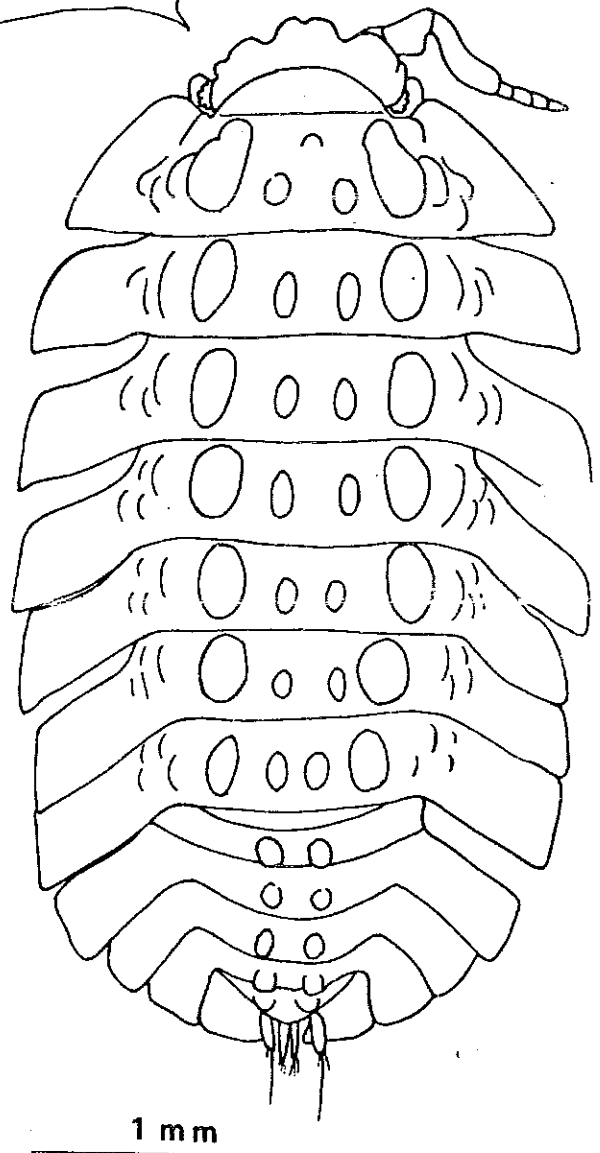
Orders for *Isopoda* and postcards should be sent to:

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

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New species of *Armadilloniscus*
(*biltoni*)