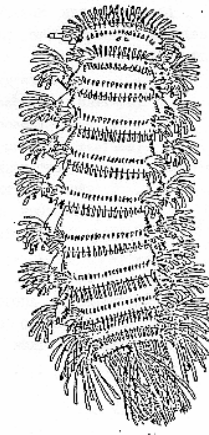




# British Myriapod and Isopod Group



SPRING 2004

Newsletter number 8

Editor: Paul Lee

## BMIG business

Easter is approaching fast and along with it the BMIG annual meeting to be held this year at Green Park, Aston Clinton in the Chilterns. You should already have booked if you plan to stay over the weekend but, even if you cannot stay for the whole meeting, all BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held on the Friday evening (16 April). The minutes of the 2003 AGM held at Reaseheath College are now on the website so you can check what was said last time. The present committee is keen to receive nominations for new committee members from any BMIG member. Ideally nominations would be communicated to the secretary beforehand but they can also be made from the floor at the AGM. I am still waiting for some members to submit their records from the Reaseheath meeting and I am sure this applies to centipede and woodlouse records as well. Please check that you don't have a pile of record cards still lying around in a forgotten corner; cards that you meant to send in but never got around to.

Henry Arnold of BRC has just informed me that they have finally managed to get all of the millipede record card data (or at least that received by the deadline of 30 June 2003) inputted. The data now has to be loaded onto the computer system before we can receive any printouts. It may be the end of March before this occurs as there are "several even more critical jobs clamouring for attention!" Once we receive printouts we can begin the process of checking the data input and, where necessary, validating records. Andy Key will also be able to get started on the analysis of the habitat and possibly the phenological data.

It has been quite a struggle to put together enough material for this newsletter and I now have absolutely no articles left over for the autumn newsletter. I am also very aware that the same few names seem to keep appearing at the bottom of the majority of the items in each issue. I know there will always be a lot more people that read the newsletter than contribute to it but it would be pleasing to receive more material from a wider range of members. So please, get out your pens this summer and let me know what you are doing in the world of myriapods and isopods, what observations you have made and what species you have found.

## Can anyone offer a home to a mechano millipede?

One of Gordon Blower's best known teaching aids was his mechano millipede. This model was constructed to demonstrate the mechanics of millipede locomotion. Bearing in mind that it is a large piece of hardware, if anyone believes they could make use of this teaching aid they should contact the secretary, Helen Read, at 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3LE.

## *Ommatoiulus rutilans* in Shetland

The following account appeared on the Shetland Wildlife website:

[www.pennington.charitydays.co.uk/latestinsects.htm](http://www.pennington.charitydays.co.uk/latestinsects.htm)

The entry is dated 5 January 2004 and includes a very nice photograph, taken by David Scott-Langley, of the millipede sitting on top of a mushroom.

"This millipede apparently arrived in Shetland in a consignment of mushrooms last autumn as it was found in a mushroom by Catrina Carter of the Shetland Amenity Trust. She passed it to Paul Harvey [of Shetland BRC – ed.], who sent it to David Scott-Langley, who sent it to Henrik Enghoff of Denmark who identified it as *Ommatoiulus rutilans*. This species is very common in Spain, but also occurs elsewhere in Western Europe and as far north as the southern Netherlands."

## *Cylindroiulus truncorum* in Northern Ireland

Roy Anderson has now checked the *Cylindroiulus* species he found in Northern Ireland and it has turned out to be *C. truncorum*. This is a new addition to the Irish checklist. Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

## What eats woodlice (continued!)

Back in the late 1980's, when Steve Hopkin was running the woodlouse recording scheme, there was some correspondence about 'what eats woodlice?' (Newsletter 23, Dec 1987 & 24, May 1988). The answers received ranged from spiders (other than *Dysdera*) to humans (i.e. *Ligia*!). Recently Steve forwarded a copy of a letter that he had been sent by Dr Carol Williams that, nearly two decades later, continues the theme. A colleague of hers found woodlouse remains in about half of the 'weekly' samples of Brown

Long-eared Bat droppings examined during 1997 and 1998. When woodlouse remains were found the percentage frequency ranged between 6.6% and 14.3%, as indicated in the table below. Carol also notes the presence of woodlouse remains in Natterer's Bat droppings (4.2% frequency in August 1999) and in 10 out of 15 hedgehog droppings examined in April and May 1996.

**Percentage frequency of woodlouse remains in Brown Long-eared Bat droppings**

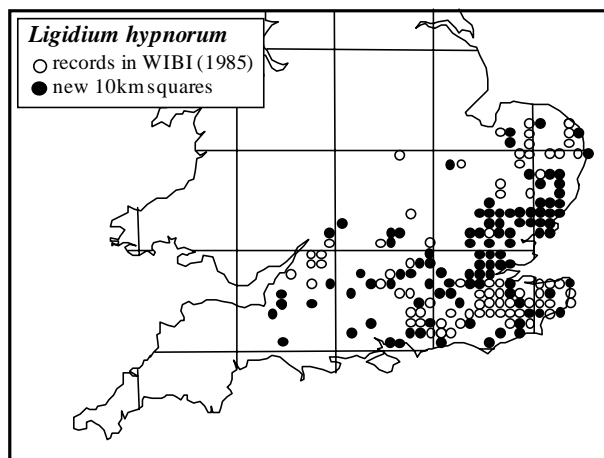
Week	1997	1998
12	Only one dropping	6.6
13	0	0
14	No droppings	12.0
15	14.3	Only one dropping
16	7.1	0
17	11.8	0
18	4.4	11.1

Incidentally this correspondence was prompted by Steve's excellent article "Woodlice, chiselbobs and sow-bugs" recently published in British Wildlife (Vol 14 No 6: August 2003). If you haven't read it I do recommend it. Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

**Woodlouse maps continue to grow**

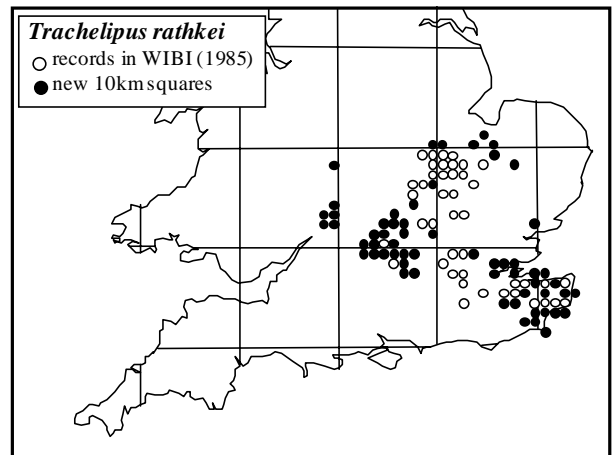
Below are a few more maps indicating the improved knowledge of the distribution of British woodlice since the publication of Woodlice in Britain and Ireland (WIBI) (Harding & Sutton, 1985). All records given in WIBI are indicated by open circles (though there are more recent records for some 10km squares), whilst records for new 10km squares discovered since 1985 are shown by solid dots.

*Ligidium hypnorum*: The map has filled in nicely and, primarily as a result of the activities of the Essex Spider Group, it has proved to be common in the east. However, outlying populations continue to be discovered as far south-west as West Dorset (what odds Devon, Mr Barber?).



*Trachelipus rathkei*: Although the known range continues to advance westwards, to include the upper Thames and Severn

catchment, the 'puzzling' distribution described in WIBI remains. It must surely occur in other river systems in southern and eastern England and possibly even South Wales (Take note Harper, Jones, *et al*).



Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

**Myriapods and Isopods at Flatford Mill**

It may be better known for its associations with John Constable and his paintings of The Haywain and Willy Lott's Cottage but February saw Flatford Mill playing host to ten eager novices, all keen to learn as much as they could about the identification and ecology of centipedes, millipedes and woodlice over a short but very intensive weekend. They came from across England as well as from Scotland and Wales. One poor soul had an appointment on the Friday evening and had to drive through the night from South Wales. He arrived about 1a.m and then slept in the car park to be there on time for the Saturday morning activities. After an introduction to collecting techniques the ten participants were let loose in the grounds of the Field Centre and soon had collected plenty of specimens to identify. After lunch we explored the mysteries of taxonomic keys and then the students were unleashed again, this time to identify their finds. In the process they were asked to constructively criticise whenever they found difficulties or faults in the test version of Tony Barber's AIDGAP key to centipedes and in a new millipede key I had prepared for the course. The morning collecting session was surprisingly successful and a species list comprising five centipedes, four millipedes and seven woodlice resulted. The following day we all piled into a minibus and headed off to search the farmyard at Mildenhall Farm, courtesy of Juliet Hawkins, one of the course participants (she had leapt at the idea as it meant she had a Sunday morning lie in because she did not have to make the 40minute drive to Flatford). As experienced collectors might have predicted, this was the most productive visit of the weekend producing a species list comprising nine centipedes, six millipedes and ten woodlice. The species encountered here included *Porcellio spinicornis* on the wall of a medieval barn, *Porcellionides pruinosus* and *Ligidium hypnorum*. The latter record fills in a new dot on the distribution map presented above by Steve Gregory. On the final morning we visited two sites with the aim of collecting specific species. Although this did not produce

long species lists it did demonstrate to the participants the importance of knowing the habitat requirements of an animal as both target species were successfully located. Firstly *Craspedosoma rawlinsi* was collected from a small area of alder woodland on the southern edge of Ipswich and then *Ligia oceanica* was collected from a small site on the Orwell estuary. This site consists of approximately 10m of the shoreline where a low concrete wall has collapsed onto the shore providing a suitable substrate for the sea slug. I was pleasantly surprised at the success of the weekend in introducing the participants to such a wide range of species at what is often seen as a poor time of the year for collecting. Throughout the weekend we saw 11 species from each of the groups including most of the common species and a few specialities. All of the participants agreed the course had been a success. I hope myself and the other scheme recorders will be receiving records from them in the future and we will be welcoming them to BMIG weekends. The only thing I regretted was not finding any *Trichoniscoides* species requiring the participants to try a little dissection!

Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

#### ***Craspedosoma rawlinsi* new to central southern England**

In September 2002 I undertook a mollusc survey at Baynes Reserve, near Newbury (SU51-65-) in Berkshire (VC22), a site owned and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. This SSSI supports a number of very wet flushed areas within acidic deciduous woodland. Although not 'prime' snail habitat I felt it could be interesting. Turning fallen dead wood, in an area of alder woodland on waterlogged peat, revealed a single male specimen of the chordeumatid millipede *Craspedosoma rawlinsi*. It was associated with the woodlouse *Ligidium hypnorum* and the snails *Macrogastrea rolfii* and *Zonitoides excavatus*, both rare molluscs in this area, so my instincts proved correct. Further specimens of *C. rawlinsi* were hand sorted from the leaf sheaths of large 'Pond' Sedges growing on waterlogged ground beside a stream. Here it was associated with large numbers of the tiny vertiginid snail *Columella edentula* and (to my initial confusion) another chordeumatid, *Chordeuma proximum*.

*Craspedosoma rawlinsi* is predominantly north-western in Britain, but populations are known from East Anglian alder carr woodland and from acidic gully woodlands in the Kentish Weald (interestingly an area where the snails *M. rolfii* and *Z. excavatus* also occur together). This isolated Berkshire record lies almost equidistant between these known centres of distribution. In my home patch of Oxfordshire (barely 10 miles to the north!) this flushed acid woodland habitat is absent and (with hindsight) this may explain why, after a decade of searching, I had failed to find it before. It is indeed, as described by Blower (1985), 'a handsomely coloured animal'.

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

#### **Dynamenology**

The sphaeromatid isopod, *Dynamene* (named after the Greek goddess of agility), is a common component of the intertidal zone fauna in western and southern British Isles, the Atlantic coasts of France, Spain and Portugal and North Africa, Atlantic islands (Madeira, Canaries, Azores), and the shallow water fauna of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, Suez Canal and Red Sea (Holdich, 1970; 1976). The genus is also known from Australia (Holdich & Harrison, 1980), and has recently been recorded from Hawaii.

Seven species have been described for the N. Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Seas (1968). Males are characterised by a strongly formed, backwardly-pointing, bidentate process at the end of the pereon (which contain poison glands!) and 'should be' relatively easy to separate. However, females of some species are similar. Ecologists continually make mistakes in identifying the various species and species lists I have seen for various Mediterranean countries are invariably wrong. A new, well-illustrated key is needed to replace the one I did for my PhD on this isopod in 1964-1968!

A number of new species are present in collections from the Mediterranean and Black Sea, as well as from Australia. The males of one species, *Dynamene torelliae*, appear to be variable in form, and this is causing confusion. Extensive collections are available for study and are either held by the author or are present in the Paris and Leiden Natural History Museums (who are happy to loan them out). The author intends to deposit his collection in the Natural History Museum, London in due course.

If anybody is looking for an interesting biogeographical-taxonomic project, e.g. for a masters degree, then I would be happy to turn the material over to them, along with the relevant literature, as well as giving them some lessons in dynamenology!

Holdich, D. M. (1968). A systematic revision of the genus *Dynamene* (Crustacea: Isopoda) with descriptions of three new species. *Publ. Staz. zool. Napoli* **36**: 401-426.

Holdich, D. M. (1970). The distribution and habitat preferences of the Afro-European species of *Dynamene* (Crustacea: Isopoda). *J. nat. Hist.* **4**: 419-438.

Holdich, D. M. (1976). A comparison of the ecology and life cycles of two littoral isopods. *J. Exp. Mar. Biol. Ecol.* **24**: 133-149.

Holdich, D. M. & Harrison, K. (1980). The sphaeromatid isopod genus *Dynamene* in Australia with description of a new species from coral reefs. *Mem. Qld. Mus.* **10**: 163-170.

David Holdich ([david.holdich@ntlworld.com](mailto:david.holdich@ntlworld.com))

# MYRIAPODS IN EUROPE

## *Habitats and Biodiversity*

30<sup>th</sup> July - 1st August

A colloquium organised by the Staatliches Museum für  
Naturkunde Görlitz, Germany

Görlitz is a beautiful historical town and the cultural centre of Oberlausitz in Eastern Saxonia. The colloquium will take place in the Conference Centre at the 765 year old Convent St. Marienthal in the Neisse valley, 17km south of Görlitz.

English will be the official language of the conference.

For further details, contact:

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Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Görlitz  
PF 30 10 54  
02806 GÖRLITZ, Germany

Karin.Voigtlaender@smng.smwk.sachsen.de

### **Bulletin Of The British Myriapod And Isopod Group Volume 19 (GORDON BLOWER & TED EASON MEMORIAL VOLUME)**

This memorial volume was published at the end of last year. The editors offer their apologies for the delay. This issue has been printed by Richmond Publishing of Slough, stretches to 88 pages, includes a large number of photographs and has a very professional appearance overall. Most of the contents derive from the papers and posters presented to the Memorial Meeting held in Manchester last year and therefore relate to the continuing influence of Gordon Blower and Ted Eason on myriapod studies. These range from local mapping schemes, e.g. the work of the Sorby NHS in Sheffield, to Europe wide faunal studies of lithobiomorph centipedes. If you did not pre-order your copy then do not despair, you can still obtain one by contacting Tony Barber (Mr A.D. Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD) after the AGM. Also, details of the content and price will be posted on the BMIG website following the AGM.

### **Bulletin Of The British Myriapod And Isopod Group Volume 20**

Material is now required for Volume 20. Please send papers or short communications or items for inclusion under Miscellanea to Helen Read or Tony Barber.

**NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2004**

**Please send your contributions to reach the editor by  
30 September 2004**

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre.

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