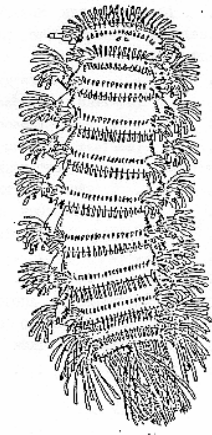




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



AUTUMN 2004

Newsletter number 9

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

The annual field meeting and AGM at Green Park, Aston Clinton was attended by a relatively low proportion of our members but what we lacked in quantity we made up for in quality! Tony Barber and Helen Read also did their best to recruit new recorders from the ranks of the Bucks. naturalists by providing input into a conference / workshop being held at Green Park the same weekend. Full details of the fieldwork and AGM will be published in the Bulletin and on the website respectively so I will only mention the highlight here. John Harper and Paul Richards discovered a rich Myriapod site literally just across the canal from our accommodation. In the chalky soil of some scrubby woodland they found numerous tiny, creamy pill millipedes. These included specimens of *Geoglomeris subterranea* (= *Stygioglomeris crinata*) but also another species which was clearly an *Adenomeris* but the characters were somewhat intermediate between *gibbosa* and *hispida*. Whilst leading the Bucks naturalists on a field visit, Helen found further specimens of the same species in nearby box woodland. Some of the specimens are currently at Paris Museum awaiting identification so watch this space.

With this issue you will have received a booking form inviting you to attend the meeting at Durham University between 31 March and 3 April 2005. You have until the end of February to book your place but as always prompt responses are much appreciated. The opportunity to use the University's lab facilities, especially the microscopes, will allow identification workshops to be run on the Saturday evening. There will be a chance to work some of Bagnall's old sites and who knows, following on from *Adenomeris* at Green Park, maybe *Eumastigonodesmus boncii* will be found after all at Gibside!

Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group

The last two Bulletins were an interesting experiment in production, driven to some extent by circumstance. However, the editors felt that the increase in cost was not matched by an equivalent increase in quality and the cover price that needed to be charged was too high. On the positive side this method did save a lot of time (for HR) in doing the layout. As a result, production of the Bulletin will be returning to the cheaper methods used previously.

In order to maintain a consistently high standard of content, all manuscripts will, in future, be peer reviewed. Also, every effort will be made to send proofs to authors for checking but this cannot be guaranteed for late submitted articles. To assist with the layout and speed the process of production, Steve Gregory has joined the editorial team. All articles should be submitted (to any of the editors) by 1st February for inclusion in that year's Bulletin. Late items may be included subject to the editors' discretion. The publication date is anticipated to be 1st June each year but the editors do not guarantee this and reserve the right to miss years if copy is lacking. Please submit articles to us so that we do not have this problem!

Finally, here is a gentle reminder to all readers to check that they have received a copy of Bulletin 20 and if so that they have returned their payment to Tony Barber.
The Editors, The BMIG Bulletin

Trachysphaera lobata threatened with extinction

The millipede, *Trachysphaera lobata* Ribaut (discovered in the Isle of Wight by myself and RE (Dick) Jones in 1984) is likely to become extinct in Britain within the next couple of years. I have recently (13-16 August 2004) visited the only two known British sites for this species (both in the Isle of Wight) and I have to report that one of the sites has been subject to considerable development and is no longer viable. At the second (original) site at Bembridge I sieved about 1m³ of soil in three days but this yielded only two specimens (both returned alive to the site). Further searching of the area (x 4 days resulted in a nil return).

The known distribution of *T. lobata* gives no clue as to whether it is introduced. It is found in a line roughly between north Italy and the Isle of Wight, so it is possibly a glacial period remnant. I believe that the Bembridge site is the only coastal location for the millipede but this may not mean that it was introduced. Indeed, the tidal flow up/down the Channel and in/out of the Solent would militate against this (it is more likely to receive deposits from America than from France). The site appears to be 'natural' and is reasonably far from human interference which militates against the species arriving in dumped soil/plant remains. On balance, I believe that it may be a native species.

The Bembridge site is on a bank abutting the beach and it is the erosion of this bank by wave action that is threatening the survival of the millipede. The bank would need to be protected from erosion by high tides and storm action but I do not think that it would be an easy task and it is also likely to be very costly. Another option might be to remove a swathe of soil (hopefully with *T. lobata* in it) to a less exposed local site in the hope of spreading the colony further through the habitat. The problem will be to match the sandy soil in which they are found (much of the site is clay based soil and very compacted).

It is possible that the species occurs more widely in the area as few people attempt to sample for species at depth in soil, and those that do might think that *T. lobata* are large grains of sand (or seeds - that's what I thought when I found them and it was Dick that discovered the seeds had legs!) as they don't move readily but remain curled for a considerable time. A concerted soil survey of the surrounding area could be mounted to establish the distribution of the species and to inform the development of a conservation policy. Whatever approach is taken, the continued survival of *T. lobata* in the UK clearly requires substantial remedial action to be instituted. (BMIG and Buglife are currently discussing a plan of action to conserve *T. lobata* including gaining funding for an intensive survey of suitable sites on the island, possibly with a view to translocation - Ed.)
Andy Keay, Merrymeet, Woodmansterne, Surrey, SM7 3HX

***Geophilus easoni* and *G. carpophagus*: the situation outside Britain**

Most readers of this esteemed publication will be aware of the 'splitting' of *G. carpophagus* into two species, as reported earlier both in these pages and elsewhere (including the Bulletin). The split was based on Eason's 'long' and 'short' forms, and the specimens examined were, like Eason's, all British. But what about the situation elsewhere? Museum specimens labelled as *G. carpophagus* prior to the split derive from a much wider geographical area – including Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the Canaries. I have looked at specimens from the NHM, and from museums in Copenhagen, Berlin and Vienna (thanks to the help of Henrik Enghoff, Jason Dunlop and Verena Stagl). The results of an intensive study of some of the Copenhagen material will be published in full detail in an appropriate journal sometime over the next year or so; but I thought it might be useful to give a brief interim account of the main findings for readers of this newsletter.

The situation is complex! Virtually no specimen from outside GB comes out as matching either British species on all of the characters examined. The only exception to this is material from Brittany, where the specimens studied were clearly *G. easoni*. Other material from Europe and further afield possess combinations of *easoni*-like features for some characters, *carpophagus*-like features for other characters, and intermediate features for yet other characters. How this should be interpreted is not yet clear. Two species with lots of intraspecific variation in each? Three species? A species complex with partial reproductive isolation? Further study will be needed to answer these questions.

The characters studied included various features of the clypeus and labrum. These were examined at considerable magnification using SEM. An unexpected finding emerged from this work that may have a relevance extending far beyond *Geophilus carpophagus* and *easoni*. The 'mid-piece of the labrum', of which there are many drawings in Ted Eason's book and elsewhere, is no such thing. Rather, it is a projection of the clypeus. So the 'teeth' are borne on the clypeus, not on the labrum as commonly thought. I would hazard a guess that this is true of geophilomorphs (and other centipedes?) generally – but of course studies of other species will be needed before this 'theory' can be confirmed.
Wallace Arthur, Department of Zoology, National University of Ireland, Galway.

BMIG Library

The BMIG Library now proudly occupies its own dedicated shelf space at the BENHS HQ at Dinton Pastures near Reading. It has been compiled around Gordon Blower's personal collection of books, with contributions kindly donated by others. There are two main criteria for the inclusion of material within the library. Firstly, works need to be relevant to the British and Irish myriapod and non-marine isopod fauna (even if not written in English!). Secondly, publications by eminent British and Irish authors are to be included even if not all works are directly relevant to our fauna. Presently there are 34 'books', including identification keys, distribution atlases, conference proceedings and taxonomic works. In addition there is a complete run of BMG newsletters (1983-1999), Bull. BMG (1972-2000) and Bull. BMIG (2001-present), but none of the BISG newsletters (ie everything pre 2000). There are also a few off-prints, including an almost complete set of Ted Eason's papers, but I have many more at home waiting to be accessioned. The library is available to anyone for use within the BENHS building, but BMIG members can take items away for closer scrutiny. One book is already on loan (it's noted – John H!).

Details of the library are held in a simple spreadsheet so that there is an accurate record of what we have and where it is located. In order to facilitate rapid searching for a particular reference or topic, the spreadsheet can be sorted by author, year, key word, journal, ISBN, etc. If anyone would like a copy please let me know and I can e-mail it in the format of your choice. Currently, myriapod works considerably outnumber the isopod ones (there are more species!), but it is hoped to restore this imbalance in due course. There are still a number of 'key' works (such as Oliver and Meechan, 1993, Woodlice) yet to be acquired. Offers of this and other publications that are currently absent from the library are gratefully received. Please contact Steve Gregory (details below). Thanks go to Tony Barber, Paul Harding, Steve Hopkin, Tony Irvine, Andy Keay, Des Kime, John Lewis and Helen Read for their help with setting up the library.
Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

BMIG Expedition to Galicia 2004 – a preliminary woodlouse report

Successfully organised by Paul Lee and under the capable leadership of Des Kime, a small but dedicated band of collectors visited Galicia (north-western Spain) in March

2004, primarily to look for woodlice, millipedes and centipedes. The region is very under-recorded, but the few previous surveys hint at an interesting and possibly unique fauna. We were based at a hostel near the River Mino and excursions were made into a variety of lowland, upland and coastal habitats (including the hostel garden) in both Galicia and across the border in Portugal. So far I've only looked at woodlice from about a quarter of the sites visited, but have differentiated 15 species (and put names to 12!).

There were some very familiar beasts, including *Porcellio scaber*, *Eluma purpurascens* and *Porcellionides cingendus* all occurring in good numbers in most habitats.

Armadillidium vulgare and *Oniscus lusitanus* (rather like a very rough *O. asellus*) also proved widespread. At a few sites *Porcellio de bueni*, rather like a rounded and polished *P. laevis* was found. There were a lot of Trichoniscids, including the familiar *Haplophthalmus danicus*. Two, yet to be identified, proved to be very widespread. One was a tiny salmon-pink *Trichoniscoides* and the other a reddish shiny species with two contrasting orange patches. On the coast there was *Trichoniscoides lusitanus*. It is closely related to our *T. albidus*, but is much darker in colour. Also on the coast there was *Miktoniscus patiencei*, *Halophiloscia (couchi?)* and small numbers of *Ligia oceanica*.

The examination of the samples is ongoing and there are many more specimens that I have yet to examine, hence the brevity of this preliminary report.

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

Expedition to Galicia - a preliminary millipede report

Although we did not seem to collect large numbers of specimens whilst in Galicia, now that there has been time to look at the samples there are more species than we originally thought. After initial sorting of our own specimens, Helen Read and Des Kime have taken on the task of putting names to them. This has involved Helen in trips to see Des in France, to see Henrik Enghoff in Copenhagen and most recently with Des to Paris to see Jean-Paul Mauries and Monique Nguyen Duy-Jacquemin. Of the species identified to date, those familiar to British workers include *Polyxenus lagurus*, *Cylindroiulus britannicus*, *C. latestriatus*, *Brachydesmus superus*, *Polydesmus coriaceus*, *P. inconstans* and *Oxidus gracilis*. Less familiar species include the *Stosotea* look-alike *Strongylosoma bertcowii*, the Julids *Cylindroiulus propinquus* (with very simple gonopods and a slightly projecting ventral scale) and *Cylindroiulus fenestratus* and the flatback *Brachydesmus proximus*. We collected examples of all of the orders represented in the British fauna. Amongst these were some attractively coloured Glomerids, a small Glomerid with a roof-like projection on the 11th segment, at least one Polyzonid from the genus *Hirudisoma* and a range of Chordeumatids including several Craspedosomids, most of which appear to be new species. However the most exciting finds from my point of view were the Platydesmids, an order I had not encountered before this trip. We collected examples of two different species. One of these flatback millipedes was dark grey to black in colour and found in pine / eucalyptus woodland on the hillside of Santa Tecla at the extreme south

western tip of Galicia. A white species was found more widely in woodland at a number of sites in both Galicia and northern Portugal. Both species would seem to be new to science.

There is still a lot more work to be done but it seems there will be at least eight new species to be described as a result of our efforts.

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

BMIG Reference Collection

John Harper has kindly (been) volunteered to be the BMIG Honorary Temporary 'Kick-starter' of Collections. His role is to set up the backbone of the collection, which can then be transported to the BENHS HQ at Dinton Pastures near Reading. Steve Gregory will then take on the long-term curation (as John is quite keen to emphasise). Currently, there is very limited space available at Dinton Pastures so in the first instance the collection will be restricted to species of Woodlouse, Millipede and Centipede found in the British Isles, with two primary aims:

- **Aim 1: Reference Specimens.** A reference collection of British species, in alcohol, that will be freely available to all and sundry to check determinations. This will consist of a single sample of six or more specimens of each sex including immatures. Ideally, microscope slides of genitalia and other relevant parts will be prepared to avoid unnecessary damage to reference specimens.
- **Aim 2: Comparative Material.** A selection of voucher material from across the known British (or European) range of each species. This will comprise of up to ten tubes, each containing as many specimens of each sex as possible. These specimens are intended for future comparative studies, such as intraspecific and geographic variation and access to these specimens will ideally be restricted to those involved in bona fide studies.

A number of people have been approached and specimens have been received from Simon Warmingham, Greg Jones, Roy Anderson and Ian Morgan to whom many thanks. Others have promised material in due course. Presently the collection is rather biased to South Wales, but central southern England will be well represented too (recorder bias!). Ideally, there should be specimens from all corners of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Offers of specimens, including 'common species' and 'greenhouse aliens' are gratefully received; particularly from remote areas or extremes of the British Isles, or of species showing regional variation or those that are difficult to collect.

Encouraging responses from others has led to the inclusion of additional aims for future consideration:

- **Aim 3: Key Voucher Specimens.** Keith Alexander has suggested the deposition of "voucher specimens" which support records of note; e.g. an extension of range or the subject of a published paper.
- **Aim 4: Donated Collections.** As he has moved on to other faunal groups, Ian Morgan has very generously donated his 140 tube collection. This is linked to his paper on South Wales Myriapods (BMIG Bull. 5; 1988), and will form a valuable resource for future work on the

area. Also Helen Read has previously expressed the need to safeguard the collections of departed colleagues. At the moment such extensive collections may be best treated as separate entities.

- **Aim 5: European Fauna.** As we are increasingly exploring the fauna of Europe, a readily accessible reference collection of species not found in, or not presently known from, the British Isles would be invaluable. To this end John is keen to work on this; one such European woodlouse has been kindly donated already by Roy Anderson.

If you are able to support these initiatives, BMIG Committee would be very grateful. If anyone would like to receive a copy of the details of specimens held so far please contact John (Tel: 01873 832506) and he will e-mail or snail-mail a copy. Until March 2005 please send your specimens to John. Steve will take over at the annual Easter meeting. Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA
John Harper, 4 Fairhome, Gilwern, Abergavenny, NP7 0BA

Maitland Emmet BENHS Research Fund

The Council of the British Entomological and Natural History Society has agreed to extend the remit of the Maitland Emmet BENHS Research Fund to include work on myriapods and isopods. Previously grants from the Fund have only been available for work on insects and arachnids. The grants are for up to £500 each for work on taxonomy, conservation and distribution in relation to the fauna of the British Isles. The work is expected to lead to a publication or production of a management plan. The number of grants available each year depends on the interest earned by the Fund. The grants are open to members and non-members alike and there is a single closing date of 30th September. Further details are available from BENHS Secretary Dr John Muggleton, 30 Penton Road, Staines, Middlesex TW18 2LD.

Use of domestic blower-vac machines

I don't know whether any other myriapodologists or isopodologists have tried using those machines on sale in garden centres for sucking up or blowing fallen leaves into bags? I would certainly recommend them – but not for fallen leaves! I have been using one for a number of years now – with a butterfly net stuffed down the suction tube and held in place with strong rubber bands – and it is a great way of getting those little creepy crawlies out from vegetation! Last summer the shingle bar at Slapton Ley produced six species of woodlouse including plenty of *Porcellionides cingendus*, as well as a number of bristly millipedes *Polyxenus lagurus*. The machines are excellent for other things too – spiders, harvestmen, pseudoscorpions. At one site in Gloucestershire I found three species of pseudoscorpion as well as the uncommon harvestman *Homalenotus quadridentatus*. At another site another uncommon harvestman, *Anelasmaocephalus cambridgei*, was sucked up along with a large variety of spiders including the nationally scarce crab spider, *Xysticus acerbus*, new to the county list. The rare jumping spider *Bianor aurocinctus* turned up in numbers at another site. The return on effort is remarkably good; the noise and smell take some getting used to – but one accepts that working alongside myriapodologists! Keith Alexander, 59 Sweetbrier Lane, Heavitree, Exeter EX1 3AQ.

Return of Flatford Myriapod and Isopod course

The successful 2004 course on "Identifying Centipedes, Millipedes and Woodlice" at Flatford Mill was reported in the last Newsletter. The course is being offered again from 18-21 February 2005 and early booking is recommended as places are limited. To book or for further details contact: Flatford Mill, East Bergholt CO7 6UL. Tel: 01206 298283.

Spare Centipede Atlas request

If anyone has a copy of the Centipede Atlas that they do not want or that is going spare would they please contact me? I need a copy to send to Victoria Ilie in Bucharest. Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Book Offers

Pisces Conservation Ltd is offering BMIG members up to 33% discount on the CD version of Eason's centipede book. Up to 10 copies will cost £18.33 each whilst 10 or more copies will be £14.88 each including VAT and postage.

The Diplopods of Serbia, Montenegro, and the Republic of Macedonia is a new hardback book with 440 pages including coloured UTM maps. It is written in English and is being offered by one of the authors for 50 euros + postage costs, a considerable reduction on the publisher's price.

Anyone interested in either of these offers should contact me by 31 December 2004. Do not send any payment at this stage. I will let you know the final costs once I know how many copies of each publication are required. Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattlingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2005

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 28 February 2005

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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