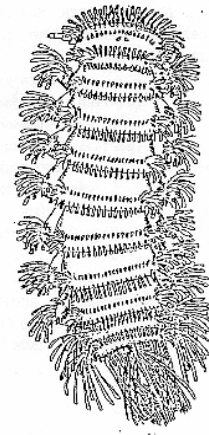




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



SPRING 2005

Newsletter number 10

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

With Easter coming early you will be reading this first newsletter of 2005 even closer to the date of the AGM weekend than is usual. You should already have booked if you plan to stay over the weekend. If you have booked you should have received maps and further details for the event. However, I am told that even now you still have time to book. Val Standen is willing to take bookings right up until the last minute, so do not be put off by the fact that the original deadline for booking has now passed. Val can be contacted at the University on 0191 3864058 if you need more information. The weekend promises to be a great success with the opportunity to welcome back some old friends who have been pursuing other interests for a few years. There will also be the chance to meet at least half a dozen new members making their first visit to a BMIG weekend.

AGM notice and notification of a proposed change to the By-laws

All BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 7pm on Friday 1st April. The venue will be Penthouse A/B in Collingwood College, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LT. The minutes of the 2004 AGM held at Green Park, Aston Clinton are on the BMIG 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.

A change to the section of the By-laws relating to the make-up of the committee is being proposed and will be voted on at the AGM. The proposed change is:

COMMITTEE

1. 'and up to three other elected or co-opted members' will now read 'and up to five elected or co-opted members'

Bulletin Of The British Myriapod And Isopod Group Volume 21

Material is required for Volume 21. Very little had been received by the deadline and it is looking increasingly unlikely that this volume will be produced in 2005. The publication of the Bulletin is dependant on a continuous supply of contributions from you. As a matter of urgency please send your papers or short communications or items for inclusion under Miscellanea to Tony Barber, Steve Gregory or Helen Read at the addresses given at the end of this newsletter.

Sheffield street safari

I am pleased to be able to announce that "Street Safari", a two year community project running in north Sheffield has been offered funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It brings together Sorby Natural History Society and Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust in a series of activities aimed at developing the next generation of naturalists and gathering biological records from a very under-recorded area of the city. Results will feed back into the new What on Earth! gallery at Weston Park Museum and into the ecology unit biological records centre.

Together we will deliver community based activities and workshops to cascade skills from experienced naturalists down to children, local groups and individuals. One aim is also to offer help and resources to develop the Sorby juniors and other young people's wildlife groups. Museum staff and Sorby members will work together to present and get involved in a wide range of activities through guided walks, weekend events, evening events and even beer garden bug hunts!

The deprived nature of the area in which this project is initially working means that gardens and derelict land will be the primary habitats in which to collect. Therefore we anticipate that myriapods and isopods will be high on the agenda for wildlife walks and events, as they are likely to prove to be some of the more interesting beasts around. Initial activities will be simple general guided walks, but as they become more focussed we will present talks and workshops on invertebrates. The aim is to be running specialist workshops in the area in two years time, for locals, Sorby members and others from beyond Sheffield. We also

hope that such events will be being run by the community members themselves, based on the skills and relationships that have been developed during the project.

One particularly exciting outcome from this and the Weston Park Museum project is the development of a simplified version of RECORDER biological recording software, which we have developed with Dorset Software and Luxembourg Museum of Natural History. This will enable beginners to input reliable information into the database without prior training in the use of RECORDER. This is based on a pictorial pick list for entering species records. I hope to include some of the more distinctive isopods and myriapods, but don't initially plan to include too many genitalia images!

This project has huge potential for developing beyond this initial phase into other cities in Yorkshire and beyond. Some of the inspiration for the project comes from the ongoing loss of specialist systematic science skills, as highlighted by the House of Lords, What on Earth? report and the National Biodiversity Network education framework objectives. But a major objective is to re-establish and develop our traditional relationship with SNHS and the biological recording community in Sheffield and help to maintain our position as one of the most environmentally aware and well recorded cities in the world.

I look forward in the next two years to being able to send in lots of urban records to the recording schemes to make the new atlas almost immediately out of date!

For further information, please contact me on 0114 2782649 or paul.richards@sheffieldgalleries.org.uk
Paul Richards, Curator of Natural History, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust.

XIIth International Congress of Myriapodology to be held in Bergen, Norway, 24th to 29th July 2005

Dear Myriapod friends!

This is an announcement to say that our web-pages at www.uib.no/myria2005/ seem to be up and running. Please take your time to read through the information, and if you have any questions do not hesitate to bring them forward.

Per, me and the rest of the "volunteers", wish you all welcome to Bergen and the conference in July!

Bjarne Meidell, Head of Natural History Collections, Bergen Museum/University of Bergen, Muséplass 3, N- 5020 Bergen

An update on *Trachysphaera lobata*

In the last issue of the newsletter, Andy Keay, reported the likely extinction of *Trachysphaera lobata* in the UK due to coastal erosion at its only remaining site on the Isle of Wight. In an editorial comment I mentioned that BMIG were discussing with Buglife, the possibility of funding work to conserve the millipede. However, this provided no short term answers and it was English Nature who contributed to the costs of three days of fieldwork on the Isle of Wight from 5th to 8th January 2005. Four BMIG members, Steve Gregory, Andy Keay, Helen Read and I, visited the site at Bembridge and several other potential *Trachysphaera* habitats nearby. We found *Trachysphaera* in good numbers at Bembridge and collected the first male specimens to be

found there. These should enable the identity of the species to be confirmed. Despite careful searching, none of the other sites visited yielded the millipede. The rate of erosion at Bembridge is definitely a threat to *Trachysphaera* and we found evidence of other threats such as tree felling, aggregate extraction and waste tipping, as well. Although extinction may not be as imminent as was first thought, the species is certainly endangered and further research into its ecology and conservation is urgently required. A full report on the fieldwork, including recommendations for further research, has been submitted to English Nature and a copy of the report will be placed in the BMIG library. Preserved specimens of the animal will also be added to the BMIG collection at Dinton Pastures once the species identity has been confirmed.

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

Sixth International Crustacean Congress to be held at Glasgow University, July 18-22 2005

The information for the congress is available now at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/icc6/>. The deadline for cheaper rate registration and for the submission of abstracts is 15th March 2005.

Glyn M. Collis, Flat 2, Hawthorn Park, 22 Argyle Place, Rothesay, Isle of Bute, PA20 0BA

Of isopods and Hollywood stars: the measure of sexual selection

On a more amusing note, my eye was caught by the above title of a book review in the Journal of Evolutionary Biology, 18 (1) p243, Dec 2004. This is a review of 'Mating Systems and Strategies' by S. M. Shuster & M. J. Wade. We are told that all is revealed about Isopods and Hollywood Stars in chapter 5. It is nice to see Isopods in the headlines, although those expecting tabloid titillation may be disappointed - heavy statistical modelling I'm afraid.

Glyn M. Collis, Flat 2, Hawthorn Park, 22 Argyle Place, Rothesay, Isle of Bute, PA20 0BA

***Porcellio spinicornis* in Western Scotland**

Porcellio spinicornis appears to have a north-eastern bias in Britain and, although widespread across eastern Scotland, there are very few records from western areas. Last year (2004) I had a request from Glyn Collis for more information about the two records of *Porcellio spinicornis* that appeared to be from the Isle of Bute on the western coast of Scotland. With a bit of research (mainly by Glyn) it emerged that the two records were from adjacent Islay and Arran. Obviously, I challenged Glyn and Dawn to find it on Bute too.

In August they wrote to inform me they had – in the flat they had just moved into. I quote, “we have to consider the possibility that we brought them with us from Warwickshire. However, this seems unlikely. Although *P. spinicornis* can be found not far from where we lived before, we never found it in the immediate vicinity of our house. We found them on Bute less than a week after moving into the flat, and I think our specimens (dead) had been there a while. In addition, there is the old unconfirmed record by Patience at the turn of the century.”

It would seem likely that this species could be expected to occur inside houses over much of western Scotland. Glyn's solution to the apparent need for more surveys was "I guess we'll just have to make lots of friends and search their houses for woodlice - what else are friends for?" Hopefully to ply some of the local whisky too!

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

BMIG Expedition to Galicia 2004 – a preliminary centipede report

I have almost finished identifying the geophilomorphs from Galicia. The species identified so far are *Schendyla nemorensis*, *Brachygeophilus truncorum*, *Strigamia acuminata*, *Arenophilus peregrinus* (the first non British record taken near Central de Lindoso power station, Viana do Castelo, Portugal) and *Geophilus easoni*. (a number of specimens but I need to check them). Also there are probable *Henia vesuviana* and another *Henia* sp. but they don't quite fit. Although Minelli (1981) produced a paper on them I am not clear about the differences between all the European species. Marzio Zapparoli has kindly offered to look at them. It is typical of the geophilomorphs and scolopendromorphs that whenever one looks at a fresh genus it seems that a revision is required in order to be sure of a correct identification!

Marzio has agreed to do the Lithobiomorpha which, when I sorted them, appeared to be many and various and defied all attempts that I made to put names to them. He has started!

In the Scolopendromorpha there are a lot of *Cryptops* specimens and, as they all need clearing in order to see the sutures on the head plate and tergite one, this will take some time. It may be that they will not be straightforward.

Dr J.G.E. Lewis, Manor Mill Farm, Halse, Taunton, TA4 3AQ

A possible new British species from Kew

On Sunday 26th September 2004 I joined the British Arachnological Society visit to Kew Gardens. I had been unable to attend the BMIG visit to Kew in 2002 and wanted to see some of the introduced millipede species associated with the site, specifically *Haplopodoiulus spathifer*, *Poratia digitata* and *Prosopodesmus panporus*. Although I did collect *Choneiulus palmatus*, *Cylindroiulus truncorum*, *Cylindroiulus vulnerarius* and *Oxidus gracilis* I failed to find any of my three "target" species. In the Palm House there were swarms of small white flat-backed millipedes that I assumed must be either *Poratia* or *Prosopodesmus*. I collected half a dozen but when I checked them under the microscope they were certainly not either of the suspects. Each segment was smooth and very hairy, most unlike the other small flat-backs I have seen. Unfortunately, amongst my specimens were females and a couple of immatures but no males. When I asked Helen Read about the finds from the BMIG visit she could not recall seeing anything that fitted the description I gave and nor could Steve Gregory or Paul Richards. However, when she checked her specimens she did find she had collected a few of the mystery species along with *Prosopodesmus* but again she had no males.

The British Arachnological Society is planning a return visit to Kew over the weekend of 25th and 26th June 2005. I intend to return to the Palm House in the hope of finally collecting some male specimens. All BMIG members are invited to join the BAS visit and hopefully help to discover the identity of this millipede. I know many BMIG members are also members of BAS and will therefore receive details of the field meetings. If any non-BAS member wishes to attend please get in touch with me and I will pass on the details of the arrangements as I receive them.

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

The Woodlice of Gibraltar

Jason Easter recently sent me a copy of his paper on the woodlice of Gibraltar recently published by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. This contribution to the BMIG Library is gratefully received. It is a very well written introduction to woodlice of 'the rock' and there are some excellent photographs. There were some very familiar species, such as *Porcellionides pruinosus* and *Armadillidium vulgare*, as well as some very handsome Mediterranean species. I noticed a conspicuous absence of Trichoniscids, but Jason tells me that there are other woodlice species present on Gibraltar that he has not yet identified. I guess we can look forward to an update in a few years time. Not unexpectedly, Jason has avoided fieldwork during the summer months because of the intense heat.

Perhaps we should add Gibraltar, next to the Channel Islands, at the base of the UK distribution map for each species.

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

Defleshing reference collection carcasses

The message below from the Zooarchaeology Bulletin Board (posted 8th September 2004 by Julie Curl of the Norfolk Museums Service) was circulated to Conchology-UK subscribers, and I thought BMIG newsletter readers might like to know of this unusual use for woodlice as 'working animals'. They will certainly be safer to keep in the vicinity of museum collections than some of the insects such as *Dermestes* beetles that have traditionally been used for defleshing small carcasses, but conchologists may be disappointed if they try to use large woodlice for cleaning small snail shells!

"For small creatures like amphibians, small rodents, etc, I would also recommend the use of woodlice for defleshing the carcass. A tank of woodlice, with a clear area for laying out the carcass is needed. It is best not to put vegetable matter in for the woodlice while they have a carcass to deflesh - that way they will get on with cleaning the bones a bit quicker! While they will eat the flesh, they are gentle enough not to disturb the bones in the process. Despite people thinking that woodlice only like wood/plant material, most species will eagerly eat animals (and even each other) if they get the chance. *Porcellio scaber* are probably the best and easiest to keep in a tank for this purpose."

Colin McLeod, 65 Johnston Avenue, Dundee, DD3 8EY

Myriapods and Isopods at Flatford Mill revisited

Following on last year's Field Studies Council course at Flatford Mill, yet more eager students met for a long weekend from 18th to 21st February 2005 hoping to learn more of the delights of multi-legged beasties. The course was fully booked and despite the arctic weather conditions all twelve students arrived safely. The group included several new BMIG members as well as our long time stalwart, Ken Hill, and some experienced invertebrate researchers. The format was pretty much the same as last year and again *Ligia oceanica* and *Craspedosoma rawlinsii* were successfully located at known sites close to the field centre. We also managed to collect a number of small white species, including *Brachychaeteuma bradeae*, *Haplophthalmus danicus*, *Macrosterodesmus palicola* and *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi*, from around the car park at Flatford Mill although it was not always easy to spot them amidst the snow flakes that kept falling! We failed yet again to find any *Trichoniscoides*, but the chance to try out some dissection was offered by a number of millipede specimens, all of which turned out to be *Cylindroiulus britannicus*. After another successful weekend I fully expect to be meeting a third group next year. Get in touch with the staff at Flatford Mill if you are interested and want to be informed when the dates have been set.
Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingsstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

In the journals

The following two recent papers on crustaceans may be of interest to newsletter readers:

Cowling, J., Spicer, J.I., Gaston, K.J. and Weeks, J.M. 2004. Current status of an amphipod invader, *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* (Hunt, 1925), in Britain. *Journal of Natural History*. **38**(13) pp 1665 - 1675.

This paper updates the 1988 review of the distribution of *Arcitalitrus* by Paul Harding and Stephen Sutton. The species is reported from 60 new 10-km squares including sites in South Wales and London. However, the authors conclude that there is no clear evidence of range expansion taking place.

Amato, J.F.R., Amato, S.B., Araujo, P.B. and Quadros, A.F. 2003. First report of pigmentation dystrophy in terrestrial isopods, *Atlantoscia floridana* (van Name) (Isopoda, Oniscidea), induced by larval acanthocephalans. *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia*. **20** (4) pp 711-716.

Although the condition has been observed previously in *Asellus*, this paper reports the first observation of depigmentation in woodlice caused by acanthocephalans. The paper includes some nice photographs of pigmented and depigmented woodlice and of the parasite.

If you have not already seen it, many of you will also want to get hold of the following British Wildlife article on millipedes by Steve Hopkin:

Hopkin, S.P. 2004. Millipedes. *British Wildlife*. **16**(2) pp 77-84.

This article provides an excellent introduction to millipedes for the general naturalist and includes a number of Steve's

own photographs. Right up to date, there is a photograph of *Adenomeris gibbosa* and reference to its discovery at Aston Clinton during last year's BMIG weekend. There are also a few photographs from other sources and unfortunately the editor has failed to correct a misidentification in one of these. You can work out which one for yourself!

Singapore breaks world record for longest Lego millipede

At the end of last year Singapore became the fifteenth country to attempt the world record for the longest millipede constructed from Lego bricks. Three million pieces of Lego were used to make the 2,600-leg millipede. It took 2,000 volunteers two months to assemble the model which, at 1,410 metres in length, has surpassed the previous Canadian record of 1,398 metres. I do not know how anatomically correct the model is but more information and some pictures are available at website www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/122462/1/.html

Thanks to the several readers who sent me details of the link for this story.

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

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2005

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by
30 September 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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