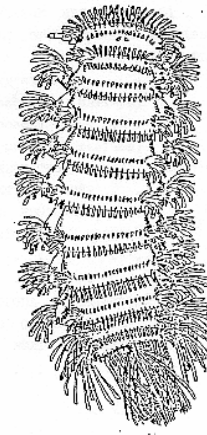




# British Myriapod and Isopod Group



AUTUMN 2003

Newsletter number 7

Editor: Paul Lee

## BMIG business

The Easter meeting at Reaseheath College, Cheshire was a great success with many of our European colleagues attending both the Manchester Colloquium and the field meetings. The AGM was held during the weekend and for those of you who could not attend or those who did attend but for one reason or another (Famous Grouse or draught Guinness perhaps) are unable to remember the minutes of the meeting should now be available on our website. I cannot give a full report on the species found over the weekend as many participants have not yet submitted their records but one of the first millipedes found in the grounds of the college was *Cylindroiulus vulnerarius*! As always during the weekend plans were laid for 2004 and with this issue you will have received a booking form inviting you to attend the meeting at Green Park, Aston Clinton in the Chilterns between 15 and 18 April 2004. You have until the start of February to book your place but as always prompt responses are much appreciated. In addition to the normal meeting the possibility of a BMIG expedition to NW Spain was also discussed at Reaseheath. As a result arrangements have been made for a small group to travel to Galicia from 23 to 30 March 2004. There may be one or two places still available to join this expedition so if you are interested please contact me as soon as possible for details.

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

## Affiliation to the BENHS

The BMIG is now formally affiliated to the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS). This will probably have no visible impact on the running of the BMIG as far as our members are concerned but there are various advantages, hopefully both to us and the BENHS. The chief benefit to BMIG is that we now have insurance cover for our field meetings. We hope that this is something that we will never need but in these days of increasing litigation it is necessary that we are covered.

## Facilities for meetings, a library and reference collection

The BENHS have their own premises at Dinton Pastures Country Park near Reading. The building houses a library and entomological collection which is open for their members to visit on one or two Sundays each month. In the past the BMIG has discussed the possibility of having a

library but had nowhere sensible to store it. Now that problem is solved! The BENHS are very happy for us to have some shelf space to house the library and we have nominated Steve Gregory, the member of the committee living nearest to Dinton Pastures, as our librarian. The Committee has proposed that in the first instance it should consist of items by British authors, about British species or of relevance to British workers. Steve would be pleased to receive items for the library. Currently he has a small number of books originating from Gordon Blower's collection and some donations from other Committee members but is especially lacking some of the classic Isopod literature. The library will be accessible for reference to all members at Dinton Pastures on the open days as mentioned above and it is possible that some items may be borrowed by special arrangement with Steve.

The facilities at Dinton Pastures would enable us to hold a reference collection of British species and this is something we are looking into. For health and safety reasons any collection would have to be stored in a secure metal cabinet and we are currently finding out more details (including of course prices!). In the future we may be asking members if they have any spare specimens they would be prepared to donate to the collection. Members would be able to make use of the collection at Dinton Pastures (there are microscopes for use there too).

We are also able to make use of the facilities for meetings and workshops and have already held one Committee meeting there.

## Events, newsletters and other publications

Our events and activities will now be open to members of the BENHS and vice versa. In practice we have not quite established how this will work! As we have just a small number of events these will be listed in the BENHS programme in future and we hope to welcome some of their members to our activities. The BENHS have a very full and active programme and to list all their events would completely overload our newsletter! In the short term we are making a link between the two websites so that it should make it easy for our members to find out if there is any

event they wish to attend. For those that are unable to access the web I am happy to send a paper version of the programme if you contact me. If anyone has any better ideas about how to do this then we would be pleased to hear! The various BENHS publications are now available to BMIG members at a discounted rate and in the future this may be an option for the publication of isopod and myriapod books or keys.

#### A whole new world!

We hope that affiliation will open up a range of new opportunities for the BMIG. We have the opportunity of using the considerable expertise of BENHS in matters such as finance and there is the possibility of holding joint meetings in the future. We are looking forward to welcoming some new members as a result of this initiative!

If anyone would like more information please contact me (or Steve Gregory if it is concerning the library or reference collection). The BENHS website address is:

[www.benhs.org.uk](http://www.benhs.org.uk).

A recorded message giving the dates of open days at Dinton Pastures and other events organised by BENHS can be heard on 0118 932 1402. Look out for items in future newsletters with more details about the library, collections and events. Helen Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3LE

#### ***Lithobius variegatus* in N.W.Scotland**

*Lithobius variegatus* is well known to be largely absent from eastern Britain and a glance at the Centipede Atlas (Barber & Keay, 1988) indicates its apparent absence from much of Scotland other than three 10km records from Skye and others from further south mostly in the west coast area and isles. There appeared to be no records from either the mainland coastal region opposite Skye (Wester Ross) or from the Western Isles.

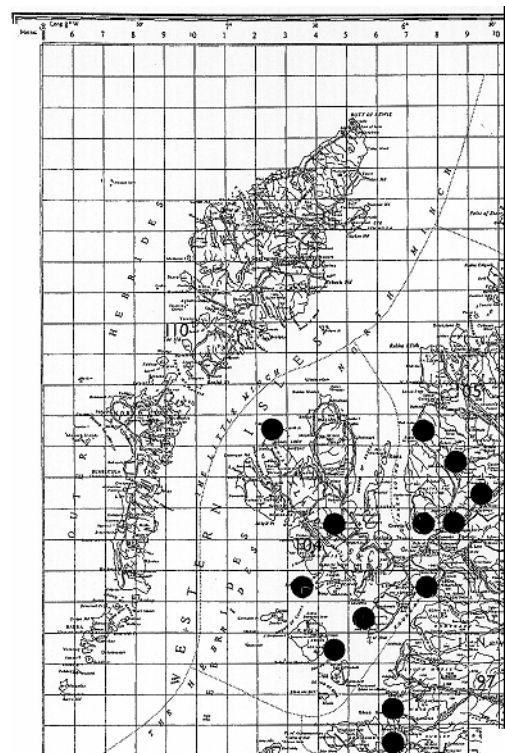
The difficulty in interpreting the data for such an area as the Western Highlands is the overall scarcity of records of myriapods. This is no doubt due to a combination of lack of collectors visiting the area and the relative inaccessibility of certain parts. Gordon Corbet and others have made various forays into these areas and his experience in the Western Isles this summer was not to find *L.variegatus* (or many records altogether) primarily as a result of the weather conditions.

A number of records of myriapods from Skye were made by Bruce Philp in the early 1980s during the course of other field work. Amongst these were the three *L.variegatus* locations of Sligachan, Rudh'an Dunain and Geary as shown in the atlas.

During late August 2003, whilst on holiday in the area, I took the opportunity to look at a few sites in both Wester Ross and on Skye. The preceding weeks had been hot and dry and not conducive to finding many specimens despite subsequent rain. As a consequence, a number of localities were searched for myriapods in vain. However some records were made and the present species was recorded

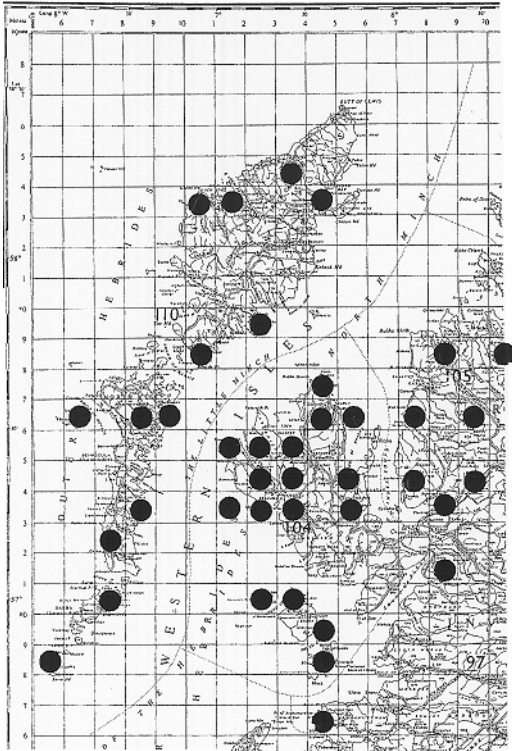
from five 10km squares in Wester Ross and two in Skye. These, together with earlier records (including some from Gordon Corbet), are shown on Map 1.

Records on the mainland ranged from Strathellen Wood, south of Loch Carron to Toscaig on the Applecross Peninsula to Annat and Lower Diabaig in the Loch Torridon area. The latter seems to be the most northerly record for the species. However, a collection made in lakeside woodland at Loch Maree (adjacent to Bein Eigh NNR) failed to turn it up even though several millipede and woodlice species and *Lithobius forficatus* were found there. A quick look at Inverewe Garden, where *Arcitallitrus dorrieni* was well established, yielded only *L.forficatus* and *Cylindroiulus punctatus*. It may be that Wester Ross is on the edge of the current range of *L.variegatus*.

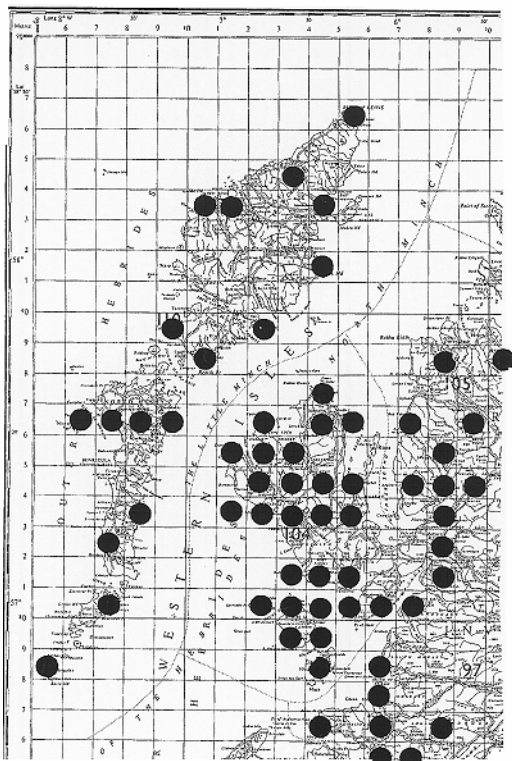


Map 1: *Lithobius variegatus* records

In Skye, despite the earlier records from three rather scattered locations, searching of likely habitats in various parts in the north and east of the island failed to produce the species. These habitats included both woodland and open moor e.g. at Storr Lochs, an area of moorland with loose stones, the only species found was *Lithobius melanops* in a roadside lay-by and at Leacan Nighean an t-Slosslaich, a rather isolated upland grass-moor with stones, only a number of *L.forficatus*. Similarly, in an area of forestry at Dunvegan, five millipede species were found but only one centipede, *L.forficatus*. *L. variegatus* was however, found in two locations looked at in the Sleat area, moorland with stones at Aird of Sleat and a forestry picnic area at Kinloch. Sleat is the most southern part of Skye, with the mildest climate, most influenced by the Gulf Stream.



Map 2: *Lithobius forficatus* records



Map 3: All centipede records

Several locations on the island of Raasay were also visited including grassland, moorland and forest. *L. forficatus* was found here but no *L. variegatus*. Gordon Corbet has records from both Rhum and from the Ardnamurchan area as well as further south.

Obviously the weather and time of year militated against finding myriapods in a number of areas and may have influenced the likelihood of finding the species. However, comparison of the distribution map for *L. variegatus* with that for *L. forficatus* (Map 2) and that for all centipede records (Map 3) suggests that its distribution is probably limited or at least rather patchy here.

It would be extremely useful to have more records of all species from this area of Scotland and adjacent ones. Collection of centipedes could be combined, perhaps, with the sampling of *Black Cuillin*, *Blaven* and *Young Pretender* amongst other offerings from the brewery at Uig. I would recommend "The Isles Inn" in Portree for good food and good beer (even if it is not in the Good Beer Guide).

A full report on the myriapods collected will be published later.

Reference.

Barber, A.D. & Keay, A.N. (1988) *Provisional Atlas of the Centipedes of the British Isles*. Huntingdon, NERC

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

**Swarming of *Cylindroiulus londinensis* in Wales**

On 29 June 2003, Sam Bosanquet and I came across large numbers of the millipede *Cylindroiulus londinensis* in very peculiar circumstances. There were a thousand or more of them, all dead, mostly fresh-looking but many somewhat decomposed and in places heaped up several deep. They were all on the edges of and around a heap of de-icing salt (2m x 1m in extent and about 30cm high) at the edge of a narrow road at Cwmrhaidr (SN757963, 180m a.s.l.) about 4km south of Machynlleth. This is a remote valley and the salt heap was in a sloping pasture below a hedgebank, 200m from the nearest habitation and garden. All of the specimens appeared to be of a similar size. Could the millipedes have been attracted to the salt and why were there so many of them? The salt must have been there since early winter and I cannot imagine that they had been brought in with it; anyway they were on and around it not mixed in with it.

Arthur Chater, Windover, Penyrangor, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1BJ

**A new *Cylindroiulid* species in Northern Ireland**

I have found a well-established colony of what appears to be a Caucasian julid at a site called Mount Stewart in Co. Down, N. Ireland. I shall be writing a full account for publication at a later date but the specimens would key to *Cylindroiulus truncorum/parisiorum* in Blower's Linnean Society Synopsis (1985). It is a highly distinctive species, however, in that many males exhibit much thickened and strongly sculptured metazonites and appear both very dark in colour and strongly ornamented. It keys to *Cylindroiulus bellus* in the literature available to me but caution would suggest that it be referred to 'a member of the *Cylindroiulus truncorum* group close to *bellus*' for the time being. There are some differences between published figures of the opisthomerites of *bellus* and the Mount Stewart specimens which I am trying to resolve. The promerites and mesomerites seem to agree. I think it very unlikely that

anyone else will have seen this species in Britain but if anyone is interested in receiving a specimen for reference this can be arranged.

Roy Anderson, Dept. of Agricultural & Environmental Science, The Queen's University of Belfast, Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5PX

### **Porcellio spinicornis in shingle**

Earlier this year I completed the analysis of some pitfall trap samples from Sudbourne Beach on the Suffolk coast. This is the narrow neck of shingle that connects Orford Ness to the mainland at Slaughden, just south of Aldeburgh. The pitfalls were set approximately 50cm deep in the shingle at the bottom of a cylinder of chicken wire. Two transects of 10 traps each were set for a period of four or five days each month from April 2002 to March 2003. One transect was in an area of undisturbed shingle whilst the other was in an area from which shingle had been extracted several years previously and from which further extraction commenced halfway through the sampling period. The invertebrates identified from the traps included several rarities but it was the presence of the woodlouse *Porcellio spinicornis* that surprised me the most. A specimen of this species was found in the rubble of a derelict building on Orford Ness in 1997 but most Suffolk records are from old walls in churchyards. In this survey it was the most frequently recorded woodlouse throughout the year occurring in traps from 20m to 100m above high water level but only along the disturbed transect. *Porcellio spinicornis* has not been recorded previously living within coastal shingle (Gregory, pers. comm.) and presumably it is relying on the input from marine shells to provide the calcareous environment it requires. This provides an interesting parallel with the distribution of the millipede *Polyxenus lagurus* which can also be found on old church walls as well as on the shore. *Porcellionides cingendus* was also recorded from some traps but only in the undisturbed area. Are populations of this woodlouse unable to cope with the massive habitat disturbance caused by shingle extraction or is it possible that competition with *Porcellio spinicornis*, introduced during previous extraction operations, is responsible for its absence?

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

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

Publication is now due in late 2003. The editors offer their apologies for the delay.

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

### **E.H. Eason's "Centipedes of the British Isles"**

This publication, which has been out of print for many years and growing in price as a second-hand book, is now available as a CD with all the text and plates and with hypertext navigation built in. It can be purchased for £20 inc. VAT and postage from Pisces Conservation Ltd. who can be found on the internet at:

<http://www.pisces-conservation.com/softeason.html>

## **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:

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

[Karin.Voigtlaender@smng.smwk.sachsen.de](mailto:Karin.Voigtlaender@smng.smwk.sachsen.de)

### **NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2004**

**Please send your contributions to reach the editor by  
28 February 2004**

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

BMIG Hon. Sec.:

**Dr H.J.Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common,  
Bucks. SL2 3LE**

E-mail: [H.J.Read@btinternet.com](mailto:H.J.Read@btinternet.com)

Centipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

**Mr A.D. Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD**

E-mail: [tbarber@pcfe.ac.uk](mailto:tbarber@pcfe.ac.uk)

Millipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

**Mr P. Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX**

E-mail: [paullee@arachne.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:paullee@arachne.fsnet.co.uk)

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme Organiser:

**Mr S. Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA**

Tel: 01865 407792 Fax: 01865 407131

E-mail: [oniscidea@btopenworld.com](mailto:oniscidea@btopenworld.com) or  
[steve.gregory@northmoortrust.co.uk](mailto:steve.gregory@northmoortrust.co.uk)

**Biological Records Centre, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Monks  
Wood, Abbots Ripton, HUNTINGDON PE28 2LS**

Tel: 01487 772400 Fax: 01487 773467 E-mail: [pha@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:pha@ceh.ac.uk)

The British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter is printed and distributed for the British Myriapod and Isopod Group by the Biological Records Centre, supported by funding from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Data Protection Act 1998

To assist mailing the BMIG Newsletter and other BRC publications, names and addresses of recipients are held on a computer database; they will not be passed to others without prior permission. Individuals not wanting their name and address held on computer should notify BRC in writing