Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group 17 (2001)

WOODLICE RECORDED DURING THE BMIG FIELD MEETING IN ESSEX (2000)

Steve Gregory

Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, nr. Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RA
e-mail: steve.gregory@northmoortrust.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

For recording purposes Essex is divided into two vice counties: vc 18 (south Essex) and vc 19 (north Essex). Harding and Sutton (1985) record 18 species of woodlice from the county as a whole (see Table 1), but there are very few records for many species and it is apparent that the county is relatively under recorded. From 1987 onwards the activities of the Essex Spider Group generated many woodlouse records during their countywide search for spiders. These and other local records, predominantly those held by the Colchester Natural History Museum (mainly 1970's-80's) and those of the author (who between 1991 and 1994 made several visits to the north-east of the county), have been collated by Peter Harvey. Records held at Monks Wood BRC have not been included. The database holds records for 21 species (Table 1) and Essex has a very good county wide coverage for the less elusive species (pers comm P.R.Harvey).

In April 2000, mainly as a result of the paucity of Myriapod records for the county (Harvey 2000), the BMIG's annual field meeting was based at St Marks College, Audley End a few miles south of Saffron Walden in the north-west of the county.

RESULTS OF THE FIELD MEETING: APRIL 2000

During the course of the weekend collections were made by 8 people from 23 sites covering 14 10km grid squares within three vice-counties. These are summarised Table 2 below. Although the majority records were made in the north-east of the county, not too far from base, some people were more adventurous and excursions were made further afield. For example, visits were made to Epping Forest and various churchyards towards the south, to the coast in the east and Paul Lee even sneaked across the border to visit a number of woodlands in Suffolk.

17 species of woodlice were collected during the weekend and the occurrence of various species is detailed in Table 2. Widespread species, in addition the usual 'famous 5' common species, were *Androniscus dentiger, Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi* and *Trichoniscus pygmaeus.* These were mainly recorded from churchyards or on the coast. *Ligidium hypnorum* (found at 3 sites) and *Haplophthalmus danicus* (2 sites) were perhaps less widely recorded than expected.

The grounds of St Marks College proved to be (jointly) the most diverse site for woodlice, an honour shared with Colne Point NNR which I shall mention below. Species of note include *Cylisticus convexus*, found beneath mats of plants in the gardens, and *Ligidium hypnorum,*

Haplophthalmus danicus and *Trichoniscoides albidus*, which were all found nearby under logs near a small stream.

One of the highlights for the weekend was the discovery *Trichoniscoides helveticus* a new county record. A single male was found by John Harper at the Harrison Sayer Reserve. This is a small remnant of calcareous grassland on boulder clay, a rare habitat in Essex (most has been ploughed for arable), but quite typical for this elusive species.

Table 1: Summary of woodlice known to occur in Essex

Species	Harding & Sutton 1985	Essex database
Ligia oceanica	+	+
Ligidium hypnorum	+	+
Androniscus dentiger	+	+
Haplophthalmus danicus		+
Haplophthalmus mengei seg.		+
Miktoniscus patience		+
Trichoniscoides albidus	+	+
Trichoniscus pusillus	+	+
Trichoniscus pygmaeus	+	+
Stenophiloscia zosterae	+	
Oniscus asellus	+	+
Philoscia muscorum	+	+
Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi	+	+
Armadillidium album	+	+
Armadillidium nasatum	+	+
Armadillidium vulgare	+	+
Cylisticus convexus	+	+
Eluma purpurecsens		+
Porcellio dilatatus	+	
Porcellio laevis	+	
Porcellio scaber	+	+
Porcellionides cingendus		+
Porcellionides pruinosus	+	+
Trachelipus rathkei		+
Total - 24	18	21

As usual the coast, sampled by Derek Whiteley, Imogen Wilde and myself, didn't disappoint. Walton on the Naze, east of Colchester, is a series of eroding clay cliffs, sandy grassland and a well developed sandy spit ('The Naze') at the far end. Historically it is well worked and long known to support the elusive *Trichoniscoides albidus* and the rare pill-bug *Armadillidium album*. Both were re-found. The former proved wide-spread in small numbers, whilst *A. album* was found at far end of the Naze in the same location as I found it in 1994. Here large quantities of rubbish and debris had accumulated and it was found by carefully searching amongst strandline debris and within underlying sand. Nearby a single specimen of *Miktoniscus patiencei* (a new species for this site) was found under a stone by Imogen. Conditions looked ideal for *Trichoniscoides saeroeensis*, but despite careful searching none were found.

Colne Point NNR lies about 10 miles down the coast. We walked along the strandline of the poorly vegetated shingle beach, turning pieces of driftwood as we went. A few *Armadillidium album* were seen, but also many specimens of a small pinkish species somewhat reminiscent of a large, but pale *Trichoniscus pusillus*. I have to confess I was completely stumped and didn't know what it was. A few specimens were collected and, much to my surprise, they turned out to be *Stenophiloscia zosterae*. In all 12 species were collected in the vicinity, including more *Trichoniscoides albidus* under stones beside a small stream, but still no *T. saeroeensis* were discovered.

DISCUSSION

A considerable number of new 10km square records were made for the less common species and the coverage for the county is looking quite respectable. The 17 species recorded reflect the mix of inland, coastal and synanthropic habitats examined.

The re-discovery of *S. zosterae*, after 25 years absence in the county, has to be the highlight of the weekend. The few British records are virtually all from pitfall traps (Harding, Cotton & Rundle 1980). This has previously proved to be an extremely elusive species and only two specimens have ever been collected live in Britain (Harding *et al* 1980, Daws 1995). The discovery of this species at Colne Point NNR is discussed in more detail in Gregory, Whiteley & Wilde (2001).

T. helveticus is another important find. There are very few records for this species, mainly from undisturbed calcareous woodland or grassland in south-eastern England. It is elusive and may prove to be quite wide spread wherever friable or rubbly lime-rich soils occur in the south-east (ie most areas!).

Several species previously recorded in the county were not re-found during the weekend. In the some cases, eg *Porcellionides pruinosus* (farmyards and manure heaps) and *Trachelipus rathkei* (riverside meadows), the right habitats were not surveyed. Others, such as *Porcellionides cingendus*, are probably genuinely very rare in the county and the odds were against us. However, the absence of *Haplophthalmus mengei* is puzzling as many apparent suitable sites were examined. There is only one record for this species in Essex, from amongst rubble in a roadside ditch in association with *Trichoniscoides albidus*. Harding and Sutton (1985) comment that *H. mengei* becomes scarce towards south-eastern England and it may be that this species is also genuinely rare in the county.

With a total of 17 species recorded, many new 10km records, the rediscovery of *S. zosterae* and a new county record (*T. helveticus*) we can conclude it was a successful field meeting. Our thanks go to Ken Hill for organising the event.

REFERENCES

Daws J. (1995) *Stenophiloscia zosterae* in Suffolk. *Newsletter of the British Isopod Study Group*, No.38. Unpublished.

Gregory, S., Whiteley, D. & Wilde, I. (2001) Some observations of Stenophiloscia zosterae (Verhoeff, 1928) at Colne Point NNR, North Essex. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* **17**: 79-80.

Harding P.T., Cotton M.J. & Rundle A.J. (1980) The occurrence of *Halophiloscia (Stenophiloscia) zosterae* Verhoeff, 1928 (Isopoda, Oniscidea) in Great Britain. *Crustaceana* 39: 1.

Harding P.T. and Sutton S.L. (1985) *Woodlice in Britain and Ireland: Distribution and Habitat.* ITE.

Harvey P.R. (2000) Myriapoda: A Review of their Status in Essex. *The Essex Naturalist (New Series)* **17:** 191-204.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to Peter Harvey (Essex Spider Group and County Woodlouse Recorder) for his helpful comments and for providing provisional distribution maps for the county.

LIST OF SITES VISITED IN ESSEX, 27TH APRIL TO 30TH APRIL 2000

1 - Gernon Bushes, TL4702, vc 18
2 - Moreton Churchyard, TL537071, vc 19
3 - Leaden Roding Churchyard, TL590133, vc 19
4 - Hatfield Forest, TL546204, vc 19
5 - Rowney Wood, TL568338, vc 19
6 - Saffron Walden, TL533372, vc 19
7 - St Marks College, TL5233375, vc 19
8 - Harrison-Sayer Reserve, Hadstock, TL557435, vc 19
9 - Bartlow, TL582450, vc 19
10 - Shadwell Wood, Church End, TL573412, vc 19
11 - Woodland near Leaden Roding, TL6012, vc 19
12 - Hempstead Wood, TL663386, vc 19
13 - Woodland near Hempstead Wood, TL666386, vc 19
14 - Ladygate Wood, Haverhill, TL6544, vc 26
15 - Felsham Wood, Bradfield Woods NNR, TL9358, vc 26
16 - Felsham Wood, Bradfield Woods NNR, TL9357, vc 26
17 - Bulls Wood, Cockfield, TL9254, vc 26
18 - Epping Forest, TQ4096, vc 18
19 - Epping Forest, TQ4195, vc 18
20 - Colne Point NNR, TM0912, vc 19
21 - Colne Point NNR, TM1012, vc 19
22 - Walton on the Naze, under cliffs, TM2624, vc 19
23 - Walton on the Naze, The Naze, TM263248, vc 19

TABLE 2: LIST OF SITES VISITED DURING THE BMIG FIELD MEETING TO ESSEX (APRIL 2000)

Site number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Vice -county:	18	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	26	26	26	26	18	18	19	19	19	19	
10km grid square:	TL 40	TL 50	TL 51	TL 52	TL 53	TL 53	TL 53	TL 54	TL 54	TL 54	TL 61	TL 63	TL 63	TL 64	TL 95	TL 95	TL 95	TQ 49	TQ 49	TM 01	TM 11	TM 22	TM 22	
Androniscus dentiger	+	+					+											+			+	+		6
Armadillidium album																				+	+		+	3
Armadillidium vulgare	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	19
Cylisticus convexus							+																	1
Haplophthalmus danicus							+			+														2
Ligia oceanica																					+			1
Ligidium hypnorum		+					+									+								3
Oniscus asellus	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		20
Miktoniscus patiencei																							+	1
Philoscia muscorum	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+		+				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	18
Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi	+	+	+	+			+	+										+			+	+		9
Porcellio scaber	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	22
Stenophiloscia zosterae																				+	+			2
Trichoniscoides albidus							+														+		+	2
Trichoniscoides helveticus								+																1
Trichoniscus pusillus	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	21
Trichoniscus pygmaeus	+	+	+				+		+							+					+	+		8

Records were contributed by Tony Barber, Steve Gregory, John Harper, Paul Lee, John Lewis, Helen Read, Imogen Wilde and Derek Whiteley