

BOOK REVIEW:

MILLIPEDES, CENTIPEDES AND WOODLICE OF THE SHEFFIELD AREA

by Paul Richards

Sorby Natural History Society, Sheffield City Museum. 91 pages. (Available from City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield, S10 2TP. £5.43 including p+p).

Occasionally local museums and natural history societies produce guides or lists of myriapods from their area. This is a much more ambitious publication and, by the nature of its content, has a much wider relevance than to just the area of the Sorby Natural History Society; they are to be very much commended on it.

After a general introduction to taxonomy, habitat, collecting techniques, preservation and identification and recording, the book goes on to deal with each of the three groups named in turn with an introduction to the group, a key and reports and 1km grid square maps of each species. Of particular interest are the keys which include sketch drawings and although of limited value to 'southerners' because of the species not included they are usefully comprehensive for anyone working in the English Midlands northward. Several 'southern' species have crept in by being found much further north than expected such as *Lithobius muticus* and *L. pilicornis*.

There are a number of useful drawings in the text as well as in the keys, eight colour photographs (plus two on the covers) and black and white (presumably scanning electron micrographs) of several more to show particular features. Some 33 millipedes, 21 centipedes and 15 woodlice are described from the area with a comment that centipedes are probably under recorded. Hopefully this book will encourage someone to work on them. There are also comments on conservation and management and a useful set of references as well as British Myriapod Group and British Isopod Study Group contact addresses.

English names are introduced for some species. Some are familiar such as the bristly millipede and pill millipede, and the use of the name 'striped centipede' for *Lithobius variegatus* is very reasonable but, on a personal level, I feel uneasy about the 'club tailed snake millipede'. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the woodlouse names. Certainly there is said to be a barrier to popularisation compared with, say, Lepidoptera by the use of Latin binomials all the time and perhaps we should be addressing it but how far should we go? R.F. Lawrence in his Centipedes and Millipedes of Southern Africa uses English names for groups - Geophilomorpha (Earth centipedes, Scutigermorpha (Home or shield centipedes) etc. and we do indeed refer to *Blaniulus guttulatus* as the 'spotted snake millipede'.

There are undoubtedly likely to be things in the book which we might not all concur with but I have not found much so far. Recommended reading and as an attempt to popularise 'our' animals the author is to be congratulated.

A.D. Barber