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THE EUROPEAN MYRIAPOD SURVEY

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In 1978, after the British Myriapod Survey had been running successfully for several years, it was decided at the Fourth International Congress of Myriapodology in Gargnano, Italy, to implement such a scheme for the whole of Europe. At the same time it was further suggested that the results should be recorded for the European Invertebrate Survey. Thus the new scheme would result in maps which would show the geographical ranges of European species, but would also include ecological data so that the distribution of the species might be related to their habitats as well as to their geographical distribution. In general, the European atlases only show the latter. Discussion with the European Invertebrate Survey committee members elicited more encouragement for such a scheme, and since 1979 there has been an annual announcement about it in the circular of the Centre International de Myriapodologie produced by Dr. Demange and Dr. Mauries in Paris. Volunteers have been asked to contact R.D. Kime in Brussels, who is co-ordinating the Myriapod scheme and preparing the maps; however, where there is a National Recording Scheme, as in Britain, this information may eventually be sent by the National organizer. P.T. Harding and C.P. Fairhurst have prepared a habitat record card, which should soon be available to collectors, and is suitable for much of Northern and Western Europe. It should be stressed that neither the C.I.M. nor the E.I.S. has the financial structure to grant funds for this work.

Following correspondence and discussions with interested parties in many countries the following general ideas have been developed:

- a) It is intended to produce separate biome cards for tundra, taiga, temperate deciduous forest, temperate grassland, montane, mediterranean and desert regions (the area of the survey extends beyond the conventional boundaries of Europe).

There are obvious difficulties in delineating these areas exactly on a map, but it must be remembered that the cards would be coded for compatibility and in a transition zone the cards for either biome could be used. For instance, the card which will shortly be available will probably be able to be used virtually anywhere North and West of the Alps - apart from the far north - and though it covers habitats in temperate deciduous forest, it includes many other possibilities, such as grassland and waste places, in an environment so often dominated by man.

- b) With respect to habitat information the cards will differ from those at present used in Great Britain and Ireland. There will be more first and second order habitats and microsites, and some discarded sections. Other information will be included, such as aspect, slope and method of collection.
- c) Allowance will be made in the computer codings for all species likely to be found in the area concerned, and the results of further taxonomic discoveries. Lists have been drawn up of the known species occurring in Britain, Ireland, France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Austria, and lists of species have been started for several other countries. As it is not sensible to have many more than 50 species on one card, selection will be made for particular regions or countries, and the cards may be printed in appropriate different languages. Also the cards for one country may be divided into groups of families or orders; in France there are 100 species listed in the Order Chordeumatidae. So a series of cards could be constructed containing the same habitat information but differing in the taxonomic groups found on them.
- d) Such a scheme should be a co-operative venture, due recognition being given to work done at a regional or national level. Regular reports may be given to the C.I.M. and information received in Brussels would be freely given to interested parties. Obviously it is the intention to publish a provisional atlas as soon as the number of records received is adequate to give a fair idea of a number of species' distribution.

Contact has been made with research workers in many countries, but there are some such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union for which no contacts exist.

Altogether a few hundred maps have been started, but many contain only one record and very few give even a rough indication of the geographical range of a species. However, the foundations have been laid, and the next few years might lead to a marked improvement in our knowledge. The maps of some species, often those found in Britain and Ireland, contain a large number of records. Attempts will be made to interest persons known to be working in countries with which little or no contact has been made. Collecting will be encouraged in areas where records are scanty. Finally, old records will be sought in the literature, but this is a lengthy operation, and may prove costly.