

MISCELLANEA

A BLUE EXAMPLE OF *NECROPHLOEOPHAGUS FLAVUS* (DE GEER)

On 20th April 2000, whilst cultivating a vegetable plot at Little Comberton, Worcestershire (SO9643) I unearthed a specimen of the geophilomorph centipede *Necrophloeophagus flavus* (De Geer) some 14 cm deep in cohesive clay loam. The specimen, which had 55 pairs of legs, was generally clear sky blue.

Under a microscope the segments appeared opalescent cerulean blue with a shimmer of cobalt blue highlights. The first eight segments were more normally coloured and from the ninth the segments were somewhat more tumid than is usual. The blue coloration persisted for three hours following immersion in 70% alcohol, after which the animal became milky white in colour.

As I had never seen a blue geophilomorph, and was unable to find any references to the matter, I contacted Dr M. Judson and Dr J-P. Mauriès, invertebrate zoologists at MNHN, Paris, neither of whom could provide further information. Dr Judson kindly discussed the matter with Dr J-M. Demange, a recognised authority on Geophilomorphs with the following result :

- a. Geophilomorphs with violet or greenish tints are known but Demange was unaware of any records of sky-blue individuals.
- b. Some geophilomorphs produce a luminous secretion containing hydrogen cyanide. Could the blue coloration be, in some way, related to that?
- c. The effect of infection may also be considered.

April 2000 was the wettest April in England for over 300 years and 103.5 mm of rain fell at Little Comberton between April 1st and 20th.

A.D. Barber advises me that he and A.N. Keay found two specimens of *Geophilus osquidatum* in the Avon Gorge near Bristol during March 1984 which were "blue" and that when exposed to UV light showed fluorescence. Unfortunately the specimens are no longer available.

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SYSTEMIC REACTION TO A *LITHOBIUS FORFICATUS* BITE.

A 43 year old patient from a village near Reims with a history of hepatitis A at age 14 showed a systemic reaction with pruritis, fever, oedema and arthralgia 48 hours after he had been bitten by a millipede (!).

Whilst carrying armfuls of wood from a woodpile the man concerned had felt a sharp pain on the inside of the right forearm followed immediately by several inflamed areas of 3-5 cm diameter. Associated with the affected area were two small, faint, red bite marks. Over the succeeding hours the reaction extended with swelling of the forearm. Anti-inflammatory treatment was instituted by application of buprenorphine. 48 hours later there were signs of a general reaction with moderate fever (38°), swelling of the forearm, pruritis of the lower limbs, joint pains, etc. The symptoms were relieved with antihistamines but a month later there was further oedema of the forearm, intense pruritis and possibly further pyrexia. This was treated with antibiotic and disappeared after several days. Tests for Lyme disease as also for allergy to mosquitoes, horseflies, simuliids, cockroach, bees and wasps were all negative. The IgE titre was normal as for the venom of hymenoptera and mosquitoes.

A visit to the patient's home and careful examination of the woodpile in the cellar revealed many *Glomeris* and one single centipede. Examination of the original source of the wood from a stack on the outskirts of the village revealed dozens of centipedes similar to the one from the cellar which could be identified as *Lithobius forficatus*.

The possibility of a hypersensitivity reaction is considered. Systemic reactions to myriapod bites are exceedingly rare in Western Europe and are often mistakenly ascribed to hymenoptera stings.

REFERENCE

Lavaud, F., Bouchet, F., Remy, G., Sabouraud, D., Perdu, D. (1995) Morsure de myriapode (*Lithobius forficatus*): un cas de réaction systémique. *Semaine des Hôpitaux* 72 (31-32): 982-984.

GEOPHILUS OSQUIDATUM IN KENT

Geophilus osquidatum is generally regarded as a western species and is widespread in the south and west. However a female has now been recorded from a garden at Maidstone in Kent, Vice County 15 (2.6.00, confirmed R.E. Jones) and this seems to suggest that its range extends further to the east than previously thought, albeit a record from a synanthropic site.

The garden concerned has been monitored over a number of years and amongst species recorded are *Schendyla nemorensis*, *Henia brevis*, *Geophilus insculptus*, *Necrophloeophagus flavus*, *Cryptops anomalans*, *Lithobius forficatus*, *Lithobius melanops*, *Lithobius microps* and the millipedes *Blaniulus guttulatus*, *Cylindroiulus caeruleocinctus* and *Polydesmus coriaceus* (*gallicus*).

A.D.Barber

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CENTIPEDES FROM CAVES

Although there were a few records of centipedes from caves made by the Cave Research Group some years ago, the number of records of these animals from such habitats is limited. A new review of records of myriapods from British caves would be welcome.

I have recently examined some specimens sent by Max Moseley of Morecambe.

1. Hazel Grove Cave, Beetham, Lancashire, VC 60 (limestone cave)
(NGR 34/493728), several specimens crawling on walls and floor, deep threshold to dark zone, 29.09.99 :

Geophilus insculptus male (49 trunk segments), female (51 trunk segments)

Geophilus electricus male (67 trunk segments).

2. Warton Quarry Mine, Warton, Lancashire, VC 60 (abandoned mine working in limestone)
(NGR 34/487724), obtained by flotation from well rotted mine timber from under rocks, floor of adit, dark zone, 10.11.95 :

Geophilus insculptus immature

Hazel Grove Cave has been well collected but without any centipedes turning up before. On the day concerned there were several specimens crawling on the walls, ceiling, etc. The cave passage is quite shallow, only 1 - 2 m below the surface so possibly the animals entered the cave accidentally, writes the collector.

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HOTHOUSE INHABITANTS WANTED

We are looking for millipedes from European hothouses for ecological experiments. The animals are usually whitish, light brown or reddish. Their body length is up to 5mm. Temperature in their biotope is 24-28°C. They like to live on the soil surface below/on dead wood, bark, bark chips and stones. The period of their main activity is summer (July/August). These tiny millipedes mostly represent the species *Poratia digitata* (Porat, 1889) and *Muyudesmus obliterated* Kraus, 1960 (see illustration on the front cover of this Bulletin). Their place of origin is the Amazon region, where populations are bisexual (male and females present). They were introduced in European hothouses, together with plants, and became parthenogenetic. This adaptation is being studied by us and we need live specimens.

Sampling is best done with the aid of a fine water-colour brush. The animals should be shipped air mail in litter and/or soil material inside a plastic (film) box with a perforated lid to:

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