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CENTIPEDES - PROGRESS TOWARDS THE PROVISIONAL ATLAS, AND BEYOND

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The Centipede recording scheme was set up in 1970 as one of a trio of schemes organised in conjunction with the Biological Records Centre (BRC). The three schemes (Centipedes, Millipedes and Non-marine Isopoda) used specifically designed recording cards, which incorporated a habitat recording system, aimed to provide basic information on habitat preferences as well as the customary information on geographical distribution for the British Isles.

Three publications have already used results from the Centipede Recording Scheme; Fairhurst, Barber and Armitage (1978) described the scheme and examined the influence of altitude, first order habitats and soil on the occurrence of centipedes; Barber (1984) reviewed records of centipedes from Ireland and Barber (1985) gave a preliminary account of the distribution of 34 non-maritime species in the British Isles with special attention to factors influencing the occurrence of Lithobius variegatus.

All records received by the recording scheme, up to the end of 1984, have now been deposited with BRC and entered on computer file. The complete data set consists of nearly 16,000 records of 47 species derived from over 10,000 record cards. The taxonomic validation of records was by Tony Barber, assisted in recent years by Andy Keay. Checking of data input was by Andy Keay and I was assisted by Mary-Clare Sevatman and James Brooks with the checking and standardisation of locality/grid reference information. All computer editing and analysis done at BRC, using the DEC PDP 11/34 mini-computer was done by Dorothy Greene, assisted by Christine Bennett. Programs for the analysis of habitat data were written by Jeff Moller of NERC Computing Services.

During January 1986 the complete data set was sorted and analysed to produce draft 10 km square distribution maps of Britain and Ireland, listing of all records for each species and analyses of the habitat data. These maps, listings and analyses were available for a two-day meeting at the beginning of February 1986 between the authors of future Provisional Atlas (Barber & Keay) and BRC (Harding). Each draft map was reviewed and compared against the listings of records; a small number of anomalous records was traced and will be corrected on the computer files. The habitat analyses were also examined and prospects for their use discussed.

As a result of this recent meeting it has been agreed that BRC will arrange for the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to publish a Provisional Atlas of Centipedes in the British Isles (by Barber & Keay) later in 1986. A draft synopsis of the atlas and the format and content of the species accounts to accompany each distribution map have been agreed. The authors plan to make use of the habitat data for each species as simple percentage occurrences in the species accounts, but it is also intended that more detailed analyses of the habitat data will be made for a future publication. It is hoped that the complete data set can be copied in machine-readable form to Salford University, to enable Colin Fairhurst to continue the analysis of habitat and related data.

Now that the data from the first phase of the Centipede Recording Scheme are on file at BRC, it is possible to provide contributors and users with lists of records from the computer. Lists are available in two basic forms:

1. as lists of all records for each species, sorted by 10 km squares;
2. as lists of all records (arranged by species) for a geographic area (e.g. a vice-county, 100 km square or 10 km square). Most records include locality names, many of which add considerably to the usefulness of the records by naming, for example, nature reserves, National Trust properties and landscape features such as woods, heaths and moors.

The Centipede Recording Scheme continues as before, but using the RA58 record card. Supplies of cards are available, free of charge for use with the scheme, from BRC (address above). Completed cards and specimens for identification should be sent to Tony Barber.

Acknowledgements

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References

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