

LITHOBIUS FORFICATUS (LINN., 1758) WITH APPARENTLY MASSIVE SCAR TISSUE ON DAMAGED FORCIPULES

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Amongst a small collection of centipedes from under the bark of a dead, fallen tree in parkland at Lanhydrock, Cornwall (National Trust; NGR SX08-63-) was an apparently mature female of *Lithobius forficatus* with an obvious cut in the forcipular coxosternite and conspicuous scar tissue. This is shown in the photograph, Fig. 1. The body length of the animal (preserved) was 19mm (25mm including 15th legs).

- A. There is massive blackish, presumably heavily chitinised, apparent scar tissue all along the ventral surface of the femoroid / coxosternite junction on the right hand side.
- B. There is clear damage to the shoulder of the coxosternite lateral to the teeth on the same side.
- C. On the same side there is a striking cut-like wound to the coxosternite running from the median margin in a sloping direction which seems to extend to about two-thirds of the distance across leaving the most medial teeth clearly separated from the body of this structure. Again, blackish, scar tissue is present.

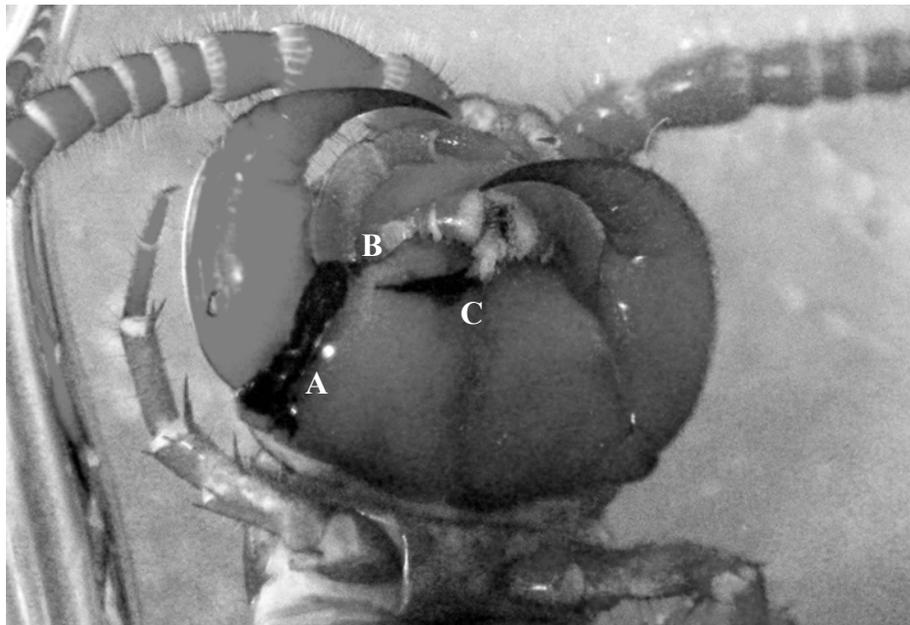


FIGURE 1: *Lithobius forficatus*, ventral view of head indicating damaged forcipular coxosternite

There are a number of ways the animal could have received such damage but presumably it was in an encounter with another predator such as a carabid beetle or even a bird. What is striking, however, is that the animal could recover and continue to live an active, predatory life following such injury. Reports of damage (and subsequent recovery) to limbs, etc. are not uncommon in lithobiids but such massive damage to its poison claws might have been expected to have significant effects on its chance of survival. Lewis (1981) quotes an example from Verhoeff (1940) of the regeneration of a prehensor in *Lithobius latro sellanus* in which the claw is very small and the tibia and tarsus not fully demarcated. Such a condition, presumably, followed the loss of the whole of the distal segments of the forcipule.

REFERENCE

Lewis, J.G.E. (1981) *The Biology of Centipedes*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.