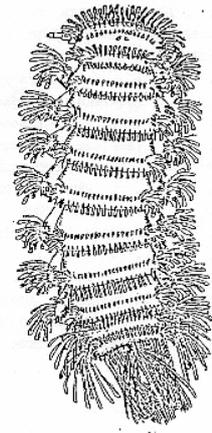




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



Spring 2008

Newsletter number 16

Editor: Paul Lee

CENTIPEDE RECORDS NEEDED

If you have any centipede records (on record cards, in site lists or in any other format e.g. Excel spreadsheet) that I have not yet had, whether from previous BMIG meetings or from your personal work, could you please forward them to me as a priority. I am trying to pull all these records together towards the new Centipede Atlas.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

2008 BMIG AGM and Field Weekend

The 2008 meeting will be held from Thursday 27th to Sunday 30th March 2008 at the University of Swansea. Fifteen members have booked as residents and other local members will be joining us for at least part of the weekend. If you are not yet booked in then you are leaving it rather late but it is still worth getting in touch with Mark Winder to see whether he can squeeze you in. You can e-mail him at mark.winder@swansea.gov.uk or phone on 01792 850 578 (evenings and weekends) or 01792 635 784 (weekdays).

Remember, whether or not you are resident for the weekend, all BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 7pm on Friday 28th March 2008. The venue will be the Singleton Park site of the University of Swansea and the (brief) AGM will be followed by a talk by Tony Barber entitled *Littoral Myriapods*. This should set us up nicely for a visit the following day to Penrhyngwyn shingle beach and the only UK site for *Oritoniscus flavus*. The site could also yield *Trachysphaera lobata* and *Thalassiosobates littoralis*.

There will be a range of other sites to visit as well and David Painter will introduce us to some of these on the Thursday evening. These include many unexplored post industrial sites in the Swansea area, sites that could yield synanthropic species of note.

For those of you that want to brush up your identification skills, Tony Barber will lead a workshop on centipedes on Saturday evening and I suspect the woodlouse and millipede recorders could be bribed to help out with a few tricky specimens as well. Alistair McLean will be around on Saturday evening to demonstrate the Recorder 6 package, very useful if like me you have been a stranger to the

software since Recorder 3.3 was replaced. As usual, there will, of course, be plenty of opportunities to share a drink or two and reminisce with friends old and new.

Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

Geophilus fucorum / *Geophilus fucorum seurati* / *Geophilus algarum* – Data needed

Geophilus fucorum was described by Brölemann (1909) from the Mediterranean coast of France and he subsequently (1924) described a form of it (which he termed subspecies *seurati*) from Algeria. The nominate form had two large and one small pore ventrally on each of the coxae of the last pair of legs whilst *seurati* had four on each with sometimes a further small one. He also described *Geophilus algarum* (1909) from the French Atlantic coast (Loire-Inférieure & Charante-Inférieure) and the French Channel Island of Chausey. This had three ventral coxal pores and one dorsal one on each side. He also described a var. *deci piens* which, confusingly for us now, lacked the dorsal pore.

Gordon Blower (1961) reported on the presence of *G. fucorum seurati* from the Isle of Man and Llandudno. He described the specimens as agreeing in all respects with the description given in Brölemann (1924), including the arrangement of coxal pores, except that they had claws on the last legs, "small but well formed". John Lewis (1962) in reviewing the centipedes of the Plymouth area compared specimens from near Plymouth, from Whitstable and from Cuckmere Haven with these northern ones, some of them differing in certain respects. He also compared the characteristics of *G. algarum*, *G. fucorum* and *G. fucorum seurati* using Brölemann's *Faune de France* (1930) description and suggested that we might be looking at a polytypic *algarum-fucorum* species with highly individual subspecies.

In *Centipedes of the British Isles*, Ted Eason (1964) described *Geophilus fucorum seurati* on the basis of these accounts and using this name it has been recorded here since. The *Provisional Atlas* showed it from Kent to the Scillies and Cornwall, Wales, Scotland & Isle of Man and it continues to be recorded. In the 1988 Bulletin BMG, John Lewis and Des Kime reported it from Brittany (Finistère); five specimens that appeared to be identical with the British

G.fucorum seurati as described in the 1962 paper. In a 2006 paper on the centipedes of the Massif Armoricain, Etienne Iorio reports on *G.gracilis* (which he considers the correct name for *G.fucorum seurati* = *G.seurati*) from Bretagne. He also records *G.algarum* from Basse-Normandie and Pays de la Loire i.e. from locations on each side of the *G.gracilis* location.

The obvious question that now arises is are we dealing with two distinct species, *G.gracilis* and *G.algarum*, both of which occur on the French Channel coast and therefore, does *G.algarum* occur on the south coast of England? Alternatively, are we looking at the polytypic species with distinct subspecies as John suggested? He indicated the need for further studies at the time. A further puzzle is the apparent disjunct distribution of *G.gracilis/seurati* between Algeria and NW Europe with the Mediterranean population of *G.fucorum fucorum* in between

Using the data from the Iorio paper, the main differences between the three forms would seem to be:

| Species | <i>G.fucorum</i> | <i>G.gracilis</i> | <i>G.algarum</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Location | [Algérie, La Pérouse – Brölemann] | Bretagne | Basse-Normandie Pays de la Loire |
| Leg pairs | 49-53(m) 51-59(f) | 51-57 (m) 51-61(f) | 53(m) 53-59(f) |
| Concavity of poison claw | 10-14 teeth | 10-14 teeth | crenulated |
| Labrum mid-piece | More than 2 teeth | More than 2 teeth | Generally 2 teeth |
| Coxal pores (dorsal) | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Coxal pores (ventral) | 2 large, 1 small and isolated | 4, possibly 1 small anterior to these | 2-3 along ventral border |
| Claw of last legs | Very short, rudimentary in male | Very short, rudimentary in male | [Short, conical – Brölemann] |

It would be highly desirable to pursue these issues a little further by collecting data on British material which I would be happy to collate. If more specimens could be collected (stones on salt marshes or estuarine mud are one possible habitat) or examined from collections then the following observations would be useful: location, approximate length/width, colour (alive or preserved), sex, appearance of labrum (if it can be seen), teeth of cavity of poison claw, leg pair number, appearance of last pair of legs including claw, appearance and arrangement of coxal pores of these legs including the presence of dorsal as well as ventral pores. Alternatively the loan of specimens would be welcomed. Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Progress report: Woodlouse and Water-slater Atlas
Work on the second edition of Woodlice in Britain and Ireland has progressed well. Last autumn all woodlouse and water-slater records submitted to the recording scheme were

entered into the dataset held at BRC. This amounts to 85,926 records for woodlice and 69,633 records for water-slaters. This is over three times the number of woodlice records upon which WIBI was based. I have included tables of the most frequently recorded species, below. Draft distribution maps were plotted by BRC in time for me to look at over Christmas! The draft species accounts have been revised in light of feedback received from various people. The bulk of the supporting text, including a revised check list, habitat accounts and a conservation section, has also been prepared. It is hoped that the atlas will be published sometime during 2008.

| Woodlice | No. Recs | % total | Rank |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------|
| <i>Oniscus asellus</i> | 18464 | 21.488 | 1 |
| <i>Porcellio scaber</i> | 16078 | 18.711 | 2 |
| <i>Philoscia muscorum</i> | 12521 | 14.572 | 3 |
| <i>Trichoniscus pusillus</i> agg. | 11942 | 13.898 | 4 |
| <i>Armadillidium vulgare</i> | 7216 | 8.398 | 5 |
| <i>Androniscus dentiger</i> | 2598 | 3.024 | 6 |
| <i>Platyarthus hoffmannseggii</i> | 2334 | 2.716 | 7 |
| <i>Trichoniscus pygmaeus</i> | 2187 | 2.545 | 8 |
| <i>Ligia oceanica</i> | 1831 | 2.131 | 9 |
| <i>Haplophthalmus danicus</i> | 1241 | 1.444 | 10 |
| Total number records | 85926 | 100 % | |

| Water Slaters | No. recs | % Total | Rank |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------|
| <i>Asellus aquaticus</i> | 62866 | 90.282 | 1 |
| <i>Proasellus meridianus</i> | 6659 | 9.563 | 2 |
| <i>Proasellus cavaticus</i> | 103 | 0.148 | 3 |
| Total number records | 69633 | 100 % | |

Many thanks to all those who have helped to move this project closer to fruition, including all who have submitted records, those who have engaged me in stimulating discussion and, not least, the staff at BRC. It has been very much a team effort.
Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, Oxfordshire OX14 4QZ

***Henia brevis* / *Chaetechelyne montana oblongocribellata* – Data needed**

The species formerly known as *Chaetechelyne montana oblongocribellata* was first recorded in Britain by F.A.Turk in 1944 from Lelant in Cornwall. He described it as having 56 (!) pairs of legs and agreeing in all ways with Verhoeff's diagnosis. It was included by Ted Eason in his *Centipedes of the British Isles* with a drawing of the characteristic coxal pore areas of the sternites and leg pairs given as about 55. Under this name or as *Henia brevis* we have continued to record it from various parts of Southern Britain, mostly from synanthropic habitats; the Provisional Atlas included 20 records, half of which were from gardens. However, it has

recently been pointed out to me that *Henia brevis* has 43-47 leg pairs and that, using the Eason figure for trunk segment number, we are possibly collecting *Henia (Chaetechelyne) montana (C. montana montana)* with its larger number of legs.

The differences given by Attems in *Synopsis der Geophiliden* (1903) are summarised as:

| Species | <i>C. brevis</i> | <i>C. montana</i> | <i>C. montana-oblongocribellata</i> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Leg pairs (Beinpaare) | 43 | 55-59 (m) 57-61 (f) | 45-47(m) |
| Pore Fields (Porenfeld) | “alle Porenfelder quer oval” | “mässig längs oval” | “sehr lang-gestreckt” |
| Anal pores (Analporen) | | “fehlen” = missing | “deutlich” = clear |
| Locations | “Oriolo bei Voghera” | Tyrol, Lombardy, Corfu | South Tyrol |

The differences given by Brölemann in *Faune de France, Chilopodes* (1930) are:

| Species | <i>C. montana</i> | <i>C. montana subsp. oblongocribellata</i> |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Leg pairs (Segmentes pédifères) | 55-59 (m) 57-61 (f) | 45-47(m) 45 (f) |
| Length | Up to 30mm | Up to 18.5mm |
| Coloration | “pale, a bandes sombres moins accusées” | “pale, sans bandes dorsales” |
| Pore Fields (Champs poreaux) | “rectangulaires non transversaux, plutôt développés longitudinalement” | “très étroits et étirés longitudinalement en boutonnière, leur longueur égalment près de quatre fois leur largeur” |
| Anal pores | “pas de pores anaux” | “Des pores anaux” |
| Locations | Tyrol | Littoral des Alpes Maritimes |

Therefore, in British specimens, we seem to have the very distinctive pore areas and coloration of *oblongocribellata (brevis)* along with the segment numbers of *montana*. It would be highly desirable to pursue this by collecting further data on British material which I would be happy to collate. If more specimens could be collected or examined from collections then the following observations would be useful: approximate length & width, colour (alive or preserved), sex, leg pair number, appearance of sternal pore field, appearance of last pair of legs including presence or absence of claw, appearance of coxal pores of these legs, presence or absence of anal pores. Alternatively, the loan of specimens would be appreciated.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Woodlice and millipedes in Wood Ant nests

My main interest is in bees, wasps and ants. Having recently completed a five-year study of the population of about 100 nests of the red wood ant *Formica rufa* at Gait Barrows NNR, Lancashire, I am now preparing to embark on a two

year study of the other invertebrates which live with the wood ants in their nests. I intend to concentrate on the NNR, sampling some nests regularly throughout the year and as many others as possible, but also to examine nests on other sites in the Arnside-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). So far, as a trial run, I have sampled eight nests, three in the NNR and the rest on other conservation sites. My technique (designed for the Senior Citizen) is to take a 2 litre (ice-cream box) sample of nest material and spread it on a picnic table where it can be searched from a folding chair, thus following the example of Victorian naturalists who were reputed to use card-tables and garden chairs (Cedric Collingwood, pers. comm.). The material is then replaced in the nest, where it is soon reintegrated by the workers. Having one's cuffs tucked into rubber kitchen gloves, and trousers into one's socks, is a necessity to prevent the ants from investigating one's person while one examines them. I had hoped for some interesting staphylinid beetles, which I have seen previously, but instead I find myself propelled into the realm of woodlice, millipedes and centipedes, into which I have not ventured much after an initial spurt of interest when I first retired from NC/NCC/EN ten years ago.

The woodlouse well known for its association with ants is, of course, *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi*. (Possibly other people interested in woodlice have, like me, wondered who on earth Hoffmannsegg was. One of my daughters found the answer for me from an on-line encyclopaedia: 'Johann Centurius Hoffmann Graf von Hoffmannsegg [August 23, 1766 - December 13, 1849] was a German botanist, entomologist and ornithologist. He travelled through Europe acquiring vast collections of plants and animals. He was the founder of the zoological museum of Berlin in 1809, to which his collections were then transferred.) From previous observations I know that this woodlouse has a very localised distribution in the AONB. It is common on the part of Arnside Knott called Heathwaite, where it is present in almost every nest of every species of ant. It occurs with *F. rufa* in Eaves Wood, but seems to be completely absent from Gait Barrows NNR. There were no surprises with this species, but what I did not expect was that I would find small (2-5 mm) juveniles of *Porcellio scaber* in every nest that I have looked at so far. I have quite often seen adults blundering about on the surface of nests, apparently unaffected by the ants, but it had not occurred to me that they might be breeding in the nests, which the extremely small size of some of the juveniles seems to suggest. Wondering whether they were ignored by the ants because they had acquired the colony odour, I tried putting some of them, along with some of the workers, on another nest, (*F. rufa* workers are known to be intolerant of workers from other nests). The workers were soon ringed by hostile residents, but the woodlice were ignored - the ants just did not seem to see them, as was the case in the nest they came from. This seems strange, as the smallest ones appear to be just the right size to be taken by the ants as prey, and I have seen workers dragging dead adults back to the nest. It may be that the workers' hunting instinct is turned off when they are in the nest and only takes effect when they go out to forage. This applies in some raptorial birds, which are

known not to take prey immediately around the nest. The only other woodlouse that I have found so far in the current study is *Trichoniscus pusillus* in one nest, again juveniles so small (2 mm) that they suggest that breeding had taken place in the nest, but in 1998 I found *Haplophthalmus danicus* in a wood ant nest in Eaves Wood.

Of millipedes, so far I have found *Proteroiulus fuscus*, *Cylindroiulus punctatus* and *C. britannicus*, all quite large specimens and only one or two in a sample, and some small centipedes, which seem to be immature *Lithobius forficatus*. Apart from *Platyarthrus*, none of these invertebrates are known to have any particular association with ants. Presumably they are in the nests simply because they provide the sort of conditions in which they normally live, but they must need to be sufficiently thick-skinned to be impervious to the mandibles of the ants and to the formic acid which must generally permeate the nest. When alive, millipedes are protected by the repellent secretions from their ozopores, but several times I have seen ants dragging the empty shells of dead cylindrical millipedes back to the nest. Presumably they had been picked up when scavenging, but it did not strike me that they would have much food value!

I hope to have more observations to report later in the project. In the meantime, I would be interested to hear from anyone else who might be looking at invertebrates in wood ants nests - or nests of any other ants for that matter.
Neil A. Robinson, 3 Abbey Drive, Natland, Kendal, LA9 7QN.

More swarming millipedes

Not long after the last newsletter was mailed another instance of swarming millipedes made it into the national press (*Sunday Telegraph* November 11 2007). The short article reported that swarming of *Megaphyllum unilineatum* had been an annual problem in the Bavarian village of Obereichstaett for centuries. The millipedes appear in their thousands on autumn nights but the residents have regained control of their village by constructing an encircling low, metal-lined wall with an overhanging lip. *Megaphyllum unilineatum* is a common species in central and eastern Europe and shows a wide tolerance to environmental conditions. BMIG members who collected in Hungary several years ago will be familiar with the beastie. However, this still brings us no closer to understanding why the animals are swarming.

Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

XIVth International Congress of Myriapodology to be held in Görlitz, Germany, 21st to 25th July 2008

Dear colleagues,

We have the pleasure to announce the 14th International Congress of Myriapodology 2008 will be held in Görlitz (Germany) from 21 to 25 July 2008. We have attempted to keep the registration fee as small as possible and will also offer scholarships and other support. Accommodation in various hotels and guesthouses of different quality and different price ranges is available.

Congress proceedings will be published in the scientific journal *Soil Organisms*.

If you are interested in participation please contact :
post@smng.smwk.sachsen.de
Prof. Dr Willi Xylander
Dr. Karin Voigtländer
Dr. Hans-Jürgen Schulz
Mrs. Katrin Adam

Oban field meeting Autumn 2007

This was based in self-catering accommodation at Bragleenbeg House, Loch Scammadale, south of Oban. Ten of us spent various portions of a week there at the beginning of October 2007. As with the Ayr meeting in 2006, the most dramatic finds were among the millipedes, including *Leptoilulus belgicus*, *Thalassiosobates littoralis* and *Chordeuma proximum*, plus plenty of interesting records of other species of myriapods and isopods. A full report is being prepared for the Bulletin.

Glyn Collis, 'Seasgair', Ascog, Isle of Bute, PA20 9ET

Forthcoming field meeting on Arran

Another west of Scotland meeting is being planned for the coming autumn, this time on the Isle of Arran. It is reasonably accessible for travel from the south, but its dramatic mountains and coastline give it a very different character from nearby mainland Ayrshire. If you would like to join us, and you have not already let me know, please contact me as soon as possible.

Glyn Collis, 'Seasgair', Ascog, Isle of Bute, PA20 9ET;
g.m.collis@warwick.ac.uk

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2008

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by
30 September 2008

BMIG Hon. Sec.:

Dr H.J.Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common,
Bucks. SL2 3LE

E-mail: Helen.read@dsl.pipex.com

Centipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr A.D. Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

E-mail: abarber159@btinternet.com

Millipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr P. Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

E-mail: paulatarachne@aol.com

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr S. Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham,

Oxfordshire OX14 4QZ

Tel: 01865 407792 Fax: 01865 407131

E-mail: stevejgregory@btopenworld.com

Biological Records Centre, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Monks
Wood, Abbots Ripton, HUNTINGDON PE28 2LS

Tel: 01487 772400 Fax: 01487 773467

The British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter is printed and distributed for the British Myriapod and Isopod Group by the Biological Records Centre, supported by funding from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Data Protection Act 1998

To assist mailing the BMIG Newsletter and other BRC publications, names and addresses of recipients are held on a computer database; they will not be passed to others without prior permission. Individuals not wanting their name and address held on computer should notify BRC in writing