

Dicranopalpus caudatus (Dresco). The latest Opilionid to be added to the British fauna

P. V. Hicks

14 Third Avenue,
Clacton on Sea, Essex.

Dresco (1948) describes the genus *Dicranopalpus* and two new species, one of which was *D. caudatus*. This species was named and described from a single male caught in the Sierra Estrella (Portugal) by Simon.

Rambla (1965) described a specimen in the Museum of Natural Sciences, Madrid, which had been collected in the same place and possibly at the same time as Dresco's specimen. In 1962-3, Rambla collected 17 specimens near Barcelona and used them to complete Dresco's description of the species. Her specimens were found on the branches of *Erica arborea*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Sarothamnus purgans* etc.

In 1957 a specimen was found by Miss E. Rix on a curtain inside a house at Bournemouth, Hants., and after being incorrectly identified as another species of *Dicranopalpus* was confirmed as *D. caudatus* in 1968, following the discovery of a single female of the species by Dr. Jochem Martens in France, and further specimens in a garden at Hove, Sussex, in September 1966 and August 1967 by M. W. Storey (Sankey & Storey, 1969).

In October 1969, the author collected two specimens in Clacton on Sea, Essex, one on the outside wall of a house and one in a greenhouse. They were identified by J. H. P. Sankey who had been instrumental in getting the Hove specimens identified and the one from Bournemouth reclassified.

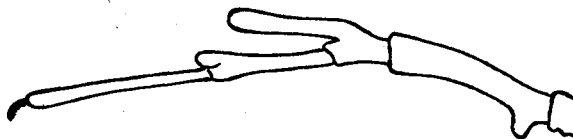
During 1970, the author made a widespread search in the Clacton area, where large numbers were discovered, always in privet hedges (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*). In all, 14 different situations were examined and *D. caudatus* found in every one. Usually the older the hedge, the more specimens were present. A total of 56 individuals were noted during this search.

Further records of *D. caudatus* have been received from A. Gunn and W. R. Dolling (pers. communication), who took one specimen on hazel (*Corylus avellana*) in the Lamorna Valley, Cornwall,

during 1969. Gunn kept it alive and made observations on its behaviour. In 1971, Gunn tried to keep alive some of the Clacton specimens, but found that immature animals died a day or so after their final moult. Wheatley (1971) collected a single male specimen, indoors, in Helston, Cornwall.

All British records are from places near the sea, and in spite of considerable searches on heaths in Suffolk, on moors in Yorkshire and in privet hedges in Berkshire, it has not been found elsewhere. Possibly the species is quite widespread in privet hedges near the South and South East coasts.

The following characteristics should prevent it being confused with any other British species.



Dicranopalpus caudatus ♀ palp

1. A dorsal protuberance on abdominal segments 5 & 6.
2. A palpal claw with pectinations.
3. An extremely long apophysis on the palpal patella.

These characteristics are all present in both sexes.

References

- DRESCO, E. 1948: Remarques sur le genre *Dicranopalpus* Dol. et description de deux espèces nouvelles (Opiliones). *Bull. Mus. Hist. nat. Paris*, (2) **20** (4): 336-42
- RAMBLA, M. 1965: Contribución al estudio de los Opiliones de la Fauna Ibérica-Sobre *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco 1948. *P. Inst. Biol. Apl. Barcelona*, **38**: 97-104
- SANKEY, J. H. P. & STOREY, M. W. 1969: *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco (Arachnida, Opiliones), first records in Britain and France. *Ent. Mon. Mag.* **105**: 106-7
- WHEATLEY, V. A. 1971: A note on *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco (Opiliones). *Brit. Arach. Soc. News Letter* **1**, p.5