



OCULARIUM

No. 4

Newsletter of the Opiliones Recording Scheme

(New Series)

November 2001

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Editorial

It is very satisfying, and often rewarding, to know about harvestmen. If one finds oneself on a spider hunt, usually harvestmen are at least as prominent, if not more so, than the spiders themselves. Inevitably someone will ask: "what is that long-legged specimen?" Aha! This is our opportunity to shine! If you know harvestmen, you can say: "*Leiobunum rotundum*" (or whatever). When you know harvestmen, you know a whole group (never mind only 25 species in the UK!)

LOCAL FIELD TRAINING

Francis Farr-Cox has contributed the following:

The Somerset Invertebrate Group has established a programme of local training days at which members and others can get to grips with a particular group of animals. Our usual venue for these events is Shapwick, one of a line of villages that lie on either side of the Polden Hills. The Poldens are a narrow Lias limestone ridge that runs east west in central Somerset. On September 8th 2001 Toddy Cooper and I endeavoured to extol the charms of both harvestmen and pseudoscorpions. The start and end of the day was spent indoors in the village hall covering aspects such as typical life histories, habitats and anatomical features. Each participant was supplied with keys and, with microscopes available, everyone had a chance to see the range of British species and some of the critical characters used in identification. Toddy and I supplied the harvestmen and Gerald Legg kindly loaned specimens to boost our own rather meagre collection of pseudoscorpion species. Mid-session we moved outdoors looking at hedgerows and associated ditches accessible from public rights of way on the edge of Shapwick village. On the harvestman front *Paroligolophus agrestis* was the most abundant species but we also noted *Mitopus morio*, *Phalangium opilio*, *Nemastoma bimaculatum* (in a damp ditch), *Leiobunum rotundum* and *Dicranopalpus ramosus* - 25 % of the British list - can't be bad!

Admirable! The combination of lab and field work, as described above, is an inspirational model for others to follow (Ed.).

The HARVESTMEN of GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Keith Alexander has contributed the following draft notes (1999) [edited and shortened for this newsletter]:

Recording of harvestmen in the county really only began in a large way in the 1980s and 1990s, there being remarkably few records before then. A key early source is George (1955) who reported records, given in an unpublished list of spiders, harvestmen and false-scorpions prepared by F.O.Pickard-Cambridge in 1902, for the Gloucestershire volumes of the Victoria History of the Counties of England. George also mentions that there were at that time no published lists of harvestmen from the county.

The Gloucestershire fauna comprised fourteen species at the time of Sankey & Savory (1974) and this has subsequently been increased to twenty one:

Nemastoma bimaculatum - A common and widespread species, in moss and vegetable debris within shaded habitats such as woods and hedgerows.

Mitostoma chrysomelas - Another widespread species in similar habitats to the last.

Trogulus tricarinatus - On soil surface beneath leaf litter in woods in southern calcareous districts. 10km square records for SO80 and ST67 (Sankey, 1988).

Anelasmaocephalus cambridgei - Among moist debris on the woodland floor, especially on calcareous soils. SO50 Slade Bottom; SU09 South Cerney.

Homalenotus quadridentatus - In grassland litter on calcareous soils, and in beechwood debris. SO80 Rodborough Common & Swifts Hill; SP01 Rendcomb College & Woodbridge Farm Banks.

Oligolophus tridens - In open woodland, on soil surface or amongst low foliage. SO51 Lady Park Wood; SO60 Nagshead; SP01 Rendcomb College.

Oligolophus hanseni - A preference for pine trees but also on native broadleaves. SO61 Foxes Bridge & Cannop Ponds; SO90 Oakley Wood.

Paroligolophus agrestis - One of the commonest species in Britain, often on the foliage of trees.

Lacinius ephippiatus - A widespread but uncommon field layer species. A number of 10km squares in Sankey (1988).

Odiellus spinosus - Prefers sheltered, man-made habitats. SO80 Standish Woods.

Mitopus morio - Widespread and often abundant, especially amongst grasses and herbage

Phalangium opilio - A common and widespread species, in a wide variety of situations.

Opilio parietinus - A fairly common species; the young amongst grasses and the adults on walls and tree trunks. SO50 St Briavels; SO90 Upper Field Barn; SP14 Pebworth; ST57 Clifton.

Opilio saxatilis - A ground-living species of dry soils such as on sand-dunes, sandy heaths and calcareous downs. A number of 10km squares in Sankey (1988); ST77 Dyrham Park.

Megabunus diadema - Mossy or lichen-covered rocks and tree trunks; widespread.

Rilaena triangularis - A field layer species, favouring woodland. SO50 St Briavels; SO60 Nagshead; SO90 Hailey Wood; SP01 Staple Grove; SP24 Preston.

Lophopilio palpinalis - An uncommon species of open woodland, usually in the field layer. SO61 Cannop Ponds.

Dicranopalpus ramosus - First noted in Glos in 1984. Currently numerous and widespread in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean, and also in limestone towns such as Cirencester where it inhabits sunny walls.

Leiobunum rotundum - A very common species in fields, woods, gardens, etc, amongst the field layer as well as ascending tree trunks and walls.

Leiobunum blackwalli - Mainly a woodland species, in the field layer, on tree trunks; also fields and roadsides. SO50 Wyeseal Wood; SO51 Swan Pool; SO61 Cannop Ponds; SO90 Francombe Wood; SP02 Guiting Wood.

Nelima gothica - Open, grassy situations and walls. A number of 10km squares in Sankey (1988).

REFERENCES:

George, R.S. (1955) Some additional records of Arachnida from Gloucestershire, including four species of mites new to Great Britain. *Ent. mon.Mag.* 91:121-4.

Sankey, J.H.P. (1988) *Provisional Atlas of the harvest-spiders (Arachnida: Opiliones) of the British Isles*. Biological Records Centre, Huntingdon.

CONFERENCE: New Perspectives in Biological Recording

A conference, organised jointly by the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), the Biological Records Centre (BRC) and the Natural History Museum (NHM), is to be held at the Natural History Museum, London, on 16th November 2001. Trevor James, the NBN Development Officer, is leading the conference which has the aim of assisting national societies and individuals to operate biological recording schemes and make full use of their data. Speakers include: Sir John Burnett (Chairman, NBN), Prof. Paul Henderson (Director of Science, NHM), Paul Harding MBE (BRC), and Prof. Barry White (Director, Monks Wood).

NEW PUBLICATION

BESTEMMELSESTABELL OVER NORSKE OG NORDISKE LANGBEIN-ARTER (OPILIONES) by Stol, I., Norske Insekttabeller no. 16, Norsk Entomologisk Forening 1999. Available: Karsten Sund, Zoologisk Museum, Toyen, Sarsgt. 1, 0562 Oslo, Norway.

An illustrated key to the harvestmen of the northern European countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the Faroe Islands) has been produced by Ingvar Stol of Norway. The key deals with 24 species, many of them familiar in the British Isles, but includes some other non-British species which are worth noting because they may in time be discovered here (as was *Opilio canestrinii* reported in GB for the first time in *Ocularium* no. 3). The species are: *Trogulus tricarinatus*, *Mitostoma chrysomelas*, *Nemastoma bimaculatum*, *Nemastoma lugubre*, *Lophopilio palpinalis*, *Lacinius horridus*, *Lacinius ephippiatus*, *Paroligolophus meadii*, *Paroligolophus agrestis*, *Oligolophus hansenii*, *Oligolophus tridens*, *Megabunus diadema*, *Platybunus bucephalus*, *Rilaena triangularis*, *Phalangium opilio*, *Mitopus morio*, *Opilio saxatilis*, *Opilio parietinus*, *Opilio canestrinii*, *Nelima gothica*, *Leiobunum rupestre*, *Leiobunum limbatum*, *Leiobunum blackwalli*, and *Leiobunum rotundum*.

RECORD CARDS SUBMITTED

Many thanks to the following recorders for submitting records last year: P. Lee, T. J. Thomas & J.D. Stanney.

OTHER ITEMS

WEBSITE for the Opiliones Recording Scheme is to be found on the British Arachnological Society's internet pages:

<http://www.BritishSpiders.org.uk> (capitals optional!)

The Opiliones Recording Scheme now has an e-mail attached to this domain: ors@britishspiders.org.uk

WEBSITE for the National Biodiversity Network is to be found at: www.nbn.org.uk

OCULARIUM No. 5 will be published in Nov 2002. Contributions received before then will be very welcome.