

OCULARIUM

No. 1

Newsletter of the Opiliones Recording Scheme

(New Series)

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Welcome

to the new series of *Newsletters* for the Opiliones (Harvestman) Recording Scheme. I hope you will find them interesting and informative and I strongly encourage you to contribute articles and observations. The harvestmen themselves are an absorbing group to study and easy to develop an affection for - even arachnophobic people are not afraid of them!

I thank all those industrious collectors who submitted records during the last four years (see over) and I apologise for the lack of a *Newsletter* during that time. I am grateful to Mr David Nellist, National Organiser of the Spider Recording Scheme, for all his help, without which, this edition may never have appeared.

Some changes have been made following the first series of *Newsletters*. This edition, the first in the new series, recaps and brings up-to-date some of the material that John Sankey introduced.

I hope now to encourage you all to do plenty of recording so that we can achieve a better coverage of the UK and to fill in the gaps, in particular: Wales, East Anglia, Southern Uplands of Scotland, Northern Scotland, Scottish Islands, Northern Ireland and a stretch of country from North Dorset to Somerset and North Devon. *Ed.*

JOHN H. P. SANKEY (1917-1995)

An obituary which makes a fitting tribute to John Sankey, who was our leading expert on harvestmen and the original organiser of the Recording Scheme, as well as Warden of Juniper Hall Field Centre, may be found in: *Field Studies* 8 (1996): 529-32. The obituary is written by David Streeter who remembers John with great affection, as indeed do I and many others. In *Newsletter* No. 5, John referred to the leg which I [Paul Hillyard] had broken when running on Box Hill - he wrote: "Tripped over a *Trogulus* I suspect, but we hope he will shortly regain the agility of a *Leiobunum*!"

John's courteous and rapid responses to enquiries were much appreciated. One recorder [Mike Davidson] recalled: "Years ago I found myself near Juniper Hall

and out of the blue called John up. I was promptly invited to lunch and taken on a tour of Box Hill and shown all the local arachnological specialities. Nothing ever seemed to be too much trouble."

John Sankey's last *Newsletter* for the Opiliones Recording Scheme was issued in July 1994 (No. 13).

THE OPILIONES RECORDING SCHEME

The ORS began in 1973 when the first recording cards (RA27) were produced. The Scheme is jointly administered by the British Arachnological Society (BAS) and the Biological Records Centre (BRC, head: Paul Harding) which is based at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2LS. The purpose of the ORS is to record the geographical distribution of harvestmen in Britain and to publish this information in the form of maps based on the 10km squares of the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The 2nd edition of the Opiliones Atlas should eventually be published and, ultimately, the records will form a database that can be accessed to provide species information on particular sites and also present useful data for studies on climate change and biodiversity.

New cards are available free of charge from the BRC. As recorders, would you please complete the cards yourself and send them to Paul Hillyard for checking as National Organiser (address above). It is also important to send in any doubtful specimens. The BRC is able to receive records on disk from any database, that can output in ASCII format, but the records need to be first validated by the National Organiser.

Paul Harding has reported that the following records are presently held at BRC:

- 11244 records fully computerised and validated (cited in the 1988 *Provisional Atlas*).
- 590 records computerised and validated since 1988.
- c 5000 records on disks (need checking).
- c 2250 records on RA27 cards (need checking).

In addition, Paul Hillyard holds 750 cards which have produced 2100 records presently stored on disk (in Stan Dobson's OPIREC programme). The total number of records is now approaching double that of the 1988 *Provisional Atlas*.

THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY NETWORK

The Biological Records Centre is one of the participating groups in the slowly developing National Biodiversity Network. The NBN co-ordinates the work of existing institutions to link up the information contained in the UK's various collections and databases. Their website provides access to the services: <http://www.nbn.org.uk>

QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire similar to the one sent out to members of the Spider Recording Scheme in 1997 will be distributed to past and present members of the Opiliones Recording Scheme between now and the next issue of the *Newsletter*. The main purpose of the questionnaire will be to find out from people the level of their past and present collecting/recording activity and whether they are willing to support the scheme in the future. An up-to-date list of the active members will then accompany the issue of the next *Newsletter*.

NEWS of MEMBERS

Many thanks to the following recorders for submitting records during the last four years:

Mike Davidson, A.E.Cooper, Paul Griffiths, Ray Ruffell, Martin Cawley, Wayne Rixom, Jon Daws, Martin George, Paul Lee, Douglas Richardson, Richard Wilson, Gordon Corbett, Michael Hogg, Helen Read, Peter Smithers, John Hunnisett, Ian Evans, John Buckley, T.J.Thomas and Doug Cowden.

If anybody's name has been missed, please contact the editor for the next issue.

HARVESTMAN NEW to BRITAIN: *Centetostoma*

As reported in earlier *Newsletters*, Peter Smithers and Michael Hogg discovered in 1990, in the vicinity of an old quarry and railway line in SW Devon, a number of strange-looking specimens belonging to the genus *Centetostoma* (family Nemastomatidae). The male's genitalia compared with *C. bacilliferum* of N Spain, were significantly different. But specimens collected by Richard Abbott from Bordeaux presented intermediate forms which suggested that this is a species which shows considerable variation. In the absence of any other evidence, the intention is to publish a description of the British specimens under the name of *Centetostoma bacilliferum*. This species now brings the total number of harvestmen known in Britain up to 24.

FURTHER SPECIES to LOOK OUT FOR

Nemastoma lugubre

A paper by Meidell & Stol (1990) draws attention to the similarities and differences of the two species: *Nemastoma bimaculatum* and *Nemastoma lugubre*. The latter is not recorded in Britain but there is a chance that it has been overlooked, particularly in

eastern regions. Males of the two species are easily distinguished by the form of the penis, the cheliceral apophysis and the palpal tibia (curvature and dentition). Furthermore, in *N.bimaculatum* the female body is only slightly denticulate and has a more or less flattened appearance. In *N.lugubre* the female body is strongly denticulate and appears relatively globular.

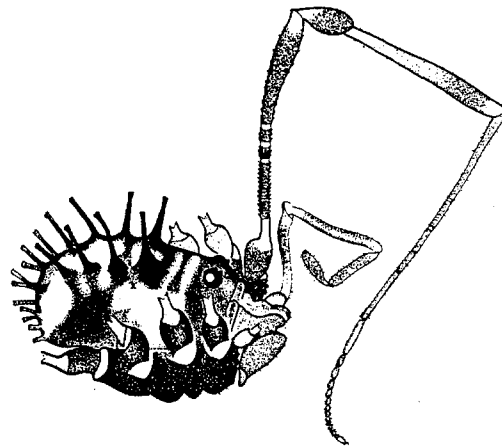
Meidell, B. A. & Stol, I. 1990: Distribution of *Nemastoma bimaculatum* (Fabricius, 1775) and *N. lugubre* (Muller, 1776) (Opiliones) in Norway, with a discussion on "east-west pairs of species". *Fauna norv.* Ser. B, 37:1-8.

Opilio canestrinii

Dr Jochen Martens informs us that *Opilio canestrinii* is spreading in Germany. It is a species often associated with gardens and walls and might be easily introduced into this country via eggs in soil, or as live harvestmen among plants. *O.canestrinii* differs from our two resident species of *Opilio* in lacking the small stout tubercles dorsally and ventrally on the palpal femur. It has two well-marked carinal lines on the shaft of the male organ. Keep a look out for this species! [repeated from *Newsletter* No. 5, July 1986]

Dicranopalpus ramosus

At the time of the *Provisional Atlas* (1988), this introduced species had colonised parts of southern England and Wales as far north as Essex and Cardigan. Since then, further records have tracked its spread north and it is now known to have reached Norwich. Can anyone confirm the rumour that has reached Cheshire?



Centetostoma bacilliferum from Devon

OTHER ITEMS

HARVESTMEN (1989) Synopses of the British Fauna No. 4 (2nd edition) by Hillyard & Sankey. Copies available from the editor (address above) at the reduced price of £15 (inc. post & packing)

WEBSITE for the Opiliones Recording Scheme is to be found on the British Arachnological Society's internet pages: <http://www.salticus.demon.co.uk>

Newsletter No. 2 will be published in November 1999. Contributions received before then will be most welcome.