

OPILIONES (HARVEST-SPIDER) RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No. 1

The first comprehensive paper on the distribution of British Opiliones was that of W.S. Bristowe, *Journal of Animal Ecology* Vol. 18, No. 1, May 1949 pp. 100-114, who gave vice county maps for 21 species. Since then, *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Simon) has been added to the British list, J.H.P. Sankey and M.W. Storey, *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 105, 1969 pp. 106-7. In his monograph of the European species, J. Martens in *Die Tierwelt Deutschlands*, 64 Teil (Weberknechte, Opiliones) p.402 places an indeterminate species from Scotland (J.H.P. Sankey, *Ent. mon. Mag.* Vol. 86, 1953, pp. 116-7) as a variety of *Leiobunum rotundum*. The few specimens caught to date are currently with Prof. Martens, but more, especially males, are wanted for fuller research (see below). Prof. Martens also mentions the finding of *Leiobunum tisciae* Avram in Derbyshire (ibid p.413). The writer has seen these specimens and has searched the area for further examples, but as there is doubt about the exact locality it is not surprising that none has been found (see below).

To further the recording scheme those areas in which special search would be useful are given. Mature specimens (mostly between July and autumn) should be collected and preserved in 70% industrial methylated spirit or preserved in c.95% I.M.S. for 24 hours and then transferred to a 1% aqueous solution of Propylene-phenoxetol. Preferably put only one specimen in a tube as the legs get tangled, and for postal despatch put the minimum amount of liquid in the tube supporting the specimen with a little tissue-paper (NOT cotton wool); a data label with the sender's serial number written in Indian ink should be included. I will be pleased to check the identification of specimens; return postage would be appreciated.

Records are needed from:

1. Most parts of Scotland, but especially on the west coast and from islands; especially also in valleys with open deciduous woodland. The Burns on the Esk (separating the old counties of Kincardine and Angus) in the region of Edsell, and the Burn near the mouth of the small river in the Den of Finella (just by the A.92 - halfway between St. Cyrus and Johnshaven) are vitally important areas where the variety (?) of *L. rotundum* has been taken. Steep-sided ravines (danger!) seem to be its haunts. End of August and September.
2. The remoter parts of Eire, especially the west and islands; grassy places, hedge banks and deciduous woodlands. Mainly end of summer.
3. Wales - grassy and rocky places, more in valleys. The distribution of *Nelima gothica* is incompletely known and the borderland counties should be worked to determine the eastern limit of its distribution - August and September.
4. Limestone areas with scrub, grassland and open woodland in all areas should be examined for the two Trogulids and other ground-living species. This is important in the west and north of England and Wales to determine the limit of the range of some of these species. A rather old record of *Trogulus tricarinatus* from Cornwall badly needs confirming. Pitfall traps and leaf-litter and moss sieving would probably prove profitable.

5. The old dry limestone walls, rank grassy places and old quarries in an area given as "between Leek and Stoke on Trent" for *Leibonum tisciae* should be carefully searched in mid-July to mid-September.
6. Coastal districts with informal privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) hedges should be searched in August and September. *Dicranopalpus ramosus* has been recorded from S. Wales, Cornwall and Essex etc. It would appear to inhabit gardens and rank grassland with scrub.
7. A few species, notably the large *O. spinosus* (windowledges, fences, gardens etc.) and the tiny *P. meadii* (sand dunes, dry places on heaths with some green vegetation and chalkland but apparently not on very acid soils) show a marked southern distribution - their habitats, in an area roughly from the Wash to Bristol, should be carefully searched and appropriate areas to the north west for *P. meadii*. The latter is known only in a few locations outside Britain. Sandy coastal areas from Le Touquet to the Spanish border might well reveal its presence anywhere on the W. coast of France.

I will be pleased to supply further information or suggestions.

John Sankey

F.S.C. International

Old Stables

Juniper Hall

Dorking

Surrey

RH5 6DA

Tel. Dorking (0306) 87332

or Dorking (0306) 5216 (home)