

OPILIONES (HARVEST-SPIDER) RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No. 9 - July 1990

A new species The exciting news of a species of harvestman new to Britain, apparently of the genus Centetostoma, comes from Peter Smithers of the Plymouth Polytechnic. One of his students, Michael Hogg, spotted this odd looking Nemastomatid while making records from a local collection made in April 1988. Further search in February of this year in a quarry close to the original site yielded four more specimens, but so far no males. As this appears to be a ground-living sub-alpine species, to date only recorded from the south-west alpine area of Europe, we may speculate whether it is an introduced or a relict species. It appears to be very similar, if not identical, with C. centetes (Simon), but specific identification can only be confirmed when a male is available. The outstanding long "spikes" on the dorsal surface at once distinguish this genus from all others of this family and give the creature a hedgehog-like appearance. Related species are recorded by Roewer from the Pyrenees. Look out in the British Arachnological Society's newsletter for more information.

Identification Michael Davidson of Inverurie has suggested that recorders might like to check some of their specimens now that the new synopsis is available (Hillyard, P.D. & Sankey, J.H.P., Harvestmen: Synopses of the British Fauna (New Series), No. 4 (Second Edition). The Linnean Society of London, 1989).* He has trouble, understandably, separating Lacinius ephippiatus and Oligolophus tridens. To quote our synopsis under O. tridens "Needs careful comparison with Lacinius ephippiatus" (p.70)! The male organs are very different (see the synopsis) and the well marked truncated and almost parallel-sided abdominal saddle of this sex in Lacinius should separate the males of this species. Amongst other points in the female the ventral surface of the palpal femur of Lacinius has numerous big spine-tipped tubercles, but only short ones in O. tridens; and for what it's worth the trident of the female Lacinius looks like a miniature three flat-pronged garden handfork, whereas in O. tridens the members are usually fairly vertical with the central one the largest and somewhat more inclined forwards than the laterals. If you have any tips or queries about identification, let's have them for the next newsletter.

I am still prepared to check specimens but please complete cards yourself with full data (height above sea level for lowland localities is not essential, and I will fill in your code number if you don't know it). Please cross through the species name (not the number) in each case. The hundred square kilometer reference may be in letters or figures. If you have other queries about filling in cards, detailed guidance notes are available from Monks Wood, who also supply the cards. (A postage-paid label is enclosed). Tubes, with only a few specimens in each, should be clearly labelled in water/spirit-proof ink (NOT PENCIL which often fades).

Other news Denis Owen's annual Odiellus spinosus score from his pitfalls in his Leicester garden is 89% of the total number of specimens caught: it still makes me wonder what the density of the population of this species might be in the city as a whole. Sabacon has turned up in another South Wales locality; thanks to Kefyn Catley, Adrian Fowles and Ian Morgan for their special interest in this species, as well as to the indomitable Cynthia Merrett. I am now taking bets as to how soon Dicranopalpus reaches Gretna Green!

* Obtainable through your bookseller, or from the publishers - E J Brill, P O Box 9000, 2300 PA Leiden, The Netherlands, or contact Paul Hillyard at the Natural History Museum.

Thank you one and all for all the valuable records received during the past year; keep up the good work in 1990: and of course to Paul Harding and Brian Eversham at Monks Wood for their continuing help and interest in the scheme. My personal thanks also to Paul Hillyard who must take the fullest credit for everything, especially the illustrations, in his co-authorship of the synopsis.

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Cards and instructions are available free of charge, from:

Biological Records Centre
Monks Wood Experimental Station
Abbots Ripton
HUNTINGDON
Cams PE17 2LS
(Tel: 04873 381 ext. 229)

I am still prepared to check specimens but please complete cards yourself with the following information: (height above sea level for localities in lowland areas) I will try to help you if you do not know it. Please refer to the following references: if you have other queries about the cards, detailed guidance notes are available from Monks Wood, who will supply the cards. (A postage-paid label is enclosed). Labels, with only a few specimens in each, should be clearly labelled in water/soluble ink (NOT PENCIL which often fades).

Other news: David Owen's annual *Ocellularia agnoscens* score from his garden in his Leicester garden is 89% of the total number of specimens caught. It still makes me wonder what the density of this species might be in the city as a whole. *Sclerocarpus* has turned up in another South Wales locality; thanks to Keith Catley, Adrian Lewis and Ian Morgan for their special interest in this species, as well as to the indefatigable Cynthia Warrington. I am now taking bets as to how soon *Dicranopogon* reaches Great Britain.

* Obtainable through your bookseller, or from the publishers: E J Brill, P O Box 9002, 3300 BA Leiden, The Netherlands, or contact Paul Hillyard at the Natural History Museum.