One year on since the first Newsletter. In that time yet another species has been added to the British list.

Microbistium brevifemoratum noted in the first Newsletter was found at a National Nature Reserve, where it was extracted from Sphagnum. The site is a remnant ancient bog which suggests that the species has been present since the end of the last ice age. In the rest of Europe it is found in Fennoscandia in the same type of habitat. I recently obtained some specimens from Norway and these will be used in the planed revised Linnean Synopsis. I await Dick Jones’ expert hand to produce an illustration of the little beast.

So, you see species new to Britain can still turn up - just look in the right place and use the appropriate extraction techniques and who knows what will be found.

Galea of our three Neobistium species.

New Synopsis and Key

Yes! A revised version of the Synopsis is being worked on. The old one is being currently worked up and having the species new to Britain added and the Chelif er canroides account and illustration altered. Obviously the key will be changed to fit the two new corners and, hopefully, improved, making it easier to use. In addition, the long promised, but less technical, key should be out early in 2000. Yes, I know I’ve said this before but I hope to find a window in my writing, editing and publishing schedule to get it out and distributed it to all of you. And, of course the need to include the species new to Britain.
An Analysis of Records

It occurred to me that for a relatively under recorded group like Pseudoscorpions it would be interesting to analyse the number of records received rather than just the number of squares that each species has been recorded from. Recorders who consistently provide records, even of the common ones have been particularly helpful in this respect. I am a stout believer in CAMS and feel that they are too often not recorded, often eclipsed by the more exotic species. However, Common As Muck Species are important especially if you have regular records. They can, for example, show up trends in the decline or otherwise of the species which would easily go unnoticed. Such changes in the fortunes of species can then lead to an early warning of habitat change, whether natural or ‘unnatural’ (people are arguably natural so their effects on the World could be regarded as similarly ‘natural’). Of course many do not bother to record or send such CAMS records in, but they should be encouraged to do so.

Enough of that lecture, searching the data base provided details of how many records had been obtained over the years from the various Vice Counties. Even looking at the numbers was interesting particularly if you were to look at your particular favourite VC(s). To provide what I thought might be a more interesting view the accompanying graphic was produced.

It is often said that when the records of a group are plotted you often get, not a distribution map of species, but rather on of the recorders and their jaunts out! Well, the graphic probably emphasises this idea (bearing in mind that the data-set is likely to be incomplete because people tend to say “Oh, another Neobisium carcinoides (yes, it really does go by this name and not Neobisium muscorum despite our feeling the latter is a better name) I’ll not bother send the information off.

It would be interesting to carry out similar exercises on the records of other groups – even those which we supposedly think are fairly well understood.

Clearly the SE of England is a hot spot! Perhaps this will spur some of us to look in those areas with very few records. Not only look for the commoner species but also in habitats that might house the less common types. It is clear that many of the latter are probably more widely distributed but have just not been looked for. So, instead of soil and leaf litter, try the odd farm building, birds’ nest (remember Larca lata turned up here) and even get your feet wet in a Sphagnum bog (Microbisium brevifemoratum).

But … Please don’t forget the CAMS too – send me the records what ever they are.

A Plea For Copy

If any of you have any suggestions, ideas, comments, interesting records, experiences (pseudoscorpion wise only!) then don’t hesitate to send me some copy.

dactylochelifer latreillei

Dactylochelifer latreillei original drawings by Richard Jones (modified from Lin. Soc. Synopsis No. 40).

Send in those records – even the CAMS!

Cephalothoraxes of our three Neobisium species. Note the posterior marginal row of setae. Remember too that there is some variation!
This graphic includes mainland Britain, the Channel Islands and the Scottish and Outer Isles. Ireland has been omitted as it will be dealt with at another time.

The number for each Vice County is shown blurred due to the perspective view of the country.