

Harvestmen (*Opiliones*) in Lancashire and Cheshire

by D. W. MACKIE

IT is many years since we have had any records of harvestmen in these Reports and the last check-list of this group of invertebrates was that published in Part 1 of the *Check List of the Fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire* by this Society in 1930 and compiled by W. Falconer. Since that time a few further records of harvestmen found in one or other of the two counties have been published in other journals and a few additional species have been recorded.

Although we have only 21 species of harvestmen in the British Isles, some of these species occur in large numbers at certain seasons of the year and this harvestmen population forms a significant proportion of the invertebrate fauna of the litter layer of our woods, fields and open spaces. Even in our coastal dune areas, harvestmen are exceedingly numerous and are often to be found there quite active all through the winter months.

At the present time 17 of the total of 21 species of harvestmen have been recorded from Lancashire or Cheshire and the following check-list has been drawn up from various sources and I would like to thank Dr. J. N. Yates and Mr. C. Felton for their help in sending me records of their collecting. A few records have also been extracted from published papers which are listed in the references at the end.

Nemastoma lugubre (Müller). This species is common and widespread in both counties, usually found in deep ground herbage. It is an easily recognised species; jet black with two cream spots on the abdomen and short black legs.

Nemastoma lugube var. *unicolor* Roewer. I collected a single male of this variety in grass on the banks of the River Etherow at Woodhead, Cheshire. It had not been recorded previously for either county. The variety differs from the type in lacking the two cream spots on the abdomen.

Nemastoma chrysomelas (Hermann). This species has been recorded in the 1930 check-list for both counties but I have no further records of it although I have taken it in Derbyshire. It is apparently a widespread but local species and is more likely to occur in our higher moorland areas.

Homalenotus quadridentatus (Cuvier). This species was recorded for Cheshire by W. S. Bristowe (1949) but the actual locality is not given. It is a southern species and usually associated with limestone areas.

Leiobunum rotundum (Latr.). A common and widespread species in both counties. In late autumn it is often seen resting on the lower portion of tree trunks. The small body and extremely long legs make this species easily recognisable in the field.

Leiobunum blackwalli Meade. This species is also common and widespread in the two counties in a variety of habitats, although probably somewhat less common than the previous species.

Mitopus morio (Fabr.). A common and widespread species in both counties. It is found in all habitats from sea-level to the tops of the highest moorlands. This is a large and handsomely coloured species, especially so in the male.

Oligolophus agrestis (Meade). This is probably the most common and numerous species in both counties in many habitats. In late autumn and well into winter large populations of this species are active in forest litter, grasslands and sand dune areas. It is a small species with short legs.

Oligolophus tridens (C. L. Koch). Although not so common as *O. agrestis*, this species is widespread in both counties and often in similar habitats.

Oligolophus hanseni (Kraep). This species is rather rare although it has been recorded a few times from both counties. It appears to have a preference for tree and shrub habitats.

Oligolophus meadei Camb. A rather rare species in both counties. It was recorded for Cheshire only in Falconer's 1930 list, but has since been recorded for Lancashire by Bristowe (1949). It has also since been recorded from Ainsdale dunes, Lancashire, at marram roots in autumn.

Odiellus palpinalis (Herbst.). This species is widespread but local in both counties, generally in long grass in fields and woods.

Lacinius ephippiatus (C. L. Koch). This is a frequent and widespread species in both counties and is to be found in a variety of habitats. It generally frequents the grass layer or the pine litter in woods but is also found in marshes and on field layer herbage.

Phalangium opilio L. This is a common species in both counties; a large species which occupies all habitats. It is also common in dune areas in autumn.

Opilio parientinus (De Geer). A frequent species in a variety of habitats in both counties. It is a large species, often to be seen resting on walls and tree trunks.

Opilio saxatilis (C. L. Koch). This species was not included in Falconer's 1930 check-list but has since been recorded for both Lancashire and Cheshire by Bristowe (1949), but no localities are given. It appears to be a rare species with us and no further records have come in since then.

Platybunus triangularis (Herbst). This is a common and widespread species in both counties and as it overwinters in the adult form, is commonly found in all habitats from April onwards.

Megabunus diadema (Fabr.). This is an infrequent species in both counties. It was recorded for Cheshire only in the 1930 Check-list, but has since been recorded for Lancashire by Bristowe (1949). It has also been collected since that date at Leighton Moss and Silverdale, Lancashire. This species is easily recognised in the field because of its cryptic colouring which simulates the lichen and moss on the rock faces and tree trunks which it frequents and also by the very long spines which surround the eye turret.

Nelima silvatica (Simon). Although this rare species has not yet been recorded for either Lancashire or Cheshire, it is interesting to note that it has been found by Mr. L. N. Kidd in a garage at Greenfield, Yorkshire, which is very close to the Lancashire border.

REFERENCES

- Bristowe, W. S., 1949. The distribution of Harvestmen in Great Britain and Ireland, etc. *J. Anim. Ecol.* 18, 100-114.
- Falconer, W., 1930. Check List of *Opiliones*, in A Check List of the Fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire, Part 1. *Lancs. Ches. Fauna Committee.* p. 91.
- Kidd, L. N., 1966. The Harvest-spider *Nelima silvatica* (Simon) in Yorkshire. *The Naturalist*, No. 896, p. 4.
- Mackie, D. W., 1967. Spiders and Harvestmen of the South Lancashire Dune area. *The Naturalist*, No. 902, 99-103.
- Sankey, J., 1953. *Nemastoma lugubre* (Müller). First record of var. *unicolor* Roewer in Britain. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* (12) 6, 27-29.