

Philoscia affinis Verhoeff, 1908 a new woodlouse (Isopoda: Philosciidae) found in Wyre Forest

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Left *Philoscia muscorum*, right *Philoscia affinis*



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In 2015 I photographed a woodlouse in Wyre Forest and labelled it as *Philoscia muscorum* the common Striped Woodlouse. However, the woodlouse in the photo did not have the characteristic shiny-black head of that species, instead it had a rather spotty or reticulated pattern. I gave this no further thought until I read Volume 30 of the Bulletin of the British Myriapod & Isopod Group (BMIG) issued in 2018, which carried a paper titled *Philoscia affinis* Verhoeff, 1908 new to the UK (Stijn Segers et. al. 2018). In the paper the authors discuss the discovery of a specimen of *Philoscia affinis* in the collection of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences which was apparently collected in the UK in 1985, despite the species being absent from the British list. The authors visited England in July 2017 to search for *Philoscia affinis* and found it in South East England confirming its presence in the UK.

The British Myriapod & Isopod Group website states "Although superficially similar to the ubiquitous *P. muscorum* in general appearance, the pigmentation of the head and body is a good guide to identification". I wondered if this could be the mystery *Philoscia* I had photographed in 2015.

The BMIG website states "Reliable identification requires microscopic examination of 7th pereopod of a male specimen". The 7th pereopod (hind leg) bears a small hook, which for *Philoscia affinis* stands up

tooth-like whereas for *Philoscia muscorum* the hook is bowed down thumb-like. Unfortunately I could not see this feature in the photograph. During a Wyre Forest Study Group meeting at Unclys Farm on 23rd March 2019 I searched for and found a *Philoscia* woodlouse with a reticulated head-pattern (which by chance was a male). I photographed the specimen including a view of the hook and sent the images to the Woodlouse and Waterlouse Recording Scheme organiser Steve Gregory who confirmed that "this is a male *P. affinis*, [this] to date, is the most inland record for a confirmed male". He suggested that it remains very unrecorded.

During a Wyre Forest study Group meeting on 13th April 2019 two further *Philoscia affinis* woodlice were found. The first by Ian Wright at Hitterhill Coppice and the second by Brett Westwood near Forest Lodge Stream. Both of these, like the original one were found under small pieces of rotting oak branches, lying on leaf litter.

References

- BMIG website- <http://www.bmig.org.uk/species/philoscia-affinis>
- Stijn Segers, Pepijn Boeraeve & Pallieter De Smedt (2018). *PHILOSCIA AFFINIS* VERHOEFF, 1908 NEW TO THE UK (ISOPODA: PHILOSCIIDAE) available at: http://www.bmig.org.uk/sites/www.bmig.org.uk/files/bulletin/BullBMIG30p21-25_Segers-etal_P-affinis-UK.pdf [Accessed 13.01.2020].
- Farmer, G. 2019. Hiding in plain sight, *Philoscia affinis* Verhoeff, 1908 new to Worcestershire (Isopoda: Philosciidae). *Worcestershire Record* number 46, pages 9 to 11.