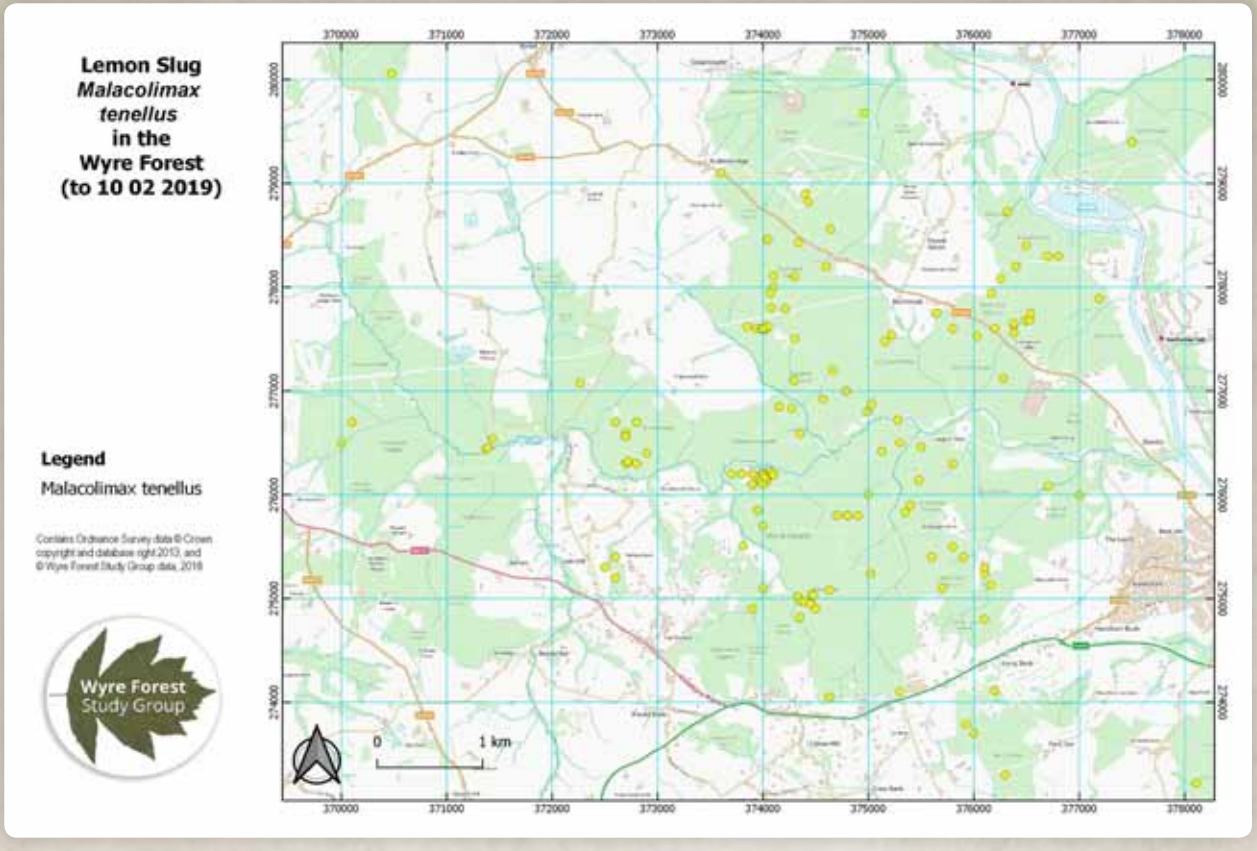
Wyre Forest Study Group

Malacolimax tenellus search in Wyre Forest 2018

ROSEMARY HILL



While the Slender Slug (or Lemon Slug) *Malacolimax tenellus* has been known from the Wyre Forest for many years, systematic surveying of the extent of the species in the forest only began in 2008. This is not an easy species to find as it lives on fungal hyphae underground, emerging when the fruiting bodies form in the autumn. The timing of field meetings for this species can be difficult, and while the occasional juvenile can be found as early as June, and individuals can survive into December in mild winters, the best chance of success is usually in October. Three Conchological Society members met up with the Wyre Forest Study Group on 13th October 2018 at Hawkbatch to examine sites in the Shropshire Area of the forest. Seckley Ravine was a particular target, aiming to work our way in from the top, to examine the wet flushes there. These flushes are more nutrient rich and have a higher number of mollusc species than more acid areas. Ash trees and a rocky area were exposed here. Some of the party stayed at the top of the ravine and searched there so as to reduce the risk of trampling damage. Several samples of leaf litter were taken and Tom Walker tried sampling the site with a cordless car vacuum. In an earlier visit to the ravine, a group had worked its way up from the bottom, but the stream and a lot of loose debris and fallen trees made access very difficult. In the current survey, *M. tenellus* was found both in open rocky woodland within the ravine in a wet flush overhung by a yew tree and other notable species included the Ash-black Slug *Limax cinereoniger,* the Point Snail *Acicula fusca* and the Land Caddis *Enoicyla pusilla* (Trichoptera). The most productive area was a wet flush under a Yew tree where the deer had grazed off the vegetation. A total of 25 mollusc species were found in the ravine, which is high for the area. The group remaining at the top of the ravine was also successful in finding *M. tenellus*. Other areas examined in Hawkbatch were more acid and less productive and no more *M. tenellus* were found. Possibly the summer drought had delayed their emergence (and that of the soil-based fungi fruiting bodies that provide their food source) in the drier parts of the forest where they have been recorded previously. The map shows the results of the survey so far. *M. tenellus* has been found so far in all the forest compartments it has been sought in, which indicates that Wyre Forest is a stronghold for the species. However in this large and complex area, there are always other areas to investigate, notably outlying parts of the forest and western areas, some of which would require permission as they are on private land. *M. tenellus* is known to be restricted to ancient semi-natural woodland, but it can still be found in partially replanted woods and tolerates coppicing and pollarding. Disturbance of the roots and fungal mycelium may be of greater importance to this species than temporary removal of the tree canopy, provided the environment remains sufficiently humid.

This article is an extract from the Wyre Forest Study Group annual Review 2018

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Woodland edge habitats may be less favourable and it will be interesting to see if this applies to the edge compartments of the Wyre Forest in future surveys.

I would like to thank Rosemary Winnall for obtaining permission to visit the sites and everyone who attended this meeting and provided records previously. Graham Hill kindly produced the up-to-date version of the accompanying map. A version of this article will also appear in the magazine of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *Mollusc World*.

Lemon Slug & Wood Ant, Chamberline 3/10/18 Roger Plant

Walking down into the Seckley Ravine Rosemary Hill

Lemon Slug, Wyre Forest 22 November 2010 Rosemary Winnall