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A checklist of the centipedes (Chilopoda) of Lithuania

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Abstract

Only 4 species of centipedes were previously reported for Lithuania. Here we present current distributional data for a total of 20 species (12 species of Lithobiomorpha and 8 species of Geophilomorpha) collected mainly during 7 years conducting ecological research at Curonian Spit, drawing on samples from the central, eastern and north-western parts of Lithuania.

Key words: Lithobiomorpha, Geophilomorpha, Curonian Spit, Baltic

Introduction

The Republic of Lithuania is one of the three Baltic States lying on the Baltic Sea coast. It is surrounded by Latvia, Belarus, Poland and Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast). It covers an area of 65,200 square kilometres and lies between latitudes 53° and 57° N. The climate of Lithuania ranges between continental and maritime with cold, snowy winters and mean annual precipitation of 600–900 mm. The terrain is moderate lowlands and highlands with maximum elevation of 294 m a. s. l. The country is basically rural with abundant lakes, pastures and forests.

The knowledge of the centipede fauna of Lithuania is very poor, based upon only two papers by Atlavinytė (1973) and Zalesskaya (1978). The former, despite its promising title, does not contain any species data. Both sources yield a total of only four species: *Lithobius forficatus*, *Lithobius melanops*, *Lithobius erythrocephalus* and *Lithobius curtipes*. On the other hand, a checklist of centipedes of Latvia, a northerly country of similar size, comprises 10 species of Geophilomorpha and 6 species of Lithobiomorpha. Even Fauna Europaea shows an unsatisfactory state-of-the-art of description of the centipede fauna of the Baltic States; there are 4 species of centipedes known from Latvia and Lithuania respectively, and no species from Estonia, in contrast to 22 reported species known from Finland and 56 species known from Poland. Although Poland and Finland are larger countries and the checklists contain non-valid and doubtful species, the gap in knowledge is evident.

The aim of this paper is to present a checklist of centipedes of Lithuania based on published records as well as newly collected material identified by the first author of this paper.

Material and methods

The majority of centipedes reported on in this list were collected by Povilas Ivinskis (PI) and Jolanta Rimšaitė (JR) using pitfall traps during their long-term research at Curonian Spit. Some other centipedes were collected recently during Ivan Hadrián Tuf's (IHT) scholarship stay in Lithuania in October 2014. The rest of the material was collected by PI and JR during occasional collecting trips to different localities using pitfall traps and hand collecting (including sorting of sifted litter). The specimens are deposited in the collection of the Nature Research Centre, Vilnius (PI) and at the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc (IHT). Taxonomical treatment follows Fauna Europaea (Enghoff 2013).