

Dicranopalpus ramosus, a new species of harvestman for The Netherlands (Opilionida: Phalangiidae)

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Abstract: The opilionid *Dicranopalpus ramosus* is recorded for the first time from The Netherlands. It was found on walls of some buildings in Ede, province of Gelderland. Short notes on biology and distribution of the species are given.

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Introduction

In the last review of the Dutch harvestmen (Spoek, 1975) twenty-one species of Opilionida are mentioned for The Netherlands. Since then only *Opilio canestrinii* (Thorell) was added to the Dutch list by Van der Weele (1993). The discovery of *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Simon) presents the second addition to this list in a short time.

Locality

The first specimens of *D. ramosus* (2 females) were collected on 27 October 1993 on the white-painted walls of the authors house in Ede (Amersfoort-co-ordinates 176-451). The species was already observed here earlier in the year (at least from the beginning of October), but, being not familiar with Opilionida, I did not pay any attention to it at that time. Being involved with the identification of some harvestmen from the nature reserve Mariapeel, some specimens of a distinctly different species were taken from the wall of the house for comparison. Both species keyed out to the same couplet in Spoek (1975) and than I realized that the specimens from Ede belonged to a new species for the fauna of The Netherlands. Identification with Sankey & Savory (1974) resulted in *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco, which is a synonym of *D. ramosus*. The identification was confirmed by P. Koomen (Leiden). Altogether five specimens (2 males, 3

females) were collected and preserved in 70% ethanol; they are deposited in the collection of the National Natural History Museum (Leiden) and the private collection of P. Koomen.

Identification

Dicranopalpus ramosus (fig. 1) can be easily identified with the keys of Martens (1978) and Hillyard & Sankey (1989), which include good illustrations of the most important characters. Also Rambla (1965) and Sankey & Savory (1974) give illustrations of some characters.

Most characteristic are the very long and conspicuous pedipalps with a relatively small apophysis at the base of the femur and an exceptionally long one on the inner surface of the patella. In females the patellar apophysis is nearly as thick and long as the tibia (fig. 1) and relatively slender and shorter (but still more than half the length of the tibia) in males. The form of the pedipalp distinguishes *D. ramosus* from all other Western European Opilionida. The arrangement of the yellow and brown annulated legs in the typical rest position also differs from other harvestmen. Harvestmen, at rest, normally keep their legs spread more or less in a circle and not fully extended, but in *D. ramosus* the legs are held in a laterigrade position (right angles to the body) and are fully extended (fig. 1), attached very closely to the substrate.

Further characters can be found in the literature mentioned above.

Fig. 1. *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, ♀, 5.xi.1993, on wall at Ede (photo Th. Heijerman).



Distributional and ecological notes

The genus *Dicranopalpus* comprises about 15 species in Europe, mostly confined to the Southern European mountains (Martens, 1978). *Dicranopalpus ramosus* has a relatively large distribution area and is known from Morocco (type locality), Spain, Portugal and the southwestern part of France (Dresco, 1948; Rambla, 1965; Sankey & Storey, 1969). Since 1957 the species is also known from the southern part of England (Sankey & Storey, 1969) and it has established many thriving colonies since then (Hillyard & Sankey, 1989).

The mostly synanthropic habitat choice of *Dicranopalpus* in England corresponds with its habitat in The Netherlands. The preference for gardens and hedges, especially on *Quercus ilex* L. and conifers, however, could not be confirmed. The Dutch specimens were observed only on walls. Beating of the foliage of several conifers in the garden (*Taxus baccata* L., *Pinus sylvestris* L., *Larix decidua* Miller, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Mirb.) Franco and *Juniperus* sp.) did not result in any specimen. This applies also to the visual inspection of *Pinus*-stems. Though *D. ramosus* was frequently seen very close to a door, the species was never found indoors.

From 27 October 1993 till 22 November 1993 (the start of a severe frost period, after which the species disappeared) *D. ramosus*

was observed daily on the walls of the house and a nearby garage. The maximum number of specimens seen on one day was five. Normally they were inactive during daytime as most specimens were on the same spot in the morning and at dusk. The last observed specimen spend two days on the same spot before it disappeared during the night.

A second interesting opilionid on the same walls was the eastern mediterranean *Opilio canestrinii*, of which three females were collected (det. and coll. P. Koomen). This species has expanded its distribution towards the north (Germany, Poland, Denmark and Sweden) and was recently discovered in The Netherlands (Van der Weele, 1993). *Opilio canestrinii* was more abundant than *D. ramosus*. With the inset of the frost period this species also disappeared.

Discussion

The origin of the Dutch population of *D. ramosus* is uncertain. Active migration of the species from either England or Southern Europe to The Netherlands seems unlikely since the species is not known from intermediate area's. Even when one bears in mind that there are not many people involved in the study of Opilionida such a striking species would have been noticed somewhere if common in these area's. Accidental introduction by traffic

or hitch-hiking with mediterranean ornamental garden conifers seems possible, as the author spend several holidays in the Pyrenees and Spain, and the garden is full with exotic conifers. However, it is very remarkable that two mediterranean species, originating from different area's, were found together on the same spot. Whether *Dicranopalpus* will be as successfull as in England will be followed in the forthcoming years.

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