

Alistair Kirk of the London Wildlife Trust for producing Figure 1 and Marie-Claire Edwards, Amanda Morgan, Simon Ramsdale and Neil Vigar for help in searching for exuviae.

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## SHORT COMMUNICATION

***Peritrechus gracilicornis* Puton (Heteroptera: Lygaeidae) in West Cornwall**—In September 1993 I took *P. gracilicornis* at two localities in West Cornwall. At Glendurgan Gardens, West Cornwall (SW772277), on 16 September, the combination of a shower of rain and a sleeping child brought about a brief postponement of a planned tour of the gardens, and I whiled away the time by investigating a large compost heap in partial tree shade beside the car park. Ten minutes of tapping the overhanging thatch of the heap over a tray was rewarded by a large number of *Peritrechus*, some of which had markedly pale hind tibiae. A sample of twenty pale-legged individuals removed for closer examination proved to consist of five *P. gracilicornis* and fifteen *P. geniculatus* (Hahn). This collecting method also produced additional species of Heteroptera: *Anaptus major* (A. Costa), *Anthocoris nemorum* (L.), *Aptus mirmicoides* (O. Costa), *Drymus ryei* Douglas & Scott, *Drymus sylvaticus* (Fab.), *Plinthisus brevipennis* (Latreille), *Scolopostethus affinis* (Schilling), *Scolopostethus thomsoni* Reuter, *Stygnocoris fuliginus* (Geoffroy), *Stygnocoris sabulosus* (Schilling) and *Xylocoris galactinus* (Fieber), as well as the weevils *Orthochaetes insignis* (Aubé) and *O. setiger* (Beck). A considerably longer list could no doubt have been obtained by more prolonged investigation.

It is not clear whether the *P. gracilicornis* were in the compost heap voluntarily. A considerable amount of material had been recently added to the pile and many insects may have been incorporated with it. Certainly some of the other species recorded would not usually be expected from a compost heap. On the other hand, *Peritrechus* seem attracted to heaps of cut vegetation, at least for overwintering purposes. I have, for example, beaten very large numbers of *P. geniculatus* and *P. nubilus* (Fallén) from piles of cut sedge at Chippenham Fen NNR, Cambridgeshire (TL646694) on 5.x.1992, and *P. geniculatus* from stacked straw at the margin of an arable field near Oldfield Pond, Northamptonshire (TF132002) on 19.iv.1993. Whether their presence in the compost heap was voluntary or not, the *P. gracilicornis* of Glendurgan Gardens must have a more natural habitat for at least part of the year, but where this might be, in or near the extensive and varied gardens, must remain uncertain.



The second location for *P. gracilicornis* is probably more typical of the species. A single individual was taken by beating a large clump of sea plantain, *Plantago maritima* L., growing low on the sea cliff at Porthallow, SW797233, on 23 September. Other Heteroptera found by beating vegetation clumps on this cliff were *Acalypta parvula* (Fallén), *Anaptus major*, *Anthocoris nemorum*, *Aptus mirmicoides*, *Beosus maritimus* (Scopoli), *Coreus marginatus* (L.), *Enoplops scapha* (Fab.), *Lygus maritimus* Wagner, *Nabis fesus* (L.), *Peritrechus nubilus*, *Plinthinus brevipennis*, *Scolopostethus affinis*, *Stygnocoris fuliginus*, *S. sabulosus*, *Taphropeltus contractus* (H.-S.) and *Trapezonotus ullrichi* (Fieber).

*P. gracilicornis* is a rare species in Britain, and records are largely restricted to the south coast. Previous records come from Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Dorset. Though Allen (1980) found it in numbers at Studland Bay, Dorset, most records are of at most a few individuals, and there has been some doubt as to whether the species is established as a long-term resident or merely forms transitory populations following immigration (Kirby, 1992). The uncertainty is compounded by the fact that it is superficially similar to other *Peritrechus* species, giving considerable scope for *gracilicornis* being either overlooked or misidentified. At both of the West Cornwall localities, *P. gracilicornis* occurred with other *Peritrechus* of one of these similar species, and in both cases *gracilicornis* was considerably in the minority. Careful examination of *Peritrechus* in the field, and the removal of specimens covering the full range of variation seen for closer examination, is clearly advisable.—P. KIRBY, 21 Grafton Avenue, Netherton, Peterborough, PE3 9PD, UK.

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#### BOOK NOTICE

**Log Book of British Lepidoptera.** J. D. Bradley. 2000. iv + 108 pp. 120 × 190 mm, plasticised cover. Published privately. ISBN 0 9532508 1 4. Available from David Bradley, The Glen, Frogham, Fordingbridge, Hants SP6 2HS. Price £6 + £1 p&p. This pocket-size fully updated log book covers the 2500 and more species and forms of Lepidoptera at present known from the British Isles, using the current scientific names, and indicates the *national status* of the protected and less common species. It has the numbering system for species as in the original recorder's log book (Bradley & Fletcher 1979) and in the *Checklist of Lepidoptera recorded from the British Isles* (Bradley 1999) [a revised edition of which is imminent], and can be accessed through the indices in the checklist.



Kirby, P. 2000. "Peritrechus gracilicornis Puton (Heteroptera: Lygaeidae) in west Cornwall." *British journal of entomology and natural history* 13, 106–107.

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