

# A 700 km disjunct population of the millipede *Blaniulus dollfusi* in Belgium (Diplopoda, Julida: Blaniulidae)

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**Summary.** The millipede *Blaniulus dollfusi* (Brölemann, 1894) is recorded as new for the Belgian fauna, based on specimens collected in Tervuren. The species is native to S. France, N. Spain and N. Portugal and is probably introduced in Belgium.

**Samenvatting.** Een 700 km disjuncte populatie van de duizendpoot *Blaniulus dollfusi* in België (Diplopoda, Julida: Blaniulidae)

De duizendpoot *Blaniulus dollfusi* (Brölemann, 1894) wordt hier als nieuw voor de Belgische fauna vermeld, gebaseerd op exemplaren verzameld te Tervuren. De soort komt voor in Zuid-Frankrijk, Noord-Spanje en Noord-Portugal en is waarschijnlijk geïmporteerd in België.

**Résumé.** Une population disjoncte de 700 km du millipède *Blaniulus dollfusi* en Belgique (Diplopoda, Julida: Blaniulidae)

Le millipède *Blaniulus dollfusi* (Brölemann, 1894) est mentionné ici comme nouveau pour la faune belge d'après des exemplaires collectés à Tervuren. L'espèce vit en France méridionale, en Espagne septentrional et au Portugal septentrional et elle est probablement importée en Belgique.

**Key words:** Diplopoda – Belgium – introduced.

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The Belgian millipede fauna is well-studied. Kime (2004) summarised earlier studies and reported a total of 50 Belgian species based on a very large material (ca. 10,000 records, more than 100,000 specimens).

A further millipede species can now be added to the Belgian list: on 23 January, 2009, I collected four specimens of *Blaniulus dollfusi* Brölemann, 1894, in the park of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (50°49'48.66"N, 4°31'22.41"E). They were found within a tiny (<1 m<sup>2</sup>) area under dead wood and a thin layer of beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) litter, looking quite active despite the date and temperature (4°C). Two other millipede species were found on the same spot: *Cylindroiulus punctatus* (Leach, 1815) and *C. truncorum* (Silvestri, 1896) (fam. Julidae).

*Blaniulus dollfusi* is quite a large millipede, reaching 34 mm in length and of a striking appearance with its very long body setae and bright red defense glands. Smaller specimens have a whitish ground colour and look like a gigantic version of the widespread *B. guttulatus* (Fabricius, 1798), while the larger ones are more brownish (Fig. 1). Brölemann (1923) provided a good description of the species. *Blaniulus dollfusi* is known from southern France, northern Spain and northern Portugal. It is frequent in forest litter and soil and is sometimes found in fungi; it also occurs in caves in Spain.



Fig. 1. *Blaniulus dollfusi* (Brölemann, 1894), living specimens from Tervuren. The largest specimen is ca. 3 cm long. The red spots on the millipedes are due to defensive secretion released upon handling them with forceps. Photograph by G. Brovad.

The Belgian myriapod fauna includes some species which show a 'Pyrenean connection' similar to that of *B. dollfusi*, notably the millipede *Ceratosphys amoena confusa* Ribaut, 1920 (Kime 2004, Pontégnie, Kime & Lebrun 2005). In the case of *B. dollfusi*, however, its disjunct occurrence in Belgium, some 700 km NNE of the northernmost record so far, is most likely the result of anthropochory, i.e., dispersal through human activity. One possible vehicle of dispersal is suggested by an observation by Desmond Kime (pers. comm.) who found *B. dollfusi* in mushroom stalks sold on the market in Brantôme in the Dordogne, southern France. Whatever the mechanism of dispersal, *B. dollfusi* seems to be established in Tervuren; it remains to be seen if the species will be able to disperse to other suitable Belgian sites.

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