



The log, returned to its original position after examination.



Mark Hobson/Nature Portfolio

Black ants *Lasius niger*

Ants are warmth loving creatures and are found in abundance in the tropics. Entomologist EO Wilson said he found one tree in the rainforest with 52 species of ants living in it. There are only just about that many in the whole of Great Britain.



Snake *Tachysternon*

Another snake found under the log. It is on detritus and the log.



Common slug *Arion ater* (Orange form)

Over 23% of all known marine animals belong to the phylum Mollusca, but there are many examples on land too, the slugs and snails being the most familiar.

Ground beetle *Harpalus a*

Asked what could be inferred about the study of His works, the British scientist have replied, "He has an inordinate number of species on Earth and these are ground beetles (Carabids)

Life under a log

The damp ground under a fallen log provides a suitable environment for many invertebrates. Photographs: Gary Skinner.

Large millipede *Diploporus niger*

Large millipede. They are common under logs and stones because they feed on detritus, which is abundant here, they like damp places.

Flat-backed millipede *Nanogona* sp.

There are two major groups of many legged invertebrates found under logs and stones, the Millipedes (seen here) and the Centipedes. Millipedes are quite slow moving and feed on detritus, centipedes by contrast are fast moving predators, some of which have venomous sting.



Stenocryptus affinis

In the work of the Creator from a biologist JBS Haldane is reported to have a "fondness for beetles." There are at least 6000 in the UK. Over 300 of them like this one.



Common slug *Arion ater* (Black form)

AJ Cain and MH Williamson said in a paper in 1958, "One of the most difficult problems in the systematics [naming] of British terrestrial molluscs is the proper assignment of all the colour varieties of the large slug *Arion*." Under this log there are at least three which might look like different species. Why aren't they?

A glimpse through the basement window

Luccombe Down on the Isle of Wight

An idyllic country scene, like the one above, is well known to most of us. We can see the trees and some of the smaller plants, and fairly easily imagine birds, small mammals, butterflies and other insects out there. What is much less well known is the life beneath the scene, in the soil.

One of the simplest and most productive ways of having a look into the life of the soil is to search for it under logs and stones lying on its surface. The centre spread (pages 10-11) shows an overturned

log and gives an idea of both the variety and abundance of life which can easily be seen here. Represented are slugs, ants, beetles and millipedes, and you might be able to see some other creatures if you look carefully at the photograph.

Also often found in this habitat are woodlice, centipedes, spiders, earthworms, earwigs, ants and even, on occasion, some vertebrates such as newts. If you go looking for animals under logs and stones, remember this is their temporary or even permanent home, so please put the log or stone back in place when you have finished.

Gary Skinner is Biology editor of CATALYST.



Woodlice *Porcellio scaber* with the ground beetle *Abax parallelepipedus*.



Many stones, especially flat ones, have ants' nests under them.



A centipede *Lithobius forficatus*, Very common under logs and stones.



The woodlouse-eating spider *Dysdera crocata*.



European newts spend most of their adult life on land, only breeding in water. Outside the breeding season (February to June) they are often found in damp places such as under logs and stones.