

# First records of the expansive harvestman *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Arachnida: Opiliones) in the Czech Republic

První nálezy expanzivního sekáče *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Arachnida: Opiliones) v České republice

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we report the first records of the harvestman *Dicranopalpus ramosus* in the Czech Republic. Its presence was documented in September 2024 in the territory of the towns of Prague and Vyškov (one specimen from each location). We provide the circumstances of the find and summarise the history of the spread of this expansive species in Europe. Voucher material is deposited in the collection of Muzeum Vysočiny Jihlava.

**Abstrakt:** V příspěvku předkládáme informace o prvních nálezech sekáče *Dicranopalpus ramosus* v České republice. Jeho přítomnost byla doložena v září 2024 na území Prahy a Vyškova (po jednom exempláři z každého města). Uvádíme náleзовé okolnosti a shrnujeme historii šíření tohoto expanzivního druhu v Evropě. Dokladový materiál je uložen ve sbírkách Muzea Vysočiny Jihlava.

**Key words:** harvestmen, Opiliones, *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, distribution, expansive species, Czech Republic

## INTRODUCTION

*Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Simon, 1909) is a conspicuous harvestman of supposedly Ibero-Maghreb origin, spreading in Europe in recent decades (summarised in Wijnhoven et Prieto 2015, Rozwałka et Rutkowski 2016, Toft 2018). In September 2024, photographs of this species from two locations in the Czech Republic were uploaded to the iNaturalist portal (iNaturalist 2024). The first entry dated 16 September 2024 included photographs of a male located as “Malá Strana, Praha 1, Česko” (inaturalist.org/observations/242087979). The second was entered two days later. The photos show a male located as “682 01 Vyškov-Vyškov 1, Česko” (inaturalist.org/observations/242427302).

Given that occurrence of this species had, to our knowledge, not yet been reported from the Czech Republic, we investigated the circumstances of these records and possible occurrence of other specimens. Here we provide detailed information on our findings.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The author of the record from Prague appearing on iNaturalist under the nickname ‘opičák’ could not be found. Based on the dot on the map in the entry, we located the find near Malostranská Underground Station, at the intersection of Valdštejnská and Klárov Streets. Klára Bezděčková visited the site on 2 October 2024 to verify occurrence of *D. ramosus* and she found one male indeed. The specimen was identified according to Wijnhoven et Prieto (2015) and stored in 70 % alcohol in the arachno-entomological collection of Museum Vysočiny Jihlava (collection no. MJI/002-05-07/146002, sub-collection no. 7).

In the case of the record from Vyškov, we managed to track down the author, Martin Vašina, appearing on iNaturalist under the nickname ‘martinvas’, to contact him and to obtain detailed information about the find.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### MATERIAL EXAMINED

1. Czech Republic, Bohemia, Prague, Valdštejnská St, on the wall of Valdštejnská jízdná (50°5'28.683"N, 14°24'34.048"E), 2 Oct 2024, 1 male (Fig. 1), K. Bezděčková lgt., P. Bezděčka et K. Bezděčková det., Museum Vysočiny Jihlava coll.
2. Czech Republic, Moravia, Vyškov, premises of the Voestalpine Profilform s.r.o. company, Tovární 4, Vyškov, in the back part of the premises, on a concrete slab under the fence, with a grassy area on both sides (49°17'48.204"N, 17°0'45.474"E), 18 Sep 2024, 1 male (Fig. 2), M. Vašina observ. et photo, P. Bezděčka det.

No other specimen has been found at either location. Concerning the male from Prague, it cannot be determined with certainty whether it was the same individual as reported on iNaturalist. At a following visit to the site on 3 October 2024, we did not find any other specimens. The presence of the male may be explained in various ways. The site of discovery is a popular tourist spot, so the harvestman could have arrived in e.g. a car or with the luggage of a visitor. It may also have been introduced to the Valdštejnská zahrada Garden with seedlings or material for the local ongoing construction work.



Fig. 1: *D. ramosus* observed in Prague (Photo K. Bezděčková)

The author of the photographs from Vyškov, Martin Vašina, paid increased attention to the observation of harvestmen at the site of the find until the end of October. Nevertheless, he failed to record any other specimens of *D. ramosus*. Voestalpine Profilform s.r.o. manufactures steel structures and profiles, and imports most of the material from Austria (Judenburg) and Hungary (Sopron). In this case, transfer of the found male with a lorry is highly probable.

Type specimens of *D. ramosus* were collected in 1907 by Martinez de la Escalera in Morocco, namely in Essaouira (formerly Mogador) on the Atlantic coast (Simon 1909). The species was described by Simon (1909) in the newly established genus *Dichranochirus*. Later, it was recorded in Europe: Portugal (1948); southern England (1957); Spain (1965); France (1969); Netherlands (1993); Belgium and Ireland (1994); Scotland (2000), Germany (2002); Denmark (2006); Luxembourg (2007); Sweden (2013); Poland (2014); Austria, Switzerland and Hungary (2018) (Wijnhoven et Prieto 2015, Rozwałka et Rutkowski 2016, Toft 2018).

Later, Starega (1973) synonymised the taxa *Dichranochirus* and *Dicranopalpus*, and *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dresco, 1948 (described from one female from Portugal) and *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Simon, 1909).

However, Wijnhoven and Prieto (2015) revalidated *D. caudatus* based on a study of specimens from the Iberian Peninsula, France, England, and the Netherlands, and con-

firmed it for Spain, Portugal, and England. According to their data, *D. caudatus* is distributed along the eastern, southern and western coasts of the Iberian Peninsula, while *D. ramosus* only occurs on the northern Cantabrian coastal strip and further north. Consequently, Wijnhoven and Prieto (2015) hypothesise that *D. ramosus* may have originated from Morocco, introduced to Europe in southern France approximately in the 1960s, and dispersed from there eastward along the French Pyrenees and northward along the Atlantic coast. Therefore, it can be assumed that all older data from the Iberian Peninsula refer to *D. caudatus*.

Currently, the genus *Dicranopalpus* comprises 13 species. However, there are still gaps in our knowledge. For example, Martens (1978) pointed at clear geographically linked differences in the pedipalp armament of *D. gasteinensis* (Doleschal, 1852), suggesting that an undescribed species may be hidden within this taxon. Additionally, the phylogenetic relationships within *Dicranopalpus* have not been satisfactorily resolved (Wijnhoven, Martens et Prieto 2022).

Taking into account the low mobility of harvestmen, the expansion of *D. ramosus* in Europe is relatively fast. During sixty to seventy years, it has occupied in fact all of Western Europe, and in the past decade it has also spreading to the territory of Northern and Central Europe.

*D. ramosus* mainly inhabits parks, gardens, cemeteries, and other greenery in human settlements, including so-called

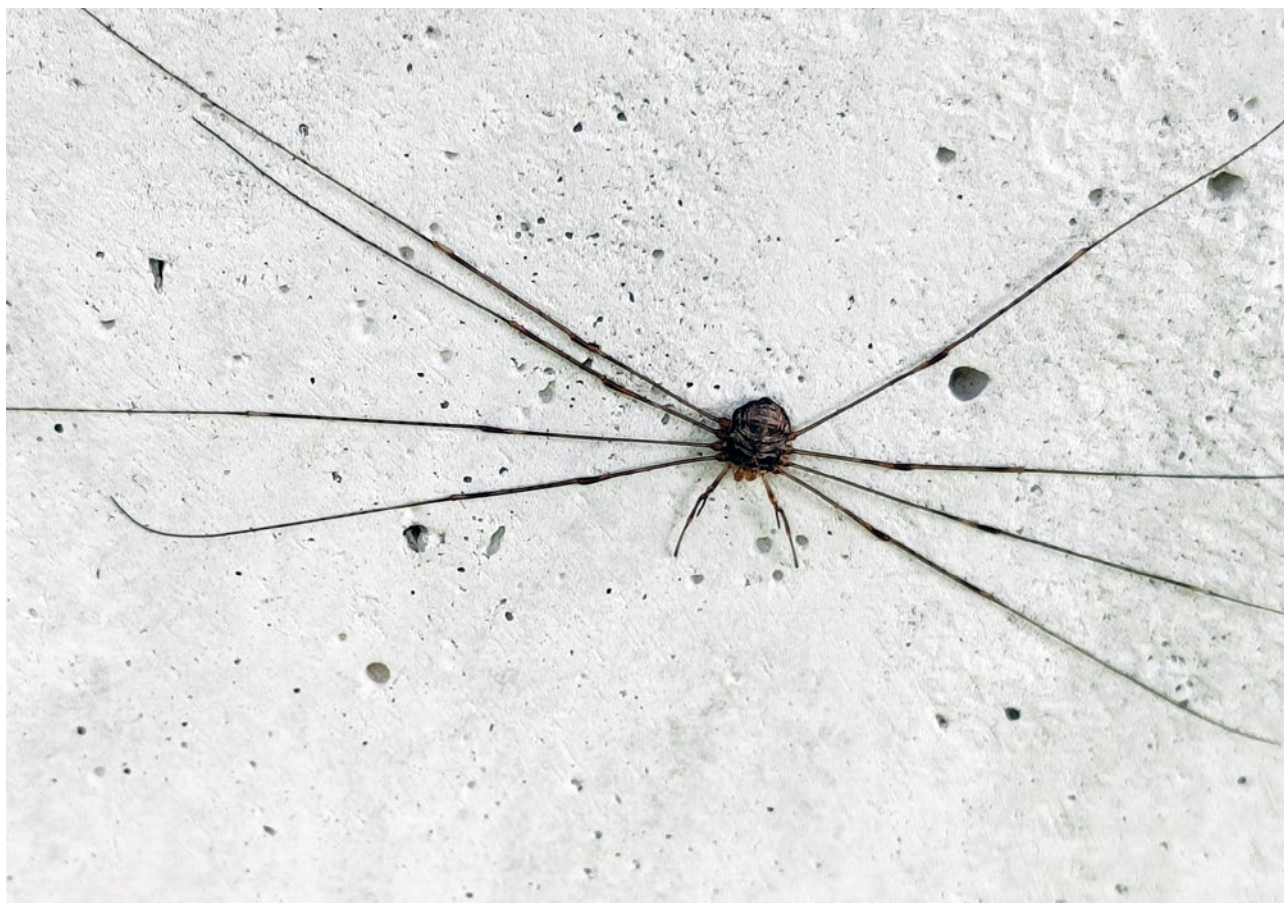


Fig. 2: *D. ramosus* observed in Vyškov (Photo M. Vašina)

brownfields, as well as various types of forests and groves. Adults start to appear in June and July, with a peak in occurrence usually in September. With the arrival of frost, their activity ends, although some individuals can exceptionally overwinter. Thanks to the characteristic resting position with legs held parallel and stretched out to the sides, it is easy to notice this species on walls of buildings, tree trunks, etc. (Wijnhoven 2009).

The presence of individual males in two different parts of the Czech Republic does not necessarily mean the existence of a population of *D. ramosus* in this country. However, based on the course of its spread, it can be expected that *D. ramosus* will appear more and more often in the Czech Republic and will become part of the Czech opiliofauna in the foreseeable future.

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