

A FIRST RECORD OF *DEROCERAS AGRESTE* (L.) IN IRELAND

Wiktor¹ gives the range of *Deroceras agreste* (L.) as Palaearctic, extending from the British Isles across Eurasia to the Russian Far East including Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. Though widespread in northern Britain it has never been recorded from Ireland^{2, 3}. Absence from Ireland has always seemed unreasonable, since this is essentially a northern species, and the habitats occupied in Britain, former peatlands (Norfolk Broads), flushed montane grassland (Scotland & northern England), and marshy stream margins³, are well represented there.

On 22 October 2005 six pale, unspotted *Deroceras* were collected in Buckroneys dunes, near Mizen Head, Co. Wicklow (Irish grid T295797). These were found under wood debris on the banks of a marshy coastal stream which had been impounded by marine sand from an exposed beach. Dissection of the first specimen proved inconclusive as the reproductive organs were small so the remaining specimens were kept for a month before killing. When dissected the penis in these had a simple penial gland which was small and single coiled and lacked nodular outgrowths. This was inserted just above the penis base and the body of the penis was solid and not noticeably constricted (in dorsal view) in the middle. The point of insertion of the vas deferens could be seen from above without turning the body of the penis over. These are all aspects in which *D. agreste* differs from the much commoner *D. reticulatum* (Müller)¹. In *Deroceras reticulatum* there is typically a deep lateral constriction in the penis and the penial gland is large, often with more than one branch, with most or all branches being nodular. Insertion

of the vas deferens is also hidden and ventral in *D. reticulatum*, facing the viscera as Wiktor¹ puts it, rather than facing outwards and upwards and therefore being visible from above as in *D. agreste*.

Using its distribution in Britain as a guide³ I have searched for *D. agreste* in montane wetlands in the northern half of Ireland on and off for about two decades, but without success. The sand dune environment and south-easterly location of Buckroneys could scarcely be predicted from the British distribution and is most unexpected. More work is clearly needed to clarify the status of this species in Ireland and to determine whether it occurs more widely. In December 2005 the Buckroneys site was re-visited and a further 4 specimens collected, this time in pony-grazed dune pasture near the stream. Two similar stream estuaries several hundred metres north and south of Buckroneys were visited but only *Deroceras reticulatum* could be found, confirming the peculiar isolation of the Buckroneys colony.

¹ WIKTOR A 2000 *Ann. Zool.* **49**: 347-590.

² ANDERSON R 2005 *J. Conch. Lond.* **38**: 607-637.

³ KERNEY MP 1999 *Atlas of land and freshwater molluscs of Britain and Ireland.* 261 pp.

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