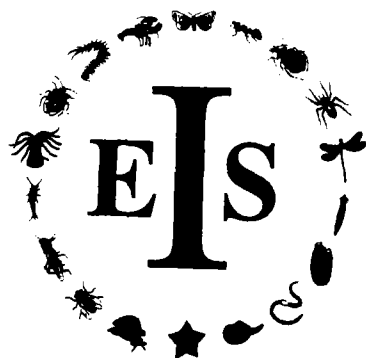




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Pac Willemse

Background information on invertebrates of the Habitats Directive and the Bern Convention

Part II – Mantodea, Odonata, Orthoptera and Arachnida

Edited by:

P. J. van Helsdingen
(Chairman Bern Convention Experts Group in Invertebrate Conservation)

L. Willemse
(European Invertebrate Survey, Leiden, Netherlands)

M. C. D. Speight
(President European Invertebrate Survey)

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Saga pedo (Pallas, 1771)

Nomenclature

Saga pedo (Pallas, 1771)

Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Orthoptera

Family: Tettigoniidae; Subfamily: Saginae

Synonyms

Saga giganteus (de Villers, 1789)

Saga serrata (Fabricius, 1793)

Saga nudipes (Fischer de Waldheim, 1830)

Saga vittata (Fischer de Waldheim, 1830)

Saga italica Costa, 1836-1857

Infra-specific taxa

none recognised

Vernacular names

La Magicienne dentelée, Langouste de Provence (French)

(Steppen-)Sägeschrecke, Große Sägeschrecke, Dornenschrecke (German)

Sága stepná (Slovak)

Kobylka Sága (Czech)

Fűrészlabú szöke (Hungarian)

Identification

Being wingless, only known in the female sex, very large (body size: 53-75 mm), and by far the largest bush cricket in its distribution area, *Saga pedo* is a very distinctive insect which can only be confused with other *Saga*-species. An identification key and description or diagnosis are given in Kaltenbach (1967, 1986) and Harz (1969). Photographs of adult specimens are given by Kaltenbach, 1967: fig. 7, 8, Kasy (1979), Chinery (1988), Quidet (1988), Bellmann (1993: 158-159), Bellmann & Luquet (1995: 158-159).

Biology

Our knowledge of *Saga* and related genera (the subfamily Saginae) has been summarised by Kaltenbach (1964, 1967, 1970, 1986, 1990). These papers include a large amount of information on the systematics, biology, ecology, distribution and behaviour of representatives of the Saginae. Most information presented here has been drawn from these publications, supplemented with data from recent publications and information received from Orthopterists all over Europe, as mentioned below.

Habitat

Like other *Saga* species *S. pedo* is thermophilic, temperature being the limiting factor influencing the horizontal and vertical distribution. The species may be found in areas from sea level to altitudes of some 1500 m, occasionally higher (Nadig, 1987). According to Kaltenbach (1990) "Saga species inhabit both dry and wet meadows, pastures, shrubby hillsides and gorges as well as fallow-grain fields and vineyards in southern Europe and western Asia. In Central Europe *Saga pedo* shows a remarkable disjunct distribution, being confined to xerothermic hills which frequently are formed with limestone subsoil." The species is found in dense herbaceous vegetation usually well hidden among long green grass stems. Major components of the vegetation in *Saga* habitats in Central Europe are: *Festuca* spp., *Sesleria* spp., *Poa* spp., *Centaurea* spp., *Eryngium campestre*, *Juniperus communis*, *Crataegus monogyna* and *Quercus pubescens*. In France *S. pedo* does not have a strict habitat preference being found in grassy plains with some bushes, thickets of blackberry bushes and clematis, undergrowth, vineyards, hedges, rugged terrains with kermes oak (Morin 1985, pers. comm.) as well as in hot and arid rugged terrain (Luquet, 1991). Also from Spain the species has been reported from various habitats: dry sites with rugged vegetation, hills, forest edges where it lives hidden away in tall herbs and thickets of *Juniperus* and *Cytisus scoparius reverchonii*, dry pasture land with isolated

patches of bushes, stubble-fields and cornfields (Pinedo, 1985; Herrera Mesa, 1995 pers. comm.; Pardo *et al.*, 1993; Gomez *et al.*, 1991). In Hungary *Saga pedo* is found primarily on rock-steppes and slope-steppes.

Like other species of the Saginae *Saga pedo* is probably mainly active during the twilight and night (Morin, pers. comm.). After the hottest part of the season sagines extend their activities more into daytime periods, the activity however declining as the season progresses (Kaltenbach, 1990). During daytime they live hidden away in the vegetation, remaining motionless and owing to their colour pattern they merge into the background (somatolysis) (Kaltenbach, 1986). This insect does not move when disturbed and is easy to catch (Morin, 1985).

Life cycle

Saga pedo is obligatorily parthenogenetic, being tetraploid ($2N = 68$) having twice the number of chromosomes found in the other *Saga* species (Matthey, 1941, 1946, 1948a-b). It is likely that there is a relation between its parthenogeneticity and its wide distribution area (Matthey, 1941; 1946). Kaltenbach (1967) discusses the question of the existence of males of *Saga pedo*. Although up to 1967, the existence of male *Saga pedo* had been reported in some 50 papers, a careful examination of these references showed that none of these reports was unambiguous, all being based on wrongly identified material. The male of *Saga pedo* is not known.

Three to four weeks after becoming an adult the female begins egg-laying which continues during the entire adult life. Prior to oviposition the female tests the soil by palpating with the antennae and probing with the tip of the ovipositor. The female deposits 25 to 80 eggs in the soil at favourable sites (Burr *et al.*, 1923; Quidet, 1988; 1991). In France oviposition takes place during august-september (Quidet, 1988; 1991). Temperature has a profound effect on embryonic and postembryonic development. At temperatures above 25°C eggs start developing without diapause. At 30°C development of the eggs takes 40-43 days, at 20°C 85 days whereas below these temperatures diapause sets in (Kaltenbach, 1990). In the field eggs usually hatch after 2-3 years of diapause, but may remain in the soil up to five years (B. Nagy, pers. comm.). Contrary to Berenguier (1905) who mentioned 8-9 instars, postembryonic development consists of 6-7 instars (Schall, pers. comm.). Hatching is not known to occur before May, with the first adults appearing in July. Adult life span may be four to six months.

Rearing experiments with *S. pedo* are at the time of writing being carried out in France and Hungary (A. Schall & B. Nagy respectively, pers. comm.).

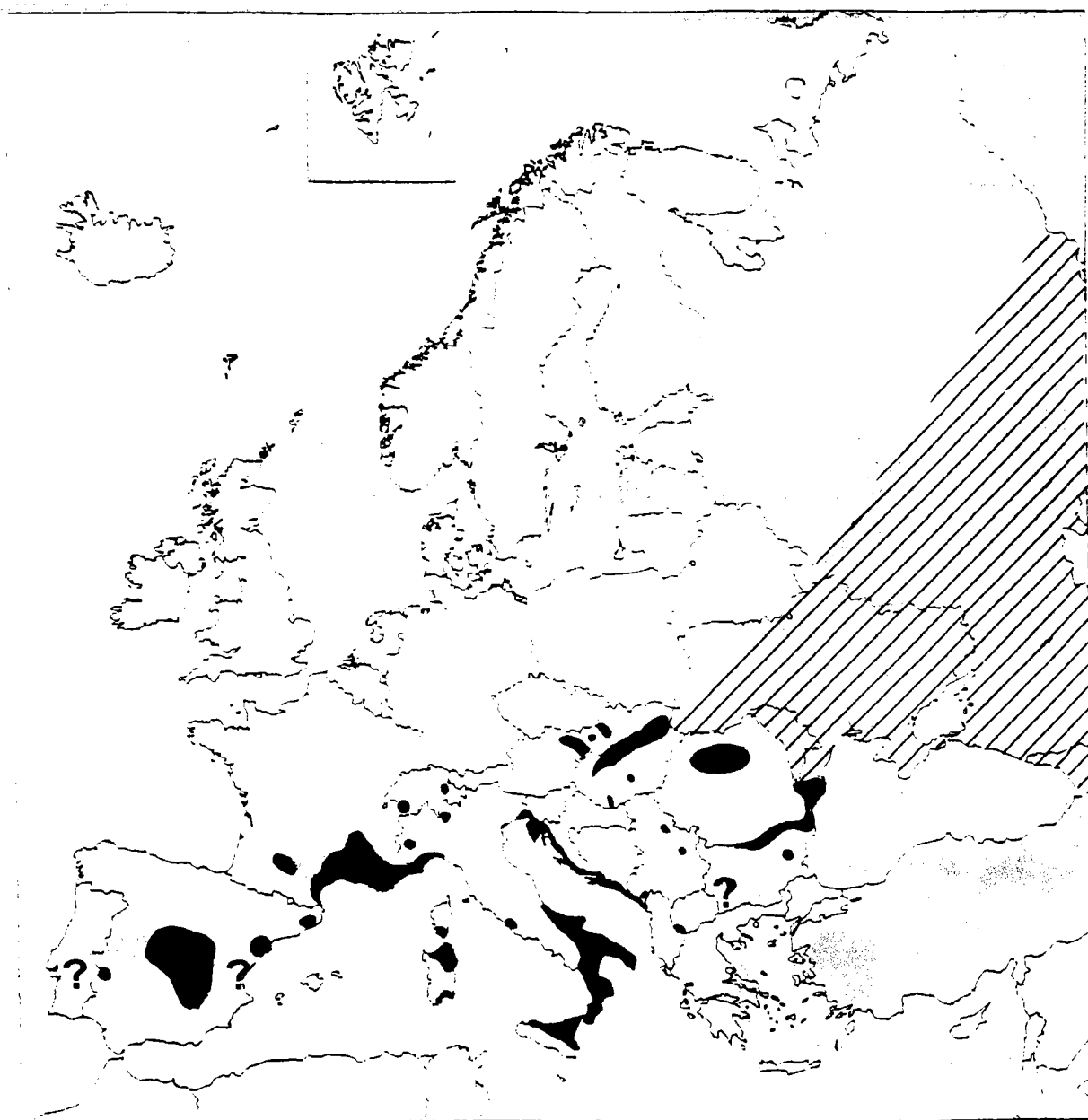
Food

Saga species are obligatorily carnivorous with a well known tendency towards cannibalism (Kaltenbach, 1986; Morin, pers. comm.). Unlike preying mantids who suddenly seize their prey with their front legs *Saga* species move about, catching their prey by suddenly leaping upon it and clasping it with their fore and mid legs. A prey is killed in a similar way each time by biting into its throat (Burr *et al.*, 1923; Kaltenbach, 1970), eating being done at the point of capture. There is a clear preference for other Orthoptera e.g. *Poecilimon* spp. (Boldyrev, 1915; Greathead, 1963), *Oedipoda* spp. (Quidet, 1988), *Chorthippus binotatus* (Gomez *et al.*, 1991). Adults on their turn are preyed upon by birds, insectivores and rodents, lizards, frogs and toads. Nymphs are eaten by spiders, scorpions, centipedes and preying insects. Endoparasitic nymphs of the flesh-fly *Sarcophaga carnaria* occasionally infest *S. pedo*. Egg parasites are unknown.

Range

Saga pedo has a vast distribution area ranging from the Iberian peninsula in the west through Central and South Europe via the southern part of the Russian Federation and the Ukraine to the Caucasus, the Trans-Caspian republics of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan into north-western China. The northern-most record is located near Sverinogolovskoye, Kurgan district in the Russian federation (54°30'N)(Kaltenbach, 1990), the southern-most in Sicily, Italy. (see also attached map).

Saga pedo was reported as an introduction from Europe into Tompkins Township, Jackson County, Michigan U.S.A. in 1970 by Cantrall (1972). It was hypothesized that eggs had been introduced on plowshares which had been used in Europe in plowing contests. In all only six specimens were found from 1970 to 1972 during August and September. As no specimens have



Saga pedo (Pallas, 1771)



widely distributed
mainly old records



recorded but exact
site not known

been found since it is probable that it is now extinct in North America (Cantrall, pers. comm. in Vickery & Kevan, 1983).

1. European Union

Austria: Confined to the eastern most part of Austria where the species has been found in the provinces of Burgenland and Niederösterreich. Most records are old going back to last century or the first half of this century. There are only very few records from after 1950 (Kaltenbach, 1967; Schall, pers. comm.).

France: Predominantly known from the mediterranean region of France (Copard, 1951; Kruseman, 1988; Voisin, 1992; data de Secrétariat de la Faune et de la Flore). There are quite a number of references, mostly from the past 25 years, concerning the record of one or a few specimens (Aberlenc, 1981; Balazuc & Reveillet, 1968; Bomans, 1990; Bosc, 1977; Breistroffer, 1968; Carriere, 1986; Delabie, 1976; Delarze, 1990; Fonfria, 1992; Hovette, 1971; Luquet, 1991; Morin, 1983, 1985, 1994; Moulet, 1992; Pasquier, 1968; Perrier, 1957; Quidet, 1988, 1991; Voisin, 1979). In the Rhône valley *S. pedo* reaches as far north as the valley of the Drôme, to the west it reaches the département Lot. Nowhere to be encountered in numbers. At some places however, like the southern slopes of the Grand Luberon (Guilbot, pers. comm.) and Mt. Ventoux the species is encountered regularly.

Greece: Old records of this species from Greece are based on misidentification or misinterpretations; although the species has been recorded from adjoining Macedonia and Bulgaria, the species up to now has never been recorded from Greece.

Italy: Recorded especially from the northern and southern parts of the country (La Greca pers. comm.; Kaltenbach, 1967): Liguria, Lombardia, Piemont and Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the North, Latium and Abruzzo in the Central part of Italy and from Puglia, Calabria, Campania and Sicilia (La Greca, 1959; La Greca & Messina, 1987) in the south as well as from Sardinia.

Portugal: Reported from two sites in southern Portugal at the beginning of this century (Aires & Menano, 1916) and never found since. The records turned out to be questionable and for all we know the species does not occur in Portugal (Pinedo, 1985). Even so, having been found in Badajoz the species may well occur there.

Spain: For a long time thought to be confined to Central Spain but probably more widely distributed. Known from the provinces of Albacete (Gomez *et al.*, 1991; Pardo *et al.*, 1993), Badajoz, Ciudad Real, Cuenca, Gerona, Madrid, Segovia, Tarragona, Toledo, Valencia (Pinedo, 1985; 1988). After 1971 only found at several localities in the provinces of Albacete (Gomez *et al.*, 1991; Pardo *et al.*, 1993) and Cuenca (Defaut, pers. comm.).

2. Range outside the European Union

Bulgaria: Reported from various areas (Buresch & Peschev, 1958): south-western Bulgaria (Peshev & Andreeva, 1986), the Black Sea coast (Peshev & Djingova, 1974), south of the Donau and near Sofija (Kaltenbach, 1967).

China: Only very recently reported for the first time from China from Xinjiang, northwestern China (Huang, 1987; Xing-Bao & Kai-Ling, 1994)

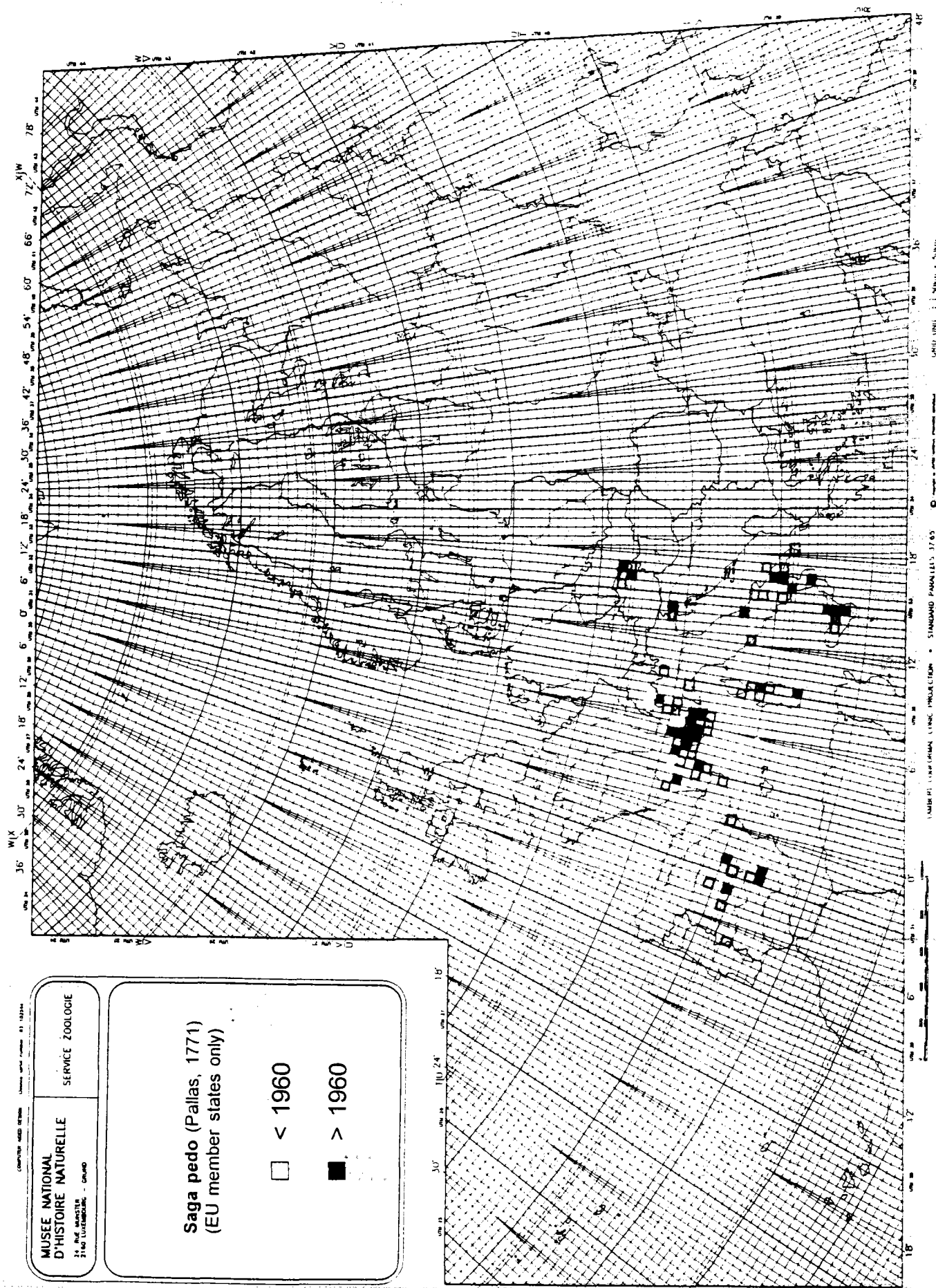
Czech Republic: limited to Moravia where it is known from three localities only: Znojmo, Pouzdrany-Pouzdranske kopce and Pavlovské kopce (L. Vidlicka pers. comm.).

Hungary: isolated and sporadic in the Hungarian mountainous areas; known from the Mecsek and Villany mountains in the south, the Bakony mountains in central Hungary and along the northern boundary of Hungary from the Vertes mountains in the west to the Zemplén mountains in the east (Nagy *et al.*, 1983; Racz, 1992; Racz & Varga, 1985; Racz, pers. comm.). It was not known from the Pannonian Plain until 1992 when surprisingly some specimens were detected in the middle of the Carpathian Basin (B. nagy, pers. comm.).

Romania: rare and local, known from various isolated sites across the country: Siebenbürgen, Banat, Moldau, Dobrudscha, with most records from the Dobrudscha (Kis, 1967; 1970; Kis & Vasiliu, 1970; 1972; Knechtel & Popovici-Biznosanu, 1959; Kohler, 1988).

Slovakia: *Saga pedo* is known from 8 localities in the west (Bratislava-Koliba, Devinska Kobyla, Plavecké Podhradie, Zachtice, Hlohovec, Nitra-Zobor, Lúka) and 3 in the south-east of the country (Plesivec, Slovenské Nové Mesto, Vinné) (L. Vidlicka, pers. comm.).

Switzerland: Known from Wallis and Graubunden (Thorens & Nadig, in prep.; Dr. P. Thorens, pers. comm.). The former localities are mainly concentrated in the area between Martigny-Ville



and Sion, with some older records downstream of Martigny-Ville. The species is mainly found in the plains with one exception, an old and recent record from Chiboz sur Martigny at 1300 m. In the latter it has only been found near Coire (Calanda) (Nadig & Steinmann, 1972).

former USSR: From the former USSR the species is known from the southern part of the Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and the Trans-Caspian republics of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

former Yugoslavia: There are records from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Herzegovina and FYR of Macedonia (Us & Matvejev, 1967; Kaltenbach, 1967). The latter author also mentioning a doubtful record from Montenegro. Very rare in Slovenia with only few reports of sightings of the species especially near the Italian border (S. Gomboc, pers. comm.). Most records are from the coastal areas of Croatia (Dalmatia, Istria). In Serbia the species was recorded by Adamovic (1970) from a sandy steppe area near Beograd, which probably is the first record from the plain in the Carpathian Basin.

Status

Although population densities may be higher than one would expect looking at material collected, *Saga* species never belong to the common Tettigonids. Low population densities combined with the fact that the species is mainly active during the night and lives hidden away in bushes where it is difficult to detect, make that it is rarely seen and hardly ever encountered in numbers. There are only few sites known to the data-sheet compiler where the species has been observed over a longer period of time. Sites where more specimens have been observed recently, on either one occasion or during various visits are for instance the Sierra de Alcaraz, Albacete province, Spain (Gomez *et al.*, 1993; Prado *et al.*, 1991) or the Mt. Ventoux and Luberon Mts., Vaucluse, France (Guilbot, pers. comm.). The fact that the species has not been observed in a certain area does not necessarily mean it is absent. Luquet (1991) for instance found *Saga pedo* in an area which he had visited a number of times between 1972 and 1990 without ever encountering it. Despite it being rare and local throughout its distribution area the range of *S. pedo* is by far the largest of all *Saga* species. Looking at all available records, taking into consideration the range of the species, the long collecting period and the differences in intensity of monitoring it is very difficult to make a proper assessment of the status of *Saga pedo*. This problem is reflected by red lists of some European countries in which the status given to *Saga pedo* is "indeterminate". Some Orthopterists who have been approached for information on *S. pedo* expressed the view that this species is fairly common but secretive and far less in danger than currently thought.

1. European Union

Austria: mentioned on the red list in the category "extinction to be expected in the near future" (Kaltenbach, 1984). The most recent records from Austria known to the data-sheet compiler are 1983-1984 when it was found between Vienna and the Neusiedlersee.

France: protected and included in the red book, its status being "not determined" (Anonymous, 1994). Contrary to for instance the situation in Austria where the number of records of this species rapidly dwindled after 1950, records for *S. pedo* from France have been numerous over the last decades. Yet again, like for other countries, records have been too few for a detailed assessment of the situation of *S. pedo* in France.

Italy: In the south, the species is rare possibly due to the use of insecticides (La Greca pers. comm.). On the other hand the species has been found regularly over a prolonged period of time in the region around Trieste (Kleukers, La Greca pers. comm., Ramme, 1951)

Spain: Because *S. pedo* is not an endemic species of the Iberian peninsula it was not included in the red book for the Orthoptera of the Iberian peninsula (Rosas *et al.*, 1993; Gangwere *et al.*, 1986). According to Herrera Mesa (pers. comm.) its distribution area in Spain remained fairly stable but he still considers it vulnerable.

2. Status outside the European Union

Bulgaria: there is no recent information available on the status of this species in Bulgaria
former Czechoslovakia: endangered (E - according to Red book of Slovakia)

Hungary: vulnerable (Rakonczay, 1989); the species is protected. There are strong indications of the disappearance of certain populations as a result of the destruction of the habitat at Gellerthegey and Hárshegy in Budapest, at Pilis near Pilisszántó and at Bélápátfalva (Nagy *et al.*,

1983). There is no explanation for the recently detected occurrence in the plains of central Hungary (Bugac) (B. Nagy, pers. comm.).

Romania: there is no recent information available on the status of this species in Romania

Switzerland: threatened with extinction (Nadig & Thorens, 1994). Based on present data it is not possible to present a well documented assessment of the regression and threats to which *Saga pedo* is exposed in Switzerland. What can be hypothesised can be summarised as follows (Dr. P. Thorens, pers. comm.). In the Valais there are still considerable areas with suitable habitat for *Saga pedo* (steppe grasslands and sun exposed bushes) situated in between forest zone and agricultural land (vineyards). Threats posed to its habitat have increased over the last decades, consisting of: enlargement of cultivated areas (vineyards), encroachment of bushes on grasslands, the cutting up of areas with suitable habitats, lack of sufficient prey animals and the use of pesticides in viticulture. In the Grisons even less information is available on the status of *Saga pedo*. The species undoubtedly is very rare and the fact that it has been found close to the river Rhine implies that it is seriously threatened by changes in that area (urbanization) (Dr. P. Thorens, pers. comm.).

former USSR: vulnerable (Lindt, 1984)

former Yugoslavia: in Slovenia *Saga pedo* is protected (S. Gomboc, pers. comm.) being given the status "indeterminate" in the red list of endangered Orthopteroidea in Slovenia (Matvejev, 1992).

There is no information available from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, former Yugoslavia and FYR of Macedonia.

Conservation

Saga pedo is listed in Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. The species has a very wide range although being rare and local throughout its range. The species has been found in a wide variety of biotopes.

By its apparent haphazard occurrence, its size and its parthenogeneticity, this insect is surrounded by mystery (Morin pers. comm.) and has drawn a lot of attention. Despite all this attention there is still little known about its exact distribution pattern, its population dynamics, and habitat requirements, aspects which need to be studied in detail. Such studies will indicate whether this species has been included correctly in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and if so what measures can be taken to ensure adequate protection, including the allocation of key sites. Until such time it is of utmost importance to try and protect the sites where populations of *Saga pedo* are known to exist. Sites where *S. pedo* is known to occur are threatened by various factors like quarrying, bushfires, disruption of the vegetation, the use of insecticides.

Recommendations:

Since the species is listed in Appendix IV and therefore should be strictly protected in Europe it is desirable that the following research should be carried out.

- study of population dynamics and ecology; an important aspect to be addressed concerns the question if and to what extent populations are stationary
- study in detail the habitat of *Saga pedo* and work out the measures for its protection (Russian Red Data Book)
- the distribution area should be established more precisely, in particular on a small scale level.

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European experts:

Apart from entomologists who provided some general information on *Saga pedo*, as mentioned below, at the moment nobody is actively involved in studying this insect. Until recently Saginae were studied by Dr. A. Kaltenbach, Vienna, Austria, who retired some 10 years ago and is now committed to work on another group of Orthoptera. Below a list of Orthopterists who have a good understanding of the distribution of *Saga pedo* for their respective country or region possibly in addition to more general aspects (biology, ecology, life history, conservation)

- Dr. V. Guseva, Lenin St. T.T./ Dept. Zool. Kibalchich str. 6, Block 5, GUS 129243 Moskau, Russian Federation
- Dr. M. La Greca, Università di Catania, Dipartimento di Biologia Animale, Via Androne 81, 95124 Catania, Italy. phone: +39 95 31 23 55; fax: +39 95 32 79 90
- Mons. D. Morin, 29 rue d'Orphée, 34070 Montpellier, France
- Dr. B. Nagy, Res. Inst. Plant Protection of the Hungarian Acad. Sci. H-1525 Budapest Pf. 102, Hungary. phone: +36 11 76 95 55; fax: +36 11 76 97 29
- Ma. C. Pinedo, Mus. Nac. Cienc. Nat., Entomologia, c/ José Gutiérrez Abascal 2, E-28006 Madrid, Spain.
- Dr. I. Racz, Kossuth Lajos University, Zoological Dept., H-4010 Debrecen, Egyetem ter 1, Hungary.
- Mons. A. Schall, Maison Forestière, F-68150 Aubure, France.
- Dr. P. Thorens, Insecta, Bureau d'étude des Invertébrés, Case Postal, CH-2002 Neuchâtel, Switzerland. phone/fax: +41 38 25 41 71

Dr. L. Vidlicka, Institute of Zoology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Dubravská cesta 9, 842068 Bratislava, Slovakia. phone: +42 07 378 22 27

Dr. J.-F. Voisin, Mus. Nat. d'Hist. Nat., 55 rue de Buffon, 75005 Paris, France.
phone: +33 16 40 79 30 68

In addition the following persons kindly provided information which has been incorporated in this data-sheet: Dr. K. Adlbauer (Graz), Dr. L. Bigot (Marseille), Mons. H.E. Bomans (Taulignan), Dra. Ma. E. Clemente (Murcia), Dr. B. Defaut (Bèdeilhac), Dr. P. Detzel (Stuttgart), Dr. Ph. Dreux (Paris), Mons. R. Fonfria (Eygalières), Mr. S. Gomboc (Beltinci), Dr. R. de Gregorio (Pau), Dr. R. Guilbot (Guyancourt), Dr. K.-G. Heller (Erlangen), Prof. Dr. L. Herrera Mesa (Pamplona), Drs. R. Kleukers (Triest), Dr. M. Lecoq (Montpellier), Dra. V. Llorente (Madrid), Dr. G. Luquet (Paris), Dr. A. Nadig (Chur).

Database:

France: Secrétariat de la Faune et de la Flore, 57 rue Cuvier, 75231 Paris Cedex 05.
phone +33 40 79 32 74; fax +33 43 36 13 39

Data sheet compiler:

Drs. L.P.M. Willemse, c/o Dr. F. Willemse, Laurastraat 67, 6471 JH Eygelshoven, Netherlands.
phone: +31 45 53 52 169

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