

Identification of *Entelecara acuminata* and *Entelecara congenera*

These two linyphiid species are closely related. Males are relatively easily distinguished by consideration of the shape of the head region of the cephalothorax and by the form of the palpal tibiae, particularly when viewed dorsally. Females present a considerably greater problem as the form of the epigyne is closely similar in the two species and final confirmation normally requires comparison with properly identified voucher material.

The head region of the male of *E. acuminata* is produced into a tall lobe on the side of which there is a large tear-shaped sulcus behind the posterior lateral eyes (Fig. 1A). In *E. congenera*, the head lobe is much lower and more rounded in profile and the sulci behind the lateral eyes are small and inconspicuous (Fig. 1B).



Figure 1A. Cephalothorax of *E. acuminata*, lateral view. 1B. Cephalothorax of *E. congenera*, lateral view.

When viewed dorsally, the tibial apophysis of the palp in both species has two branches. In *E. acuminata*, the distal branch is longer than the proximal branch and has a rounded tip while the proximal branch has a slightly hooked tip (Fig 2A). In *E. congenera*, the two branches are of greater length and the proximal branch is not hooked at the tip. In addition, there is a small, thorn-like process between the two branches present in *E. congenera* but not in *E. acuminata* (Fig. 2B). When the palps of the two species are viewed laterally, the difference in shape of the distal branch of the tibial apophysis is also clearly visible.

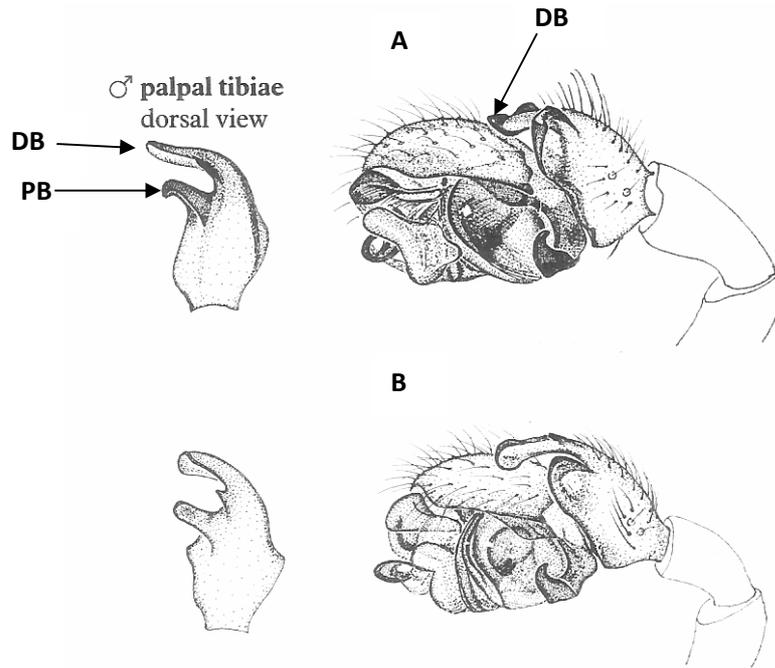


Figure 2A. Palpal tibia and palp in lateral view of *E. acuminata*. 2B Palpal tibia and palp in lateral view of *E. congenera*. DB = distal branch of tibial apophysis, PB = proximal branch of tibial apophysis.

Females of the two species can usually be distinguished by careful examination of the epigynes. The epigynes of both species have a light median area surrounded by a darkly pigmented region. The pale median area is divided into two symmetrical halves within each of which is an elongated ovoid structure. In *E. acuminata*, the ovoids are more or less linear in form and the anterior margins of these structures meet at the midline of the epigyne at an angle (Fig. 3A). In *E. congenera*, these ovoid structures are more or less L-shaped and meet at the midline of the epigyne at the tip of the horizontal bar of the L (Fig. 3B). However, as the figures show, there is some variation within the epigynes of both species and ideally isolated female specimens should be compared with reliably identified voucher material of both species to ensure correct identification.

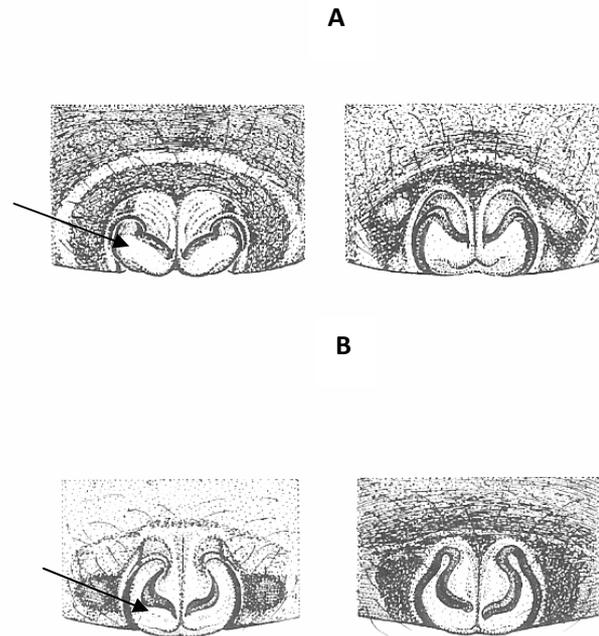


Figure 2A. Epigynes of *E. acuminata*, ventral view. 2B. Epigynes of *E. congenera*, ventral view. Note shapes of symmetrical ovoid structures on either side of mid-line of epigynes.

Habitats. Both species are normally found on shrubs or the lower branches of trees although occasional specimens have been found on the ground and in the field layer. *Entelecara acuminata* is a widespread species in Britain although rare north of Yorkshire and in western areas. About half of all records come from woodlands but it also occurs in grasslands, heathland and moorland. *E. congenera* is very much less common than *E. acuminata* and confined to the southern half of the country where it is almost absent from western areas. More than half the records are from moorland and a further 30% from various types of woodland.

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