

British Arachnological Society



NEWSLETTER NO 5

NOVEMBER 1989

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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Changes in Area Organisers:

Mr Francis Farr-Cox has kindly taken on GLOUCESTERSHIRE in addition to Somerset.

Mr Eric G Philp of the Maidstone Museums & Art Gallery, St Faith's Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1LH has agreed to take over KENT from Mr Paul Hillyard.

Ms Deborah Procter of the Nature Conservancy Council, 60 Bracondale, Norwich NR1 2BE has agreed to take over NORFOLK from Dr Eric Duffey.

Dr Trevor Hughes of Rimes House, Kingston Bagpuize, Oxon OX13 5AY is taking over the SCILLY ISLES, formerly treated as part of Cornwall.

Mr Peter Smithers of 40 Copperfields, Horrabridge, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7UB has taken over DEVON from Mr Paul Hillyard.

We are grateful to those who have recently become Area Organisers and we would like to thank those who have ceased to hold this office.

Changes of Address of Recorders:

Mr David Cuthbertson now lives at 22B Englefield Road, Hackney, London N1 4ET.

Mr Dick Jones now lives at 63 London Road, Widley, Portsmouth PO7 5AQ.

Dr Peter Merrett now lives at 6 Hillcrest, Durlston Road, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2HS.

New S.R.S. Members:

32 Mr Lawrence Jones-Walters, 22 Queens Avenue, Andover, Hants SP10 3HZ.

33 Dr Trevor Hughes, Rimes House, Kingston Bagpuize, Oxon OX13 5AY.

34 Mr Neil D Redgate, Burnside, Murkle, Caithness KW14 8YT.

35 Mr David J R Haigh, 'Merrivale' 27 St Luke's Road, Cheltenham, Glos GL53 7JF.

36 Dr Chris R Spilling, 44 Sussex Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 4LX.

103 Mr J H Bratton, N.C.C., Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

104 Mr P Hampson, 4 Wilkinson Way, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 9BB.

There are now exactly 100 members (recorders) of the Spider Recording Scheme, and to date only 46 have completed SRS cards that have been processed by Area Organisers and sent to the National Organiser. This number is somewhat disappointing and it is hoped that the remaining 54 will find the time and opportunity to transfer some of their records to SRS cards before the winter is out and send them to the appropriate Area Organiser, or direct to the National Organiser.

DATA FROM PUBLISHED SOURCES

Recorders are encouraged to transcribe data from published sources onto RA65 cards. General instructions are included in the Introductory Notes sent out to all recorders when they were registered, but the following points should be noted:

- a. Extracts have already been made from appropriate articles in the Flatford Mill Spider Group Bulletins, the British Spider Study Group Bulletins, the B.A.S. Secretary's Newsletters and the B.A.S. Bulletins. There is no need for duplication.
- b. Extracts have also been made from a variety of publications, both national and local, but so far no attempt has been made to produce a complete extraction from any one source e.g. Ann. Mag. nat Hist. A file recording extraction data from all such sources has recently been opened, and kept by the National Organiser; to avoid duplication of effort, recorders might like to find out whether a contemplated extraction has already been undertaken, by writing to the N.O. A lot of records in both national and more local publications have yet to be incorporated in the SRS data, and this might provide an idea for winter activity for some SRS members.
- c. The fact that it has been printed and published does not automatically make a record reliable, and recorders should beware of copying up suspect data.

British Spiders, vols 1, 2 & 3 by Locket, Millidge and Merrett provide useful lists of synonyms, so that current lists should contain current nomenclature only. Where necessary, an indication of the reliability of old records should be given. **Please inform the N.O. when you intend starting the extraction of data from any source so that there is the minimum chance of duplicating.**

S.R.S. WEEKEND AT HAYDON BRIDGE

A dozen or so SRS Recorders enjoyed a weekend at Haydon Bridge in the Tyne Valley at the end of July 1989, capably organised by Dr Steve Rushton. There was only one formal session when Craig Slawson, David Beaumont and others demonstrated their computer systems and how they have been adapted for their spider recording needs. Craig Slawson, with help from Brian Eversham of Monks Wood, produced a paper entitled "The Use of Computers in Biological Recording", forming an excellent introduction. (See later note in this Newsletter).

The remainder of the weekend was taken up with fieldwork in three major types of habitat, producing a wide range of species recorded. There was ample opportunity to discuss SRS matters, identification problems and suchlike on the Saturday evening, and we were admirably fed and accommodated by the willing members of the house staff. We are most grateful to Steve Rushton and all those who helped him for organising so enjoyable and profitable a weekend.

THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

A paper with this title has been produced by G Craig Slawson, Area Organiser for Staffordshire, and copies are available, free of charge, by writing to Brian C Eversham, I.T.E., Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2LS.

From the point of view of the Spider Recording Scheme, four points in particular should be noted;

- a. Anyone developing his own computer programme should make sure that all the requirements for completing RA65 and other recording cards are included. In particular, vice-county name and number, altitude, structured habitat data, and collecting techniques are the items most frequently omitted.
- b. Contact your Area Organiser or the National Organiser, enclosing an example, to find out if they are willing to look at computer listings to check whether any of your records require expert determination before acceptance.
- c. When the processing of all spider records, at the Biological Records Centre, begins in a few years time, it may be possible for your records to be transferred directly in machine-readable form. (At present, data can be received by BRC on 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " or 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " disks in ASCII format, providing they use the species code-numbers given on the RA65 and in the Introductory Notes sent to recorders when they register). Please DO NOT send disks to BRC until work on the S.R.S. data is announced in the Newsletter.
- d. Whenever sending computer listings, or records on disk, to anyone, it is good practice to include detailed and unambiguous explanations of what information is held in which field (column numbers), and exactly how this has been coded or abbreviated.

THE S.R.S. 1990 WEEKEND COURSE

Ms Cynthia Merrett and Mr Francis Farr-Cox have kindly undertaken the organisation of the 1990 SRS Weekend Course. It will have as its centre the Littledean House Hotel, Littledean, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire GL14 3JT. Tel. (0594) 22106. Full board and lodging from Friday dinner until Sunday afternoon will cost about £40 per person inclusive.

Accommodation has been provisionally booked for the weekend of September 14-16, 1990, and if we are able to book sufficiently long in advance there will be a reduction in the charges. Please book through Francis Farr-Cox (1 Winchester Road, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 1HY) with a deposit of £10.00 per person as soon as possible before the date of the 1990 B.A.S./A.G.M. Fuller details will be included in the Spring 1990 Newsletter.

Completed RA65 cards for the area are few in number (West Glos. 15; East Glos. 1; Monmouth 4; Hereford 7) and we hope to make a substantial impact by our visit! Mornings and afternoons will be reserved for fieldwork. Suggestions for the evenings' activities will be welcome.

COMPLETED CARD TOTALS:

The following totals of cards have been received before October 1st, 1989:

| | |
|--|------|
| RA65 (single site, single date, many species): | 5089 |
| GEN7 (single species, several sites & dates): | 299 |
| GEN13 (as above, but with habitat data): | 7 |
| GEN14 (spider rarity card): | 141 |

Several RA65 cards include records of more than 100 species each, while others refer to one species only; there is a similar variation in number of sites and/or dates on GEN7 cards. Numbers are not everything, but they serve to remind us how successful the SRS is proving to be.

It would be helpful if each Recorder were to complete the following form, tear off (or copy onto another sheet of paper), and return to the Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2LS, using the pre-paid address slip.

(cross out the alternative that does not apply)

1. I would like/do not wish to continue receiving the Spider Recording Scheme Newsletter.
2. Please send me a supply of cards RA65 (site-visit card)
..... cards GEN7 (single sp. many sites)
..... cards GEN14 (spider rarity card)

Name

Address

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