

British Arachnological Society

NEWSLETTER No 8



DECEMBER 1990

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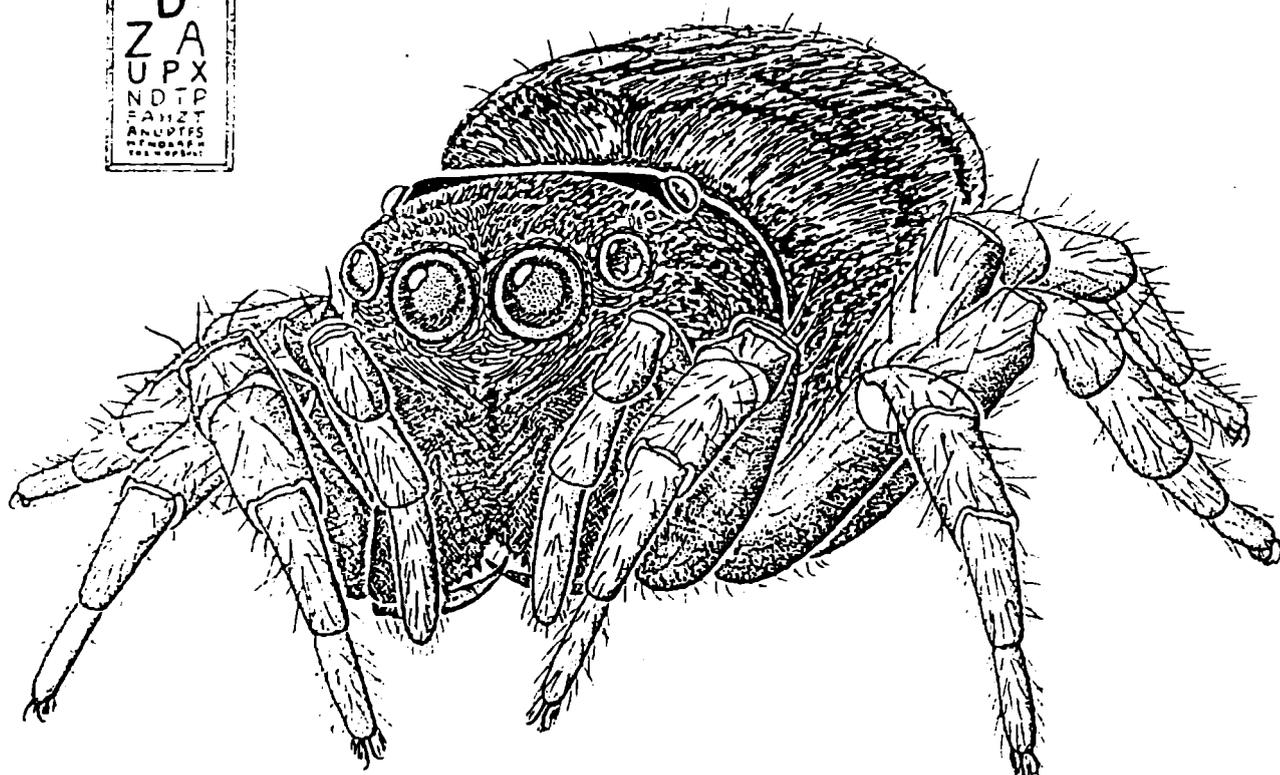
SPIIDER RECORDING SCHEME

This issue of the SRS Newsletter has been printed and distributed by the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood

Seasonal Greetings to all SRS Recorders.

With a new year ahead of us, may we make a number of suggestions that will help forward the work of the Scheme:

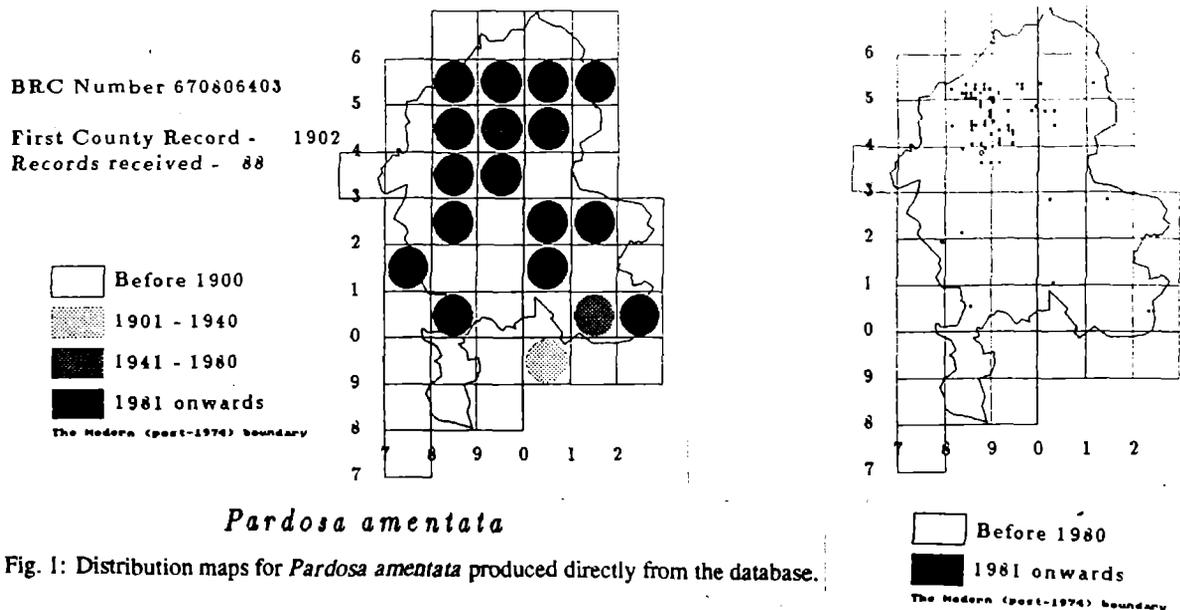
- * It is noticeable, looking through the completed RA65s and GEN7s that have been recently submitted, that quite a number of recorders registered with the Scheme have not sent in any records for some time. Now that the Scheme is gathering momentum, it is hoped that everyone concerned will make an effort to play their part in the ultimate success of our combined work.
- * In particular, we hope that those who have recently joined the Scheme will make every endeavour to send in completed cards that have been, where necessary checked by their Area Organiser or other expert.
- * Please make plans for the year to cover some of the less frequently visited parts of your vice-county.
- * Please consider taking part in fieldwork organised by the BAS and/or the SRS. Details of courses that are being planned will be included in the March Newsletter. Why not plan a working holiday in a part of Britain that has little coverage, as can be seen in the RA65 vice-county totals in this Newsletter.



Salticus scenicus ♀

as seen by Mike Roberts

Why computerise? This is a common question asked, especially when the SRS is not computerized itself and does not lay down any guidelines for the choice of computer equipment. The most significant answer to this question is to improve the usefulness of the data, even if only on a personal level. A computer can rapidly produce a composite species list for a site that may have been visited many times over a number of years - much easier than wading through a pile of RA65 cards! It can also achieve the reverse - showing all the localities at which a particular species has been found. This obviously gives a better picture to Area Organisers, with a larger database to call on, especially if the computer is capable of automatically producing maps



Using a common species such as *Pardosa amentata* can give a good idea of which areas require extra work. The 1km map clearly shows the north-west is considerably better covered than the rest of the county: this is not so clear from the 10km map.

At present the national Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood is happy to receive computer data in any reasonable form providing it is in ASCII format on MS-Dos disks, has some explanation of layout and includes all the information contained on a normal RA65 card. Obviously if popularity increases, it will be necessary to standardize to reduce their work-load, but initially the BRC are prepared to reorganize the data themselves. It should be noted that the BRC is not calling for spider records for several years yet, and discs should not yet be sent to them. MOST IMPORTANTLY, all records need to be passed through AREA ORGANISERS. For most AOs this will presumably be easiest done as a computer print-out, or some other list on paper.

Finally, regarding computer equipment. I have had several enquiries concerning what to buy: in particular, what database is best at an affordable price. Unfortunately I do not use MS-Dos or IBM-PC equipment, and have little experience of what is available. I would welcome any comments SRS members using computer databases may have, which I can then pass on to prospective users when required. I have also been asked for demonstration copies of the database management system I showed at the Northumberland meeting in 1989. Unfortunately this cannot be converted to run on an IBM: however, I can supply a short illustrated description of the system for anyone wishing to set up a similar system.

November 1990

Pseudoscorpions Recording Scheme

At our invitation, Gerald Legg, the National Recorder of the above Scheme, has written the following article for inclusion in this SRS Newsletter

Pseudoscorpions are fascinating and intriguing arachnids - a biased opinion perhaps but once you have seen one I am sure that you will agree. Their small size and secretive habits have resulted in their being frequently ignored by zoologists and naturalists alike, even though under favourable conditions they can occur in large numbers. Consequently, compared with other arachnid groups, relatively little is known about their biology, ecology and distribution.

Following the accumulation of a sufficient number of records Philip Jones, late of the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, put together the Provisional Atlas for the group. This was published in 1980. Not long after this Philip left Monks Wood and I took over the role of national recorder. Many of the contributors to the Atlas have continued to supply records, but in addition other collectors have been roped into the scheme.

Unfortunately it is not widely known that pseudoscorpion records are in demand and yet many of the non-pseudoscorpionologists come across them. The word will now be spread in order to encourage recorders and collectors to get their 'seafching image' attuned to pseudoscorpions.

For those wishing to learn more about these animals and to try their hand at identification, the Linnean Society Synopsis of the British Fauna No.40: Pseudoscorpions is in print. I will happily examine any material sent to me c/o The Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA, as well as accepting records. The more data I can get the sooner we will have a more accurate understanding of the distribution of the British species. Instead of reflecting the distribution of collectors and their haunts and holidays, the maps will show where the species occur! Record cards and a free Provisional Atlas are obtainable from me. Much of the data is still held in card format and the BRC have no plans to computerise it: however, I am gradually transferring the data to dBASE III database on an IBM ST. The maps are updated as records are compiled.

So, go forth and find these lovely little creatures. I am sure you will be fascinated by them once you have had a close encounter. Happy hunting.

Gerald Legg

November 1990

Special Spider Records

It is always encouraging to read of other recorders finding rare or uncommon species of spider, and we like to make mention of such records in the SRS Newsletter. The next issue is planned to include a number of items of this nature so please write to tell us of anything you have come across like this. Only a short note, please. Mention should be made of the name of the species, the name and grid reference of the site, the nature of the habitat (if relevant) and the date of the record. Add any other information that you think would interest readers. I look forward to the possibility of producing a bumper edition of the Newsletter. Why not write to me straightaway?

A Report on two North of Scotland field/lab. meetings : 1990

During the last weekend in September, Ron Arthur, Mike Davidson, Claire Geddes Amanda and Pete Kennedy were joined by Jim Stewart from Edinburgh and Jenny Rees and John Schofield from Inverness at Ballater Field Centre. We had two days of gentle but persistent rain and on the Saturday we all visited two sites: a heathland area with regenerating Scots pine, and then Black Moss (an area of mire, reedbeds and sedge swamp) on Muir of Dinnet NNR. Greeted by a very wet Sunday morning, we decided to stay indoors to complete the identification of the previous day's collection. Out of the total of 43 and 51 species found at the two sites, the most notable were Hypselistes jacksoni and Episinus angulatus from the heathland (new records for Aberdeenshire) and Cercidia prominens from Black Moss (the only site record in Scotland, first collected by Jim Stewart in 1984).

The October meeting shifted to Invernesshire. Mike and Gillian Davidson came north to join Claire and Mike and Debbie Roberts (who are Claire's closest BAS neighbours now, only 60 miles away!). We were attracted to the Caledonian Scots pine woodland of Strathfarrar NNR, where we met up with Hugh Brown, warden of the Reserve, and his family. Dolomedes fimbriatus and Philodromus margaritatus are recent interesting finds, the result of casual collecting by Hugh earlier this year. The female Dolomedes with egg sac was found on one of the artificial ponds on the Reserve, whereas the crab spider was found in Hugh's landrover (!), the only other record from Scotland being the Black Wood of Rannoch. Hugh took us to a deep cavern to reveal a thriving colony of Meta menardi with several eggsacs hanging like light bulbs from the ceiling of the cave. Mike Roberts promptly sent in his record of 41 species collected from a pine/birch/juniper - whereas one of us (CG) needs a wee bit longer to identify all these linyphiids! The place needs another visit, so do come and join us next year.

Claire Geddes

11th November 1990

Appeals for Help

Please will you consider whether you can help the SRS in two ways? They are:

a. I need line drawings of spiders to use as illustrations in the Newsletter
Black ink drawings are best, while drawings with continuous shading do not reproduce at all clearly. Mike Roberts has kindly provided me with a number of excellent drawings but it would be delightful to have other artists to add variety to our production.

b. There are several vice-counties with no Area Organiser to look after, and

I hope that you will look at the list of Area Organisers published with this Newsletter to see if you can help fill the gaps. The duties of an Area Organiser are basically two-fold. Firstly, to receive completed RA65s and GEN 7s from recorders who have done fieldwork in their vice-county and to check the validity of individual records, particularly of rarer species records. If an Area Organiser does not feel competent to do this thoroughly, such records can always be submitted to an acknowledged expert. He does not need to be omniscient himself! The other duty is to encourage fieldwork in his vice-county if necessary, by arranging day outings or weekend fieldcourses. The extent to which this is already done varies from vice-county to vice-county: Claire Geddes' article above give the flavour of such activity that is both enjoyable and successful.

The SRS Week-end in the Forest of Dean, September 14 - 16, 1990

The Forest of Dean seemed a good place to spend a week-end boosting the spider records for Gloucestershire: our base, the Littledean Hotel, proved to be a delightfully eccentric starting point. On the Friday evening, after a few initial sorties, we were given an excellent introduction to aspects of Dean life and wildlife by Bob Godfrey who oversees the Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation reserves in the Forest. Saturday saw all 23 residents plus 4 day visitors out in the field, followed by an identification session in the evening. Sunday came all too soon but those who could spent a further day collecting.

Conscious of the very dry summer, I had obtained permission to visit a wide range of habitats, and thanks to the diligence of all present we did cover 19 different sites from ancient wood to ancient mine! The dry weather was against us: limp ferns in the woods testifying to the conditions. Even the normally wet sites were not - one enthusiast reported finding Sphagnum which had turned to powder and blown away! In spite of all this, the best site yielded 71 species, while over 140 species were recorded during the week-end.

At least one rare spider was found: Hyptiotes paradoxus was beaten from yew at two separate sites in the Wye Valley by four different recorders. It is only a matter of time I suspect before the species is recorded from across the water in Wales. One of the Wye valley sites also produced what appears to be a juvenile Episinus maculipes, but this has yet to be confirmed. Two other unusual spiders: Robertus neglectus and Walckenaeria nodosa were recorded from wetland sites in the Forest proper.

My thanks to all who gave permission to visit sites, and to the magnificent support of all who attended and who I hope enjoyed their visit to the Forest of Dean.

Francis Farr-Cox

November 1990

(Our thanks also go to Francis himself for all the work he put in to the successful organisation of the weekend.)

The Identification of Specimens collected by other Organisations

Many organisations collect specimens, particularly by pitfall trapping and suction techniques, for the study of all groups of invertebrates. Many of them find difficulty in the correct identification of spiders, and it is regretful if such information is wasted. The Nature Conservancy Council often undertakes surveys of areas under threat, and will appreciate the help (sometimes unpaid) of competent arachnologists. If Area Organisers are aware of such surveys taking place, they might consider offering their services to record spiders that are collected. At present I am looking at specimens collected by the NCC at Thorne Moors, a site under threat in the south of Yorkshire; and also at specimens from Sutherland that were taken by the Biology Department of Durham University - the latter in particular is adding considerably to the known spider fauna of that area.

New Members of the Spider Recording Scheme

The following members have been registered with the Scheme since the most recent list was printed in Newsletter No. 6 (May 1990)

- 107 Mr Nigel W J Burston, 193 Queen's Road, Priors Park, Tewkesbury,
Gloucestershire GL20 5EP
- 108 Mr A Russell-Smith, Melrose, Mendham, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0NH
- 109 Mr Rex Hancy, 124 Fakenham Road, Taverham, Norwich NR8 6QH
- 110 Mr Ian K Morgan, Cae Tegeirian, 4 Erw-Las, Llwynhendy, Llanelli,
Dyfed SA14 9SF
- 111 Ms Helen Read, Aston, Beeches Road, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3PR
- 112 Mr M Halpin, 158 Penhill Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 3EA
- 112 Mr M Barker, 56 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PW
- 114 Mr Ian A Blair-Brown, Sunnyside, Wigley Manor, Ower, Romsey,
Hants. SO51 6AF
- 115 Mr C I Carter, Forestry Commission, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham,
Farnham, Surrey. GU10 4LH
- 116 Mr K H Halstead, Mistletoe Cottage, Masseys Lane, East Boldre,
Brockenhurst, Hants. SO42 7WE
- 117 Mr C F G Thomas, Dept. of Biology Bassett Crescent, The University,
Southampton, SO9 3TU
- 118 Mrs Linda Gregory, 6 Willow Close, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8QW
- 119 Mrs Jane Crothers, 12 Nunsmoor Road, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
NE4 9AU
- 120 Mr J D Stanney, 35 Glaisher Drive, Meir Park, Blythe Bridge,
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. ST3 7RF
- 121 Mr Jonty Denton, Stonefold, Stainton, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0HP
- 122 Mrs E Crowson, 1012 Great Western Road, Glasgow G12 0NR
- 123 Mr M Hogg, 12 Welbeck Avenue, Plymouth PL4 6BG
- 124 Dr Tracey A Sanderson, School of Biological Sciences, University of
East Anglia, Norwich. NR4 7TJ
- 125 Mr Keith Hunter, 7 Cedar Crescent, Ormskirk, Lancs. L39 3NT
- 126 Mr John Beaumont, White Gables, Calcoed, Treffynnon, Clwyd CH8 8LE

We welcome all these new members into the SRS and hope that they will be able and willing to contribute to the production of spider records, particularly in preparation for the proposed Atlas of British Spiders that we hope to produce in about 1997.

COMPLETED RA65 RECORD-CARDS

Column 1 : Number and Name of Vice-County

Column 2 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1989

Column 3 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1990

1 West Cornwall	33	46	26 West Suffolk	20	30	51 Flint	29	30
2 East Cornwall	4	7	27 East Norfolk	40	51	52 Anglesey	28	54
3 South Devon	59	136	28 West Norfolk	25	40	53 South Lincs.	7	32
4 North Devon	11	12	29 Cambridgeshire	20	27	54 North Lincs.	38	139
5 South Somerset	44	45	30 Bedfordshire	27	50	55 Leicestershire	5	8
6 North Somerset	65	78	31 Huntingdonshire	24	39	56 Nottinghamshire	41	62
7 North Wiltshire	6	7	32 Northants	61	131	57 Derbyshire	105	109
8 South Wiltshire	5	12	33 East Gloucester	1	4	58 Cheshire	63	82
9 Dorset	120	150	34 West Gloucester	15	26	59 South Lincs.	142	178
10 Isle of Wight	1	7	35 Monmouth	4	6	60 West Lincs.	15	21
11 South Hampshire	68	120	36 Hereford	7	7	61 S.E. Yorks.	264	274
12 North Hampshire	7	8	37 Worcestershire	86	87	62 N.E. Yorks	390	402
13 West Sussex	9	42	38 Warwickshire	16	23	63 S.W. Yorks.	341	373
14 East Sussex	14	18	39 Staffordshire	159	269	64 Mid-W. Yorks	403	440
15 East Kent	28	31	40 Shropshire	32	40	65 N.W. Yorks	85	91
16 West Kent	17	22	41 Glamorgan	34	43	66 Durham	121	126
17 Surrey	109	178	42 Brecon	14	24	67 S [^] Northumber	251	265
18 South Essex	137	193	43 Radnor	6	6	68 N [^] Northumber,	9	10
19 North Essex	110	206	44 Carmarthen	12	73	69 Westmorland	95	97
20 Hertfordshire	183	231	45 Pembroke	50	51	70 Cumberland	39	55
21 Middlesex	29	70	46 Cardigan	21	21	71 Isle of Man	6	56
22 Berkshire	3	17	47 Montgomery	12	12	113 Channel Is	12	12
23 Oxfordshire	8	19	48 Merioneth	24	31			
24 Buckinghamshire	11	60	49 Caernarvon	77	87			
25 East Suffolk	48	150	50 Denbyshire	30	33			

1989 Total for England and Wales = 4435

1990 Total for England and Wales = 5996

(Totals for Scotland were printed in SRS Newsletter Number 7 in September 1990)

Congratulations to a number of Area Organisers and Recorders in a goodly number of vice-counties where the numbers of completed RA65s have increased considerably during the year. It is, of course, understood that some completed cards record only one or a very few species, while others may had a hundred or more species recorded. However the above table does give some idea of the degree of activity in each vice-county.