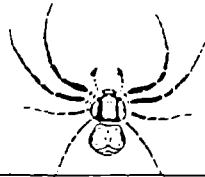


British Arachnological Society



NEWSLETTER No. 11

SEPTEMBER 1991

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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

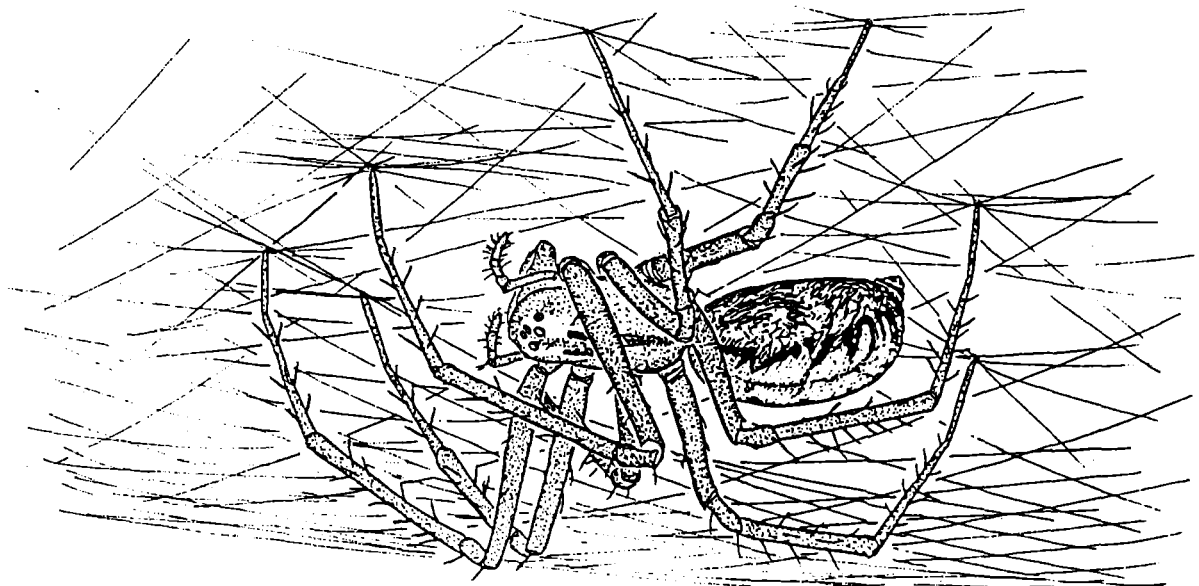
Comments from many S.R.S. Recorders in recent weeks suggest the paucity of specimens due to the dry weather. Heathland and grassland habitats seem to have been most effected while throughout the country the continuing hot weather seems to have brought many species to maturity earlier than usual.

Happily the influx of completed RA65s has continued unabated and at the beginning of the month the total stood at 9360 - so there is every hope that we will break the ten thousand barrier before the end of the year. This event is not important in itself, but it does act as a spur to our efforts.

An analysis of the authors of the RA65 cards I have recently received indicates that by no means all Recorders have submitted the results of their fieldwork, while an encouraging number have sent in very commendable quantities of completed cards.

As an exercise to indicate the completeness (or otherwise) of our current recording, I have analysed the commoner species in the genus Clubiona for the two vice-counties of Norfolk, using the 170 RA65 cards already submitted for this area. The result is shown on a later page of this Newsletter, and it will be seen that many quite common species have hardly been recorded in more than a few of the 65 x 10Km squares in the two vice-counties! It will be seen that records are concentrated on three areas - the Broads, the northern coastline and the southern boundary with Suffolk including Redgrave Fen and parts of the Breckland. Special studies have been organised to cover these areas, but it is obvious that large tracts of Norfolk have gone unrecorded by arachnologists.

As this Newsletter is prepared for distribution, the S.R.S. Weekend Course will be held at Norwich. A report on the occasion will appear in Newsletter No.12 and we hope that the impact of such a visit will be apparent.



Linyphia triangularis ♀ in its web.

drawn by Mike Roberts

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

The following new S.R.S. Recorders have been registered since Newsletter No.10.:

- 136 Mr Steve Gregory, Manor House, Little Wittenham, ABINGDON, Oxon. OX14 4RA
137 Mrs Valerie Goring, 9 Broad Marston Road, Pebworth,
STRATFORD-ON-AVON, Warks. CV37 8XR
138 Mr Henry Berman, 104 Ramsey Road, ST. IVES, Cambs. PE17 6XW
139 Mr Chris Gardiner, 15 Castle Rise, Belmesthorpe, STAMFORD, Lincs. PE9 4JL

Mrs Helen Read has kindly agreed to become Area Organiser for Buckinghamshire: her address is - Towerwood, Park Lane, Burnham Beeches, Bucks. SL1 8PN
She is organising a meeting at Burnham Beeches at 10.00 a.m. on October 6th, and all SRS recorders are warmly welcome to join the party.

Mr Lawrence Bee has kindly agreed to become Area Organiser for Oxfordshire: his address is 14 Tower Hill, Witney, Oxon. OX8 5ER. He therefore ceases to be A.O. for Nottinghamshire, and for the present time there is nobody to take over this office.

Mr Shaun Hexter of 71 Havant Road, Walthamstowe, London E17 3JE, membership secretary of the B.A.S., has kindly offered to supply S.R.S. Area Organisers with print-outs of the names and addresses of all B.A.S. members who live in their areas. They should write to him, enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope for the reply.

An Application Form for membership of the B.A.S. is enclosed for all those S.R.S. Recorders who are not yet in membership.

HELIOPHANUS DAMPFI

Jim Stewart, A.O. for East Central Scotland, writes:

"The exciting one was our trip to the S.W.T. Reserve at Flanders Moss which lies astride the upper reaches of the river Forth between Thornhill and Kippen. We (Isobel Baldwin A.O. for south-east Scotland and I) were there as part of our plan to initiate reserves wardens and members of support groups into the basic techniques of spider collecting. Imagine our surprise on hearing from Peter Merrett that some Heliophanus females we couldn't identify from the books were in fact Heliophanus dampfi. So we were back there yesterday (Sunday) to try to find males, but had no luck in taking mature specimens although I had two immature males as well as an immature female. We left others including two very small specimens. So there appears to be a very viable population in that reserve and in the neighbouring NNR which I checked out yesterday as well. At this time of the year, the preferred habitat appears to be Bog Myrtle and Birch saplings up to about 750 mm - but the very small specimens I shook out of heather. The SWT Reserve is a small part of Flanders Moss - the largest remaining lowland raised bog in Britain. Much of it is wet with sphagnum moss and cotton grass, and the drier areas with heather, bog myrtle and birch scrub.

BRITISH RED DATA BOOK No.3. (Invertebrates, other than insects): available from John Bratton (ed.) 253pp. £8.00 post free. Produced by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee at Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY. There are details of 86 rare, endangered or vulnerable species, providing information on distribution, habitat & ecology, status, threats and conservation possibilities.

ARANEUS ALSINE in Scotland

During the last week of July, a party of 16 arachnologists at Kindrogan Field Study Centre visited a number of sites in the area, including Cairnwell, the Black Wood of Rannoch and Killiekrankie. The latter is a N.F.R. and had been visited on a previous course when Peter Merrett distinguished himself by finding a specimen of Araneus alsine in a curled-up silver birch leaf.

During the 1991 course, a determined effort was made, directed by Peter Merrett and Mike Roberts, to determine the status of this spider at Killiekrankie. Eventually a considerable colony was found in a wet area with bog myrtle and small birch trees dominating a typical wetland ground flora. Many spiders had constructed inconspicuous webs, some 6 inches in diameter and from 12 to 18 inches above ground. Most specimens, when disturbed, retreated into a curled up silver birch leaf.

Previous to these records, it was considered to be a rare British species, confined to England as far north as South Humberside, Wales.

The whole course at Kindrogan provided a number of RA65 cards that included such species as Clubiona subsultans, Dipoena torva, Robertus scoticus (from the Black Wood of Rannoch) as well as Araneus alsine.

SPIDERS IN A CEREAL FIELD

Chris Topping, Area Organiser for Sussex, writes:

" We have found quite a lot of Meioneta simplicitaris (in the pitfall traps in our fields) We have also found them ballooning over our fields. Could this be a species on the increase or just simply overlooked in the past?

Another interesting spider we have is Porrhomma microphthalmum. This is almost impossible to find by hand-searching or D'Va in our cereal field, but if an area of field is caged and the contents of the cage then trapped, this spider is found to be quite numerous. We suspect that it is living in deep cracks in the ground and is coming out of these in the cages either to emigrate (it is a common ballooning species) or as a result of the reduced light intensity. However, we haven't found anyone able to provide us with any further information.

(Dr. C. J. Topping, Horticultural Research International, Worthing Road,
Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6LP.)

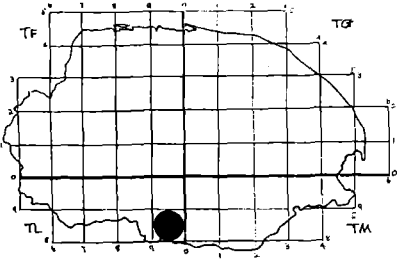
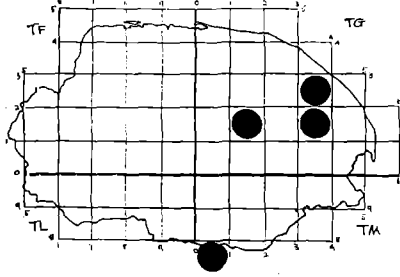
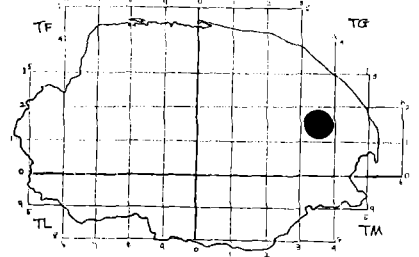
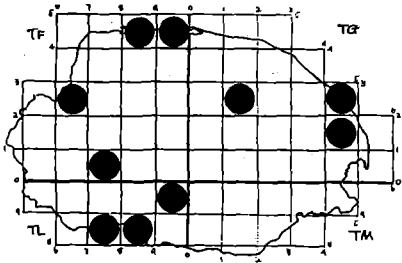
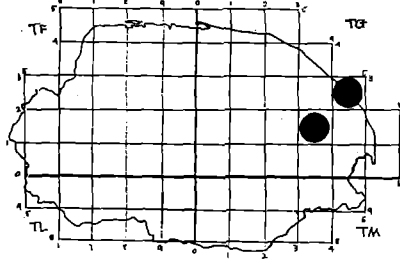
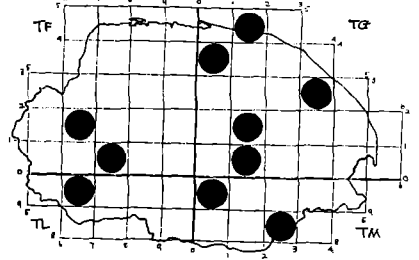
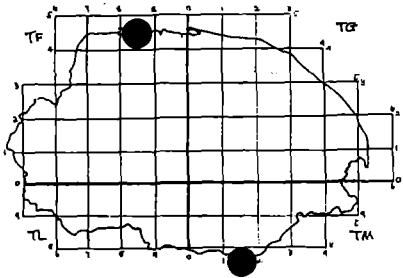
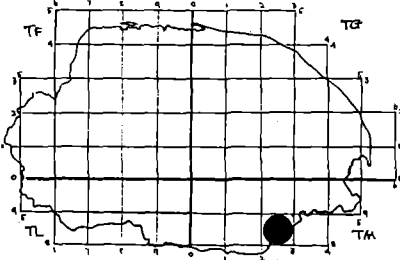
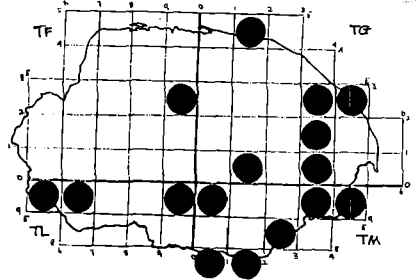
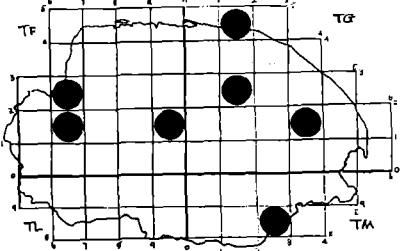
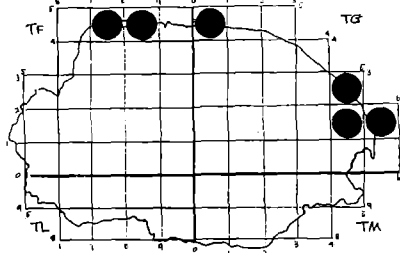
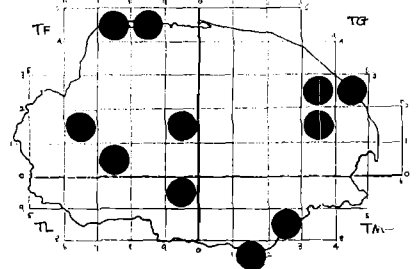
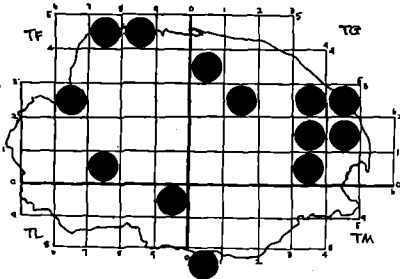
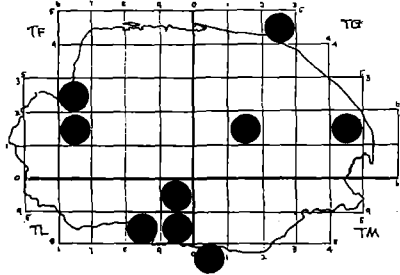
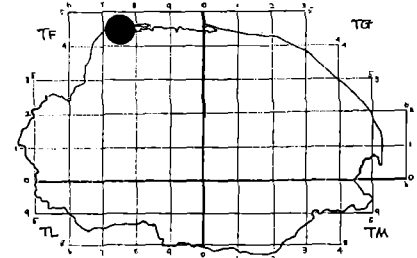
POST A.G.M. QUANTOCKS VISIT

The 1991 BAS/AGM was held in Bridgwater in Somerset. After the meeting and on the following day participants were invited to take to the nearby Quantock Hills for an SRS recording session. The Quantocks were Britain's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and rise to a height of 1200 feet AOD. The area visited offered a range of habitats with diverse names to match.

Sixty five spider species were recorded including Philodromus praedatus and Micrommata virescens from Five Lords and Agroeca brunnea from Hodders Combe.

Our thanks go to the landowners and English Nature for permission to collect and to all those who participated: Martin Askins, Toddy Cooper, Chris Felton, Linda Gregory, Peter Harvey, Frances Murphy, Clifford Smith & Chris Spilling.

(Francis Farr-Cox, 1 Winchester Road, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset. TA8 1WY)

02901 *Clubiona brevipes* Blackwall02903 *Clubiona compta* C L Koch02904 *Clubiona constricta* (Walck.)02905 *Clubiona diversa* O P C02907 *Clubiona juvenis* Simon02908 *Clubiona lutescens* Westr.02909 *Clubiona neglecta* O P C02911 *Clubiona pallidula* (Clerck)02912 *Clubiona phragmitis* C L Koch02913 *Clubiona reclusa* O P C02915 *Clubiona similis* L Koch02914 *Clubiona steganialis* Simon02918 *Clubiona subtilis* L Koch02919 *Clubiona terrestris* Westr.02920 *Clubiona trivialis* C L Koch

The above maps indicate the distribution of the commoner species of spider in the genus *Clubiona*

Data has been obtained from the 170 RA65 cards already submitted to the S.R.S. Each black dot shows at least one record for that species in a 10km. square.

NEWS FROM ESSEX

So far this year there have been two more NCRs (new county records), Wichlea calcarifera in pitfalls from very old grassland at Mucking Heath, S. Essex, and Theridiosoma gemmosum from wet marsh in Lake Wood, Gosfield Lake in N. Essex.

Other interesting records this year include Centromerus incilium from Heydon, N. Essex and Colne Point, N. Essex; C. serratus from Mucking Heath, S. Essex; Zelotes pedestris from Thrift Wood Gravel Pits, S. Essex and from Barlow Hills, N. Essex; Porrhomma oblitum from Parkhall Wood, N. Essex; and Xerolycosa nemoralis from Hadleigh Great Wood, S. Essex. Trichopterna cito has finally turned up again at Colne Point - just two solitary males in pitfall traps, but Heliophanus auratus still does not seem to have been recorded here again since the original 1961 record. The only other British records are in 1987 and 1988 from two tiny areas of shingle in the Blackwater Estuary.

Zodarion italicum is present in some numbers at Kersey Marsh, an area of grazing marsh grassland at Benfleet, S. Essex. This seems to be the most undisturbed habitat in which it has so far been found in Britain. The Fenchurch Street to Southend railway line does however run through the marsh and could explain its presence.

Philodromus praedatus continues to turn up on oak in new localities in Essex. I would even suggest that it might become a species that we ought to record from every 10Km. square in the county! I have also found the species on field trips this year to Kent and Somerset. I urge other arachnologists to collect Philodromus from decent-sized oak trees, looking for females that have pale, mottled lateral carapace bands and clearly annulated legs, and for males in which the iridescence typical of P. aureolus and F. cespitum is masked by yellow or brown hairs. Keeping immature and subadults to maturity increases the period in which it is possible to collect the species and would improve the national recording coverage.

More records for Philodromus collinus in Essex suggest that this species might well be present in most of the coniferised woodlands in the county, and P. albidus continues to turn up all over the county in hedges and woods.

(Peter Harvey, 9 Kent Road, GRAYS, Essex. RM17 6DE)

ENOPILOGNATHA OVATA and E. LATIMANA: the situation in Essex

A look at the present known distribution of E. latimana in Britain shown by Dr Geoff Oxford in the last SRS Newsletter shows the patch of records in Essex. Although some of these records have been coastal, most records have been from recently disturbed habitats such as chalk quarries, sand and gravel pits, waste places and recently improved sea walls. Where the species has been deliberately looked for inland in recently disturbed habitats, it has been found.

In Several localities both species have been found. At Grays Chalk Quarry E. ovata was found in areas of grassland that had been established for well over 50 years, whereas E. latimana was found in areas that had only recently been developed from bare chalk. At Linford Sand Pit, E. latimana occurs on herbage on recently colonised sand, whereas E. ovata is found in more established grassland and in gorse and oak. At a sand and gravel pit near Chelmsford

(continued overleaf)

I swept E. latimana from herbage on recently colonised sand, and both species together at the edge of the pit where it backed onto a thicket. E. ovata itself seems able to thrive in a variety of habitats ranging from grassland and scrub in the open to the field layer inside dark woods.

I believe that E. latimana was recorded last year in Surrey - again from a waste ground type of habitat. I am sure that the species should be looked for in this type of habitat and might then turn out to be quite widespread.

(Peter Harvey, 9 Kent Road, Grays, Essex. RML7 6DE)

New Records of EPISINUS MACULIPES (Cavanna) from the South West

During September 1989, a mature male of the genus Episinus was collected from a stand of Hemp Agrimony growing in association with the strandline vegetation at the base of a cliff in Plymouth. Examination of the palps revealed it to be Episinus maculipes. Alert to the possibility of its presence in the Plymouth area, we re-examined all Episinus material previously collected and we discovered four sub-adult specimens of E. maculipes.

Since then E. maculipes has been found at three other sites within the city boundary, one being an area of uncut grassland in a city park, the second beneath some rubbish on a disused railway line, and the third on the edge of a small area of deciduous woodland. In June 1990 a further sub-adult was taken from the field layer in Kilminorth Wood at Looe in East Cornwall.

Until this time, E. maculipes had been recorded from two sites only in Britain; one being on the south shores of the Isle of Wight where it was found in the lower canopy of an area of deciduous woodland and scrub interspersed with holiday developments (Hillyard, 1983). The other is a single record from Tiptree in Essex which has yielded no further species to date (Locket, Millidge & Merrett 1974)

The presence of this species in widely separated parts of Plymouth, and its occurrence in East Cornwall suggests that it might not be as rare as was previously thought. It is interesting to note that all of the S.W. England specimens were found in habitats associated with the field layer while those of the Isle of Wight were found in the low canopy.

Examination of all our Episinus specimens indicated that the pale median sternal band was not specific to E. maculipes; all of our E. truncatus possessed a vague median band extending over the anterior half of the sternum at least. One of our E. angulatus has a narrow broken band that ran the length of the sternum. It would thus seem that this feature is more widely distributed in the genus than was previously thought to be, and thus may not be diagnostic of E. maculipes.

We would like to thank Dr Peter Merrett who kindly confirmed the identification of our specimens.

Ref: Locket Millidge & Merrett (1974) British Spiders Vol.3., Ray Soc., London
Hillyard (1983) Episinus maculipes Cavanna (Araneae, Theridiidae): rediscovery in Britain, Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc 6 (2) 88-92

Andrew Stevens & Peter Smithers, Dept of Biological Science, Polytechnic SW., Drake Circus, Plymouth, Devon.