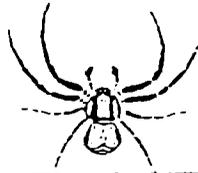


British Arachnological Society

NEWSLETTER No. 12



DECEMBER 1991

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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

S. R. S. WEEKEND COURSE AT NORWICH : SEPTEMBER 1991

A party of nine arachnologists met for the weekend of September 13 - 15 at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, and visited a number of sites in the county. The weather during the weeks before the meeting had been mostly hot and dry with the result that the number and variety of spiders were much more limited than usual. On the average, less than 50 species were recorded at any one site we visited.

The following were the main sites:

- a. Foxley Wood: a mixed woodland with wide, open rides (G.R. TG 05.22.)
- b. Whitwell Common: a spring-fed valley fen (G.R. TG 08.20)
- c. Woodbastwick Fen N.N.R.: an extensive fen - mostly open (G.R. TG 34.16)
- d. Holkham Gap: Marram dunes with conifers and scrub (G.R. TF 88.45.)

Centromerus incultus was recorded at Woodbastwick by David Carr, from litter by the edge of a dyke. This rare species had been previously recorded at Wicken Fen in 1913, Woodbastwick in 1970 and Catfield 1989 .

Yellow Fleabane in the rides at Foxley Wood provided the habitat for a rich population of Araneus diadematus and Araneus marmoreus - the latter were mostly var. pyramidatus but a few var. marmoreus were also present. The latter had been recorded previously this year in Foxley Wood, but a widespread search in the woods of the area by Rex Hancey later in the autumn failed to provide any further specimens. Araneus angulatus was recorded in Foxley Wood by Deborah Procter.

The visit to Holkham Gap produced disappointing results, partly due to the distraction of a TV crew. None of us saw the resulting programme that was put out locally, but its production kept a number of us too distracted from our wish to get down to spider recording.

A further 6 sites were briefly visited in the county - mostly in 10km squares that had no completed RA65s to their credit - and provided further data for the SRS mapping intentions.

We are all most grateful to Deborah Procter for all the hard work that enabled us to be accommodated at the University, and for planning our fieldwork. She even made special arrangements for us to enjoy good weather all the time we were in Norfolk.

COMPUTERS AND THE S. R. S.

Although the S.R.S. has been using computers to record spiders for some time under the direction of Craig Slawson, the B.A.S. has recently decided to take action and I therefore invited John Crocker, a B.A.S. Council Member, to write an article - this is printed overleaf. Brian Eversham of the B.R.C. will also be consulted before a policy document is produced.

Towards a standardised computer recording strategy
for spiders, harvestmen and pseudoscorpions.

At the British Arachnological Society's October Council Meeting, Council agreed that the Society should address itself to the question of establishing guidelines for computerised recording of distribution data for spiders, harvestmen and pseudoscorpions. It is acknowledged that amateur workers in this field far outnumber professionals, and help is needed when setting up a home computer for this purpose. Much labour is involved in the initial establishment of a system, and since the whole point is in the manipulation and dissemination of this collected data, simple and reliable interchangeability of data-sets is essential.

The institutional use of computers in the storage and manipulation of biological data is now well established, and as the cost of powerful home-based machines continues to fall, more and more individual workers - in specialised fields such as arachnology - are availing themselves of the facilities offered by this new technology. This issue has been raised several times in earlier SRS Newsletters, and Craig Slawson's contribution in Newsletters 5 & 8 is apposite.

Many members of the SRS scheme are using computers for some aspect of their recording and the Society wishes to involve EVERY ONE OF YOU in this study. This exercise is being approached with an open mind and YOUR comments will be valued at this early stage. The future is uncertain, as computer technology is developing at such a rapid pace, but it is unlikely that the basic purpose of spider recording and the information involved will alter much. What is clearly going to change is the ease with which this information can be manipulated in new, compact and cost effective systems. Initially it is necessary to find out what various people are using in any aspect of computer recording for their own spider data. This extends, of course, to harvestmen and pseudo-scorpions and any special criteria for these groups should be emphasised. There is no intention to get involved at this stage in analysis of hardware systems but simply to ascertain what software programs are in use, how these programs are structured and what they do. If the hardware has a direct bearing on the limitations of software performance, it would be useful to know about this, but this study is primarily concerned with the potential of your program, what it does (or could do) and what you would like it to do.

Please write direct to Mr J.Crocker, 34 Bramcote Road Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 2SA, who is gathering this information together for appraisal. Correspondents will be kept informed of progress and it is eventually hoped to develop a forum of expertise within BAS/SRS to address the shifting ground of computer technology.

SPIDERS ON MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LAND

As the third largest landowner in the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Defence has within its estate over 200 SSSIs. We all hear of the complaints concerning low-level training flights and the noise nuisance they cause, of war-games and disturbance to local inhabitants, and yet how many of us hear of the concern and interest that the MOD is showing towards positive conservation and land management?

I recently wrote to the MOD, asking for permission to carry out spider surveys on local land, and was surprised when I received an encouraging answer. Not only was I offered help in making contact with local MOD Conservation Groups, I also learned that the MOD has over 300 establishments at home and abroad, and that they are fully aware of their responsibilities towards the protection of rare and important flora and fauna. With reviews of land use due to the 'cutting back' of our defence forces under way, the MOD wants to find out as much as they can about what is living on their land. It was explained to me that there is a national shortage of arachnologists on their conservation groups, and many important areas could benefit from a survey of their arachnofauna.

You need to get in touch with the MOD Conservation Office in the first instance by writing to Colonel J H Baker, Lands 3, Ministry of Defence, Room B2/1, Leatherhead Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 2LU (tel. 081-391-3028). His office will, in turn, advise you of your local MOD Conservation Group and provide you with a contact address. I suspect you will be warmly welcomed because spider experts are very few indeed.

Most vice-counties have at least one or two MOD establishments within their borders. With so much effort being made by the MOD to provide these areas with some form of protection, it would be an opportunity lost if we were not to lend a hand in providing information that may help keep an area conserved for the future.

James Wright (A.O. for Isle of Man) 32 Wythburn Crescent, St. Helens,
Merseyside WALL 7HD

FIELD MEETING at EELMOOR MARSH

There will be a joint meeting of the DRA Farnborough Conservation Group, the British Arachnological Society, the West Surrey Natural History Society and the British Naturalists Association at 10.30 am on Sunday 7th June 1992.

Those wishing to attend should meet at the Main Gate of DRA Farnborough at Map Ref. SU 866 550.

Eelmoor Marsh SSSI is a small area of heathland and woodland bordering Farnborough Airfield. It supports an interesting range of spiders such as Dolomedes fimbriatus as well as reptiles and mammals.

Names and addresses of all those wishing to attend must be sent to Dr. Lovesey by 21st May 1992. Further details from: Edward Lovesey (Tel. 0252 24461 X 4082)

BRIEF NOTES

Brian Eversham and Stuart Green worked pitfall traps in The Burren in west Ireland, and sent the spiders for identification. No unusual species were recorded, but there were some new vice-county records.

Steve Gregory (SRS no. 136) reports Syedra gracilis from Little Wittenham M R in Oxfordshire. He found several species to add to the list of 230+ species recorded there by Clive Hambler. He has also done pitfall trapping on a local scrubby fen/wet woodland site where he has taken Glyphesis servulus among the 100 species he has recorded so far.

The Channel Islands have been recently well-recorded by Alex Williams and David Horsfield with nearly 50 RA65s and a set of 100+ GEN7 cards. A number of rarities have been recorded on GEN14 cards (checked by Peter Merrett) including: Ero aphana, Philodromus pulchellus, Heliophanus tribulosus, Micaria albimana, Alopecosus albofasciata and Heriacus oblongus.

A decision will soon have to be made whether or not to include the Channel Islands in the proposed Atlas of British Spiders.

Dr. Jennifer Owens has sent for identification a collection of specimens taken in a malaise trap in Leicester. Large numbers of Clubionids were included, but few Linyphiids.

Many recorders in the S.R.S. have expressed difficulties in separating Philodromus praedatus from Ph. aureolus. It is hoped that an article due to appear in the B.A.S. Newsletter in the near future will deal with the problem.

The spiders of Anglesey are receiving considerable attention at present. David Mackie's list included over 70 species, to which have been added many more species by James Wright, Mike Roberts, Chris Felton and many others to a lesser extent. The most prominent recent additions have been made by Don Roscoe (SRS no. 63) who has contributed over half the RA65s currently received.

Before taking up his new post in Scotland, Mike Usher (SRS no. 81) and his team undertook a survey of the spiders of woodlands to the south of York. Among the less common species to be recorded were two males of Lepthyphantes insignis: the first time this species has been recorded in Yorkshire. He also took Araneus marmoreus var. marmoreus, adding yet another Yorkshire site for this variety.

David Beaumont (SRS no. 43) recently published a paper on pitfall trapping he did in a wood (Coille Mor) on the island of Colonsay in the South Ebrides. This vice county has been too little recorded, and it is no surprise therefore that considerable numbers of new county records were established. For example, in the genus Walckenaeria, the following species were taken: alticeps, antica, atrotibiale, cuspidata, dysderoides, kochi, nodosa and nudipalpis. (all of which are new vice-county records.)

We congratulate Adrian Fowles (SRS no. 130) on recording Agroeca lusatica in Cardigan, the vice-county of which he is the Area Organiser. We hope to provide fuller details in a later Newsletter.

NOTICE TO ALL S. R. S. RECORDERS

Please make good use of the winter months to catch up with getting your records onto RA65s, GEN7s or GEN14s, or on computer.

Please also send me short items of particular interest, such as those above, for including in coming issues of the S.R.S. Newsletter.

COMPLETED RA65 RECORD CARDS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Column 1 : Number and Name of Vice-County

Column 2 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1990

Column 3 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1991

1 West Cornwall	46 56	26 West Suffolk	30 33	51 Flint	30 33
2 East Cornwall	7 23	27 East Norfolk	51 171	52 Anglesey	54 116
3 South Devon	136 180	28 West Norfolk	40 79	53 South Lincs.	32 34
4 North Devon	12 17	29 Cambridgeshire	27 27	54 North Lincs.	139 153
5 South Somerset	45 48	30 Bedfordshire	50 66	55 Leicestershire	8 15
6 North Somerset	78 79	31 Huntingdonshire	39 43	56 Nottingham	62 79
7 North Wiltshire	7 8	32 Northants	131 191	57 Derbyshire	109 141
8 South Wiltshire	12 19	33 East Gloucester	4 4	58 Cheshire	82 108
9 Dorset	150 186	34 West Gloucester	26 104	59 South Lincs.	178 224
10 Isle of Wight	7 9	35 Monmouth	6 7	60 West Lincs.	21 24
11 South Hampshire	120 133	36 Hereford	7 8	61 S.E. Yorks.	274 320
12 North Hampshire	8 20	37 Worcestershire	87 111	62 N.E. Yorks.	402 415
13 West Sussex	42 78	38 Warwickshire	23 55	63 S.W. Yorks.	373 419
14 East Sussex	18 35	39 Staffordshire	269 360	64 Mid-W. Yorks.	440 480
15 East Kent	31 38	40 Shropshire	40 87	65 N.W. Yorks.	91 97
16 West Kent	22 27	41 Glamorgan	43 51	66 Durham	126 167
17 Surrey	178 214	42 Brecon	24 25	67 S. Northumber	265 292
18 South Essex	193 350	43 Radnor	6 6	68 N. Northumber	10 28
19 North Essex	206 424	44 Carmarthen	73 212	69 Westmorland	97 113
20 Hertfordshire	231 247	45 Pembroke	51 89	70 Cumberland	55 60
21 Middlesex	70 83	46 Cardigan	21 89	71 Isle of Man	56 56
22 Berkshire	17 19	47 Montgomery	12 14		
23 Oxfordshire	19 26	48 Merioneth	31 36	113 Channel Isles	12 43
24 Buckinghamshire	60 64	49 Caernarvon	87 98		
25 East Suffolk	150 195	50 Denbyshire	33 42		

(Details for the Vice-Counties in Scotland are to be found overleaf)

Total number of completed RA65s for Great Britain in 1990 = 6992

Total number of completed RA65s for Great Britain in 1991 = 9539

Congratulations to many Area Organisers and Recorders in a goodly number of Vice-Counties for their continuing efforts. It is hoped that numbers in those areas that show little increase during 1991 will significantly increase when completed cards are sent in to swell totals.

Particular thanks to the following for outstanding increases:

Norfolk (Deborah Procter) and West Gloucester (David Haigh) who hosted SRS Weekends Essex (Peter Harvey and his team), Carmarthen (Ian Morgan), Cardigan (Adrian Fowles), Anglesey (Don Roscoe), Caithness and the Outer Hebrides (Rowley Snazell).

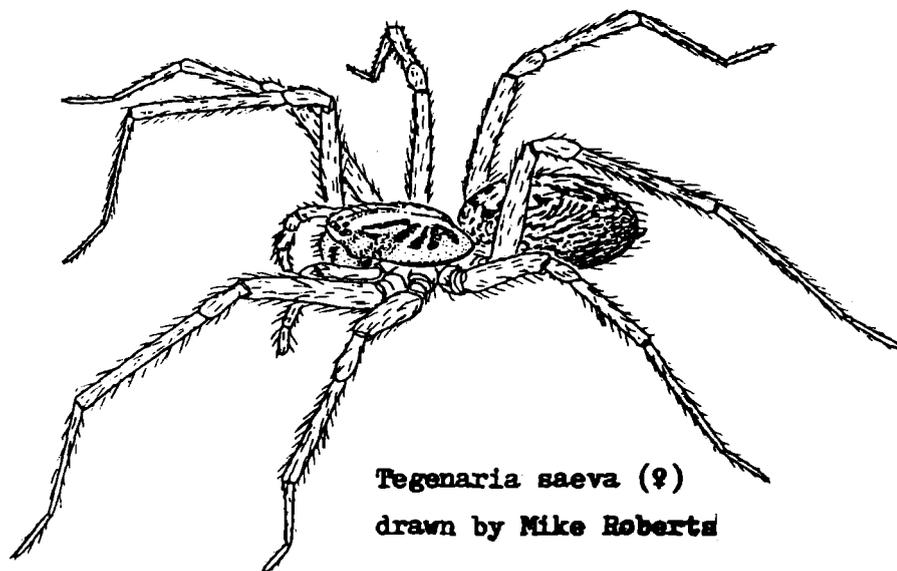
COMPLETED RA65 RECORD CARDS FOR SCOTLAND

Column 1 : Number and Name of Vice-County

Column 2 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1990

Column 3 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1991

72	Dumfries	15	16	92	South Aberdeen	49	87
73	Kirkcudbright	53	70	93	North Aberdeen	22	44
74	Wigton	32	33	94	Banff	12	14
75	Ayr	23	51	95	Elgin or Moray	9	31
76	Renfrew	23	28	96	East Inverness	54	72
77	Lanark	26	36	97	West Inverness	19	30
78	Peebles	22	43	98	Argyll Main	26	44
79	Selkirk	12	18	99	Dunbarton	5	13
80	Roxburgh	20	30	100	Clyde Isles	12	14
81	Berwick	11	16	101	Kintyre	15	17
82	East Lothian	38	54	102	South Ebudes	49	59
83	Midlothian	86	122	103	Mid Ebudes	6	6
84	West Lothian	15	21	104	North Ebudes	12	38
85	Fife/Kinross	21	36	105	West Ross	44	49
86	Stirling	22	30	106	East Ross	8	8
87	West Perth	10	20	107	East Sutherland	5	5
88	Mid Perth	61	78	108	West Sutherland	37	51
89	East Perth	36	46	109	Caithness	4	58
90	Angus	58	82	110	Outer Hebrides	10	35
91	Kincardine	7	15	111	Orkney Islands	5	7
				112	Shetland Islands	2	9



Tegenaria saeva (?)

drawn by Mike Roberts