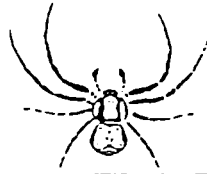


British Arachnological Society



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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

MEMBERSHIP OF THE S. R. S.

A reminder in the June SRS Newsletter indicated that just over half those on the SRS Register had not sent in any completed RA65 or GEN7 or GEN14 cards for more than twelve months. Individual reminders were included with the next Newsletter, asking recorders either to send in completed cards or else resigning from the Scheme. The response to these requests has been disappointing. This issue of the SRS Newsletter is the last one to be sent out to inactive recorders, but it is to be hoped that some will be stirred into action before the proposed deadline!

SPIDERS IN CHURCHYARDS

I often find that the easiest place to start recording spiders when in an area new to me is the local churchyard. It is one place where I am not likely to be challenged by gamekeepers or irate farmers, parking is easy and over-inquisitive children are few. It is quiet with usually plenty of places to look for spiders. Cars are uncommon, although once I was held up for some time by a very large and fashionable funeral that made collecting impossible.

An abundance of old yews often makes beating very rewarding, ivy is usually present on walls, and cracks in the walls may be interesting. There is always a heap of dead flowers in the corner just waiting to be shaken over a sheet, whilst easing the grass away from a wall usually adds a few Linyphiids to the list - as well as the odd Salticid if one's lucky. Many churchyards were noted for their fine elms, sadly gone with the elm disease: however, the stumps are still there with lots of loose bark to ease off (nail it back afterwards).

If the church is open, many interesting things can be found around windows or in nooks and crannies. With permission, the cellars can be visited and who knows what treasures await you down there with the central heating boiler.

This country has a long tradition of churchmen who have made significant contributions to natural history which still persists despite increased workloads. It is unknown in my experience to be refused permission. I have several times received actual help with beating and turning over planks of wood left by gravediggers. It is worth remembering that the church and graveyard have perhaps been there for a thousand years, relatively undisturbed!

Alex Williams, 40 Preston Park, FAVERSHAM, Kent ME13 8LN 19 Sept. 1992

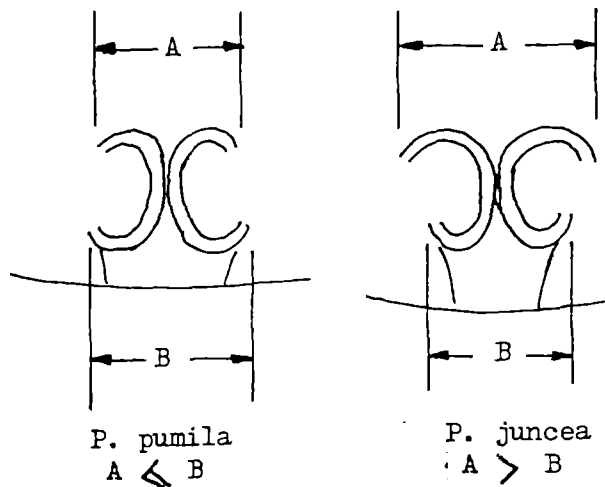
MALAISE TRAPS FOR RECORDING SPIDERS

I have recently had the opportunity to examine the contents of a flight interception trap that my friend Jonathan Cooter of the Hereford Museum recently set up in nearby Moccas Park. The trap was in operation from early June to late August (when it was knocked down by rutting deer). I was pleasantly surprised to record some 40 species of spider: Metellina mengei was by far the most numerous spider trapped, and I was pleased to find Lepthyphantes alacris which I had not encountered before and also Philodromus praedatus. It is not worthwhile to set up such a trap to catch spiders but if you are lucky enough to have a friend using one (they are popular with dipter-aists) it might be worthwhile asking him to separate out the spiders for you.

Alex Williams, 40 Preston Park, FAVERSHAM, Kent ME13 8LN

Separation of females of Pocadicnemis pumila (Blackwall) and P. juncea Locket & Millidge

Some time ago, I sent a female Pocadicnemis to Peter Merrett as P. pumila for checking as a new county record. He pointed out that it was, in fact, P. juncea the epigyne having sunk into the abdomen and reducing the apparent distance between the epigynal fold and the posterior edge of the sperm ducts - the



character which is normally used for separation. This specimen came from pitfall trap material which was not in very good condition, hence the distortion, and included, so I thought, both species under discussion. On re-examination, I found that several other specimens which I had identified as P. pumila were also P. juncea.

This led me to check other specimens in my collection and, although I found none misidentified, there were a few which made me look very carefully. However, as a result of this, I realized that there was a constant character in all those which I examined which enabled separation of even the distorted specimens. The sperm ducts form a pair

of loops both anteriorly and posteriorly: in P. juncea, the width across the anterior pair appears to be greater than that across the posterior pair, whereas in P. pumila it is less than or equal. This distinction is shown in the diagram above and is clearly evident in the drawings given in Roberts (1987) and also, though not as clearly, in Locket & Millidge (1953).

Stanley Dobson, Moor Edge, Birch Vale, via Stockport SK12 5BX

HELIOPHANUS DAMPFI

The discovery of Heliophanus dampfi by Isobel Baldwin and Jim Stewart was recorded in SRS Newsletter no.11 (September 1991) at Flanders Moss in East Central Scotland where females and immatures were taken. Jim Stewart now writes that he returned to Flanders Moss (NS 637973) this June and was able to find males as well as females.

Almost at the same time, David Horsfield wrote: "Heliophanus dampfi was first recorded as British from Wales by S A Williams (1991, Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc. 61: 3-4) and the first Scottish records were noted by Jim Stewart from Flanders Moss. I collected an adult male and two females on 16 June 1992 by sweeping saplings of birch and Scots pine on Ochertyre Moss, a raised bog Near Stirling (NS 735974)." The distance between these two Scottish sites is about 10km.

ARGIOPE BRUENNICHI

Arising from enquiries earlier in the year, Roger Blake records the species from two sites: Hatch Pond, Canford Heath SZ015939 5.7.92.; and disused railway line near Ringwood SZ157046 in mid September.

Ken Halstead gives a number of sight recordings this year in the Southampton Water area, but promises a fuller report in the near future.

SHORT NOTES

Geoff Oxford writes: I discovered a large Salticid back in May/June time, walking across my laboratory bench. It looked rather like a Marpissa. After a long career being taken round Primary Schools, it finally died the other day. I sent it to John Murphy and he has identified it as Plexippus paykulli (the genus is certain, the species less so but fits with it turning up way out of its range.) This species is a "well-known traveller/hitch-hiker and could be from almost anywhere where the climate is warmer than here". Presumably it was imported with one of the many parcels of Enoplognatha I was receiving around that time. Since they were from the former USSR, Europe and the USA, the spider really could have come from anywhere. However, it's hardly worth a new map in the proposed Atlas of Yorkshire Spiders!

SCYTODES THORACICA Latreille is found in houses along the south of England, but not in Hertfordshire according to the map in Peter Merrett's vol. III of British Spiders. David Nellist (AO for Herts.) has just sent in a completed GEN7 card compiled by G. Maynard recording the species in his house in Hertford this year in April, throughout the period between the end of June to the end of July, and then in October. Have any other SRS Recorders made similar records?

THE BURREN Cambridge University Zoology Department took an expedition to the Burren, in County Clare, Eire to undertake a Gryke Invertebrate Survey. Apart from hand collecting, pitfall traps, water traps and carrion traps were used - the latter seemed to attract a small number of spiders, presumably to prey on the carnivorous insects. We are now building up a large collection of completed RA65 cards for both Northern Ireland and Eire, ready for decisions to be made about their eventual use. If you have any records you've made, please send them along.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS Following the excellent lead made by Liverpool Museum, we have now received published lists of spider specimens at other British museums. The list for Manchester Museum has been compiled by Stanley Dobson who is an honorary curator in charge of their spider collection: it contains well over 3,000 specimens, mainly collected by William Falconer and David Mackie. The list for Leeds Museum has been compiled by Adrian Norris who is curator in charge of their spider collection: it contains about 1,000 specimens, mostly collected by Douglas Richardson and Adrian Norris. We would be glad to receive similar lists from other museums in Britain.

W P WINTER'S DIARIES The diaries kept by W P Winter between 1906 and 1920 have come to light. Part of his method of recording was a sequence of notbooks with a page to each species with details of sites, dates and habitat notes. This has made it easy to transfer his information onto a set of GEN7 cards, and he took the trouble to have his less common species vetted by William Falconer. Most of Winter's records were made in central Yorkshire, with occasional brief spells on holiday in other parts of Britain.

COMPLETED RA65s It is interesting to note the number of completed RA65s that have been handed in since the SRS was started in Spring 1987. The annual number of cards received are:

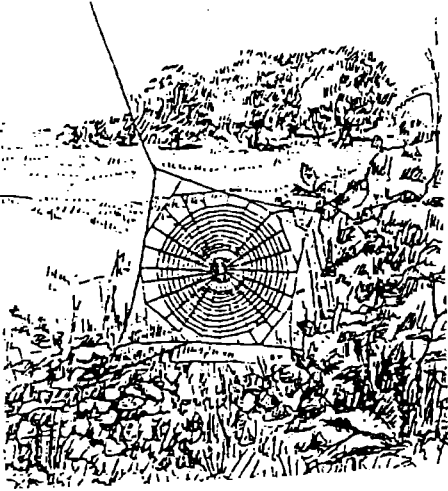
November 1st 1988	2541
November 1st 1989	2529
November 1st 1990	1922
November 1st 1991	2547
November 1st 1992	2570

These add up to a total of 12,109. No account is made of the number of GEN7 and GEN14 cards that have been completed, some of which contain information about a single species on a single date while some refer to 20 or more records

ARANEUS DIADEMATUS IN 1992

or The strange case of the disappearing Epeiras

Peter Merrett, in SRS Newsletter number 15 on the subject of Argiope, talked about population fluctuations as judged by local observations and reports from further afield. It was mentioned in passing that 1992 was a good year for Araneus diadematus. But, was this true only in local terms or nationwide? It seems that the overall picture is very complicated. From reports reaching me and from my own observations, the story is of a perplexing year for watchers of garden spiders.

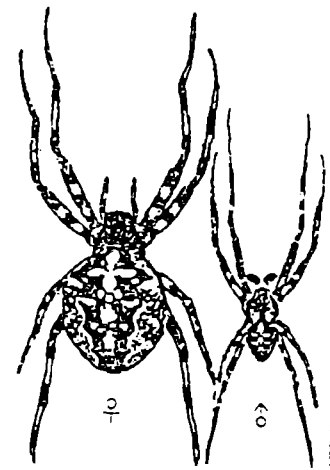


The year of the garden spider apparently began as usual. In May the spiderlings were commonly seen, as normal, in their little webs. But through June and July they grew very little. By August, in the Thames valley, in places where they are normally abundant, very few could be seen. At the time, it was worrying. Those specimens that were found looked puny and undernourished, and males were no-

where to be seen. As far as the weather was concerned, 'global warming' was on everybody's lips - until July that is. After that it became continuously cool and wet.

Probably everyone has noticed the way garden spiders seem to appear relatively suddenly. It is a regular phenomenon - for weeks they are small and unobtrusive and then one discovers that large female garden spiders in their orb webs are everywhere. The difference this year was that it seemed to happen remarkably late and from a low stock. From numerous reports, received from Kent to Banff, adult females and males appeared during the second half of September, at a time when the weather was generally poor. In Berkshire I found adult males on October 4th. By contrast, in Argiope-land, at Priddy's Hard (Gosport) male garden spiders had been in evidence during June (Simon Moore, pers comm.). However, in Catalonia in late July, after a wet spring and summer, A. diadematus was as undeveloped as it was in most of GB where drought was official. Thus weather cannot be the sole factor.

The complexity, contrywide, of garden spider size, abundance and life cycle was first indicated by D.S.Bunn (BAS newsletter no. 35, 1982). It was said that in many localities, individuals survive the winter and complete their life cycle during a second year. It would thus be interesting, with the assistance of SRS recorders, to assess the true incidence of winter survival. This would be a particularly interesting question in 1992/3 because the mating season generally seems to have been so late and poor. The assumption is that undeveloped and unmated individuals are more likely to continue to the following year (Temperature permitting).



I am aware that the foregoing is largely anecdotal; what is needed is a factual, annual compilation of observations and data. Garden spider watchers should unite!

(Paul Hillyard, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London..SW7 5BD)

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 1991
 Column 3 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1992

1 West Cornwall	56	60	26 West Suffolk	33	41	51 Flint	33	39
2 East Cornwall	23	31	27 East Norfolk	171	286	52 Anglesey	116	186
3 South Devon	180	255	28 West Norfolk	79	112	53 South Lines	34	41
4 North Devon	17	22	29 Cambridgeshire	27	38	54 North Lines	153	175
5 South Somerset	48	49	30 Bedfordshire	66	222	55 Leicester	15	15
6 North Somerset	79	80	31 Huntingdonshire	43	66	56 Nottingham	79	81
7 North Wiltshire	8	9	32 Northants	191	211	57 Derbyshire	141	161
8 South Wiltshire	19	19	33 East Gloucester	4	35	58 Cheshire	108	136
9 Dorset	186	195	34 West Gloucester	104	119	59 South Lancs	224	262
10 Isle of Wight	9	11	35 Monmouth	7	13	60 West Lancs	24	29
11 South Hampshire	133	172	36 Hereford	8	13	61 S E Yorks	320	329
12 North Hampshire	20	34	37 Worcestershire	111	116	62 N E Yorks	415	425
13 West Sussex	78	217	38 Warwickshire	55	60	63 S W Yorks	419	513
14 East Sussex	35	52	39 Staffordshire	360	550	64 Mid-W Yorks	480	491
15 East Kent	38	69	40 Shropshire	87	116	65 N W Yorks	97	107
16 West Kent	27	31	41 Glamorgan	51	68	66 Durham	167	168
17 Surrey	214	263	42 Brecon	25	30	67 S. Northumb	292	296
18 South Essex	350	495	43 Radnor	6	8	68 N. Northumb	28	30
19 North Essex	424	626	44 Carmarthen	212	253	69 Westmorland	113	121
20 Hertfordshire	247	266	45 Pembroke	89	113	70 Cumberland	60	66
21 Middlesex	83	97	46 Cardigan	89	259	71 Isle of Man	56	93
22 Berkshire	19	22	47 Montgomery	14	23			
23 Oxfordshire	26	31	48 Merioneth	36	46	Scilly Isles		34
24 Buckinghamshire	64	82	49 Caernarvon	98	125	113 Channel Isles	43	44
25 East Suffolk	195	227	50 Denbyshire	42	50			

(See overleaf for Scottish Vice-County Totals)

Total number of completed RA65s for Great Britain in 1991 = 9,539

Total number of completed RA65s for Great Britain in 1992 = 12,109

Number of completed RA65s submitted in 1992 = 2,570

*Eleven Vice Counties submitted more than 50 completed RA65s during the year: namely: Angus - 204; North Essex - 202; Staffordshire - 190; Cardiganshire - 170; Bedfordshire - 156; South Essex - 145; West Sussex - 139; East Norfolk - 115; South-West Yorkshire - 94; South Devon - 75; and Anglesey - 70.

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 1991

Column 3 : Number of completed RA65 cards received before 1st November 1992

72	Dumfries	16	16	92	South Aberdeen	87	93
73	Kirkcudbright	70	70	93	North Aberdeen	44	52
74	Wigton	33	74	94	Banff	14	16
75	Ayr	51	52	95	Elgin or Moray	31	34
76	Renfrew	28	28	96	East Inverness	72	75
77	Lanark	36	36	97	West Inverness	30	32
78	Peebles	43	43	98	Argyll Main	44	45
79	Selkirk	18	18	99	Dunbarton	13	13
80	Roxburgh	30	30	100	Clyde Isles	14	14
81	Berwick	16	18	101	Kintyre	17	17
82	East Lothian	54	58	102	South Ebudes	59	61
83	Midlothian	122	125	103	Mid Ebudes	6	6
84	West Lothian	21	21	104	North Ebudes	38	50
85	Fife/Kinross	36	37	105	West Ross	49	51
86	Stirling	30	30	106	East Ross	8	17
87	West Perth	20	22	107	East Sutherland	5	6
88	Mid Perth	78	78	108	West Sutherland	51	53
89	East Perth	46	60	109	Caithness	58	58
90	Angus	82	286	110	Outer Hebrides	35	44
91	Kincardine	15	17	111	Orkney Islands	7	8
				112	Shetland Islands	9	18

Jim Stewart, Area Organiser for East Central Scotland, has been following up some of the more interesting of his recent records. He reports having found Heliophanus dampfi again at Flanders Moss (NS637973), but this time with ♂♂ as well as ♀♀. Dictyna major ♂♂ have now been recorded at Barry Links in Angus, as well as Maro minutus in the same locality.

Jim also writes: "The Outing to the SWT Reserve at Stormont Loch (NO 197423) on May 31st started in good style with Isobel (Baldwin) catching a new species for Scotland as she swung her sweep net about the roadside verge whilst waiting for others to turn up. It was Dictyna uncinata, confirmed as new for Scotland by Peter Merrett. In the reserve proper the most interesting find was Gibbaranea gibbosa, not often taken in northern areas according to Peter's maps. In all we added four county records to the Perthshire list.

Jim's batch of completed RA65s arrived just too late to be included in the above list.