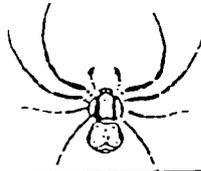


British Arachnological Society



NEWSLETTER No. 17

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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

The S.R.S. Newsletter No. 16 was distributed to Recorders in December last year, and there has been a long period until the appearance of no. 17 this summer. I apologise for this gap, but it has been caused by the Editor's ill health throughout this period. The time has come for the job to be handed on, and I am delighted that David Nellist has agreed to take over: he will be getting in touch with all S.R.S. Recorders individually in due course. His address, should you need to establish contact before he write to you, is:

David R Nellist
198A Park Street Lane
Park Street
ST. ALBANS
Herts. AL2 2AQ

In the meantime, I have received a number of items for publication in the S.R.S. Newsletter. Although some of them are somewhat out of date, I am including them since they all contain items of interest.

ENOPOLOGNATHA LATIMANA and E. OVATA records

While in Kent, Devon and Cornwall during July and August 1992, I decided to look for Enoplognatha latimana if the opportunity arose (I was on holiday and not allowed to spend more than a casual amount of time looking for spiders!). The result was a number of records either from coastal habitats or disturbed habitats inland. This was similar to the situation that seems to exist in Essex, where the species is widespread inland in waste places and on recently colonised ground in sandpits and quarries. The spider also occurs along the sea walls in the county - these have virtually all been disturbed and raised in recent years, so it is difficult to assess the status of the species in this situation.

In Kent E. latimana was found on open sandy dune at Sandwich and together with E. ovata along pathside herbage further inland at Sandwich and by a roadside at Hersden. E. latimana was also collected from an area of thistles and other tall herbage growing in an open area of an old chalk quarry at Upper Halling.

By August in Devon and Cornwall, all the Enoplognatha were only to be found spun up with eggsacs. At Croyde in North Devon, E. latimana was collected from bramble on a coastal hilltop, while at Tintagel, Porthowan and Portreath both latimana and ovata were collected from bramble growing amongst the maritime heath vegetation that survives along the coast of north Cornwall (The contrast between this uncultivated strip of cliff top and the adjacent arable land is depressing). At Whitesand Bay near Lands End and at Logan Rock, Kennack Sands and Kynance Downs only E. ovata was found although I am fairly sure that E. latimana must occur. Latimana was found again at Lowland Point on the eastern side of the Lizard Peninsula where E. ovata was also beaten from gorse. It was nice to find Araneus angulatus here in a large web by the side of the footpath.

Peter Harvey

WEIHLEA CALCARIFERA

Whilst pitfall-trapping as part of my PhD at Bristol University some years ago, I caught three males of Weihlea calcarifera. I had 15 traps set in each of six woods and that where the Weihlea turned up was probably the least exciting-looking patch of the lot. The woodland was a scruffy scrap in the corner of a field only 0.08 km² in size. It was dominated by Oak with some ash and wych elm and an understorey of brambles: it was situated on a windy ridge north of Almondsbury between the M4 and M5, Avon. The soil was clayey and easily water logged.

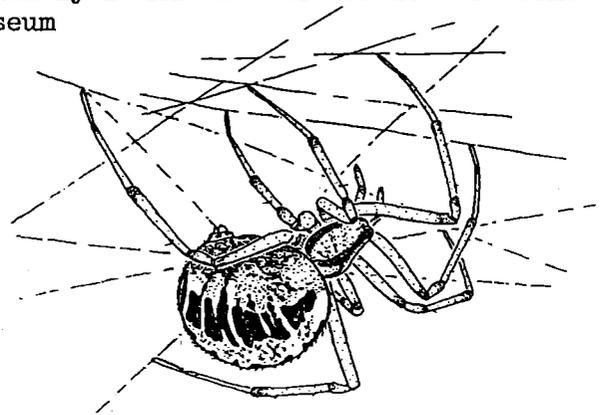
The spiders were caught in three different sampling periods between 14.3.85 and 25.4.85. They were very small (1mm long), rather pale and easily overlooked when sorting: the males could be distinguished from juveniles by their palps.

Locket, Millidge and Merrett (1974) list the species from several localities in the South of England (Dorset, Devon and Hampshire) from sandy soils and often heathland. This is rather different from the habitat where I recorded the species. Roberts (1987) mentions coarse soil, leaf litter and grassland. Locket, Millidge & Merrett indicate that Weihlea is adult in autumn and winter, whereas my specimens were found in very early spring. My traps were set all the year round.

OTHER BRIEF NOTES

Micaria subopaca? David Beaumont asks for help with a spider that has been taken inside the Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum in Glasgow in December 1992. He says that the spider is a female Micaria subopaca that was found walking on a desk-lamp on December 7th. No others have been subsequently found and whether it was alone or part of a larger group in habiting the Museum is not known. This species is described as being of local distribution in southern counties of Britain. David does not know of any records from Scotland. He asks: "Can you offer me any enlightenment as to Scottish records of this species?"

Interestingly, as he was rummaging around in the Museum, he found large numbers of Psilochrus simoni.



Theridion sisypium : drawn by Mike Roberts

Scytodes thoracica in Norfolk: Rex Hancy writes: What more fitting a site for a self-perpetuating colony of Scytodes than the Natural History Department of Norwich Castle Museum! A specimen has been recorded as dropping on the Keeper's desk. The assumption is that live spiders were brought to the Museum by a person unknown. This species has also been recorded in a hardware store in Great Yarmouth where a mature male was discovered in July 1991; a mature female was subsequently found.

Psilochrus simoni has also appeared at Kinloch Castle on the island of Rhum in May 1989. This appears to be a first record for Scotland. Another first for Scotland is Dictyna uncinata, found on Insh Marshes in the Spey Valley, Easternness on 28th June 1991.

Area Organiser for Sussex. Chris Topping has been the AO for Sussex for a number of years, but he has now taken up a post in Scotland at the Scottish Agricultural College in Aberdeen. Any offers for the vacant Sussex position should be sent to David Wellist as soon as possible.

(Spider Recording Scheme No.17: continued)

Nigel Burston writes: One unusual occurrence did happen during the end of last year when I introduced a sub-adult Tegenaria gigantea? into a jar containing two egg-sacs of T. agrestis and the spider was seen to busy herself applying her own silk to them. She also attacked everything that I introduced into the jar including the nib of a pen, some scissors and my own finger. Is this normal for a spider to adopt such behaviour?

Paul James Yoward writes: I am a graduate student at York University under the supervision of Geoff Oxford, and am studying the mating behaviour of several species of spider, including Pholcus phalangioides. This species rarely occurs in Yorkshire and I would like to receive specimens from the south of the country. Either let me know of places with good populations of accessible spiders so I can collect them; or let me have specimens and I will cover postage and containers. Any help you could provide would be very gratefully accepted.

Geoff Oxford is spending the second half of the year in Hawaii where he is working on the genetics of the Hawaiian Happyface Spider. He writes that it is found in a native wet forest on the island of O'ahu, and that the name derives from the "happyface" pattern that is present on the abdomen. The spider is classified as Theridion grallator and there are similarities with the colour patterns that Geoff is already studying in Enoplognatha ovata. Geoff concludes his letter by saying that "it is a wonderful place: 98% of the invertebrates are endemic! A biologist's paradise." We look forward to hearing more from Geoff on his return.

Alex la Touche was an arachnologist of an earlier generation and some of his field notebooks found their way into the hands of Peter Merrett who made extensive use of their contents in some of his publications. His medical work took him to various parts of the country, and the notebooks that Peter Merrett lent me cover la Touche's time in Portsmouth during the 1940s and in Leeds in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Each record includes the date, the name of the species that can be converted into current usage where necessary, and the name of the site. The latter does not provide grid reference, but names of woods and similar habitats allows us to pinpoint the site fairly accurately. As a result, most of la Touche's records have been incorporated in the S.R.S. data. Additionally, he seems to have been adept at finding the less common species: he certainly visited many areas well-known to present-day arachnologists. For example, he records visiting Beaulieu Road (New Forest) in 1944 when he noted 110 species including:

Nigma walckenaeri, *Diplodrossus dalmatensis*, *Zelotes serotinus*, *Mcrommata virescens*, *Thomisus onustus*, *Xysticus robustus*, *Oxyptila scabricula*, *Philodromus emarginatus*, *Philodromus rufus*, *Euophrys petrensis*, *Sitticus caricis*, *Dolomedes fimbriatus*, *Ero tuberculata*, *Steatoda albomaculata*, *Theridion instabile*, *Tetragnatha nigrita*, *Zilla diodia*, *Hypsosinga sanguinea*, *Theridiosoma gemmosum*, *Walckenaeria nodosa*, *Trichoncus saxicola*, *Tapinocyba mitis*, *Satilatlas britteni*, *Gongylidiellum murcidum*, *Micrargus laudatus*, *Glyphesis cottonae* & *Altella lucida*.