

# British Arachnological Society



## SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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### 1. EDITORIAL

1.1. Distribution of the S.R.S. Newsletter. This is the twenty-first issue of the S.R.S. Newsletter to have been produced since the beginning of the S.R.S. in 1987, and with it the distribution arrangements are being changed. Numbers 1 to 20 were distributed only to Recorders and Area Organisers registered with the S.R.S., plus a number of other individuals and organisations nominated by the Biological Records Centre. However, at a meeting of the Council of the British Arachnological Society held in Worcester in October 1994, it was agreed that from the beginning of 1995 the Newsletter would also be sent to all members of the B.A.S. resident in the U.K., whether or not they were registered S.R.S. Recorders. So, with this issue, number 21, a copy of the S.R.S. Newsletter will be included with each mailing of the B.A.S. Bulletin and Newsletter, distributed in March, July and November. At the same time, those few members of the S.R.S. who are not members of the B.A.S. will also receive their copy of the S.R.S. Newsletter, but these will be distributed by the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood. The purpose of this change is to make B.A.S. members more aware of the activities of the S.R.S., to stimulate greater interest in *recording the distribution of British spiders, and thus to generate more records as we approach the publication of the provisional distribution maps.* I am always happy to send detailed information about the scheme and its procedures to anyone who wishes to actively participate.

1.2. Mid-Wales Survey. S.R.S. members will have read the report by Paul Lee, in Newsletter No. 20, of the successful Orford Ness survey held in June last year and I am proposing to organise a similar activity this year but visiting sites in the under-recorded area of mid-Wales. Adrian Fowles, the Invertebrate Ecologist for the Countryside Council for Wales, has agreed to advise on the identification of sites which need attention lying within reasonable distance of a base in the Newbridge-on-Wye area. The proposal is that we survey a different site each day, beginning on Saturday 17th. June and continuing through the week. Of course it may be that more than a single day will be needed at some sites and there will be flexibility here. As last year I do not propose to take responsibility for arranging accommodation but I will provide a list of B&B's, small hotels etc. to anyone interested in joining the team. In this way individuals can make their own arrangements depending on their availability and the capacity of their wallets. It is anticipated that some members will participate for the whole week, others only on some days during the week, or only for the first weekend. In any event I would be pleased to hear, as soon as possible, from anyone interested in joining the team.

### 1.3. News of Members.

#### a). We welcome the following new Area Organisers:

Mr. Wayne Rixom, 44 Edward Avenue, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 8AX. For Herefordshire, V.C. 36.

Mr. Don Roscoe, Bwlchy Fron, Gaerwan, Anglesey, Gwynedd, LL60 6DT. For

Caernarvonshire, V.C. 49.

b). Change of Address:

Mrs. Valerie Goring, 24 Park Road, Stratford upon Avon, Warwks., CV37 OAT.

2. SUBMISSION OF COMPUTER RECORDS. - Stan Dobson.

Moor Edge, Birch Vale, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 5BX.

The Biological Records Centre has indicated that it will only be able to accept computer-generated records routed through one person to ensure reliability and consistency. As announced in Newsletter No.19 I have been asked to assume this responsibility and I have been giving some thought to problems which may arise when the time for data-input arrives. One of the obvious concerns is the multiplicity of systems, both hardware and software, which are being used to store data. With PC's and most database programs, there should be little problem; with other systems a scheme will have to be devised for converting the data to the required format. I would be grateful if any Recorders who are anticipating submitting their records on magnetic media would let me know details of their systems so that, if necessary, we can work out the best way of proceeding. Information already sent in to David Nellist has now been passed on to me.

The program SPIREC was described in Newsletter No. 19. Although a great step forward in fast data entry it had a few limitations. An updated version, SPIREC65, is now available which caters for all the fields on the RA65 record card and allows simple entry of such data as Structured Habitat and Collecting Technique.

3. PUTTING THE ISLE OF MAN ON THE MAP. - James Wright.

32 Wythburn Crescent, Carr Mill, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA11 7HD.

The checklist of Manx spiders stood at just 117 species in 1988 ("*Manx Spiders*", J. Dalingwater, B.A.S. Newsletter No. 53, p2, 1988). A decision was made to try to raise this number to 200 by 1998, in time for publication of the provisional distribution maps, and I set about trying to find ways of getting across to the island to carry out surveys.

After finding various references to recent surveys on Mann ("*Invertebrate Conservation in the Isle of Man*", D. Boyce and A. Fowles, NCC, 1989; "*Pitfall Trapping on the Calf of Man*", R. Loxton and D. Walker, Calf of Man Bird Observatory Annual Report, 1989; "*An Entomological Survey of the Langness Peninsula, Isle of Man*", M. Luff, Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, IV(4), 1990) I carried out an initial survey of several sites in 1990. Combined with the new county records contained in the above reports and the 8 I managed to add myself, the list stood at 157 species by year-end. At that time John Dalingwater and myself worked on publishing a provisional list ("*A Provisional List of the Spiders of the Isle of Man*", J. Dalingwater and J. Wright, Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, X(1), p141-144, 1992). Two more surveys were carried out by myself in 1991, adding another 22 species to the list, and I became the successor to John Dalingwater as Area Organiser for Mann that year. Another survey in 1992 ("*A Pitfall Survey of the Ayres, 1992*", M. Luff, unpublished report from the Dept. of Agricultural and Environmental Science, Newcastle University, 1993) made another 5 additions. I visited the island again in 1993, by which time I had a small number of people sending me specimens from Mann, and a further 11 species joined the list (2 off residents). Excited at the prospect of reaching the arbitrary target of 200 species, 1994 saw more species added (2 off residents), and as I write the list now stands at 199; the 200th species still eludes me! Plans are afoot for another survey in 1995. Nonetheless, 82 species have been added since 1988, almost two thirds of the initial total. Some 59 sites have been surveyed personally, some several times, and the

list continues to grow. Not bad for an island just 32 X 12 miles in size.

The work could not have been carried out without financial assistance. Pilkington Glass and the Entomological Club assisted my first two year's surveys, while Manx Airlines Project 2000 has given me full financial assistance for the last three years. I have also been given travel assistance from the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (in 1991) and Mylchreests Car Hire (each year). Several people have provided me with accommodation during visits, including the Centre for Manx Studies (in 1994), and each visit has been given full media coverage by Manx Newspapers and Manx Radio, leading to more people sending me specimens from the island. I have been given much encouragement and support from many Manx folk. To all the above, for the good of the spider and other recording schemes, I am grateful to you for putting the Isle of Man on the map.

#### 4. A HOLE NEW WORLD ? - Jon Daws.

3 Watermill Cottages, Mill Road, Kettleburgh, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 7JS.

Over the winter of 1994/1995 I visited many churchyards in East Suffolk. The main aim of these visits was to record woodlice and harvestmen, but spiders also got closely acquainted with my pooter ! On these trips I started lifting drain and man-hole covers. An important practice is to work out the prevailing wind direction before lifting the cover and to stand downwind to avoid the worst of the smells. A strong stomach is also useful as the view beneath often leaves much to be desired ! In less than half the churchyards visited could the man-hole covers be lifted, and some churchyards lacked man-holes and a sewer system altogether. Once the cover has been lifted the underside is examined first; then the rest of the hole is investigated.

Some common species are often present, such as Amaurobius ferox and Tegenaria duellica. Occasionally more interesting species are found which have included Lessertia denticelis, Nesticus cellulanus and Meta bourneti. All three are new vice-county records for East Suffolk (V.C. 25). There is an old, pre-1950's record of M. bourneti from Gedding in West Suffolk (V.C. 26), but this species has only been found at about a dozen other sites in Britain. M. bourneti was found in two covered man-holes in Pettistree churchyard (TM2954) on the 4th. February, 1995, when 4 females and a medium sized juvenile were recorded. A second record of this species came from a larger sewer in Earl Soham churchyard (TM 236632), when 3 females, a sub-adult male and a juvenile were seen on the 21st. February. Another new species for East Suffolk, Cicurina cicur, was collected from Elmsett churchyard (TM 0547) on the 20th. January 1995, from the underside of a small drain cover. Apart from M. bourneti none of these spiders is considered to be rare, but M. bourneti is classified as Nationally Notable although probably under-recorded, but the habitat they live in is seldom investigated. So, the next time you are out collecting, stick your head down the nearest sewer !

#### 5. TRICHONCUS SAXICOLA, NEW TO SCOTLAND. - Michael Hogg.

University Marine Biological Station, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae, KA28 OEG.

Peter Merrett has kindly confirmed the identity of a single spider, taken from the island of Ailsa Craig on the 3rd. June 1976, as a mature female of Trichoncus saxicola. Ailsa Craig is situated at the southernmost point of the Clyde estuary (V.C. 100). As far as I am aware this is the first record of this species from Scotland despite the age of the record. There is a single record from the west of Ireland, but otherwise all other specimens are from the south of England. Betty Crowson who took the Scottish specimen says that she obtained it from the lower slopes of Ailsa Craig although precise details are lacking. It would be interesting to know if this record is a chance occurrence or whether the species occurs in the intervening

area. I am grateful to Betty Crowson for allowing me to write this note and to Geoff Hancock of Glasgow Kelvingrove Museum for allowing me to see the specimen.

## 6. OTHER INTERESTING RECORDS. - David Nellist.

In addition to the new localities for Meta bourneti in West Suffolk, described by Jon Daws above, Mr. L. Howe sent me a female discovered in a disused ice-house in the grounds of Shuttleworth College, Old Warden Park, near Biggleswade in Bedfordshire. This was collected on the 14th. August 1994 from the domed ceiling of the ice-house, presumably a dark, cool and moist environment, and is a new county record for V.C. 30.

Jon Daws also tells me that he has found a male Pityohyphantes phrygianus in the east of Leicestershire (V.C. 55) and this must surely be the most southerly record to date for this species. He also took a female Lepthyphantes insignis in the grounds of Ickworth House (West Suffolk, V.C. 26) in February of this year, a species which is, at least in my experience, very uncommon indeed.

Peter Smithers wrote to tell me that he had taken Episinus maculipes on a limestone bluff at the rear of an abandoned quarry at Latedown, Plymouth in May, 1993, confirmation of the presence of the species in that area because suspected juveniles had been found during a survey in 1989. This is, of course, a very rare species and is listed in the Red Data Book (No. 3, *Invertebrates Other Than Insects*). Most records are from the Isle of Wight, but there is one from Devon and one (probably erroneous) from Essex.

Ed. Milner, who is the AO for Middlesex (V.C. 21) and also the Recorder for Spiders for the London Natural History Society, continues to be very active in his area. A couple of years ago he recorded Coleosoma blandum from Queens's Wood in Highgate in north London, a quite remarkable find because this tiny spider (about 2mm in length) has previously only been recorded in the tropics from such places as Malaysia and the Seychelles. More recently he has re-discovered Atypus affinis on Hampstead Heath where it had not been seen for many decades. This discovery was made during a survey for the Corporation of London which has now indicated that the conservation of the spider and its habitat will be a matter of priority.

Another recent and remarkable find has been made by Chris Felton of the Liverpool Museum during a survey of Wynbunbury Moss National Nature Reserve in Cheshire (V.C. 58). Indeed, the discovery of Gnaphosa nigerrima, a species new to Britain, even generated a large spread in THE GUARDIAN newspaper for the 20th. January this year. Wynbunbury Moss has received a good deal of attention over the years (it is in fact the site for another rare spider, Carorita limnaea) and so it is very surprising that G. nigerrima has escaped attention in the past. Has it been confused with G. lugubris? Well, it is a possibility, and so it might be worth looking again at Gnaphosa specimens in your collection, although Chris tells me that many people have already done this but without success. Incidentally the epigyne and palp of G. nigerimma are figured in the book by Ute Grimm (*Die Gnaphosidae Mitteleuropas*, Hamburg, 1985).

**Editor's Note.** Many thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. The next Newsletter will be distributed in July and I would welcome contributions for that. Do please send notes, articles etc., related to the distribution and recording of spiders and the activities of the S.R.S., which would be of interest to other members. Thank you.

David R. Nellist.  
National Organiser