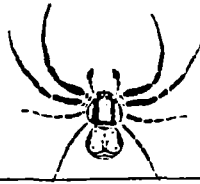


British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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FRANCES MURPHY.

Members of the Spider Recording Scheme will be saddened by the death of Frances Murphy on the 20th. July. She had been the Area Organiser for Surrey for a number of years following the start of the S.R.S. in 1987, but of course she was an arachnologist with an international reputation expert, particularly, in rearing immature spiders through to maturity and then producing wonderful photographs of them. She had a formidable mind and, as I know to my cost, one had to be very sure indeed of one's facts before engaging in debate with her about any topic, arachnological or otherwise. But she always enthusiastically encouraged younger arachnologists and it was Frances who invited me to my first field day (at Box Hill back in 1967) when I met some of the leading figures of the day. Many of us have reason to be grateful for her encouragement and she will be greatly missed. In all of these activities she was herself encouraged and supported by her husband John who shared her dedication to arachnology and to whom we send our sympathy. A more detailed account of her achievements, by George O'Neill, has appeared, most appropriately, in the Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society of which she was a founder member.

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Recording cards.

At the end of 1994 the number of RA65 cards received since the beginning of the S.R.S. in 1987 was almost 16,000, with very much smaller numbers of GEN7's (the single species card) and GEN14's (the rare species card). The rate at which RA65's have been sent in during most of this time has been remarkably consistent at just under 2000 per year. I was therefore disappointed to note that the number received in 1994 dropped to just under 1500 and, based on the results so far, I expect the number for 1995 to be even lower at perhaps 1200. I hope that this simply indicates that most Recorders have now completed transferring all their early records to cards and that more Recorders are storing records on computer media. Whatever the reasons, it was confirmed, during a recent meeting at the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, that we are still on track to publish provisional distribution maps in 1997, and so it is now very important that our recording activity does not falter and that all records are sent in, or are available on disk, so that data transfer can begin when B.R.C. is ready. I would very much like to hear now from those Area Organisers and Recorders who have not been in touch with me for some time so that I can form a better picture of the situation in their vice-counties. Whilst on the subject of cards can I, firstly, make a plea that ALL sections of the card are completed before they are sent in. So often I have to go to my local library to find information which is missing such as the map reference or altitude and, of course, there is no way I can add the details of a site of which I have no knowledge, or indicate the collecting method. Secondly, for those rare species whose names do not appear on the RA65, please complete a GEN14 (rare species card) so that the detailed information for these species will get into the database.

1.2. Contributions to the Newsletter.

My thanks to those Recorders whose contributions appear in this issue, and my apologies to those

whose contributions have been held over because of the lack of space. Please do send me more contributions for issue No. 24 due out in March. Thank you.

1.2. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Recorder:

Mr. Tom Faulds, 2 Sunnyside, Worksop, Notts., SA81 7LN.

b). The following Recorders have new addresses:

Mr. Matthew Shardlow, Old Catton Hall, St. Faith's Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR6 7DP.

Mr. Jon Daw, 19 The Portway, Leicester, Leics., LE5 OPT.

Mr. Michael Hogg, 6A Yeovil Court, Ribbleson, Preston, Lancs., PR1 5YH.

2. SALTICUS ZEBRANEUS (C. L. KOCH) IN WORCESTERSHIRE - Keith Alexander.

14, Partridge Way, Cirencester, Glos., GL7 1BQ.

The rare jumping spider Salticus zebraneus is generally believed to be a specialist of the trunks of large pines growing in open situations e.g. on Beaulieu Heath in the New Forest (Hants) and Wimbledon Common (Surrey). Peter Merrett (1990, "A Review of the Nationally Notable Spiders in Great Britain", NCC, Peterborough) mentions that only seven localities were known at that time, the others being in Sussex and Kent. Essex and Berkshire have been added more recently (Merrett, *pers. comm.*) and I can now add Worcestershire, which represents a substantial extension to its known range.

A single female was taken in a webby cavity beneath loose bark on an old parkland oak at Croome Court (SO 891438), between Worcester and Tewkesbury, on the 13th. June 1995. The parkland has here converted to arable and the tree concerned had substantial dieback, doubtless due to root damage from ploughing. The site still has many old oaks - although losses due to arable cultivation are apparent. I don't recall any large pines but there are large cedars closer to the mansion.

It is difficult to assess whether this record represents a recent colonisation. The recent flurry of new sites may suggest this. However, Croome Park is a historic parkland and supports a relatively rich variety of old tree invertebrates which are regarded as relict old forest species. This would fit with the species occurring in the New Forest and Richmond Park, for example.

3. COMMUNAL OVERWINTERING IN SPIDERS: SOME CONJECTURE AND OBSERVATIONS. - James Wright.

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

Jon Daws asked (Newsletter No. 22) if other species overwinter communally after he had found several Larinioides cornutus in a "tight group" under bark last March. It is something that I was forced to consider, a number of years ago, after finding "tight groups" of Amaurobius similis under loose paving stones in my back garden during winter. I well remember being quite surprised, initially, on turning over the paving stones and seeing all stages of this species (immatures and adult females of various sizes) in very close proximity to each other. There were at least ten spiders within a space of 100 sq. cms., seemingly oblivious of each other, and in a state of torpor. Touching them, with a grass stem, caused no movement and they were, apparently, quite "well out of it". The adjoining stones did not have a single specimen under them, though there were plenty of active Lepthyphantes nebulosus, and I concluded that they were overwintering "en masse" in what must have been a very stable micro-habitat. The stones were in constant shade from any winter sun, did not get frost under them on frosty nights, remained dry, and were undisturbed (until my incursion). There they remained for nearly three months (December to February). The A. similis in my garden shed, built of brick and concrete, remained responsive to stimulus (though much less active), during the same period.

A. similis can be quite an aggressive species when dealing with intruders and prey on its web, and so it was somewhat unusual to find such a group with the spiders in close proximity to each other seemingly with their predatory instincts "tuned down" to this extent. My thought at the time turned to reasoning that these spiders had nothing to gain in fighting each other, risking injury and possible death, when the gains were less than the cooperation of sharing space over the winter, using very little energy, and surviving through to dispersing in spring.

4. AGGREGATION OF HALORATES REPROBUS (O. P.-CAMBRIDGE)

- Michael Hogg.

6A, Yeovil Court, Ribbleson, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 5YH.

In the last issue of the S.R.S. Newsletter (No. 22) Jon Daws commented on an aggregation of Larinioides cornutus beneath bark and included a request for reports of other observations of spiders overwintering in clusters. During the last three years I have been studying the spider Halorates reprobus on rocky shores on the west coast of Scotland. I have several times found numbers (up to a dozen adults, male and female) of spiders in very close proximity (some legs touching) in rock crevices during the winter, particularly after severe storms. I suspect that the spiders do not overwinter in such a state permanently but aggregate in the limited sheltered sites available to them during periods of bad weather, and probably disperse again afterwards. H. reprobus is active throughout the winter, although it seems that only very adult males survive the winter.

5. SEGESTRIA BAVARICA C. L. KOCH NEW TO ANGLESEY, NORTH WALES

- Carl Davies.

153, Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9JU.

On the 23rd. August 1955, during an all too brief collecting trip to Puffin Island off the island of Anglesey, North Wales (SH 655824, V.C. 52), I identified an adult female Segestria bavarica, after removing it from its tube in the eroding mortar between brickwork on the derelict Telegraph station at the north end of the island.

As far as I am aware S. bavarica is only known from a number of coastal localities in the south and south-west of England. This appears to be the first record of this uncommon spider on Anglesey, and is probably the most northerly specimen identified to date. The specimen is deposited in my personal collection.

6. STAFFORDSHIRE SPIDERS: UPDATE FOR 1994 - Wayne Rixom.

44, Edward Avenue, Aldridge, Walsall, WEst Midlands, WS9 8AX.

Following my earlier article (Newsletter No. 20), 9 further species have been added to the county list which is already quite considerable. Careful selection of pitfall-trap localities has again proved invaluable with a couple of scarce spiders being recorded. Phrurolithus minimus is hardly a species one would expect to find this far north, indeed the pitfall trap was set in a south-facing hillside at Halldale in the Peak District (SK 1353). Both male and female turned up, in quite a poor state of preservation, but Peter Merrett confirmed the identifications to ease my fears! Boulders and stones covered the locality which previously had returned immatures of what could have been the same species. Oddly, a male Ballus chalybeius, itself a rare find in this part of the Britain, also turned up in a pitfall trap at the same site! Donacochara speciosa was recorded at Aqualate Mere NNR (SJ 779204) again taken in a pitfall trap. The locality was a very fen-like area of marshland adjacent to a substantial reedbed. Trapping in this area of the Aqualate Mere has proven to be very difficult because of the varying levels of the water-table which led to the failure of many traps, but enough data was extracted to produce a list of species which also included Hypomma fulvum.

Among other good records during 1994 were Alopecosacuneata, Hahnia pusilla, Micrargus laudatus and Trematocephalus cristatus. This last species had been taken two years earlier, beaten from bushes at Kinver (SO 8080), and this second specimen was found by searching amongst the roots of grass about 750m from the earlier locality, suggesting an established population. As with Phrurolithus minimus there is always the possibility of accidental introduction but other species likewise have very discontinuous distributions in Britain.

7. HEREFORDSHIRE: A REPORT ON PRELIMINARY RECORDING IN 1994/1995

- Wayne Rixom.

44, Edward Avenue, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 8AX.

I took over as the Area Organiser for Herefordshire (VC 36) in March of this year and set about updating the county list. As recently as 1992 the total number of species recorded was still well under 150, over 90 of those were originally listed in the Victoria County History for Herefordshire and date from before 1908 ! I actually started visiting the county last year, and with a combination of grim determination and careful site selection, together with help from a few other people, including Mike Taylor, the checklist has been completely transformed and currently stands at 240. Sufficient information is available now to begin compiling a "Provisional Checklist" although big gaps still exist, particularly in relation to old records and for those species found between 1939 and 1974.

Far too many interesting species have turned up over the last couple of years to give any detailed rundown here, but Nationally Notable species recorded (mostly from pitfall traps again) included Trachyzelotes pedestris, Drassyllus praeficus, Liocranum rupicola, and Zora nemoralis. Zygiella stroemi turned up at Moccas Park (recorded by Mike Taylor). Zilla diodia and Tetragnatha pinicola were found in heather and grass respectively.

Despite such excellent results a fair number of the more common species remain unrecorded and it is amazing how difficult it is to find these when they are missing. If anyone has information or records for the county, then a list would be very much appreciated. This applies to both recent records and pre-1987 recording where the absence of a recording scheme may possibly have led to species being missed from the B.A.S. updates or other literature.

8. LYME DISEASE - David Nellist.

Whilst organising the Mid-Wales Survey earlier this year I was struck by the number of Reserve Managers who advised me to take precautions against the sheep tick, Ixodes ricinus, because it is now well established that the tick is the carrier of Lyme disease. It is not my intention to give here a detailed description of the symptoms of this disease but, briefly, it can lead to problems with joints (even years after being bitten by the tick), to a lack of energy and weakening of the limbs. No one need be discouraged from undertaking field work but for those intending to work in tick-infested areas (Scottish Highlands and Uplands, The Pennines, Lake District, New Forest and Welsh Uplands) some simple precautions are advised. Always wear long trousers tucked into socks or wellingtons and long-sleeved shirts buttoned to the wrist; brush off clothing before going indoors; undress and check for any ticks; remove them by grasping with forceps and twisting anti-clockwise; wash hands and apply antiseptic to the site of the bite. More information on the disease in Britain can be found in an article by John M. Cameron which appeared in *British Wildlife* in 1993 (Vol. 4, No. 5, 280-282).

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