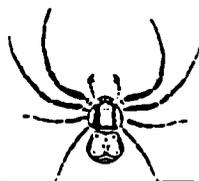


British Arachnological Society



David R. Nellist
198A, Park Street Lane,
Park Street,
St. Albans,
Herts, AL2 2AQ.

SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 24.
March, 1996.

Tel: 01727.872981.

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Recording cards.

My comments in the last Newsletter about the somewhat disappointing rate at which record cards had been sent in during 1995 clearly stirred many Recorders into activity ! As a result I am pleased to report that during the last month or so of the year a large number of cards landed on my desk, mainly RA65s with smaller numbers of GEN14s and GEN7s. Thus my prediction that the 1995 year-end total for RA65s would be under 1200 proved to be incorrect and, in fact, the figure was 1721, compared to 1467 for 1994 and 2201 for 1993. Since the beginning of the scheme in 1987 we have therefore accumulated nearly 17,500 RA65 cards, most of these now safely in store at the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood.

On the other side of the coin I have to report that we still have very patchy coverage of the country. Although there are two vice-counties for which we have over 1000 RA65s, and for many others we have hundreds of cards, there are 13 vice-counties from which we have received less than 25 cards in total since 1987, and a further 28 which have submitted between 25 and 49. To be fair, I know that in a number of these V-Cs records are being stored on computer instead of on cards but, sadly, the fact remains that our knowledge of the spider fauna of many vice-counties has changed but little since the recording scheme began over 8 years ago. I therefore repeat my plea that recording should not falter as we approach our goal of publishing the provisional maps in 1997. I ask, especially, that Recorders and Area Organisers who have not submitted very many records in the past do ensure that any records they have stored away are retrieved and submitted and, even better, that during this year they get out into the field and fill in some of the gaps.

1.2. S.R.S. Surveys - 1996.

Unfortunately, due to family commitments during the early part of this year, I am unable to organise week-long or weekend surveys in June as I did in 1995 and 1994. However I do hope to arrange one or more weekend surveys later in the year. One possibility, for example, is a return visit to Orford Ness for which we have a standing invitation from the National Trust. Because the next issue of the Newsletter will not be out until mid-July anyone wishing to be kept informed of any surveys that are arranged should drop me a line. Thank you.

1.3. Contributions to the Newsletter.

When typing-up Michael Hogg's note in Newsletter No. 23 on the aggregation of Halorates reprobus I missed a word out of the penultimate line ! This should have read "...although it seems that only very few adult males survive the winter". My apologies to Michael for this error which rather altered the sense of his sentence.

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. 25 due out in July. Thank you.

1.4. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Area Organisers :

Miss Deborah Procter, 17 Burton Court, Burton Street, Peterborough, PE1 5AF has become AO for Cambridgeshire (VC 29), in addition to her current role as AO for Norfolk (VCs 27 and 28).

Mr. Evan Jones, 6 Mortain Road, Westham, Pevensey, East Sussex, BN24 5HL has become AO for Sussex (VCs 13 and 14).

Mr. John Murphy, 323 Hanworth Road, Hampton, Middx., TW12 3EJ, has agreed to become the AO for Surrey (VC 17).

Mr. Edward Milner, 80 Weston Park, London, N8 9TB, has taken over from David Horsfield as AO for Orkneys and Shetlands (VCs 111 and 112), and will continue as AO for Middx. (VC 21).

b). We welcome the following new Recorder :

Mr. David Bell, 48 Doddington Road, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 2JH.

c). The following Recorders have new addresses :

Miss Deborah Procter, 17 Burton Court, Burton Street, Peterborough, PE1 5AF.

Dr. A. Feest, Dept. of Continuing Education, University of Bristol, 8-10 Berkeley Sq., Bristol, Avon, BS8 1HH.

2. ON TWO EARLY RECORDS OF SPIDERS NOT INCLUDED ON THE BRITISH LIST AND OTHER RECORDS.

- J.R. Parker.

Stone Raise, 42 Lakeland Park, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 4AT.

Recently in one of my books, I found a memo dated 1974 from the late David Mackie concerning two spider specimens in the H.W. Freston collection at Manchester University Museum. The first records a female of Cheiracanthium mildei L. Koch (1864) taken from below gorse at Conway, Caernarvonshire, on 15th. September 1901, which was originally mis-identified by O. Pickard-Cambridge as C. punctorum Vill. until it was later examined by both A. Randell Jackson and E. Simon. The second record is for a male Frontinellina (Linyphia) frutetorum (C .L. Koch 1834) taken at Farmingwoods, Brigstock, Northampton on 21st. May, 1902. Its identity was also confirmed by both Jackson and Simon. The identifications were checked by David Mackie and found to be correct.

They are, I think, quite rightly not included on the British list because no other specimens of these have since been taken here. I do not know anything about the former. Platnick (*Advances in Spider Taxonomy*, 1881-1987, p. 439, Manchester University Press, 1989) lists it with a Holarctic distribution. The latter is an early maturing species in habitats similar to those associated with Linyphia triangularis on English autumn days. The appearance, habitat, and distribution of Frontinellina frutetorum are all well described by van Helsdingen in his masterly monograph (*A Re-Classification of the Species of Linyphia based on the Functioning of the Genitalia (Araneida, Linyphiidae) II*, Zoologische Verhandelingen, Leiden, 1970) which reclassified the species of Linyphia. The species is widespread all over Europe as far north as Belgium and Finland, but apart from this one instance never from the British Isles. I found it to be common on low shrubs in the South of France, on roadsides between Digne and Sisteron (Basses-Alpes) in 1964 during the same month as the English record.

In S.R.S. Newsletter No. 22 (Note 2), Chris Felton refers to Agelena labyrinthica (Clerck) which is common all over England as far north as Lancashire. It has been recorded from Cumbria but I have never seen it here. Harry Britten (*The Arachnids of Cumberland*, Trans. Carlisle Nat. Hist. Soc., Vol. II, Carlisle, 1912) lists it as being "very common" from four sites in Cumberland including one notified to him by A. Randell Jackson. In the same Newsletter Chris Felton records the rare spider Urozelotes rusticus (L. Koch) from Kirkby, Merseyside, and includes some other records for this synanthropic species which I have found only once; a female, very late at night, in the boilerhouse of the White Swan Hotel at Stratford-upon-Avon on 24th. June, 1963.

Incidentally Peter van Helsdingen's monograph referred to above is a superb example of scientific literature. It was published in two parts and runs to almost 400 pages illustrated by about the same number of beautifully drawn text figures. Written in clear English prose it is a joy to read because it is without all the scientific jargon used by so many other authors.

3. EPISINUS TRUNCATUS LATREILLE (THERIDIIDAE) IN WALES.

- Keith Alexander¹ and Adrian Fowles².

¹ The National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Glos., GL7 1QW.

² Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Penrhos, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2LQ.

Peter Merrett (*A Review of the Nationally Notable Spiders of Great Britain*, N.C.C., 1990) describes Episinus truncatus as almost exclusive to the heathlands of southern England. Occasional records from coastal grassland are mentioned but no details are given. Both of us have found the species in Wales recently and on both occasions it was found in coastal limestone grassland.

AF collected and identified two females (and others were seen) by beating clumps of rock-rose over a tray on the south-west facing limestone grassland slopes of Great Orme, Caernarvonshire (SH 758833) on 6th. July, 1994. The identity of these specimens was confirmed by Peter Merrett. KA collected a single female, identified by Peter Merrett, beneath mats of rock-rose on an old lime kiln above Tor Beach, Gower, West Glamorgan (SS 298879) on 20th. July 1994.

In the above review Peter Merrett comments that it spins a simple web low down under overhanging branches of heather. Overhanging rock-rose on limestone rock is essentially a very similar situation - a woody dwarf shrub on a warm, well-drained substrate.

4. LYME DISEASE - Ken Halstead.

"Mistletoe Cottage", Masseys Lane, East Boldre, Brockenhurst, Hants., S042 7WE.

I was interested to read the article by David Nellist in the November Newsletter (No. 23) about the precautions he was advised to take against the sheep tick Ixodes ricinus. I live in the New Forest with which I have been associated for over 30 years and it was not until 3 years ago that I acquired my first tick. In fact to make up for all those years being tick-free, despite my dogs frequently bringing them home, I actually had a hundred or two all over my body and in their earliest stages of development being very difficult to see with the naked eye. It was obvious that a mature and very pregnant female had literally "exploded" at my point of contact. By the time that 40 tiny ticks had been removed, with difficulty despite the assistance of my wife, it was obvious that more desperate measures were required, so I took medical advice in view of the incidence of Lyme disease in the Forest. The advice from my doctor was to apply fly spray to my body which I reluctantly followed, although the second stage of the advice to rub in vaseline is a good practice which is used on the dogs satisfactorily. This procedure seemed to work.

In the New Forest Ixodes ricinus is known as the deer tick, there being very few sheep except in the north of the area. Several Forestry Commission keepers have contracted Lyme disease which in one or two cases has caused serious debilitation for nearly a year. Several of my naturalist friends agree that the incidence of ticks has remained at about the same level during the last thirty years although Lyme disease only appears to have been high-lighted in recent years. I would however endorse the precautions given to David Nellist by Reserve Managers, as I was guilty of wearing shorts when I acquired my army of ticks in an area notorious for their presence. Long grass and bracken appear to be the most prolific situations where these ticks breed.

5. THE MID-WALES SURVEY. - David Nellist.

In Newsletter No. 22 (July, 1995), I gave a brief report on the Mid-Wales Survey mentioning particularly the sites that had been surveyed in Brecon and Radnor. We had concentrated on these

two vice-counties because they were good examples of the under-recorded areas that I have commented upon in my Editorial on page 1 of this Newsletter, but we also visited one site in Cardigan and one in Montgomery. Before the survey very few record cards had been submitted (34 for Brecon and 10 for Radnor) and the total list of species recorded was also low (135 for Brecon and 109 for Radnor). They had clearly suffered from the absence of active, local arachnologists and our inability, dating back to the very beginning of the scheme, to appoint Area Organisers. At the time of that first report I had received few of the species lists from the team members, but now that all the lists are available and correlated it is possible to see the impact of our week's activity. We recorded a total of 159 species, none new to Wales but with substantial additions to the lists for both Brecon (increased by 39 species) and Radnor (increased by 37 species) and 5 species added to the list for Montgomery. However, note that the new totals for these V-Cs still remain significantly below the totals, for example, of the neighbouring (but coastal) vice-counties of Carmarthen (263) and Cardigan (300).

Of the individual species recorded six were in the Nationally Notable "b' category (Clubiona norvegica, Agracina striata, Rugathodes bellicosus, Singa hamata, Satlatlas britteni and Diplocephalus protuberans). Adrian Fowles (Countryside Council for Wales) tells me that Rugathodes bellicosus had not been recorded in Wales for over 80 years and Diplocephalus protuberans for over 20. Although not a Nationally Notable species Porrhomma campbelli had only two previous records for Wales, the last in 1975. At the other end of the scale there are many ubiquitous and common species which we did not record but, of course, many of the sites we looked at are very large (Nant Irfon and Rhos Goch Common for example) and a survey of a few hours by a small number of people can only be regarded as cursory. More work is clearly needed.

6. LINDOW COMMON - A LOWLAND HEATH IN CHESHIRE. - Carl Davies,
153 Chatham Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9JU.

I have for the last two or three years been intensively collecting on Lindow Common., near Wilmslow in Cheshire (SK 834812) and have held a field trip there. This is one of only a few remaining lowland heaths in Cheshire and exists on a layer of peat resting on gravel and glacial sands deposited around 10,000 years ago. It has been designated as a S.S.S.I. and also is a Local Nature Reserve. Although it covers only an area of 43 acres I have to date recorded 113 species of spider from the varied habitats. Within the next year or two I would hope to conclude collecting on the site and would like to compile a short publication on "The Spider Fauna of Lindow Common S.S.S.I. - A Lowland Heath in Cheshire". Although I have started drafting out the overall format and have information about the various sections I want to include, I would welcome any advice regarding the undertaking of a publication, in particular the financing of it, who to approach and also the suitability of either photos or sketches of species identifiable in the field neither of which at present I personally have access to. Advice/information welcome.

[I have suggested to Carl that his local Natural History Society or Wildlife Trust would probably be pleased to publish the results of his work - Ed.].

7. OTHER NEWS.

John Crocker and Jon Daws have announced the publication of their new book "*Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland*" due out in May. This will cover the distribution and habitats of the 326 species of spider recorded within the Watsonian vice-county of Leicestershire based on some 18,000 individual records, mostly the result of work since 1960. More information about the book is included in the latest issue (No. 75) of the B.A.S. Newsletter but those Recorders who are not members of the Society will find a leaflet and details of the pre-publication offer included in with this S.R.S. Newsletter.

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David R. Nellist, National Organiser.
198A, Park Street Lane, Park Street, St. Albans, Herts., AL2 2AQ.