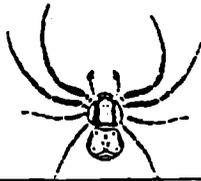


British Arachnological Society



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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 25.
July, 1996.

Tel: 01727.872981.

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Recording cards.

In the last Newsletter I reported that the number of RA65 cards received from Recorders and Area Organisers during the whole of 1995 totalled 1721, just a little below the average of previous years. I am pleased to report that at just about mid-way through 1996 I have already received 1242 RA65's, and smaller numbers of GEN14 and GEN7/13's. Good news, of course, but I have to emphasise that this is the work of just a small number of enthusiastic Recorders and Area Organisers, and I therefore repeat my concern that there are a number of vice-counties up and down the country receiving very little attention. Last year, as reported in Newsletter No. 24, we surveyed sites in Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery, vice-counties for which regrettably we did not have Area Organisers (although I am pleased that John Stanney has since volunteered to take on Montgomery), and we recorded many species in these vice-counties for the first time. Unfortunately we were not able to repeat the exercise this year in Scotland where we urgently need records for such vice-counties as Mid Ebudes, East Sutherland, Dunbarton, Banff and a number of others. The Area Organisers in Scotland are responsible for huge areas and need support, especially now as we move towards the preparation of the dataset for the production of the provisional maps. If you already have records for Scotland tucked away in your files then do please dig them out, fill in record cards and send them in. Many thanks.

1.2. Contributions to the Newsletter.

For previous issues of the Newsletter I have fortunately been in the position of having sufficient contributions in hand to fill four pages with ease, and generally have had to hold over some articles and notes to the next issue. Unfortunately, in recent months I have not received any contributions from Recorders and my back-log of articles and notes has been exhausted. This issue therefore contains more material from my own pen than I would wish! So, I would be very pleased indeed to receive articles and notes, describing your recording activity and its results, in time for the next issue. I would be particularly pleased to hear from those of you who have not submitted notes in the past. Please get writing, but note that I do need to have notes and articles on my desk by the end of October if they are to be included. Many thanks.

1.3. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Area Organiser :

Mr. John Stanney, 35 Glaisher Drive, Meir Park, Blythe Bridge, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs., ST3 7LJ, has become the AO for Montgomery (VC 47).

b). We welcome the following new Recorder :

Mr. Richard Gallon, 23A Roumania Crescent, Craig-Y-Don, Llandudno, Co. Conwy, LL30 1UP.

c). The following Recorders have new addresses :

Mr. J. Beaumont, White Gables, Calcoed, Holywell, Flintshire, CH8 8LE.

Mr. M.B. Davidson, 25 Rutherford Folds, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, AB51 9JH.

Mr. Michael Hogg, 8 Viaduct Court, Cwmyrnscoy Road, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 5SP.

Mr. I. Morgan, 37 Coronation Road, Llanelli, Dyfed, SA15 1PD.
Mr. R. D. Ruffell, 155 Halstead Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5JT.
Dr. D.T. Roscoe, Bwlchy Fron, Llanddaniel, Anglesey, Gwynedd, LL60 6DT.
Dr. P. Selden, Dept. of Earth Sciences, Williamson Building, University of Manchester, Manchester, M13 9PL.

2. NOTES ON TWO NEW SPECIES. - David Nellist.

Lepthyphantes beckeri Wunderlich, 1973.

In their recently-published book "*The Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland*" (available from Kairos Press, Newtown Linford, Leicestershire) John Crocker and Jonathan Daws report the discovery in Britain of Lepthyphantes beckeri. Only two specimens of this species are known to science, and both are females. The first was collected in an old, open-woodland nature reserve near Berlin by Professor K. Becker and described by Wunderlich in 1973 ("*Weitere seltene und bisher unbekannte Arten sowie Anmerkungen zur Taxonomie und Synonymie (Arachnida, Araneae): Spinnenfauna Deutschlands, XV*", Senckenberg. biol., 54, 4/6, 405-428). The second, from Leicestershire, was found by Marcene and John Crocker in leaf litter at the base of a low wall within the ruins of Bradgate House in Bradgate Park in 1970. In both cases further collecting failed to produce any more specimens. The species is believed to be closely related to Lepthyphantes mengei and Lepthyphantes flavipes, and both these species are also found in Bradgate Park. However, interestingly, both specimens were captured carrying an ectoparasitic larva. John Crocker and Jon Daws mention the possibility that rather than being a new species both specimens are showing biochemical/morphological modification caused by the parasite, but the debate on this suggestion is continuing. The Leicestershire specimen is now deposited in the Natural History Museum, London, but a drawing of its epigyne is shown in Fig. 1 and reproduced from the book by kind permission of the authors.

Meioneta mossica Schikora 1993.

I first became aware of this addition to the British list when I read the paper by Schikora in which he first described the species ("*Meioneta mossica sp.n., a new spider close to M. saxatilis (Blackwall) from northern and central Europe [Araneae, Linyphiidae]*", Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc., 1993, 9(5), 157-163) and noted that he had listed Kielder Forest in Northumberland, near the border with Scotland, as the only site where it had been found in Britain (by Peter Merrett). In a subsequent paper ("*Intraspecific variation in taxonomic characters and notes on the distribution and habitats of Meioneta mossica Schikora and Meioneta saxatilis (Blackwall), two closely related species from northern and central Europe [Araneae, Linyphiidae]*", Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc., 1995, 10(2), 65-74) he also listed Creag an Lochan (NW of Loch Tay, Scotland) and Dun Moss, Alyth (11km NW of Blairgowrie, Scotland) as additional sites.

I read the description of the new species with interest. In males Schikora noted that M. mossica has a single, well-defined tooth on the paracymbium whilst M. saxatilis has two; the shape of the lamella characteristica differs slightly between the species, and the chelicerae as viewed from the front are also distinct. He could not find a reliable difference between the external epigynes which would allow a separation of the females, but did find differences in the curvature of the copulatory ducts in cleared specimens. Interestingly, in his second paper he described male specimens from another British site, Kinder Scout in Derbyshire, which appeared to be intermediate in character with a moderately strong second tooth at the base of the ascending branch of the paracymbium and the cuticle at the base of the posterior tooth having a wrinkled or gnarled character. In this second paper he also concluded that there was a difference in the preferred habitats of the two species, M. mossica being found only in bogs and related sites, whilst M. saxatilis was to be found in a great variety of habitats including disturbed sites and meadows, as well as bog.

Having, over the years, collected M. saxatilis on many occasions, and being familiar with the species, it occurred to me that I usually confirmed the identity of males by studying the shape and surface structure of the rugose tibial apophysis. I certainly had not given close attention to the teeth

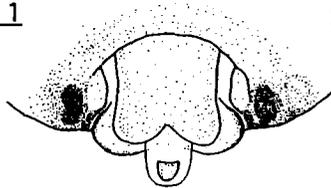
on the paracymbium or the shape of the chelicerae. Although Schikora claimed that there were slight differences in the shape of the tibial apophysis between the species, it seemed to me that these would be very dependent on small differences in the viewing angle and thus easily overlooked. So, the question arose: had I mis-identified specimens of M. mossica over the years and thus had them in my collection but labelled as M. saxatilis ?

To check on this possibility I recently took the opportunity of looking back through my collection. I retrieved 30 males, all labelled as M. saxatilis, the oldest collected in July 1966, and then simply looked at the tibial apophysis and the teeth on the paracymbium. Incidentally I did not attempt a similar exercise with females in order to avoid the lengthy task of clearing the epigyne of each one to reveal the copulatory ducts. In summary, 21 of these males were clearly M. saxatilis with two teeth on the paracymbium (as shown in Fig. 2), whilst 7 had been mis-identified and were clearly M. mossica with only a single, well-defined tooth present (as shown in Fig. 3). Of the two remaining specimens I decided that both were M. mossica although they were slightly different in that one specimen carried an additional very small tooth, just at the base of the rising part of the paracymbium, and present on both palps (see Fig 4.). In his 1995 paper Schikora illustrates a paracymbium with a small tooth just a little higher on the rising section than is shown in Fig. 4. Apparently he found that 5-8% of males carried this extra tooth in extensive samples from southern Sweden. He suggests that the presence or absence of the tooth falls within the range of intraspecific variation of the paracymbium of M. mossica. I could not detect any differences in the shape of the tibial apophysis on any of these specimens.

Looking at the habitats and distribution of these specimens also proved of interest. 6 of the M. mossica specimens came from bogs (Fox Tor Mire, Devon; Rannoch Moor, Perthshire; Malham Tarn Moss, Mid-West Yorkshire; Inchnadamph, West Sutherland). One had been collected grubbing in moorland (Caernarvonshire) and the two remaining specimens, one with the extra tooth, had been found together under a stone in the bed of a dried-up river (Glaisdale, North-East Yorkshire). The 21 specimens assigned to M. saxatilis came from a variety of habitats, mostly grassland sites but also including leaf litter and from moss around trees in woodland. All specimens had been collected from the end of May through to the middle of July except for one M. saxatilis specimen collected in the middle of August.

I do intend to re-examine all these specimens again, carefully, and also attempt to separate females, collected with the males, using Schikora's criteria. Obviously I would be very pleased to hear from any other members who may have carried out a similar exercise.

Fig. 1



Epigyne of
Leptyphantes beckeri

Fig. 2



Paracymbium of
Meioneta saxatilis

Fig. 4



Paracymbium of
M. mossica showing
extra tooth.

Fig. 3



Paracymbium of
Meioneta mossica

3. NOTES ON SOME NEW COUNTY AND OTHER RECORDS. - David Nellist.

Centromerus cavernarum (L. Koch, 1872).

This rare species, which is included in the *British Red Data Book 3, Invertebrates other than Insects*, and not listed on the RA65 recording card, has a very restricted distribution in the south-east and extreme west of England, and to the best of my knowledge very few specimens have been taken in recent years. Certainly there have been no new county additions listed in the updates published by Peter Merrett in the BAS Bulletin. Now John Beaumont has taken a specimen (May

1995) in Buckholt Wood, Nr. Stroud in E. Gloucestershire (V.C. 33), a 25 year old beech coppice, and Tom Thomas has taken a specimen (October, 1995) in Dedmansey Wood near Whipsnade, a mixed woodland just on the Bedfordshire side of the Herts./Beds. boundary (V.C. 30). I have taken this species on only one occasion (September, 1966) from beech litter in Whippendell Wood near Watford in Herts, where it was tucked up in the empty husk of a beech nut, and certainly beech litter seems to be a preferred habitat.

Centromerus capucinus (Simon, 1884).

This is another rare species which does not appear on the RA65 card. Just four sites are shown on the distribution map in Vol. 3 of *British Spiders* and since then it has been found in four more counties, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire. The Herts. records are the result of work by David Powell, formerly of the Ministry of Agriculture's laboratory in Harpenden, who collected large numbers of this species (but only one female), from December through to May, in pit-fall traps set in a field of winter wheat on a farm near Redbourn, and operated from 1988 to 1992. Other rare species were also recorded in his traps including females of Pseudomaro aenigmaticus, the males of which are not known. In a similar exercise on a farm in Cambridgeshire, David and his colleague Heather Maher discovered a species of Centromerus new to science and (with Peter Merrett) subsequently described it as Centromerus minutissimus ("A new species of Centromerus (*Araneae, Linyphiidae*) from arable farmland in eastern England", Merrett, P., Powell, D.F. and Maher, H, Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc., (1993), 9(6), 169-208). Further pit-fall trapping on disturbed arable land might well change our views of the frequency of occurrence and distribution of these species which appear to favour subterranean habitats.

Araniella inconspicua (Simon, 1874).

This species is listed on the RA65 recording card as "uncommon" but in my experience I would class it as "rare" and, indeed, it has Nationally Notable "b" status. However since the publication of the distribution maps in Vol. 3 of *British Spiders* it has been found in ten more counties. Recently Alan Scott sent me a specimen collected (in June 1994) by L. W. Harwick of the Lancs. and Cheshire Entomological Society, and taken from the bog at the Stiperstones in Shropshire. The specimen had already been seen by Chris Felton, and although it is apparently close to the very rare A. alpica, we all three identified it as A. inconspicua. It has been found previously in Shropshire but the habitat of the present specimen is unusual in that the species is usually beaten from trees especially oak and evergreens.

4. WHEN ONE EYE IS SUFFICIENT. - Ken Halstead.

"Mistletoe Cottage", Masseys Lane, East Boldre, Brockenhurst, Hants, SO42 7WE.

Early one morning a power cut occurred in our village due to a major fault in the electricity power lines. My phone rang at 4.45am, a call from a Central Monitoring System, informing me, as the key holder, that the alarm on a nearby property had triggered. Apparently the police had already investigated but could find no evidence of a break-in and it was suspected that the power failure had simply set off the alarm system. I eventually met two operatives from the security company who were responsible for locating any fault and then resetting the system. They were not convinced that the power failure had been responsible and subsequently traced the fault to the dining room. I noticed one sweeping spiders from the walls and, especially, from the eye of the infra-red device monitoring the room, and he then alleged that it was the spider sitting right across the eye that had caused the alarm to be activated. He had, in fact, removed Pholcus phalangioides from the eye and there were other specimens of this species hanging in all the ground floor rooms. I was told that this was not the first time that a spider had set off an alarm in this way.

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