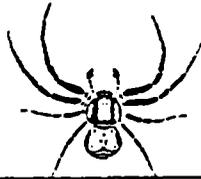


British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 26.
November, 1996.

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1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Publication of Provisional Distribution Maps.

Recorders will be disappointed to learn that we shall not now be publishing the provisional distribution maps in 1997 as originally proposed. Very briefly there are three reasons for this. Firstly, although I estimate that after almost ten years of field work we have accumulated approaching 130,000 individual records, held on recording cards or on computer disk, the Biological Records Centre (BRC) has advised that we are still some way from being able to generate meaningful distribution maps for the 635 species on the British list from this number of records. Secondly, we have large gaps in the coverage of the country, for example in Scotland, Mid-Wales and parts of England, where more records are urgently needed and, thirdly, the BRC does not have the resources in the 1996/97 financial year to computerise the data currently held on cards. Indeed, funding for this work in the 1997/98 financial year is uncertain until the outcome of an application to the Millennium Commission is known. This application has been made jointly by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the Natural Environment Research Council (the parent body of BRC), the Natural History Museum and the Wildlife Trusts, for funding to establish a National Biodiversity Network (NBN). The overall purpose of the Network, including a co-ordinated network of Local Record Centres, is to ensure that the vast pool of data which exists about the flora and fauna of Britain is more effectively managed in the 21st. century than it has been in the 20th. and, incidentally, to make the most of the huge amateur and professional expertise in the UK. I understand that the result of the application will be known in April 1997.

However, there are a number of possible options for dealing with the problem of transferring data from recording cards to the BRC computer. If the NBN bid is not successful then BRC may be able to allocate resources to the task in the 1997/98 financial year but this will depend on the outcome of a review of all national recording schemes being undertaken by BRC and JNCC. Irrespective of the bid the British Arachnological Society (BAS) might wish to consider finding some resources to get the cards computerised, or perhaps recruit volunteers from among its membership to help with the task. Obviously detailed discussion will be needed on these options and a realistic development plan for the scheme put in place. BRC will continue to be closely involved with BAS about the future of the scheme.

In the meantime recording will continue, as indeed it would have done anyway in preparation for publication of the full Atlas. More records must be accumulated and more effort made to fill in the gaps in the coverage of the country. For this effort the co-operation of an enthusiastic band of Recorders is essential, and very shortly all Recorders will be receiving a questionnaire so that the extent of the records still in their possession can be judged, and seeking their continued active support to the scheme.

1.2. Recording cards.

During 1996 I had received just over 1400 RA65 recording cards by mid-September, so I estimate that by year-end the total will be about 1750, compared with totals of 1721 (1995), 1467 (1994) and 2201 (1993). We are now approaching a grand total of 20,000 RA65 cards received

since the beginning of the scheme in 1987, with smaller numbers of GEN14 and GEN7 cards, and many thousands of records stored on computer. However, as mentioned above, we continue to make very slow progress towards filling in the gaps in the coverage of the country, and there are a number of vice-counties, particularly in Scotland, for which we have not received any cards this year. Unfortunately I was not able to organise a survey this year but I hope to do so in 1997 to look at some of these under-recorded areas in Scotland. In the meantime please submit any outstanding records for Scotland as soon as possible.

1.3. Contributions to the Newsletter.

I am grateful to John Parker and Stan Dobson for submitting articles for this Newsletter but I remain very short of material for future issues. Please do submit short articles describing your recording activities, noting particularly the important records that are made of, for example, rare species or the more common species found outside their usual range.

1.4. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Recorders :

Mr Adrian Colston, 48 Main Street, Woodnewton, Peterborough, PE8 5EB.
Mr Ian Dawson, 122a Station Road, Tempsford, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2AY.

b). The following Recorders have new addresses :

Mr David Bell, 11 Newlands Road, Stirchley, Birmingham, B30 2SA.
Mr Jon Daws, 25 Pen Close, Leicester, Leics., LE2 6TT.
Dr J.S. Denton, 26 Bow Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 1NY.
Mr Stan Dobson, Moor Edge, Birch Vale, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK22 1BX.
Mr Ivor Kenny, 49 Elm Road, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 7AZ.
Dr Helen Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Farnham Common, Bucks., SL2 3LE.

c). Name Change:

Mr Michael Hogg is now Mr Michael Kilner. His address is unchanged.

2. BIOLOGICAL RECORD CENTRE NUMBERS FOR NEW SPECIES. - David Nellist.

Since the publication of "Amendments to the check-list of British Spiders" (Merrett, P. and Millidge, A.F., Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc., 9(1), 4-9, 1992), several new species have been added to the British list taking the overall total to 635. Except for Gnaphosa nigerrima, Lepthyphantes beckeri and Minicia marginella details of these new species have appeared in either the BAS Bulletin or the BAS Newsletter, and those in families other than Linyphiidae are also described in Mike Roberts' book "Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe" (Collins Field Guide, Harper Collins, 1995). Minicia marginella has been described by Rowley Snazell in the Journal of the Zoological Society of London (Vol. 224, 381-384, 1991), whilst the discovery of Lepthyphantes beckeri by John and Marcene Crocker was mentioned in the last SRS Newsletter (Number 25, July 1996) the details being drawn from the book "The Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland" by John Crocker and Jon Daws (Kairos Press, 1996). A paper describing the discovery of Gnaphosa nigerrima is to be published in the BAS Bulletin next year.

Numbers have now been allocated by the Biological Records Centre to these new species, and to a number of others which had appeared on earlier check-lists without numbers. These are shown below. Because these species are not listed on the RA65 recording card the details of any captures should be noted on a GEN14 rare species card and the species number included in the appropriate box.

Dysderidae	Harpactea rubicunda (C. L. Koch, 1839).	6708 1302
Zodariidae	Zodarion italicum (Canestrini, 1868).	6708 22701

Gnaphosidae	Scotophaeus scutulatus (L. Koch, 1866).	6708 2001
	Zelotes subterraneus (C. L. Koch, 1833).	6708 2006
	Gnaphosa nigerrima L. Koch, 1877.	6708 2604
Philodromidae	Philodromus albidus Kulczynski 1911.	6708 4512
	Philodromus longipalpis Simon, 1870.	6708 4513
Salticidae	Heliophanus dampfi Schenkel 1923.	6708 4905
	Euophrys thorelli Kulczynski 1923.	6708 5408.
Theridiidae	Steatoda nobilis (Thorell, 1875).	6708 9105
	Theridion hemerobium Simon, 1914.	6708 9416.
Linyphiidae	Minicia marginella (Wider, 1834).	6708 22731
	Porrhomma cambridgei (Merrett, 1994).	6708 19711.
	Meioneta mossica Schikora 1993.	6708 19909.
	Centromerus minutissimus Merrett & Powell, 1993.	6708 20315.
	Lepthyphantes beckeri Wunderlich, 1973.	6708 22122
	Nothopantes horridus Merrett & Stevens, 1995.	6708 22741

3. ERRATA IN THE SPIREC SPECIES LIST. - Stan Dobson.
Moor Edge, Birch Vale, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK22 1BX.

I cannot remember now where I obtained the original list which I used in producing SPIREC; I certainly didn't type it out myself. Two spelling mistakes have already been corrected in later versions, but I have now found several others. These are shown below with the offending word underlined; the two previous corrections are shown asterisked.

<u>Callilepis</u> nocturna	* <u>Silometopus</u> ...	<u>Agraecina</u> striata
<u>Panamomops</u> sulcifrons	* <u>Micrommata</u> virescens	<u>Wiehlea</u> calcarifera
<u>Aelurillus</u> v-insignitis	Centromerus <u>levitarsis</u>	Robertus <u>arundineti</u>
Centromerus <u>aequalis</u>	Zilla <u>diodia</u>	

These came to light when work was being done to sort out the exportation of data into RECORDER. It also transpired that the RECORDER list, or at least the one that I was shown, has an error: Agalenatea is spelt incorrectly.

If any SPIREC user would like a version with the corrected list, please send me a blank disc.

4. NOTHING SINISTER ABOUT Centromerus levitarsis (Simon, 1884). - J.R. Parker.
Stone Raise, 42 Lakeleland Park, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 4AT.

Several British spiders have specific names ending with the latin noun pes meaning a foot or tarsus, which means much the same thing, which, coupled with an adjective, indicates form, colouring or marking. Thus: flavipes, rufipes, nigripes, fuscipes, maculipes and castaneipes (indicating yellow, ruddy, black, dusky, spotted and chestnut brown respectively). Usually all of which refer to the entire legs and not merely the feet.

Simon's description of Centromerus levitarsis is in his Arachnides de France, Tome 6, Pt 3 (published postumously by Berland and Fage in 1924) and this minute linyphiid spider is described on p.548 under this name, but on p.553 it appears as C. laevitarsis and it was by this name it was known in the British literature for many years. The latin adjective laevus means left-handed, as does the word sinister; both being antonyms of dexter, which is right-handed, while levis as used in the original description means light, smooth or hairless. It seems likely that laevitarsis was a misprint which misled arachnologists into thinking it to be a correction. Fortunately the Rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature insist on names with the original spelling and the name has, in recent years, been changed back to levitarsis with its original meaning.

This Red Data Book species is extremely rare in Britain and known only from Glasson Moss N.N.R.

and Biglands Bog in Cumbria, and Fox Tor Mires in Devon, where I have found it in all three, as well as Oakmere, Delamere in Cheshire by Dr. A Randell Jackson in 1906 which was the first British record. All my other records were made some 63 years later. It occurs in wet sphagnum moss in the shade of birchwood carr, although the site in Devon was an open mire. The Oakmere site is said to be drying out and that at Glasson Moss may well have been ruined following the disastrous heath fire which destroyed the trees some years ago.

5. Argiope bruennichi (Scopoli) IN DERBYSHIRE. - Stan Dobson.
Moor Edge, Birch Vale, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK22 1BX.

The Petty Whin, Genista anglica, is a rare plant in Derbyshire. On Thursday, 5th. September 1996, Nick Moyes of Derby Museum went with Alan Willmot, a local botanist, to an SSSI a few miles north west of Derby to check on a plant growing there. When they reached the low bush they were amazed to see a very striking spider sitting in the centre of an orb web on the bush. Nick knew that he had seen pictures of it somewhere, so he carefully sketched it and replaced it. When he returned home, he found the photograph in Dick Jones' Field Guide and identified it as Argiope bruennichi.

He tried, unsuccessfully, to ring me the following day. He returned to the site on the Saturday to photograph the spider but found that it had disappeared; however the web was still there showing the stabilimentum clearly. He sent me a note which I received on the Monday, so I phoned him and arranged to meet him at the site the next day. When we arrived there was still no sign of the spider. I searched the vicinity of the web in the vain hope that there would be an egg sac, and then the spider was rediscovered about five metres from the original site, on a web spun in a clump of Tufted Hair-grass, Deschampsia caespitosa. It was feeding on a large fly and was undisturbed when we moved grass leaves to photograph it, and when I bent close to examine the ventral surface with a hand lens to confirm that it was an adult female.

There is no doubt about the identification; the big question is, what was it doing there ? We spent a couple of hours searching and sweeping the site , but there was no sign of any others and it seems very unlikely that it was part of a colony. The site itself seems ideal; it is a large area of unimproved damp grassland which is never cut and there appeared to be an abundance of grasshoppers and other insect life. I understand that this species can be obtained from suppliers, and it is possible that it has been released by someone; however the site is way off the beaten track so this is unlikely. It may have ballooned in when tiny from one of the south coast sites and happened to drop on a suitable spot, but last winter was very cold and I believe that they mature in their second year. The most likely explanation seems to be that some naturalist has visited a site, either in the south of England or on the continent , and accidentally picked one up in his bag, then visited this site after his return (I am occasionally shown European spiders which have stowed away in tents after a camping holiday abroad). And, of course, there is always the chance that it is, in fact, part of a hitherto undiscovered colony !

6. SPIDERS IN PEMBROKE. - David Nellist.

Stan Dobson recently sent me the list of species recorded during his week-long course on spiders, held at the Orielton Field Centre near Pembroke at the end of July this year, which I had attended. It is an impressive list of 144 species which includes the Red Data Book species Haplodrassus minor, two Nationally Notable species, Enoplognatha mordax (Na) and Theridiosoma gemmosum (Nb), and three new county records for Pembroke, Haplodrassus minor, Saaristoa firma and Macrargus rufus. However, on the debit side, I was dismayed to see the salt marshes we visited so badly affected by the oil which leaked from the grounded oil tanker "Sea Empress" in February of this year. The leak occurred in the middle of a proposed Special Area of Conservation (SAC) !

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National Organiser.

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