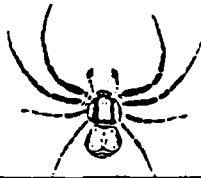


British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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1. EDITORIAL.

1.1 Publication of the Provisional Distribution Maps.

It had always been Clifford Smith's goal to publish provisional distribution maps after 10 years of field work following the establishment of the recording scheme in 1987. In Newsletter 26 (November 1996) I set out the reasons why that timetable had had to be abandoned. Not least among those reasons was an approach to the Millennium Commission, by a consortium which included the parent body of the Biological Records Centre (BRC), for funds to establish a National Biodiversity Network, and this had a major impact on BRC's planning process whilst the verdict was awaited. So, we have had 6 months of uncertainty. However, at a recent meeting with Paul Harding, the Head of BRC, Paul was able to propose a new timetable which would result in the publication of the provisional maps in 1999. Hopefully, by the time members read these words, the process of transferring records from our recording cards to the computer will have begun and will continue through next year. If all goes well BRC will carry out a preliminary validation of the dataset in early 1999 and then run draft maps. Publication will follow later in the year. I do have to provide BRC with some more information, and its 1998 budget has yet to be formally approved, but our period of uncertainty does now appear to be over and our goal is in sight.

1.2. The Questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire, which was distributed at the end of 1998, allowed me to identify Recorders who were, for a variety of reasons, no longer active in the scheme and I have deleted their names from our list. So, we now have 118 Recorders (down from 150). We also lost one or two Area Organisers and we now have 11 vice-counties with vacancies. These are Berks (VC22), Merioneth (VC48), Denbigh (VC50), Flint (VC51), Notts (VC56), SE Yorks (VC61), NE Yorks (VC62), SW Yorks (VC63), MW Yorks (VC64), NW Yorks (VC65) and the Channel Islands (VC113). Very briefly the tasks of an Area Organiser are to stimulate interest in spiders in their area; to receive and check completed record cards from Recorders in their area; to assist Recorders with the identification of specimens, and checking the identification of rare or uncommon species. If anyone would be interested in taking on one of the above VCs then do let me know.

1.3. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Area Organisers:

Peter Smithers, 40 Copperfields, Horrabridge, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7UB, who takes over W. Cornwall and Scilly (VC1), and E. Cornwall (VC2). Peter is already the AO for S. Devon and N. Devon (VCs 3 and 4).

Michael Kilner, 8 Viaduct Court, Lower Cym, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 5SP, who takes over Monmouth (VC35), Glamorgan (VC41), Brecon (VC42) and Radnor (VC43).

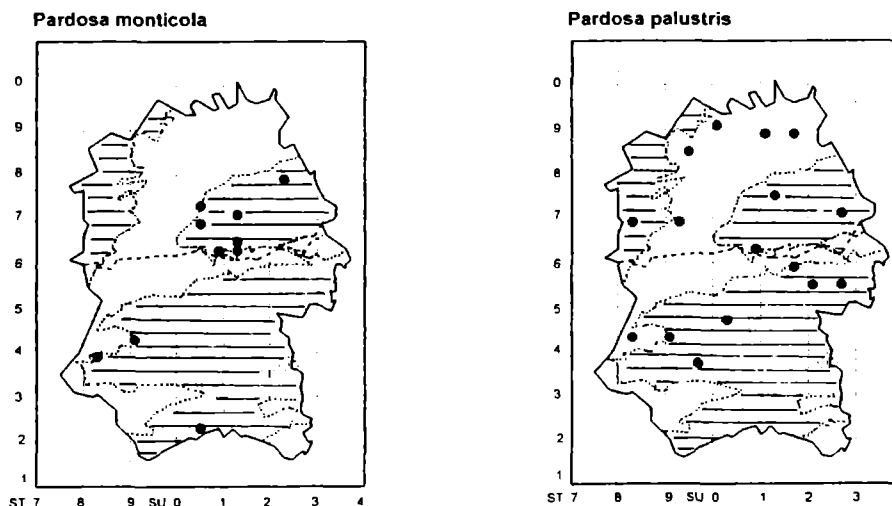
2. Pardosa monticola and Pardosa palustris IN WILTSHIRE. - Martin Askins.
69 Savill Crescent, Wroughton, Swindon, Wilts., SN4 9JG.

Following on from Richard Wright's note (Newsletter 27, March 1997) on Pardosa palustris and P. monticola in Warwickshire, and Peter Harvey's note on the species in Essex (Newsletter 28, July 1997), I thought that the situation in Wiltshire might be of interest and add to the discussion.

Both species are widely distributed and turn up regularly in Wiltshire. However, P. palustris is less restricted in its habitat preference and is fairly uniformly spread over the county (as far as can be defined given the amount and non-uniformity of recording done in the county; to date North Wilts. has more data). It seems to be associated with disturbed or "improved" grassland, e.g. pasture or areas near arable fields - similar to Peter Harvey's habitat description but not necessarily associated with bare ground. I can't say whether there has been a marked increase in numbers of this species recently, having started collecting in Wilts. in 1994 and during which time my collecting methods have not been systematic enough to allow ready comparisons across years. Nevertheless, it does appear that P. palustris has been easier to find this year in comparison with previous years. Interestingly, R. B. Coleman did not list P. palustris in his 1973-74 survey on Porton Down (BAS Newsletter 18, May 1977), but records made in 1978 from the same or similar areas (records provided by R. B. Coleman) include P. palustris. Does P. palustris go through population cycles like the Holly Blue butterfly ?

In contrast to P. palustris, P. monticola seems to occur almost exclusively on the short turf of chalk downland. Wiltshire's generous supply of downland in part explains its widespread occurrence in the county - undoubtedly there are more sites where it occurs, especially in the south of the county. When found it can be quite numerous. Its preference for short grass is borne out in Dick Coleman's data where he found that it was much less frequent on one area of Porton Down with longer grass than at the other sites examined. Furthermore some limestone grassland sites in the north-east of the county, which are managed for their wildflower and butterfly populations, and which have longer swards in summer due to lower grazing pressure, do not support P. monticola. The sites are not improved or disturbed, as indicated by the other species found on them.

On the maps below the hatched areas indicate the extent of the underlying chalk (in the west and south of the county) and the limestone (in the north-east). Overlying deposits are not indicated.



3. Carorita limnaea: A SECOND LOCALITY IN BRITAIN. - Wayne Rixom
44 Edward Avenue, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 8AX.

English Nature recently allowed me to examine a collection of spiders from pitfall and water traps set at the Whixall and Fenn's Moss NNRs in Shropshire and Denbighshire in 1993/4. Amongst the 110 species so far identified were two rare species: Carorita limnaea and Glyphesis cottonae, both from Shropshire. The discovery of Carorita limnaea is important as it represents an extension of

its range that has long been suspected. The species was recorded from Whixall Moss in a low-lying acidic peatland site with extensive sphagnum cover, in traps set in the west of the survey area (SJ 4835). A single male was identified (confirmed by Dr Peter Merrett) in a sequence that ran from May to June 1993. The reasons for the failure to record it previously at this site are a mystery; it appears to be very rare at the reserve which might be a factor.

The capture of Glyphesis cottonae is interesting as it again represents a new locality for a linyphiid that was rare and local in the north of England previously. On this occasion a male and female have turned up, both associated with sphagnum although the female was recorded in a water trap.

4. Pityohyphantes phrygianus IN LEICESTER. - Jon Daws.
67 Crophorn Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

Having only a couple of hours to spare and no transport my collecting for the day (3rd. May, 1997) was limited to the close proximity of my flat in East Leicester. Having swept a small spinney (in tetrad SK6204), and a tall herb/rough grass verge, I set about beating a strip of some 5m high coniferous trees. These had been planted about 10 years ago as a shelter belt on the edge of Evington Park, Leicester (SK 624036). The shelter belt included several species of pine, with a few spruce and deciduous trees mixed in. A single male Pityohyphantes phrygianus was beaten from the pine trees. This is only the second record for the county, a female having been beaten from spruce at Pickworth Great Wood (SK 985148) on 26th. June 1994. This is an interesting capture which could well indicate that this species may be present in other centres of population throughout Britain.

5. Steatoda triangulosa NEW TO BRITAIN ? - Jon Daws.
67 Crophorn Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

On the 11th. October 1996, whilst looking for Tegenaria saeva on a demolished housing site, a recently-moulted female Steatoda triangulosa was discovered beneath a piece of hardboard. The hardboard lay in what had been the garden of a post-war council house on the Saffron Lane Estate in East Leicester (SK 584002), demolished in the late spring/early summer of 1996. Mike Roberts confirmed the identification which is, as far as we know, the first British record. This is a synanthropic species with a wide European distribution being found in and around houses. It may be present in other large centres of population in southern Britain.

[Editor's note: The palp and epigyne of this species are figured in Mike Roberts' *Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*, Collins Field Guide, 1995].

6. Atypus affinis RECORDED AT MINSMERE RSPB RESERVE, SUFFOLK.
- Richard Wilson.
Minsmere RSPB Reserve, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 3BY.

As part of my work at Minsmere RSPB Reserve on the Suffolk coast I have been studying the invertebrate fauna on the heathland. I decided in May 1997 to locate 6 pitfall traps on an area of heathland which, 2-3 years ago, had been foraged harvested as part of the ongoing management of the site. The heather is bushy, attaining a maximum height of 30cm but sufficiently open underneath to allow easy movement for a wide range of invertebrates. It is surrounded by a copse of silver birch, some of which have been felled to create glades.

On emptying the pitfall two weeks later, to my astonishment and not without some excitement, I discovered a single male Atypus affinis. In addition to this, other species of note were the Salticid Attulus saltator, and the gnaphosid Zelotes pusillus. All three species were new to Minsmere, but the record of A. affinis is the first record for Suffolk. Subsequent weeks revealed 2 more males in pitfall traps but, to date, no females or live individuals have been found. The discovery of the spider has since caused much interest in the local and even national media. A substantial article appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times and a journalist phoned from the Big Issue magazine enquiring about it; no doubt the press release of a tarantula discovered in Suffolk caused the excitement.

Minsmere RSPB reserve is situated on the Suffolk coast between Dunwich and Sizewell and is entirely owned and managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It covers almost 2500 acres of heathland, reedbed, coastal lagoons, woodland and vegetated sand dunes. Anyone who would be interested in visiting to collect spiders, harvestman (or any other group) can contact me at the above address or telephone/fax: 01728.648701.

7. Centromerus levitarsis AT WEDHOLME FLOW NNR. - Chris Felton.
Entomology Section, Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN.

John Parker's article about Centromerus levitarsis, including its status at Glasson Moss NNR Cumbria, and at its few other British localities (Newsletter 26, November 1996), was very interesting. During 1995, in Liverpool Museum, I identified pitfall samples from a survey of Glasson Moss and also from Wedholme Flow NNR, Cumbria, undertaken by English Nature. Unfortunately C. levitarsis was not recorded amongst the Glasson material but two adult females were found at Wedholme. One was trapped between 30 May and 13 June, and the other on 15 August, in pitfalls set in Sphagnum. The Red Data Book account of this rare and vulnerable species gives March, April, May and October for adults.

Both sites produced a wide variety of spiders including Gnaphosa leporina, Trochosa spinipalpis, Pirata uliginosus, Robertus arundineti, Gongylidiellum latebricola, Araeoncus crassiceps, Agyneta olivacea and Satilatlas britteni. Perhaps the most surprising find was an adult Marpissa nivoyi trapped at Wedholme on 19 September.

8. Zodarion italicum IN NORTH ESSEX. - Ray Ruffell.
155, Halstead Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5JT.

An article in a previous Newsletter (No. 28, July 1997), by Doug Marriott, concerning Zodarion italicum referred to the possibility of finding this species away from South Essex in disused railway sidings. Last year, and again this year, I found Z. italicum in disused railway sidings at Stanway, North Essex, VC19. The habitat was much as described by Doug for the Herts. site, and Pardosa hortensis is present, but both this species and Hahnina nava would appear to be much more common in Essex than Herts.

The Stanway site would be about as far from the South Essex sites as is the Herts. location, and the railway seems to be the obvious connection, this site being along the main east coast line to Norwich.

9. Argiope bruennichi IN ESSEX. - Ray Ruffell.
155, Halstead Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5JT.

On 29th. August the Assistant Curator for Natural History at Colchester Museums telephoned me to say that he had been shown a photograph of a spider which he identified as Argiope bruennichi. The photograph had been taken on 18th. August 1997 by John Tyler at Alphamstone in North East Essex. The following day I went with my wife Joanna to the location given, which was access land; an undulating field of grass which, apart from the centre, had been cut. The six-figure grid reference which I had been given was at the field edge bordering a small wood.

Almost two hours were spent along the field edge with no sign of Argiope before I suggested that we have a look in the uncut centre of the field before giving up. With minutes a female was found in her web, suspended on clover and grass. Three more females were then also found. These were low down in the vegetation, not in the centre of the web, and when gently touched ran up into their webs. There had been rain during the previous night and all webs were damaged, including those of the numerous Araneus quadratus and this, coupled with the overcast afternoon, may explain why the Argiope specimens were so low in the grass whereas the A. quadratus were ensconced in their retreats at a much higher level. Because Argiope was so very low in the vegetation it is quite

probable that sweeping would not have produced results, and those seeking this species may care to bear this in mind in similar conditions.

Peter Harvey has informed me that he had earlier received a report of a sighting of this species at Basildon, but upon searching the site had been unable to find it. The female, being so distinctive, is hardly likely to be mistaken though, so we may have two localities in Essex.

A number of articles have previously appeared in the Newsletter regarding this spider's distribution and methods of dispersal. It seems most unlikely that it arrived in a bale of hay from the south coast of England, and successful ballooning from there into a field in North Essex, by both sexes, is as unlikely as me winning the national lottery ! So what other explanations can be suggested ? Is successful ballooning across the North Sea more credible ? An interesting point which should be mentioned is that we also found Conocephalus discolor in the field. This species of bush-cricket has rapidly spread from the very south of England in a few years and its nearest known station to Alphamstone is on the Essex/Herts. border some 40 miles to the south-west !

10. Myrmarachne formicaria - A REQUEST FOR RECORDS.

- Lawrence Jones-Walters.

c/o English Nature, Bullring House, Northgate, Wakefield, WF1 3BJ.

Some time ago I completed a note on the biology of Myrmarachne formicaria in Britain. I would like to produce a distribution map to accompany the paper and would be grateful if SRS members could send me any records they may have. Any additional field notes on location, habitat and associated ant species would also be most welcome.

Bristowe (in the *Comity of Spiders*) has a record of M. formicaria from Scotland. I would be very interested to know if anybody can provide me with a source for that record. M. formicaria is rarely found with its supposed model, Formica rufa. However, there seems to be a positive association between juvenile M. formicaria and the small red ant Myrmica scabrinodis. The spider is relatively common on the south coast and in the New Forest valley mires where M. scabrinodis is abundant. I suspect that if it is still present in Scotland, it may be found within the range of M. scabrinodis, which is largely to the west, and possibly on some of the lowland peat bogs. Good hunting.

11. Steatoda grossa IN A SEWER SYSTEM - Jon Daws.

67, Crophorn Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

On the 6th. April 1997, while looking for cave spiders in the sewer system of a small housing estate in East Leicester, two sub-adult and an adult female Steatoda grossa were found hanging beneath the undersides of man-hole covers. The specimens were found singly with two of the specimens being about 200 metres apart. The sub-adult specimens were the first to be found and, at first, I thought they were large specimens of Steatoda bipunctata, but on finding the female it became clear that they were something new. The sewer system also contained hundreds of Nesticus cellulanus, just the odd specimen of the locally rare Lessertia dentichelis, and both Tegenaria domestica and T. gigantea.

12. Theridion hemerobius IN LEICESTERSHIRE - Jon Daws.

67, Crophorne Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

On the 6th. July 1996, while collecting spiders by torchlight at the Wanlip fishing complex and former gravel pits, a single female Theridion hemerobius, a species new to Leicestershire, was collected from a post and rail fence (SK 606115) separating the fishing complex from a cattle-grazed field. This spring (1997) I returned to the pits on several occasions to sweep and grub about in the vast area of marsh and scrubby rough grassland which forms part of the River Soar flood plain. On one of these trips (27 April), while sweeping bankside vegetation and searching beneath pieces of dumped plastic, a single male T. hemerobius was collected. The exact locality of this

specimen is unknown as its identity only became known when the collection was being examined under the microscope, but the area being worked was centred on SK 605117, some 200 metres from the original site. I find it remarkable that this species is presently restricted in its known distribution to a site in Sussex and, now, one in Leicestershire, but it may have been overlooked in the past by confusion with Theridion pictum.

13. Zelotes petrensis IN SUSSEX AND SURREY - Jonty Denton.
26, Bow Street, Alton, Hants., GU34 1NY.

I recorded a single male of Zelotes petrensis from a pitfall trap on Churt Flashes, Surrey, on 2nd. September 1996. The traps were placed amongst mature heather on ground that is usually wet in winter. The traps also yielded several specimens of Episinus truncatus but no other Zelotes species. I also found a single female of this Nationally Notable species on open chalk grassland on Levin Down, West Sussex on the 13th. June 1997. The spider was found amongst moss and leaves which had accumulated in a rabbit scrape on a closely cropped, south-facing slope. This would appear to be the first record from Sussex of this enigmatic species. Then on the 13th. July 1997 I found a female running across a sandy track on Albury Heath, Surrey (TQ 063466). In keeping with previous information these records were of singletons on chalk or heathy sites.

14. MORE SPIDERS IN LEICESTERSHIRE - Jon Daws.
67 Crophorne Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

Since the publication of "*The Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland*" (John Crocker and Jon Daws, Kairos Press, 1996), a number of new species have been added to the county list, including Theridion hemerobius and Steatoda triangulosa, the subject of separate notes in this Newsletter. A female Cheiracanthium erraticum was beaten from a rose bush adjacent to an area of lichen heath, itself adjacent to a live railway line on what had once been sidings (South Wigston Triangle, SP592987, 20th. June, 1996). A female Atea triguttatus was collected when an orb-web was spotted on the lower branches of an oak tree adjacent to the fairway on the 18th. hole (Luffenham Heath Golf Course, SK959027, 7th. July, 1996). Jacksonella falconeri has occurred in pitfall traps at two sites in the county. At Charnwood Lodge (1 male, SK473149, 10th. July, 1996) traps were set amongst patches of tall heather in a low-lying area of heathland that also contained sphagnum moss. At the other site (3 males, Buddon Wood, SK558150, 3rd. May, 1996) they were set amongst heath grassland, with some bracken, beneath an open canopy of young birch and oaks. Centromerus cavernarum, a Red Data Book species, was also found at Buddon Wood, in the same trap line as J. falconeri. This is a woodland species usually associated with ancient woodland, in this case sessile oak and birch.

15. TONGUE IN CHEEK ! - Michael Kilner.

Another example of the shortcomings of the RA65 record card came to light in the middle of last summer (1996). I recorded Nesticus cellulanus from beneath a plate in the middle of a pile of washing-up in my kitchen ! Somehow "Buildings" just doesn't seem to cover it. To the best of my knowledge Nesticus cellulanus is a new county record for Monmouthshire, VC35.

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This issue of the Newsletter contains six pages, rather than the usual four, to allow me to include several notes which had not made it into previous issues, and which had thus been in my file for many months. My apologies to those authors whose contributions had been so delayed and, of course, my thanks go to those who have supplied the notes for this issue. Newsletter No. 30 will be published in March next year and I will be very pleased to receive articles and notes for that. Many thanks.

David R. Nellist
National Organiser
198A, Park Street Lane, Park Street, St Albans, Herts., A2 2AQ.