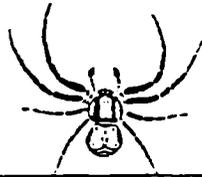


British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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A NEW NATIONAL ORGANISER.

Members will have read in the last Newsletter (No. 32, November 1998) that publication of the provisional distribution maps has been postponed again, until 2001 at the earliest. This is a great disappointment, especially to those Recorders and Area Organisers who have worked so hard to produce the large number of records we now have in our database. I have always believed that provisional maps are desperately needed even if, in the first instance, they were to be published without accompanying text. Maps would establish a recording base-line, reveal gaps in the recording of the country and provide the information needed to support the growing conservation initiatives of the country agencies, such as English Nature, and other organisations. Not least they would stimulate more focussed recording. When I took over from the late Clifford Smith as National Organiser I was determined to achieve his goal of publishing the maps in 1997 and no one is more *disappointed than I am at the subsequent postponements*. So, with publication not now due until early in the next millennium I am going to take the opportunity of standing down as National Organiser and letting a younger person take over. Since February 1994 I have edited sixteen Newsletters. This will be the last, and I would like to thank all those who have contributed articles and notes, and supported the scheme in so many ways, during these years. I have chivvied and encouraged others to participate in the scheme and submit their records. Now I am now looking forward to being on the receiving end !

I am delighted that Peter Harvey has agreed to become the new National Organiser. He will take over on May 22nd., after I have given my last report to the BAS Council and to the members at the society's Annual General Meeting. Peter joined the BAS in 1983 and has since had two spells on Council. He became the SRS Area Organiser for Essex in 1987, and together with three other enthusiasts (the Essex Spider Group) has surveyed the county in detail. The original goal of recording over 100 species in every 10km square was achieved and, annually since 1987, he has produced distribution maps for the county facilitating the identification of both under-recorded areas and under-recorded species. The value of such detailed work is demonstrated by the questions it has raised. For example, why are a number of species scarce in Britain but widespread in Essex and why are some species, found commonly or widespread in southern England, so rare in Essex ? His list of over forty published papers and articles is impressive, dealing not only with spiders, harvestmen and pseudoscorpions, but also with bees, wasps and ants. Clearly he will bring a wealth of experience and wide knowledge to the SRS and it will prosper in his hands. I wish him well.

D. R. Nellist.

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. News of Members.

a). Change of Address:

Dr David Beaumont, RSPB Scottish Headquarters, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace,

Edinburgh, EH4 3TP.

Dr Peter Kennedy, Ecological Risk Assessment Section, ZENECA Agrochemicals, Zealott's Hill
Research Station, Bracknell, Berks., RG42 6ET.

Mr John Stanney, 50 Mulberry Way, Leek, Staffs., St13 5TL.

1.2. Correction.

In Newsletter No. 31, July 1984, I listed the BRC number for Midia midas (Simon, 1884) as [22122]. This was incorrect. The correct number is [22112]. Apologies for the error.

2. Acartauchenius scurrilis (O. P.-Cambridge) IN NORTH HAMPSHIRE AND SURREY - Jonty Denton.

26, Bow Street, Alton, Hants., GU34 1NY.

Acartauchenius scurrilis, a Nationally Notable (Na) species, was abundant in the nests of the ant Tetramorium caespitum in Woolmer Forest (North Hants., SU 79-32-) on 19th. October, 1997. The secret is finding nests with galleries at the surface, such as the undersides of stones and man-made debris such as old bits of roofing tin. The spiders move around amongst the ants which seem oblivious to their presence. On 22nd. October I visited Thursley Common National Nature Reserve in Surrey (SU 90-41-), and found a female A. scurrilis on the underside of a lump of ironstone capping, the first T. caespitum nest examined. These appear to be the first records of this species in vice-counties 12 and 17. Berkshire and West Sussex Recorders take note !

3. Argiope bruennichi (Scopoli) IN ESSEX IN 1998. - Peter Harvey.

32, Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP.

Argiope bruennichi now seems to be undergoing a dramatic expansion in its range. Over the past few years it has been reported from new sites along the south coast and there was even an assumed import into Derbyshire (Stan Dobson, SRS Newsletter No. 26, November 1996). However, in 1997 the spider was reported from two sites in Essex, both in the south and the north of the county. Subsequently I also learnt that the father of John Lamoureux discovered the spider near Grays in South Essex in 1997. I was taken to see this population in August 1998 and we found Argiope to be present in huge numbers across a large area of rough grassland, and even alongside the public footpath that runs through an arable field of wheat (although these were depauperate specimens).

This year (1998) I swept an immature Argiope from tall grassland alongside a ditch and hedge near Orsett, and I have recently received reports of further new sightings in the area. The Essex Wildlife Trust warden of Grays Chalk Quarry, Alan Sadgrove, reports that the spider was found at the quarry during a recent work party, and Chris Beale has informed me of the spider being found during a WATCH meeting on an area of waste ground near St Clements Church in West Thurrock.

The story continues - Argiope was apparently found in North Kent a couple of years ago (Mike Edwards personal communication) and was found in Surrey in 1998 by David Baldock (there was a note on his discovery in SRS Newsletter No. 32, November 1998). It now seems almost certain that the species will be found at various sites between Essex and the south coast, and may even have spread to Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and beyond. Could the Derbyshire discovery of 1996 be part of this expansion in range and could the spider have already spread this far north ?

With similar, remarkable changes in the past few years to the distribution and abundance of species such as the aculeate wasp Philanthus triangulum (the Bee Wolf), it seems that the longer, warmer summers, extending later into the autumn (even in 1998 ?!), have favoured species that are mature and active in the late summer period. The Bee Wolf was formerly extremely rare (Nationally Vulnerable, RDB2) and virtually confined to the Isle of Wight, yet it is now to be found as far north as Lincolnshire and Lancashire, often in abundance, and will nest in practically any sandy ground, with reports of colonies even in the middle of a roundabout in London !

Argiope, like its relatives Araneus quadratus and Araneus diadematus, matures in the late summer and the gravid females, and then the webs with their egg sacs, will still be around into October. The large orb-web is a significant investment of resources on the part of the spider and it is unlikely to survive from year to year in areas which are cut before late autumn. Rough grassland, still uncut into late autumn, is definitely worth investigating. Although very distinctive, with the transverse yellow stripes and the zig-zag "stabilimentum", the spider is still easy to miss amongst tall vegetation. The spider also drops rapidly when disturbed and does not seem to be easily collected by sweeping.

4. Diplocephalus protuberans (O. P.-Cambridge) IN NORTH HAMPSHIRE
- Jonty Denton
26, Bow Street, Alton, Hants., GU34 1NY.

I sieved a single female from loose leaf litter on a gravel bed in the channel of the River Rother at Empshott Mill, near Selbourne (SU 751307). The stream is in fairly deep shade from mature trees. The discovery of a spider previously restricted to Northern England, North Wales and Scotland is remarkable. However the streams in the Hanger woodlands of N.E. Hampshire, and the River Rother itself, have a number of insect species more typical of the north and west of Britain, including isolated populations of several beetles including Aegalia sabuleti and the Therevid fly Psilocephala rustica.

5. A NEW LOCALITY FOR Enoplognatha oelandica (Thorell) AND
Uloborus walckenaerius Latreille. - Jonty Denton.

Enoplognatha oelandica is a rare species (RDB3) known from a few scattered sites on sand dunes and heaths. In Surrey it has been recorded from the three largest remaining heaths on the Lower Greensand (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons). On the 26th. May 1997 I found a female on Brentmoor Common near Red Road (SU 92-61-). The specimen was under a stone on a recently disturbed area largely devoid of vegetation. This appears to be the first record from a North Surrey heath on Tertiary sands. Steatoda albomaculata was also present under stones and other debris.

On an adjacent part of the site, also on the 26th. May, 1997, I swept a single male Uloborus walckenaerius from mature heather. This appears to be a new locality for this rare spider. I also found a single immature male at Thursley National Nature Reserve (SU 90-40-) on the 14th. September, 1997. This spider has been known from Thursley for many years but there have been few records since the fires of 1976. It was recorded at nearby Witley Common (SU 92-40-) in 1992 by Don Tagg, bringing the total number of sites in Surrey (with Ash Ranges and Chobham Common) to five.

6. NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF
Oxyopes heterophthalmus Latreille IN SURREY. - Jonty Denton.

This rare spider (RDB2) is currently only known from sites within Surrey, although there are old records from the New Forest. I have surveyed most of the known sites for the spider and have noticed a dramatic difference in abundance from north to south in the county. Oxyopes is locally abundant on all the north Surrey Tertiary heaths that I have surveyed: Ash, Brentmoor (part of Pirbright) and Chobham. At these sites numbers are greatest on mature heather, but it does appear on more degraded areas of ling. It is also abundant on Blackheath, a Greensand heath east of Guildford.

The pattern is very different on the Lower Greensand heaths to the south. Hankley and Thursley Commons are large sites with substantial areas of structurally similar conditions to the northern heaths. However, despite spending proportionately much more time on the Lower Greensand heaths in Surrey and North Hampshire, I have only found three specimens of Oxyopes, an immature male

on Hankley, on a south facing slope, and recently two adults on Thursley Common NNR in September. Both were swept from Hypericum growing in a large area of acid grassland, completely devoid of any heather, but surrounded by open dry heath. Intriguingly, the Oxyopes look-alike, Philodromus histrio, is in my experience common on mature heather areas on the Lower Greensand, but much scarcer on Tertiary heath sites where Oxyopes is abundant. Could there be some interaction between these spiders ? I would be interested to hear from anyone who can support or debunk this tentative suggestion. For instance, is Philodromus histrio abundant in the New Forest ?

7. NOTES ON SOME NEW AND INTERESTING RECORDS IN CARDIGANSHIRE

-Mike Bailey.

Troedrhiw Seiri, Bontgoch, Talybont, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY24 5DR.

Earlier this year (1998) I set out to confirm the presence of a number of notable species from Ynyslas Dunes at the mouth of the Dyfi estuary. Philodromus fallax, Marpissa nivoyi, Mecopisthes peusi and Ceratinopsis romana (all Notable, Nb), were each collected from marram dominated foredunes within the period mid-March to mid-April. Also, and more unexpectedly, on 7th. April I discovered two males and an immature female Diplocephalus inornata amongst the exposed roots of marram. This is the first record of this notable (Nb) species in the vice-county, and as far as I am aware the first time the species has been found amongst sand dunes.

During May I took a female Porrhomma campbelli in a pitfall trap set on the grazed upper saltmarsh of the Dyfi estuary. Roberts notes that this species occasionally exhibits reduced eye size and this is true of my specimen, which also proved to be a new vice-county record. In early June at the same location a specimen of Agraecina striata was taken. Whilst this notable (Nb) species is common on the nearby raised mire of Cors Fochno (Borth Bog), it has not previously been recorded on saltmarsh and I know of no other records from this habitat.

On the 10th. July I carried out some sweep-netting of the dwarf shrub canopy (largely bog myrtle and heather) across the central dome of Cors Fochno, in order to gain some insight into the distribution and abundance of Heliophanus dampfi. In addition to H. Dampfi I also swept a female Entelecara flavipes, which is new to Cardiganshire and has apparently been recorded only once before in Wales.

Pitfall trapping at Ynyslas Dunes during October produced another interesting record, a single male Prinerigone vagans. Despite not having nationally notable status this species has been found in Wales on only one previous occasion. The trapping site was at the edge of a wet, sandy dune slack, where invading willow and the enriched humus layer were removed two years ago. It is interesting to note that three nationally rare stoneworts and a nationally rare liverwort have also appeared since the embryo slack conditions were recreated.

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Thanks go to those who have supplied notes and information for this issue. Newsletter No. 34 will be published in July 1999. Do please send in your articles and notes as soon as possible to:

Peter Harvey
National Organiser
(from 22nd. May, 1999)
32, Lodge Lane,
Grays,
Essex, RM16 2YP.