

British Arachnological Society



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SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 35 November 1999

My thanks to those who have contributed notes and information for this issue. Newsletter No. 36 will be published in March 2000. Please send contributions as soon as possible to Peter Harvey, SRS National Organiser, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP email: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

**Remember: the deadline for all data to be included
in the provisional atlas is the end of this year.**

Provisional species accounts and distribution maps

All cards and computer data must be in to BRC by the end of the year. If you have computerised data and have not yet let Stan Dobson know, please do so soon!! There will be about 30,000 cards to input and several hundred thousand computer records to process. Data input should be completed by BRC by the end of May 2000. It was agreed at a meeting with BRC on the 7th July this year that data input would start with the cards collated by Clifford Smith. BRC have now reported that VCs 1-31 of these cards are available for 'punching checking' comprising 3,824 cards and 59,382 records. This is the beginning of an increasing number of records which will need checking by volunteers in the SRS. If you are prepared to help in this process please contact me a.s.a.p.

At a later stage, when all data for each county has been entered, it is hoped that regional maps can be provided to Area Organisers to aid the validation of the records and the identification of errors.

This newsletter includes species accounts for two common species, *Salticus scenicus* and *Lepthyphantes tenuis*. **Feedback from recorders on the distribution and frequency of these species in different parts of Britain is requested.** There may be important observations which should be taken into consideration before the final drafts are submitted for the provisional atlas. A species account and provisional map is also provided for the RDBK *Theridion pinastri* because this is a species where new information suggests a revision of current knowledge is necessary.

Although the draft maps in the SRS Newsletters include an outline for Ireland, data is not available for the Republic of Ireland and the published maps will not show an outline for the whole of Ireland. Apologies for the overlapping grid lines on the draft maps included in the July Newsletter. These result because there is a different grid system in use for Ireland.

What happens next?

The recording scheme does not finish after the production of the provisional atlas. At the end of 1999 all recording will remain as important as ever. Aims of the scheme will be to maintain a database for the distribution of British spiders and to provide a forum for members which will keep everyone up-to-date with developments in our knowledge of the distribution, ecology and conservation of species. Whilst card records will still be very welcome there will be a move to reduce unnecessary repetition of work by accepting, whenever possible, data already computerised direct from disk or email. We should then be in a position to sort and analyse the data on an ongoing basis and provide information to relevant people and organisations.

HATFIELD MOORS FIELD MEETING

Hatfield Moors, like the nearby Thorne Moors has been severely damaged by peat stripping and is under intense threat of complete destruction. Some good habitat survives and Helen Kirk, President of the Doncaster Naturalists Society and Executive Committee member of the Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, has recently found some interesting spiders, including *Evarcha arcuata*.

In order to try and get more data for the site before the deadline for the provisional atlas we have arranged a field meeting to Hatfield Moors on the Saturday 20th November, meeting at the Green Tree Public House SE683097 at 11am. Although you may receive this newsletter after the meeting has taken place we hope that all recorders likely to be able to attend have already been invited. Many apologies to anyone who has been inadvertently missed.

Submission of Computer Records

Stan Dobson Manchester Museum, M13 9PL, UK; Tel: +44 (0)161-275 2632; Fax: +44 (0)161-275 2676; WWW: <http://man.ac.uk/museum>

Last year, when I issued the document with the above title, I had no real idea of what the response was going to be like. Had I been overwhelmed with data (a situation which I didn't really envisage), I would have needed all the data files to be as near the agreed format as possible in order to cope. What actually happened was that I received a certain amount of data, more or less in the right form, but also a lot of enquiries from people who weren't quite sure how to deal with it. With most of these, I asked them to send their records in whatever form they were, provided that the essential fields were present, and I edited them into the correct form.

In view of this, and also bearing in mind that the deadline for submission is fast approaching, I am proposing the following amendments, mainly simplifications, to the way records should be submitted.

- Send records in any standard form. This could be as a data file from a database or spreadsheet. I can read any files in standard formats such as dBase, Access or Excel and most others should be exportable in delimited text formats - if in doubt, contact me. The only data I have been unable to deal with so far have been in RECORDER files.
- Do not remove GEN14 records. This has been agreed with BRC to reduce the amount of typing in of cards; however, GEN14 cards should still be submitted separately.
- Please leave the species as names unless they have been converted to BRC numbers automatically with a system such as SPIREC. We are worried about spurious numbers appearing due to typing errors and I can easily convert from names.
- In the same way, vice-counties can be submitted as names.
- Submit dates in any form, but it would be a great help if they are all in a consistent format.
- Obviously, as much information as possible is welcome in the records; however, don't let a lack of data deter you from sending them in. As far as the Atlas is concerned, the essential information is species name and grid reference, date, recorder and determiner, closely followed by habitat. Anything else is bonus.

Callilepis nocturna (L.) on the Isle of Wight

Keith Alexander, National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Glos GL7 1RQ.

This spider has been known from the seacliffs of one small area of south Devon for about 30 years but - until now - had not been found away from this favoured area. A single female was however collected from the bare chalk brow of the seacliffs of Tennyson Down (SZ330855) on the Isle of Wight, 31st May 1998.

The specimen then remained forgotten amongst miscellaneous unidentified material until recently examined by David Nellist. Both the Isle of Wight and south Devon sites combine open rock and sparsely-vegetated ground with a hot sunny microclimate, and plenty of ants - the main prey. Suitable conditions seem to be related to coastal exposure rather than the local geology.

New Records from Worcestershire - or 'How I nearly threw away a rarity'

John Partridge, 31, Duxford Close, Redditch, Worcs B97 5BY

The one that nearly got away was *Theridion hemerobium*. In the middle of August I had discovered the 'address' of *Larinioides sclopetarius*, or you could say belatedly realised that 'buildings, bridges and fences near water' could include lock gates, and I had gone to Strensham Lock on the River Avon to get another record. There were hundreds there, especially on the superstructure of the weir.. I also swept some of the vegetation on the two small islands that make up the lock and weir complex, and collected a few specimens, including a pale Theridiidae that was nearly discarded on the spot as probably immature. It came near being discarded again that afternoon when I found that the epigyne was rather pale, and did not match anything that I could find in 'The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland', but I labelled it up and put it on one side. On two other occasions it came out to see if I could get any further, and I nearly labelled it *Theridion varians* from the abdominal pattern, but couldn't force the epigyne to match.

It sat there until the end of October, when I was sending off another specimen to Peter Merrett for confirmation as a new county record, and I thought I might just risk looking a fool by sending the unknown specimen as well. Happily, this turned out to be the right thing to do, and Peter identified it for me as *Theridion hemerobium*, hitherto known only from Sussex, Middx, Herts and Leics. There must be a moral in this somewhere.

The other fairly uncommon species found this year, at the end of April, was a male *Hybocoptus decollatus*. This was collected off a set of fence posts in woodland on the Malvern Hills. There were twenty to thirty new posts, and nearly all had a few spiders that looked as if they were trying to be aeronauts. The majority were *Theridion pallens*, together with *Hypomma bituberculatum*, *Lathys humilis*, *Oedothorax fuscus* and *Linyphia peltata*.

Other new Worcestershire records from this year are: *Panamomops sulcifrons*, *Entelecara erythropus*, *Theonoe minutissima*, *Pelecopsis mengei*, *Steatoda grossa*, *Meta bourneti*, *Psilochorus simoni*

I would like to record my thanks to Dr. Peter Merrett for confirming the identifications and the new county status for these records, and also for identifying the *T. hemerobium*. This would also be a suitable place to thank David Nellist for his noble efforts in getting me past the beginners stage in my Araneology; he dealt very patiently with my initial mistakes (and quite a few later ones) in identifying common species and gave me many useful hints in areas such as the use of the microscope, lighting, cleaning up glass beads and clearing specimens.

***Theridion blackwalli* O. P.-Cambridge in Leicestershire.**

Jon Daws, 33 Rowan Street, Leicester LE3 9GP

Up until the beginning of 1998, *Theridion blackwalli*'s known distribution within Leicestershire was limited to two records in the far east of the county. These were 1 male collected May 1994 TF001087 Great Casterton Churchyard and 1 female July 1995 SK981043 Ketton Churchyard.

In the autumn of 1997 I got a job as a telephone box cleaner with Amalgamated Cleaning Services, who are one of the five companies sub-contracted by BT to clean all their telephone boxes in Britain. This involved cleaning three groups of between 45-64 phone boxes in rotation, twice a week, working Monday to Saturday. One group of boxes was in the south of the city, the second group were centred around the towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth, with the third taking in most of the villages of south-east Leicestershire with odd boxes in Northamptonshire. As one would expect, I collected interesting looking specimens as I cleaned and since my rounds also included rural boxes, I occasionally stopped off at the odd churchyard.

At the beginning of May I collected a few spiders from Countesthorpe churchyard, amongst which was a sub-adult male *Theridion*, which due to its coloration, I took to be a possible *Theridion blackwalli*. Having been

alerted to the possibility of *Theridion blackwalli* being found in other parts of the county than in the far east, I made a mental note to visit a few more churchyards.

On the 30/5/98 I was returning home from cleaning phone boxes, when I stopped off at Fleckney churchyard to collect for half an hour. The time was about 5:00pm and at the rear of the church on a shaded wall, 4 male *Theridion blackwalli* walked about in full view within a square metre area one and a half to two metres from ground level. A fifth male specimen was collected forty metres away on the newly built church hall, this time from under a window frame two metres from the ground.

On the 2/6/98 I had been out earlier cleaning local phone boxes and then visited the museum. The weather had started very wet, but had slowly dried out and when I went to the Ford Fiesta van at about one thirty pm, the sun had been shining for over an hour. As I was unlocking the van, I noticed a dark *Theridion* species hanging from the driver's side wing mirror. I tubed the specimen, which I identified as a male *T. blackwalli*, which I believe was an aeronaut. The following day, 3/6/98, while cleaning phone boxes on the country run a male *Theridion blackwalli* was found inside a red phone box at Kings Norton, walking around the windows just over a metre from the floor.

On the 4/6/98 I returned to the Countesthorpe churchyard, where while searching the comers of the churches walls, a female *T.blackwalli* was found half a metre from ground level. The 5/6/98 found me at Kilby, where once again a male *T.blackwalli* was found wandering the inside of a red telephone box. On 6/6/98 I stopped off at Twyford churchyard, where under a small overhang on the church wall, a male *T.blackwalli* was found about half a metre from the ground. Later the same day at Hallaton another male *T.blackwalli* was collected from within a red telephone box two metres from the floor. A further male *T.blackwalli* was taken from the wall of the chapel situated within the ground of Wigston cemetery on the 8/6/98.

The morning of the 9/6/98 found me cleaning phone boxes in Market Harborough. At the edge of the town centre still on the High Street a male *T.blackwalli* was again found within a red telephone box. Interestingly, a female *Achaearanea simulans* was taken from the outside of the box a few moments later. Further down the road, on one of Market Harborough's council estates (Fairfax Road), I cleaned a triangular "doorless" phone box. On this morning a male *T.blackwalli* was being blown about on the top of the phone boxes mechanism; this was probably another aeronaut.

On 10/6/98 I returned to the red phone box at Kings Norton, to find a second male *T.blackwalli* wandering the phone box. Several hours later a female *T. blackwalli* was found in the red phone box at Medbourne, in a web about two metres from the floor. The second female of the day was again in her web, situated in a similar place in Theddingworth's red phone box. Bitteswell churchyard produced two female *T. blackwalli* on the 12/6/98, both from the walls of the church, with one from the rear and the other from around the stonework of the main doors.

While out cleaning phone boxes, one gets to know where all the shops, petrol stations and public toilets are situated and their opening times. So on the 15/6/98 while visiting the toilets situated within the Wigston cemetery, I noted several spider species inside the toilet on the walls and ceiling, amongst which were two male *T. blackwalli*.

The final *T. blackwalli* record of the year came from the red phone box at Ashby Magna on the 16/6/98, when another wandering male was found on the glasswork of this box. On 22/6/98 I finished working for ACS. This curtailed my collecting activities and no further *T. blackwalli* records were forthcoming. A few records obviously point to aeronauts, others to ideal permanent habitats such as churchyards, with eight records coming from red phone boxes.

This species could be more of a frequent aeronaut than previously realised, but due to the brevity of its maturity season unless you are out and about at the right time, it could easily be overlooked. I have collected many species of known aeronauts from inside red phone boxes. These have climbed up the outside of the box and then wandered through the 15 mm high ventilation gap that goes around the phone box at about two metres high. This slit has a downward curving overhang at the top to stop rainwater getting into the phone box; conversely any small creature wandering up the outside of the phone box (such as a spider to aeronaut) would be channelled inside.

The 1999 season.

The first record of the year came on the 28/4/99 while collecting spiders in Narborough churchyard. Two sub-adult male *T.blackwalli* (one was collected) were found amongst the decorative stonework either side of the main doors.

A further record came from the yard of a terraced opticians practice on the Narborough Road, Leicester. My wife was the optical dispenser there and when I dropped her off I occasionally examined the yard for spiders. On the 19/5/99 a male *T.blackwalli* was found under one of the window sills. This prompted me to visit Desford churchyard in the west of the county on the same day, where a male and sub-adult female *T.blackwalli* were found together under a window sill.

Having finished a night shift at Asda on the 25/5/99, I drove to Fenny Drayton churchyard where a male, sub-adult male and a female *T.blackwalli* were discovered in the corners of the stonework around the main entrance to the church. Several churchyards later another male *T.blackwalli* was collected from beneath the window sill of Sibson church. The following day I visited another group of churchyards, this time to the north-east of Leicester, where the final church of the day yielded a female and sub-adult female *T.blackwalli*. These were collected from a two metre high brick wall and from the church wall respectively.

On the 1/6/99 I visited a further group of churchyards in the south-west of the county, where at Claybrooke Parva two male and two female *T.blackwalli* were captured. A male and female were found amongst the ornate stonework around the walls of the church, with the other male and female being found inside a small wooden shed adjacent to the church wall. The female was within her web on the back of the door, with the male wandering around about half a metre away on the same door. The shed had no windows, so the spiders were in relative darkness.

At Frolesworth churchyard a male *T.blackwalli* was found amongst the stonework at the entrance to the church. With a female being discovered spun-up in the recesses of a carved gravestone in the grounds of Dunton Bassett churchyard. These were the final *T.blackwalli* records of 1999.

Conclusion.

This spider has a short maturity season, with recognisable sub-adults being found from late April to late May and adults from mid-May to the end of July. From the evidence gathered from these few records it would seem that males mature up to several weeks before females. There is also evidence that both sexes aeronaut as adults. It would seem that this species could arise almost anywhere when aeronauting, with it surviving/breeding in some unlikely places, such as telephone boxes.

Although these records are nothing more than a snapshot of what *T.blackwalli* is doing in Leicestershire, it would seem that from mid-May to mid-June *T.blackwalli* could be looked for almost anywhere in England.

Provisional species accounts and distribution maps

***Salticus scenicus* (Clerck, 1757)**

Distribution

Widespread across Britain.

Status

Common and probably present in virtually every garden at least in southern England. It is widespread and common throughout Northern Europe (Roberts 1995).

Habitat and Ecology

The species is found on sunny walls and fences but is also found in more natural open habitats, on rocks and sometimes tree trunks. This is an easily recognised spider whose adult season extends from May/August. As with all Salticidae the spider has good vision and the enlarged chelicerae in the males, easily seen by the females, play a role during courtship.

Author of profile P.R. Harvey and David Nellist using information from Bristow (1958), Jones (1983), Locket & Millidge (1951) and Roberts (1995).

Lepthyphantes tenuis (Blackwall, 1852)

Distribution

Widespread across Britain.

Status

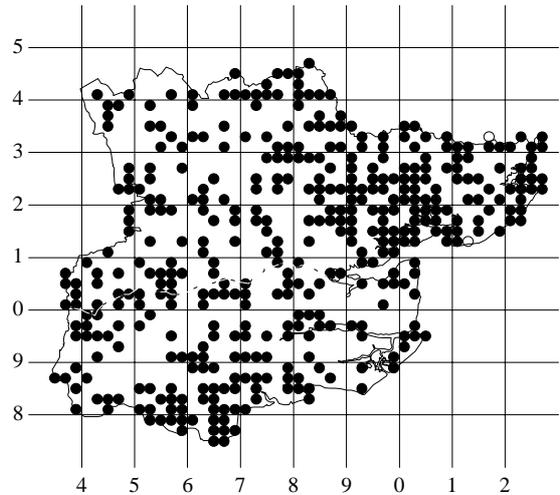
Common and can be regarded as one of most ubiquitous spiders.

Habitat and Ecology

The species is a frequent aeronaut which can be found in many different habitats including ruderal vegetation, grassland, woodland, wetland and heathland but is perhaps especially associated with grasslands. It can be considered a 'pioneer' species which will quickly colonise new habitats and take advantage of disturbed ground. Adults can be found throughout the year.

Author of profile P.R. Harvey

A distribution map for Essex illustrates a situation which is probably reflected in most other parts of Britain. Please send any relevant feedback.



Theridion pinastri L. Koch, 1872

Distribution

The species was first recorded in Britain as a male at Chobham Common, Surrey in 1977 (Murphy & Murphy 1979) with a female taken in the same vicinity in 1984. There have been a number of more recent records (Carr 1998; Carr & Harvey 1996; Harvey *et al* 1993; Jones 1992) and further unpublished records in S. Essex and W. Kent which suggest that the spider may be more widespread in southern Britain than previously suspected.

The species is widespread in central and southern Europe.

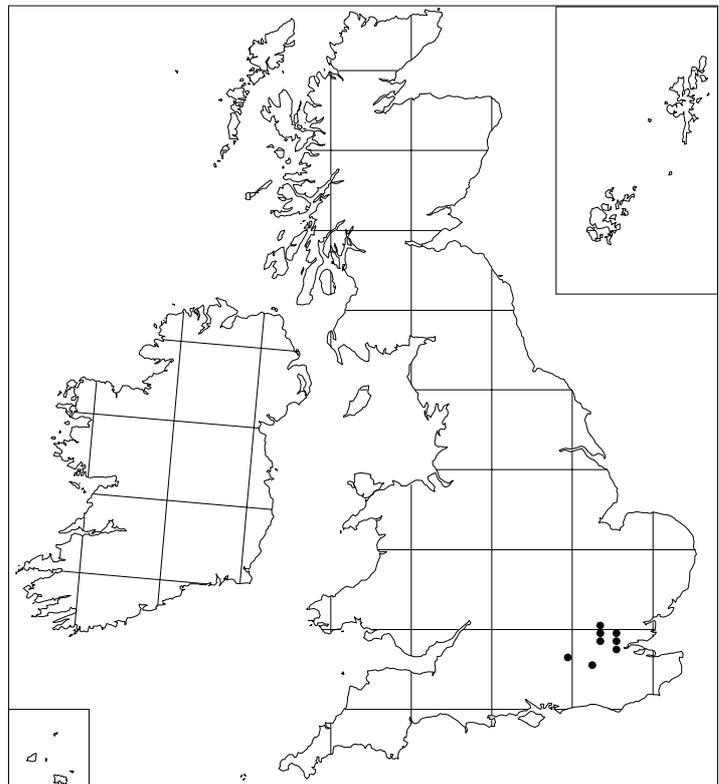
Status

Insufficiently Known RDBK. Current evidence now suggests this species is a rare native spider which should belong to the Rare (RDB3) category.

Habitat and Ecology

The spider has previously been associated with mature heathland in Britain and pine woods on the Continent (Merrett in Bratton 1991). However recent evidence suggests that mature deciduous trees such as large oak or beech in open situations at the edge of woodland clearings, acid grassland or heathland are more typical. Mature males and gravid females have been beaten off the lower branches of oak at Leyton Flats in S. Essex and further males and females have been collected from large oaks in open habitat in S. Essex and Hertfordshire, and from mature beech at Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire (Harvey *et al* 1996; Carr 1998). However in 1998 an adult female was also collected from scrubby oak in a hedgerow near Dartford Heath in W. Kent and an adult male was taken in a pitfall trap set in a silt lagoon at Rainham Marshes in S. Essex.

Of the 14 specimens collected in Britain adults have all been found in the period early June – mid July except for a single female taken in October.



Threats

Although most recent records involve mature deciduous trees, a common feature is an open habitat at the edge of clearings or widely spaced trees in open grassland or heathland. Lack of management resulting in the development of secondary woodland and the closure of open woodland is probably detrimental to this species.

Management

Management to retain open surroundings by light grazing or periodic control of scrub and tree invasion is likely to be important.

References

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- Carr, D. 1998. *Theridion pinastri* L.Koch new to Hertfordshire. *Spider Recording Scheme Newsletter* **32**: 4.
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Author of profile Peter Harvey.

Comments please to Peter Harvey at 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex RM16 2YP

female *Theridion pinastri* with egg sac on oak leaf



***Diplocephalus protuberans* and other spiders recently found in Hastings, East Sussex**

Andrew Phillips, 45 West Hill Road, St.Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex

I was pleasantly surprised to read J. Denton's article in the March 1999 SRS newsletter on the occurrence of *D. protuberans* in Hampshire just after I had received confirmation of a male of the species that I had found in Hastings, East Sussex. The spider was found in leaf litter beside a wooded gill stream in Ecclesbourne Glen, Hastings Country Park (TQ838102) during November 1998. It has been recognised for some time now that the gill streams of Hastings and the Weald have a bryophyte flora typical of more Western and Northern parts of Britain. It is becoming clear as more and more Northern and Western species of invertebrates are found in this area that the invertebrate fauna also has a Northern/Western flavour. Other Northern/Western species recorded from Hastings have included the water beetle *Hydraena pygmaea* and the caddis-fly *Diplectrona felix*.

Other spiders recently found in Hastings have included *Hybocoptus decollatus*, beaten from gorse on the undercliff at Fairlight Glen, Hastings Country Park (TQ852106), and *Episinus truncatus* and *Micrargus laudatus* were found from a small area of landslip at the base of the cliffs at Rock-a-Nore, Hastings (TQ830096).

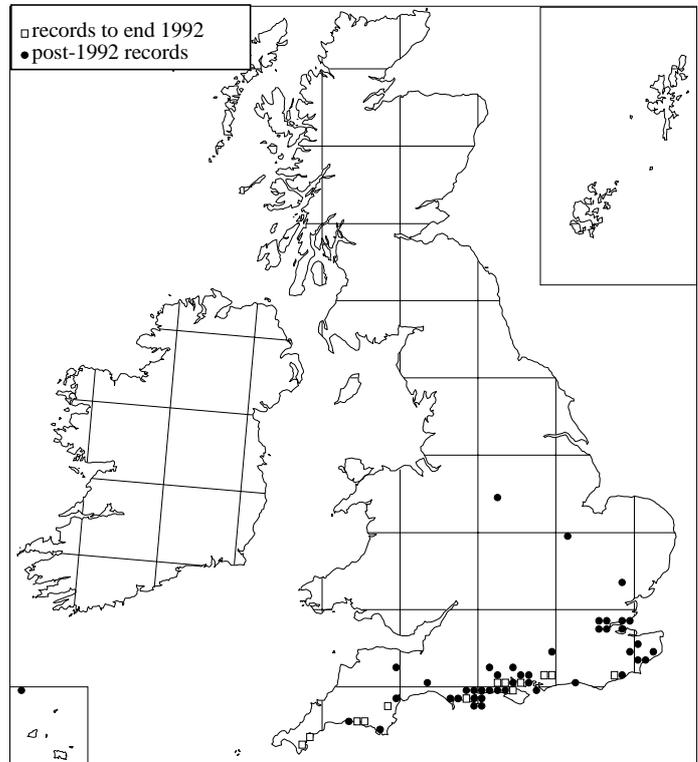
An update on the expansion in range of *Argiope bruennichi* (Scopoli, 1772)

Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2Y

I am very grateful to all those people who have sent me their records of *Argiope bruennichi*. Peter Smithers has written a more detailed review of recent British records for the BAS Newsletter. All the data I have received is reproduced here in the form of a map which clearly shows the remarkable increase in range which is occurring for this species. We should continue to document this expansion in range and I would urge all SRS members to keep a look out for the species in future years.

The article on this spider in the Mail started an influx of reports and a spate of articles in local newspapers. My own local newspaper carried an article about a sighting of this 'venomous European wasp spider' by a local resident who had identified it and obtained information, unfortunately not all accurate, using the internet. A report from Blackpool seems likely to involve *Dysdera crocata* and a report from Cleveleys in Lancashire has been found to be *Araneus diadematus*. Two sightings in south Essex reported to me by members of the public were also of *Araneus diadematus*, despite all the newspaper articles carrying excellent photographs of *Argiope*.

Argiope bruennichi distribution in October 1999



A new Area Organiser

Lincolnshire has been without an Area Organiser for several years. I am very pleased to announce that Annette Binding, a BAS and SRS member, has agreed to take on the role. Anyone with completed record cards or computerised data for this county should send them into the Spider Recording Scheme via Mrs Annette E. Binding at 6 Willow Court, Washingborough, Lincoln LN4 1AS

The next newsletter

Newsletter No. 36 will be published in March 2000. Please send contributions as soon as possible to Peter Harvey, SRS National Organiser, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP email: grays@peterharvey.freemove.co.uk