

British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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Many thanks to those who have contributed articles, notes and information for this issue. Newsletter No. 39 will be published in March 2001. 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

Progress towards the provisional atlas

All cards have been coded, ready for punching. About 28,000 cards were submitted. All but 3,500 field cards, and c.800 Rare Species cards, have now been punched. All punching should be finished by the end of October.

About 14,000 cards are ready to send out for checking. This is the major task still remaining. 5327 cards were sent out for checking in the latest batch, and most of these are now back, and are in the process of being edited. Another 4737 cards have already been checked, edited, and progressed to automatic validations.

There are still some more batches of electronic records to come (including my own!!) and when they arrive, they will be need to have automatic validations carried out.

10,260 records are in the process of having automatic validation carried out. 130,903 records have been completely validated. This includes all the records submitted in electronic format to date.

To date, there are 287 unedited draft accounts and some of these have been included in the July 1999, November 1999, March 2000 and July 2000 Newsletters. There remain 79 species without any existing account or promised author, as well as 133 RDB and Nationally Scarce (Notable) species with existing published accounts by Peter Merrett which may need updating, and which will need to be adjusted to a format suitable for the atlas. Additional volunteers are still wanted!

Feedback on these draft accounts by Spider Recording Scheme members and other arachnologists is essential if we are to make sure the text reflects people's knowledge and experience in the field. Unfortunately it is not going to be practical to publish draft text in the timescale available. However the National Biodiversity Network Gateway may provide an exciting opportunity for many members to access both the draft maps and text and respond with valuable information. Please read the article by Jonathan Cooper on the next page for details. If you cannot access the internet then you can still receive the draft text (but not maps – this would involve too much paper generation and postage!) by notifying me that you would like to be involved in reading and responding to the draft text for the provisional atlas.

Using the NBN gateway (www.searchnbn.net) for validation of Spider Recording Scheme data

Jonathan Cooper

Introduction

The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) has developed a web site for distributing and sharing biodiversity information, particularly biological records. This site has become known as the NBN gateway. It is still in its pilot development stages, but is available for everyone to see at www.searchnbn.net. It is planned that the Spider Recording Scheme, in collaboration with BRC, use this web site to distribute draft maps to its members for interactive checking. These pages will not be available to anyone other than spider recorders. Here is a brief description of the website, how SRS would like to use it and how SRS users will be able to access it.

The NBN gateway

The NBN gateway works like a search engine, where the user types in the name of the species or location they are interested in and a list of web pages is presented that match the search. The types of web pages that can be found include:

- Species dictionaries
- Species accounts
- 10km national species maps
- Occurrence on SSSI's and SAC's
- Interactive maps of sample points/records

The web pages are built from a central database of species records, geographic boundaries and textual information. Since it is still a pilot system, its taxonomic coverage is limited to bryophytes, beetles, crayfish, Odonata and marine species, but this will expand. Also, only information that is already in the public domain is available to the public, other information (such as interactive maps and species occurrence on sites) are hidden behind a security system.

Using the NBN gateway for SRS data validation

It is planned to provide interactive maps for geographic validation of spider records. These maps will only be available to SRS registered users (explained below). Once the unvalidated SRS records have been loaded onto the central NBN database, SRS users can use the interactive map to zoom in on spider records, interrogate them (point and click on the dot for record information) and flag them if they think they need further checking. Data can be viewed either by single species, or all species together if the validator is particularly familiar with a site.

When a record is flagged the user will be able to add a comment. This information will be returned, via the internet, to a central database. All records flagged and commented in this way will then be passed to a co-ordinator who has the final responsibility for dealing with them. It is hoped that with the assistance of spider recorders in this way, errors can be spotted and corrected before they reach the printed page.

Accessing SRS only web pages

Anyone can access the NBN gateway. However, they will soon discover they only have access to information that is already in the public domain, such as published species accounts and 10km dot maps, but not the SRS draft maps. To gain access to web pages intended only for SRS users you must do two things:

1. **Register:** the easiest way to do this is to click on the 'Register' link on the home page (top right). This presents a short form to fill in. When filling in the form be sure to select '*Spider Recording Scheme*' as your organisation, and give yourself a user name and password. Once the form has been filled in press '*Register me!*', this will give you Peter Harvey's e-mail address. Then...
2. **e-mail Peter Harvey:** Peter will be moderating access to the SRS only web pages. You should e-mail him so he can upgrade you from '*public user*' to '*SRS user*', this will then give you access to all pages available to SRS users via your unique user name and password.

Obviously, there will be no draft spider maps or text for SRS users to see until they are posted on the website. This is likely to be around January 2001.

Herefordshire spiders - or some that will miss the Atlas!

Wayne Rixom, 44 Edward Avenue, Aldridge, West Midlands WS9 8AX

It has been over 2 years since my last contribution to the SRS Newsletter (no30, Mar 1998) and compared to earlier years I have suffered from something that catches up with all recorders: eventually, the law of diminishing returns!

In July 1998 a nationally notable species, *Philodromus collinus* was beaten from conifers at Queens Wood S067-27-. A locality that at the time was the most western record in Britain. The most interesting spider that year came when *Scytotes thoracica* was found in the summer. Initially on the exterior of an old monastery in Hereford (under loose mortar). More significantly it was also found under windowsills of a closed public records office in Leominster, protected only by the overhang but otherwise fully exposed to the elements. Last year there were just three additions. Of most interest was the appearance of *Achaearanea simulans* (Nationally Notable Nb) at 2 different sites.

This year *Xysticus bifasciatus* turned up in traps set at the summit of a tiny reserve called Monument Common SSSI an area of patchwork gorse and grassland dominated by ant mounds. Also present here was *Drassodes pubescens*.

Another record at Leominster this year was an immature *Steatoda grossa* in an atypical habitat. An old pipe on waste ground. I remember reading in BAS/SRS columns that storm drains and inspection chambers have been recent sites for this species, which is rare in the Midlands with only 4 northern records from Worcestershire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and an old one from Staffordshire (G C Slawson). Amongst records from other naturalists supplied to me this year was *Pardosa agricola* on the north bank of the river Monnow.

By far the least expected record this year came when I undertook pitfall trapping of a trust reserve of dry calcareous grassland at Nupend Wood. This forms part of a long-term objective to try and track down possible habitats for an old record of *Pardosa paludicola*, possibly genuine according to Dr Merrett (pers comm). Instead of that of course I find over 50 specimens of another RDB2 spider, *Pelecopsis radicola* from no more than 5 traps. These came from a site about 2km south west of the original locality. There would probably have been even more if there had not been some trap losses over the 3 week run. Is this a record from so few traps examined? Could this RDB species be excluding the far more widespread species *P. parallela* (absent in the county so far) from a suitable microhabitat here I wonder? Furthermore is this species moving north. Such a large local population could well suggest a firm basis for this.

***Bianor aurocinctus* (Araneae: Salticidae) captured at Hatfield Moors SSSI, Yorkshire**

Richard Wilson, 82 Harold Terrace, LEEDS, West Yorkshire, LS6 1LD.
e-mail: riwspider@hotmail.com

As part of my MSc Biodiversity & Conservation at the University of Leeds, I have been studying the spiders and ground beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae) of this former raised peat-bog in South Yorkshire (National GR: SE 6904). The method of capture has been entirely pitfall trapping.

During the week commencing 14th June 2000, in one of the pitfall traps situated on sandy soils with sparse vegetation (average cover (1m²): 12%), a single male *B.aurocinctus* was caught. This is a nationally notable 'Na' species and as far as I know, a new species for Yorkshire. The individual was confirmed by Mr. T.Thomas (Bedfordshire Recorder).

In addition to this species, several male *Euryopis flavomaculata* have been caught in the wetter areas of heathland (dominated by *Calluna vulgaris*), a species that I've never seen before.

Update on *Argiope bruennichi*

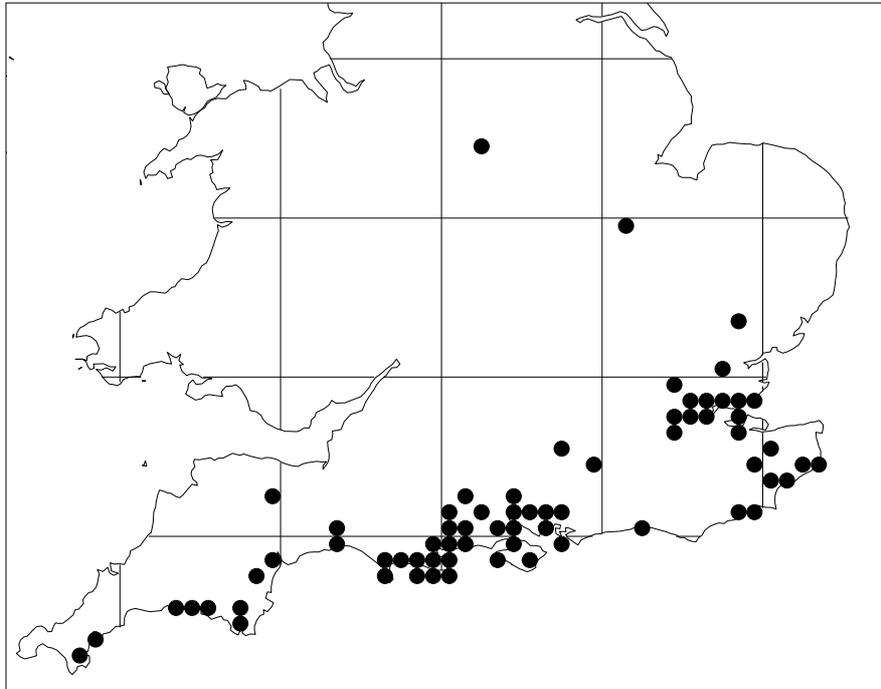
Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays Essex RM16 2YP

I am very grateful to those people who have responded to my appeal for records of *Argiope*. I have received a number of records from new areas, but in the main reports this year have consolidated data within areas the spider is already known.

It still surprises me how such a striking species can be difficult to spot. David Carr, Ken Hill, Eric Philp, Tony Russell-Smith and myself paid a visit to Minster undercliffs and Bedlams Bottom in Kent on the 8th October. We found one specimen at Bedlams Bottom, on the edge of the River Medway in Kent, in typical habitat in rough grassland. Searches eventually turned up three more females, all close to the original discovery.

All data available to the end October 2000 is given in the map below. If you have any additional data please send it to me.

Argiope bruennichi distribution in October 2000



Corrected address details

Address details for Michael Kilner, Area Organiser for vice counties 35, 41, 42, 43 and 100 (Monmouth, Glamorgan, Brecon, Radnor and Clyde Isles) were shown incorrectly in Newsletter 36. The correct details are: 58 Llandegfedd Way, New Inn, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 0RG. Apologies for this.

Changes in Area Organiser details

Mike Taylor has left Worcester VC37 and Salop VC 40 and moved from his previous address to 12 Walsingham Mews, Rickingham, DISS, Suffolk IP22 1ET.

John Partridge has very kindly agreed to take over from Mike Taylor. His address details are:
31, Duxford Close, Redditch, Worcs. B97 5BY