

British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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NEWSLETTER

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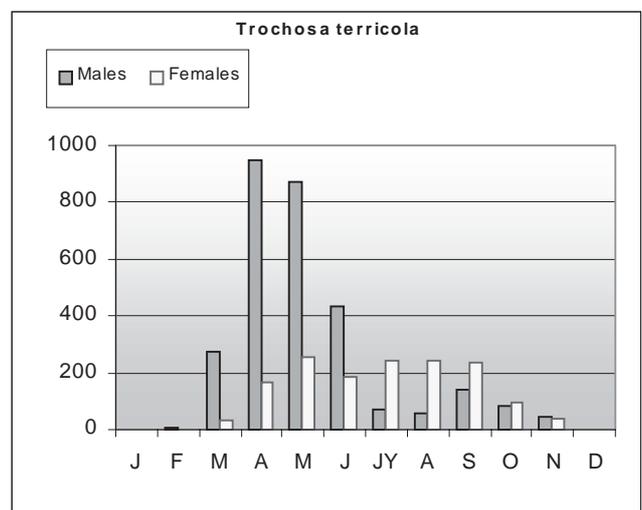
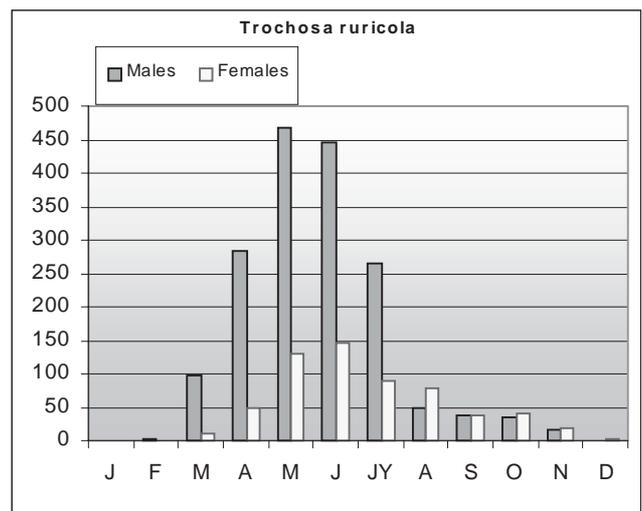
Many thanks to those who have contributed articles, notes and information for this issue. Newsletter No. 42 will be published in March 2002. Please send contributions by the end of January at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP email: grays@peterharvey.freemove.co.uk

Progress towards the provisional atlas

A total of over 490,000 records have been submitted to the scheme in time for inclusion into the provisional atlas. These have all been punching checked and have undergone other standard checks at BRC. The status of records queried by arachnologists on the NBN Gateway or by examination of hard copy draft maps has been checked as far as possible in the time available, and decisions have been made whether or not to map them on the advice of Peter Merrett and other members of the SRS Subcommittee of the British Arachnological Society. A dataset of male/female data provided by the Essex Spider Group, Martin Askins, John Crocker, Francis Farr-Cox, Richard Gallon, Paul Lee, John Murphy, Robert Merritt, Jennifer Newton and John Partridge based on over 130,000 records has been used to inform the species accounts and will be used to produce a chart of numbers of males and females recorded monthly, to be included in the accounts for most British species. All text and male/female data has been submitted to BRC and publication work on the atlas is under way. Publication is now expected in early January 2002.

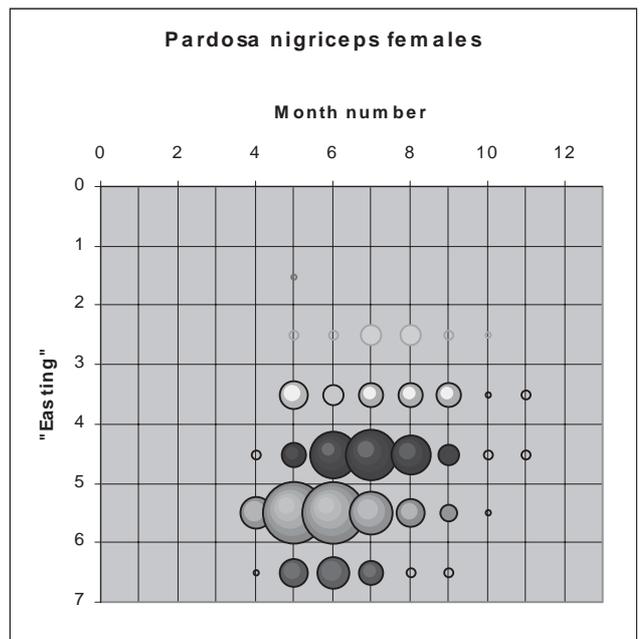
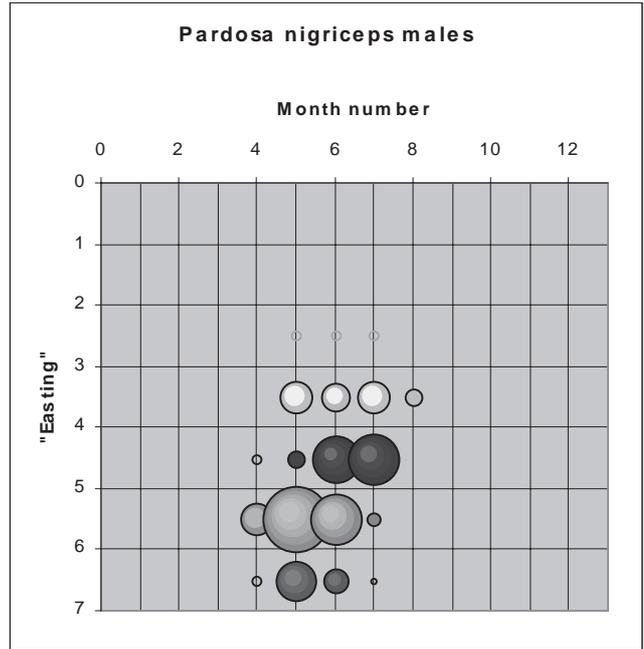
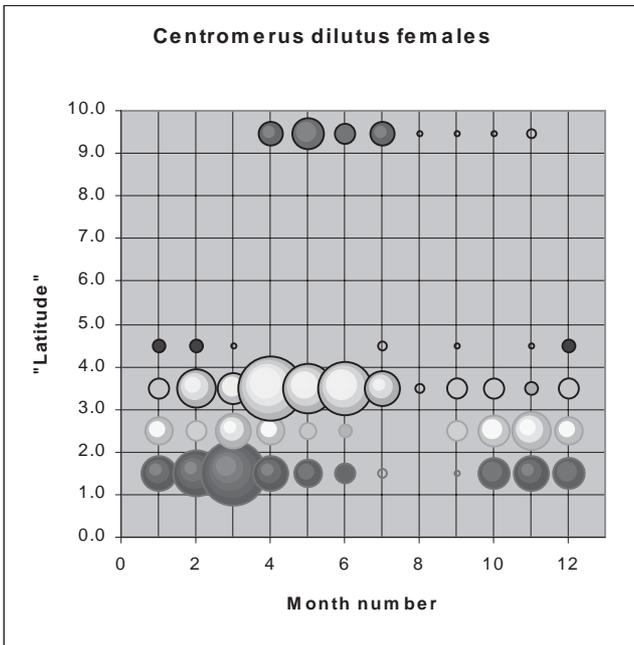
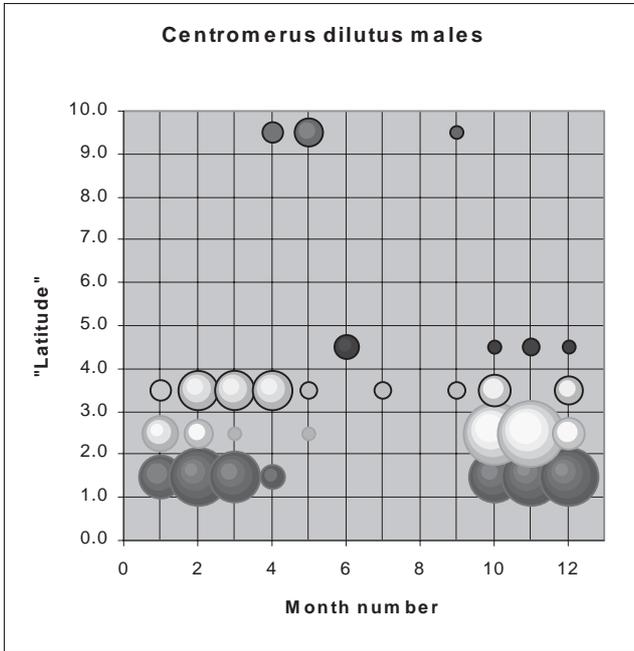
Draft text and distribution maps are still available to registered SRS members (at www.searchnbn.net, or via the SRS pages of the BAS website), although it is too late now to provide any feed back prior to publication. The intention is that the published dataset and maps will be on the NBN Gateway at some stage after publication, with access to data behind the dots available to registered users. This should help research into relationships between species and recorded information on habitat, altitude, etc. The intention is also to keep this regularly updated.

For me, one of the most interesting aspects to come out of the work towards publication has been the value of male/female data provided with records. Two examples of charts such as those to be published in the atlas are given below, for *Trochosa terricola* and *T. ruricola*. I think these demonstrate the value of having such data available.



These data are potentially even more interesting when looked at on the basis of their latitude and longitude in Britain (using the 100km OS grid for northings and eastings). The data available indicate that for a number of species the maturity period changes further north (e.g. phenograms for *Centromerus dilutus* overleaf):

submit to the scheme please contact me.



Also, for some species there is an indication that maturity period changes from east to west (e.g. *Pardosa nigriceps* right):

**PLEASE KEEP THE RECORDS
COMING INTO THE SCHEME**

However, at the moment the data available do not cover a wide enough range of latitude or longitude, and it hasn't been analysed on a year by year basis; but wouldn't it be nice to have enough data coverage to properly examine patterns across the country?

The intention is to try (being the operative word) to keep card data up-to-date in the future on at least a yearly basis, and to increasingly encourage and accept data which is already computerised.

As well as concentrating on under-recorded parts of the country and under-recorded parts of each county, the collection of male/female data should be major feature of phase two of the recording scheme. If anyone already has male/female data which they could

Habitat data submitted to the recording scheme

Of the 490,000 records that have been submitted to the spider database, nearly half have coded information on habitat. Mark Telfer has provided me with a breakdown of these data. They vary from 40,950 records from deciduous woodland to 161 records from machair, and only five habitats account for over 50% of these records (deciduous woodland, grassland-other, heath/moor-heather, woodland-mixed and wetland vegetation-other).

The number of records per coded habitat varies over a very wide range, and of course it is often difficult to assign one collecting area to a single coded habitat. The number of species recorded in each habitat (fig. 1) is therefore unlikely to be an accurate or complete indication of habitat richness.

Graphing the relationship between the number of records and the recorded species diversity (fig. 2) indicates a reasonably close relationship between number of records and number of recorded species, levelling out when sufficient records have been made. This suggests that for many habitats more records would result in more species being recorded. There is also some evidence, not unreasonably, that buildings, cave/tunnel/well and cultivated land have fewer species than other habitats. However

the graph also suggests that most habitats potentially might reveal remarkably high numbers of species. It seems that a lot more data is required before any conclusions can be valid.

Individual species habitat data have not been available for use in the text during the production of this atlas, and its analysis will become a future aim of the Spider Recording Scheme. Another aim for the second phase of the recording scheme should also be to raise the number of records from poorly recorded habitats.

Fig. 2. Relationship between species diversity and number of records

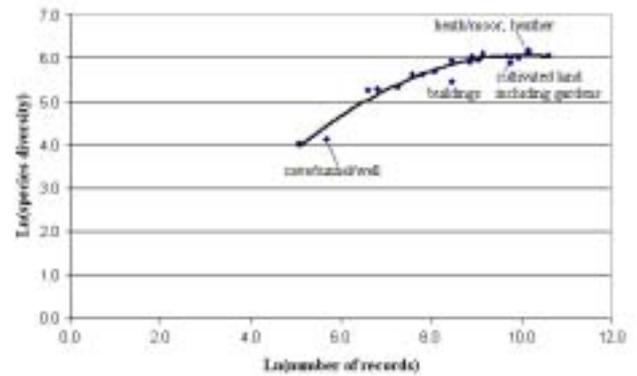
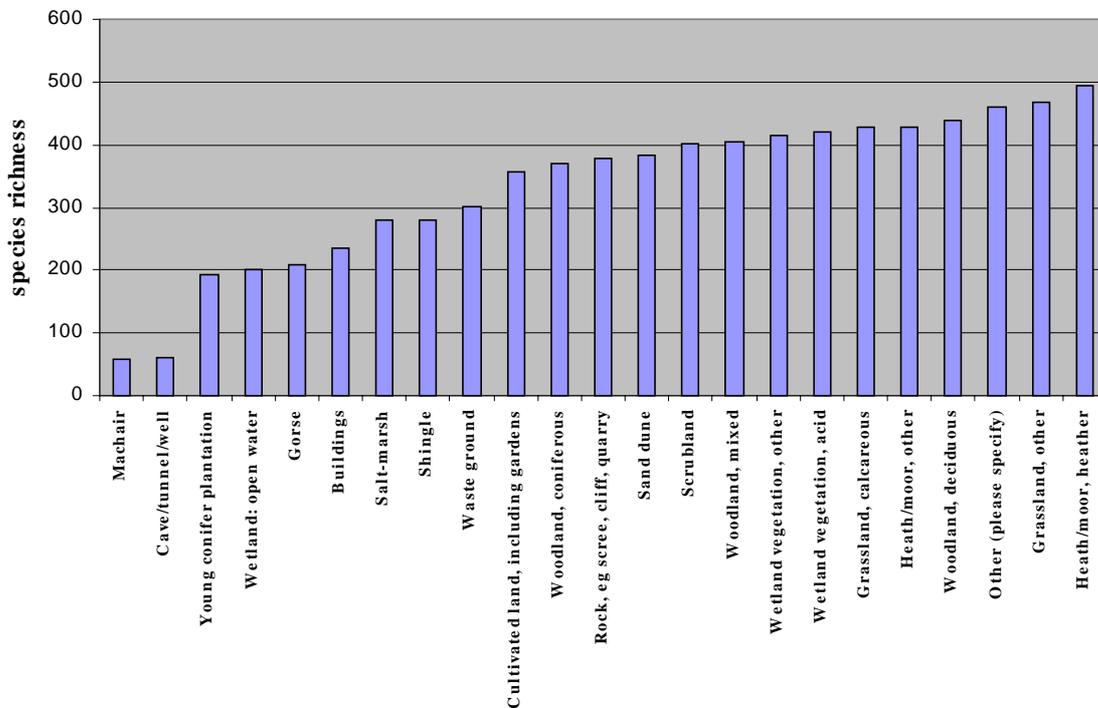


Fig. 1. Species richness per coded habitat type



Continuing submission of computer records

Stan Dobson Moor Edge, Birch Vale, High Peak,
Derbyshire SK22 1BX stand@beeb.net.

The input of electronic data for the provisional atlas has now been completed, but records should still be submitted for the next atlas and beyond. The system as prescribed in the 1998 document 'Submission of computer records' has worked quite well, and, for the most part, will be retained; but it has become apparent that there are shortcomings in the data requirements which were based on the RA65 cards. These will have to be revised, but for the time being, data can be sent in more or less the same format as before. However, some changes, initiated by BRC, have already been made to this and others have been proposed for immediate adoption. Modifications to the specification as set out previously are given below.

When the updated specification is finalised, a revised document will be produced. For those interested in submitting electronic data for the first time, the original (amended in line with the modifications below) is still available from me.

MODIFICATIONS.

Additional fields.

A Dateclass field has been introduced for use when the date is known only approximately. Please insert this immediately after the Year field and enter a single character '+', '-', 'C' or 'P' meaning 'after', 'before', 'about' (use average date for a range) or 'published in' (undated, literature record) respectively. Leave blank for known dates. .

Data are now being requested for statistical work on the seasonal appearance of the sexes and juveniles. If possible, please include three separate fields for males, females and juveniles giving either the number seen or collected, or any other character such as 'x' to indicate that they were present. If this is not possible, use a single field with an indication such as 'm, 2f'. If egg sacs are seen with females, it would be a good idea to note this.

Relaxations of requirements.

Originally, a strict naming convention for files was specified. This has been found to be unnecessary and many people didn't follow it anyway, so it can be abandoned. However, please make sure that your file names identify you, as occasionally details have to be checked later and it isn't so easy when more than one file is called something like 'spiders.csv'! Incorporate your name, initials or recorder number and, if you send more than one file, please don't use the same file name.

Data can be sent by e-mail (preferably); otherwise it must be PC compatible and can be on 3.5" floppy discs, 100Mb Zip discs or CDs. Large files sent by e-mail should be compressed to save downloading time.

The file can be in csv (comma-separated variable) form as plain text, or as an Excel or Access file. Other data formats may be acceptable; please contact me for further information.

Field names in a header row are acceptable.

An additional category has been introduced for the Source field. This is 'LRC' (digit 4) which refers to 'Local Records Centre or similar'.

Occasionally the VC number is indeterminate. In such cases use 0 and if there is a VC name field, leave it blank.

For species, originally, the BRC code number was required rather than the name, but it has been found that the name is more reliable as it can be converted automatically without errors. Please include both as a doublecheck.

When entering names in the recorder and determiner fields, if there are many, it would help a lot if they are entered surname first. I have to have numbers allocated to these names, and it is very much quicker changing them if the surnames come first.

General comments.

Any records of rare species which are sent in on GEN14 cards should also be included with the electronic data to minimise card entry.

Please ensure that there are no double quotes anywhere in the data fields. This is most important as they prevent correct operation of the checking program.

Experience has shown that very few files reach me that require no modification, but please remember that for every minute that you save by not formatting your records correctly, that is an extra minute for me and it is multiplied by all the files I receive.

If there are any queries or if you require more help in producing your record file, please give me a ring on 01663 743551 or e-mail me at stand@beeb.net.

A further record of *Pistius truncatus* from Blean Woods, Kent

A. Russell-Smith 1 Bailiffs Cottage, Doddington,
Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 0TU

Although first recorded in Britain from the New Forest in the 19th century, *Pistius truncatus* (Pallas, 1772) is currently only known from East Blean Woods L.N.R., near Canterbury in Kent. Two sub-adult specimens were beaten from a small oak tree in July 1995, one of which, a male, was subsequently reared to the adult stage by the late Frances Murphy (Allison & Russell-Smith, 1996). Since that date, at least 12 attempts have been made by the author to collect this species in the same area, as well as several in other parts of the Blean Woods complex, but without success.

On the 29th July 2001, the author collected a specimen by beating small oaks in the same general area of East Blean Woods in which *P. truncatus* was taken previously. A single adult female was taken from a tree less than 20 m from where the previous specimens were collected in 1995. This tree was of very similar size and appearance to that on which it was collected earlier. The specimen was kept live, photographed

at the author's home and then, in view of its apparent rarity, returned to the same tree on which it was found. It seems likely that this species is mature in late July and possibly early August in this country, rather later in the year than many records from the continent.

Other spiders collected from a series of small oaks in the same general area included species that are typically found on the foliage of deciduous trees. On this occasion *Xysticus lanio*, *Philodromus praedatus*, *Ballus chalybeus*, *Heliophanus cupreus*, *Anelosimus vittatus* and *Araniella cucurbitina* were all taken. On previous sampling occasions at earlier periods in the year, *Clubiona compta*, *C. brevipes*, *Misumena vatia*, *Philodromus aureolus*, *P. dispar*, *P. albidus*, *Araneus triguttatus*, and *Araniella opistographa* were also beaten from oaks in this area.

Pistius truncatus from Blean Woods, Kent

photograph by A. Russell-Smith



This record suggests that a viable population, albeit possibly extremely small, does exist in East Blean Woods. As with other extremely rare invertebrates, management recommendations for its conservation cannot be based on adequate population data until an effective sampling protocol becomes available. Beating of tree limbs is almost certainly a highly inefficient way of sampling invertebrates, if only because a small proportion of readily accessible branches is sampled on any given tree. However, techniques such as insecticidal fogging, while certainly more efficient in an absolute sense, are clearly not appropriate for rare and potentially endangered species. However, if the observation from continental countries that *P. truncatus* is normally associated with "scrub" oaks (J. Murphy, pers. comm.) holds true in Blean Woods as well, it would be important to ensure the continued coppicing of a reasonable proportion of oak trees, as opposed to "promoting" them to high forest trees.

Reference

Allison, R. & Russell-Smith, A. 1996. *Pistius truncatus* (Pallas, 1772) in Kent. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **76**: 4.

Spider Recording In South Wales

Michael Kilner 58 Llandegfedd Way, New Inn, Pontypool NP4 0RG

Glyncornel Environmental Centre, situated in the heart of the Rhondda valley, was the venue for a July spider identification training day, hosted by Stan Dobson and myself. The event was inspired by collecting done on the site by A.R. Jackson exactly 100 years before (with no activity at all in between!). 14 people attended over the weekend, for a combination of fieldwork in the SSSI woodlands adjoining the centre, and other nearby habitats, and later laboratory work. An excellent time was had by all, and even the weather was kind. A total of 61 species were taken over the weekend, including *Theridion impressum*, *Ceratinella scabrosa* and *Evarcha arcuata*, all new to Glamorgan. The opilionid *Sabacon viscayanum* was also abundant. Such was the enthusiasm of the participants that a spider recording group is now being established for Glamorgan and Gwent.

This enthusiasm is already bearing fruit. *Phlegra fasciata* has since been found by Simon Warmingham at Kenfig Burrows national nature reserve, making this the third site for this Red Data Book species in the county.

Another good find in the area was *Hypomma fulvum*, which I took from a reed bed at Uskmouth nature reserve on the Gwent levels. This is the first record of this species for Wales. *Pirata latitans* was also present. *Dolomedes* has also been seen in the area, but the only specimen that I have seen to date was the desiccated carapace and legs of a female (no abdomen), so the species will have to remain off the Gwent list for the present.

Hopefully, if the recording group takes off, there will be many more additions to the local lists in the near future.

addendum

On 9 September 2001 I went out to Piercefield Woods, Chepstow (Monmouthshire, VC35) where I found a single *Hyptiotes paradoxus* in Yew woodland. *Hyptiotes* was previously known from the other side of the river Wye, in Gloucestershire, but I believe that this is the first record from Wales. I looked for other specimens, without success, but the habitat is classic *Hyptiotes*, and I am sure that there will be a viable population there.

Where's Denny?

Michael Kilner 58 Llandegfedd Way, New Inn, Pontypool NP4 0RG

I was interested to be sent some specimens and litter samples from Denny Island, (OS grid reference ST458810), a small rocky outcrop lying in the middle of the Severn estuary, almost equidistant between the English and Welsh shorelines. Denny is a limestone rock outpost, with a bare rocky shoreline, and an extensive colony of cormorants. The centre of the island, such as it is, is dominated by Tree Mallow, although this is apparently in decline owing to the slow spread of the cormorant colony.

I had been hoping to visit the island myself, but unfortunately the original trip date was cancelled, and another date arranged at short notice, on which I was unable to attend. The specimens were therefore collected on 11 August 2001 by Colin Titcombe and Graham Harris, who do extensive work on the fauna and flora of Monmouthshire.

A single female *Dysdera erythrina* was taken from amongst the mallow, and numerous *Tiso vagans* and *Ostearius melanopygius* were found within samples of cormorant nest litter. Whilst these are very common species, they probably represent the first ever spider records from the island, which is an unappealing site for research because of its small size and the estuarine currents which make a prolonged stay (30 minutes maximum) impossible. I would be very interested indeed if any SRS member knows of any previous records from Denny.

Two other points. *Dysdera* seems to crop up quite often on islands, and I am interested to know what it feeds on. The only woodlouse in the samples that I was sent was the shore slater *Ligia oceanica*, which in its adult form at least is much bigger than *Dysdera*, and would pose a difficult challenge. Has *Dysdera* been recorded feeding on this species before, and if so, are juvenile *Ligia* available all year round? (or at least when *Dysdera* is active).

Lastly, Denny island sits almost exactly on the border between Monmouthshire (VC35), West Gloucestershire (VC34) and North Somerset (VC6). Exactly which vice county does it belong in? I am told it is Monmouthshire, and certainly most of it seems to be in VC35, but of course, I am biased towards the Welsh side. If anyone can provide a definitive answer, please let me know.

***Philodromus albidus* Kulczynski, 1911 in Watsonian East Gloucestershire (VC33)**

Paul F. Whitehead Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3EH

On 8 June 2001 I visited Kinsham Gravel Pit, Worcestershire (covering parts of both Watsonian V.-C. 33 and V.-C. 37) as part of an ongoing bio-assessment programme of a species-rich biologically diverse managed agrarian landscape (Whitehead, 1995, 1996), generally known as The Kemerton Estate. Kinsham Gravel Pit is now a privately-owned biological conservation site, and the assessment programme is arranged by the Kemerton Conservation Trust through its Conservation Officer.

Working across extensive areas of species-poor ruderal herbage (*Epilobium roseum* Schreb., *Senecio jacobaea* L. and *Ranunculus repens* L.) growing on previously cultivated ground between areas of open water and an ancient boundary hedge, I swept a completely white *Philodromus* off *Epilobium roseum*. The specimen was a small female, and was readily identified (Roberts, 1993, 1995) as *Philodromus albidus* Kulczynski. The find site was in the administrative county of Worcestershire, but just, and only just, inside Watsonian East Gloucestershire VC33 (SO93).

On 25 June 2001, I knocked a large female *Philodromus* off a flower-cluster of privet *Ligustrum vulgare* L. at the same site, forming part of a young linear amenity planting at the edge of a field. The vegetation probably best represents scrub edge in a largely open ruderal area, containing a water-body extending over some 0.3km², undoubtedly impacting on local micro-climate. This specimen had the abdominal dorsum heavily suffused with deep pink, and the epigynes were somewhat different to those of the first specimen. I then consulted David Nellist who kindly sent me a copy of a paper by Segers (1989). This proved most enlightening on the subject of variation in the form of the spermatheca duct, and I was left then with no doubt that this second specimen was also *P. albidus*.

The southern edge of Kinsham Pit is marked by some older plantations, and more recently developed amenity woodland, but these are >500m distant from the find sites. The *P. albidus* on 8 June 2001 was in a completely open herb-dominated landscape with no trees nearer than 150m.

According to the draft national distribution map kindly sent to me by Peter Harvey, *P. albidus* is presently limited to the area more or less south-east of a line from the Wash to the Bristol Channel, with a marked concentration of records in Essex. Kinsham Gravel Pit lies on the north-western edge of this range, and although there appear to be one or two records from Worcestershire and Warwickshire, *P. albidus* is thought to be new to VC33.

I am grateful to the people named in the text for providing information on *P. albidus* and its variation and to the Kemerton Conservation Trust for permission to visit the site. Dr P. Merrett also made some helpful comments.

References

- Roberts, M.J., 1993. *The spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* Compact Edition. 1-3. Harley Books.
- Roberts, M. J., 1995. *Spiders of Britain and northern Europe*. HarperCollins.
- Segers, H., 1989. A redescription of *Philodromus albidus* Kulczynski, 1911 (Araneae, Philodromidae). *Bulletin British Arachnological Society* **8** (2): 38-40.
- Whitehead, P.F., 1995. The invertebrate fauna of the Kemerton Estate, Worcestershire. Part I: Terrestrial Habitats. *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*. **156**: 89-105.
- Whitehead, P.F., 1996. The invertebrate fauna of the Kemerton Estate, Worcestershire. Part II: Arboreal habitats and Beggarboys wetland. *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*. **157**: 170-190.

***Ozyptila blackwalli*, new to Essex**

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

This year I have been undertaking an invertebrate survey at Belton Hills in south Essex, funded by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and English Nature. Belton Hills are south-facing coastal grasslands on clay, which have been the subject of various unfriendly planting and management schemes in the past, but which are now a Local Nature Reserve recognised for

their floral and faunal importance. Low density populations of two national Biodiversity Action Plan bumblebee species *Bombus humilis* and *B. sylvarum* were identified at the site last year, and the purpose of the survey was to identify other invertebrate species of importance in relation to recommendations for appropriate management of the reserve.

As part of this survey pitfall traps and pan traps were set in different compartments. Many invertebrate species of interest have been found, including the Nationally Scarce (Notable A) spider *Phrurolithus minimus* and the Nationally Scarce (Notable B) *Episinus truncatus*, which was widespread across the site at its only known Essex locality. One female of this species was first collected at Belton Hills by Roger Payne in 1997. Not surprisingly the 'East Thames Corridor' species *Zodarion italicum* has also been found at the site. However the real surprise was the presence of a single male *Ozyptila blackwalli* (confirmed by Peter Merrett) in a pan trap set between 29 May and 15 June 2001. This was in a small area of shorter open grassland amongst longer species-rich grassland in an area where some ornamental tree planting has taken place in the past.

Since no further specimens have been taken, it is not possible to confirm the status of the species at the site. However, with its isolation from other recorded populations, it seems very likely that the species exists here at a low population level.

***Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell,1875) at the Park Street gun shop**

Doug Marriott 19 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts., WD3 3RF (E-mail; dugmar @supanet.com)

On the 27th of July I received a call from a Mr. Fred Twilley, who writes weekly nature notes in the Herts Advertiser, saying that he had a spider which he had identified as a *Steatoda* sp. and comparing with the photos in Dick Jones' book he thought it was *Steatoda paykulliana*. Apparently his son works at a gun shop in Park Street, near St. Albans, just along the road from David Nellist's domain, and while his son was pulling down the security shutters at the close of business this spider fell to the ground and he collected it and took it home. His father brought the specimen over to me the following day and it was obviously too big for *S. paykulliana*. It was 11-12 mm. in length, very dark and warty and I identified it as a male *Steatoda nobilis*.

This is an unusual occurrence and if one refers to the provisional maps for the Atlas there are small colonies along the south coast and one record for Essex near the Thames Estuary, but as far as I know there are no records of the species being found inland in the U.K. So where did it come from? The security shutters are operated each day. The owner of the shop had been on the continent fairly recently so he could have imported it but then it would be more likely to have found a niche indoors and not walked outside and up the shutters. Then again, someone local may have been to the south coast and brought it back. Next door is a Chinese restaurant so maybe it came in with their fruit and veg. but it is certainly a puzzle.

My thanks are due to David Nellist for verifying the id and to the Twilleys for collecting and referring this unusual spider.

***Steatoda nobilis* female from Essex**

photograph by Peter Harvey



***Uloborus plumipes* in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire**

Colin Howes Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery, Chequer Road, Doncaster, S. Yorks DN1 2AE

On 5th August 2001 I visited Tickhill Garden Centre, Tickhill, Doncaster, South Yorkshire (SK603930), just before 6pm closing time. In the limited time available a number of old and tattered webs and some new webs were located. Of these at least ten were occupied by *Uloborus plumipes*. Nine were amongst the spear-like foliage (all above head height) of 10-15ft tall Yucca palms and one in an adjacent Norfolk Island Pine. These were in a covered and enclosed area with fountains and running water, the humidity kept fairly high for the benefit of Australasian Tree Ferns.

Uloborus plumipes

photograph by Peter Harvey



At first the immobile spiders, some of which were very tiny (probably recent hatchlings) were very difficult to see, stretched out in their webs. However, with the use of a long thin cane it became an easy matter to check which tiny angular objects were spiders and which were pieces of debris. The outstretched elongated front limbs with their ornate gauntlets of dark bristles

quickly became an easy means of identification. Although time was limited, I couldn't see any signs in the more exposed areas of the centre where air-flows were cooler and at a higher velocity.

Spurred on by the Tickhill discovery, on the 12 August I visited several of the larger, more established Garden Centres in the Doncaster region and can report the following :-

Branton (SE/633017) VC63

15 hatchlings and 1 adult *U. plumipes* on *Ficus alii* (at about 6-7 ft.); 1 adult *U. plumipes* on *Cicas revoluta* (at about 5ft.)

Epworth (SE/782040) VC54

Sweltering and rather stuffy. A large number of *U. plumipes* of all ages, including some dead and mildewed. There were 20+ *U. plumipes* of all age categories in roof frames above tropical plants such as *Musua banana*, *Diefenbachia* sp. and *Dracenia marginata*, all above 6ft off the ground; 40+ *U. plumipes* of all age categories on aluminium window frames and roof structure above water features with no plants, in enclosed and high humidity conditions. All spiders were above 4ft off ground; 50+ *U. plumipes* of all age categories on aluminium window frames and roof structure in tropical pets department (no plants, enclosed and with high humidity). All spiders were above 6ft off the ground. None were noticed in dryer departments or in semi exposed and more out-door sections.

Howden (SE/757285) VC61

2 spiderling *U. plumipes* were found on *Dracaena marginata* at 3-45ft in enclosed area with high humidity; 1 spiderling *U. plumipes* was on *Ficus benjamina* at 4-5ft in enclosed area with high humidity; 15+ tiny spiderlings and 1 adult *U. plumipes* were on *Ficus benjamina* at 4-5ft in enclosed area with high humidity; 20+ tiny spiderlings and 2 adult *U. plumipes* were on *Ficus benjamina* at 4-5ft in enclosed area with high humidity; 30+ *U. plumipes* of all age categories were on aluminium window frames and the roof structure at the south-facing and warmer end of the greenhouse plants section. All were above 6ft off ground, and none were noticed in drier departments or in semi exposed and more out-door sections. Interestingly at the Howden Garden centre there was a 'colony' of at least seven *Pholcus phalangoides* in one corner. They were on the aluminium framework and painted breeze block wall of the structure's lower section. They were still in a warm and humid area but were occupying a zone (about 3-4ft) beneath the *Uloborus* population which were relative trapeze artists operating in sunnier conditions at between 6-10 ft. Incidentally, I think Both *Pholcus* and *Uloborus* may represent a new VC61 records.

No *U. plumipes* were seen at Blaxton, where all the sky-lights were open creating cooler, well ventilated conditions or Brodsworth, where conditions were decidedly cooler and there was more air movement, and the site is exposed and very windy.

Further visits to new garden centres produced more records:

Wentworth (SK/390978) VC63

Wentworth Garden Centre, Wentworth, Rotherham 18th August 2001. Four tiny spiderlings, in webs in the foliage of a 5ft Palm-like plant labelled *Beaucarnea nolina* within the central

'hot-house' area.

Swillington Common, Garforth, Leeds (SE/385326) VC64

Strike's Garden Centre, Selby Road, Garforth, Leeds 2nd September 2001. The spiders were numerous (I stopped counting at 175) and in all size (?age) categories. They were in webs mainly at heights from about 5ft to 10ft+ on the aluminium frame work of the main glass house structure. They showed preference for less ventilated, therefore warmer and more humid conditions. They were virtually absent from the better ventilated areas subject to greater air-flows, cooler and fluctuating temperatures.

Unless other BAS members from the Leeds area have records, this would seem to be new for VC64.

***Uloborus plumipes* eggsac**

photograph by Peter Harvey



Congregations of Adult *Araneus diadematus* (Araneae: Araneidae) in Hertfordshire and Greater London

Richard Wilson Nature Conservation Bureau, 36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, NEWBURY, Berkshire, RG14 5SJ. riwspider@hotmail.com

As part of an ongoing contract to carry out botanical surveys of Thames Water sites, the sewage treatment works at Fiddlers Hamlet, Hertfordshire (TL477003) was visited on the 10/09/2001.

In one small area of the site I observed at least 30 individual *Araneus diadematus* sitting on their webs which were located within a small brick observation hatch. What caught my attention apart from the numbers involved was the fact that the webs were all intertwined such that many were indistinguishable from their neighbours. Thus the web structure was more similar in appearance to those created by *Tegenaria* species as opposed to the more familiar orb webs associated with *A. diadematus*. For those individuals that were located in the central portion of this entangled web, I rather doubt that any small creature would manage to get through the upper section without getting ensnared.

A similar observation earlier in the year (22/08/2001) at Stain Hill reservoir, Greater London (TQ 130 693) involved far fewer individuals (c.10) and all the adults were sitting on the typical orb web though in close proximity to each other.