

British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 43

July 2002

Many thanks those recorders who have contributed to this issue. Newsletter No. 44 will be published in November 2002. Please send contributions by the end of September at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP email: grays@peterharvey.freemove.co.uk

The provisional atlas and onwards.....

The provisional atlas was finally published at the beginning of April 2002. Although extremely frustrating it was probably inevitable that the planned deadlines were not attained. I hope the result has been worth the wait.

The atlas frequently raises many more questions than answers, and there is still much to do. We obviously need to continue recording sites of high nature conservation interest, threatened sites, under-recorded parts of the country and under-recorded parts of each county, as well as under-recorded habitats. However, for me, one of the most interesting aspects to come out of the work towards publication was the value of male/female data provided by arachnologists who kept these data even though their inclusion had not been a part of phase one of the scheme. In the near future, the SRS will hopefully be incorporating this important new dataset which gives phenological information for adults of each species (separately for males and females) using data kindly provided by the Essex Spider Group, Martin Askins, John Crocker, Ian Dawson, Francis Farr-Cox, Richard Gallon, Paul Lee, John Murphy, Robert Merritt, Jennifer Newton and John Partridge, and I have already learnt from Steve Gregory of data that will become available for Oxfordshire. Recording information of this sort will become a new focus of the next phase of the recording scheme. Male/female data, however limited in its acquisition and methodology, is an important mechanism to look at the phenology of spider species, not only in Britain as a whole, but more importantly by latitude, longitude and year.

Another major aim of phase 2 of the recording scheme is to establish an improved habitat classification for recording purposes. There are many reasons for this, for example we need to better establish a profile of the ecological characteristics of each British spider species, we need good quantitative data to identify the 'hot-spots' of biodiversity of spiders in the British landscape and those habitats where

species richness and/or presence of notable species makes them of special conservation interest. We need to assess how well these habitats are represented in protected areas. Above all we need to provide quantified information on spider ecology which will aid future research and stimulate new studies, and establish a data bank which will form a base line against which all future ecological work can be compared especially regarding aspects of landscape change and human activities.

The eventual aim might be to publish a volume describing the ecological characteristics of each British species in quantitative terms, discussing the implications of the results and highlighting aspects which seem to have no rational explanation, with suggestions for future work which may help resolve the issues.

Phase 2 will also include a management classification for recording purposes, so that we can establish a mechanism for identifying the effects of different management on the associated spider fauna. Data from this should better inform and enable recommendations to be made for appropriate management of different habitats for their spider fauna.

Coming up with a useful but workable habitat and management classification system has been extraordinarily difficult, and I am very grateful for the input of Dr Eric Duffey, the Spider Recording Scheme Subcommittee and various other arachnologists in helping me try and sort out a satisfactory system.

The last pages of this newsletter consist of a 2-sided A4 recording card with the latest draft proposed recording structure. The card attempts to provide a system which can give us much better data for the future, but I realise that there will be many circumstances where it will be impracticable to record all the requested data - **but please remember, data not provided is potentially important information lost forever!**

I would be very grateful indeed for comment and feedback from recorders on the the structure and workability of the

draft. The development of this card has been more for clarification of the recording structure than for actual card use, so please don't be too put off by the small font size. Also backward compatibility with the existing card has meant that there is an overlap in habitats. This is deliberate, not only for compatibility, but also to allow for habitats where recorders have difficulty in identifying a particular habitat.

When the data structure has been finalised, a booklet will be sent to all recorders and BAS members setting out the new phase 2 recording format with notes about submission of computerised data and completion of the card. Hopefully this will take place with the November mailing.

Whilst I believe it is essential to retain our excellent system of Area Organisers to help co-ordinate and stimulate recording locally, it might help to establish a network of Regional Co-ordinators who would collate, co-ordinate and enter computerised data. Any offers will be very gratefully received!

Quality of data is paramount. One of the roles of Area Organisers has always been to vet specimens of rare and scarce species as well helping inexperienced arachnologists, either by confirming identifications themselves or by passing the voucher specimens onto others with the necessary experience. Despite this, there are clearly a few dots that have crept into the provisional atlas which should be checked. We are now hoping to set up an additional national verification system where a panel of arachnologists will decide each year which records need further confirmation.

Progress has also been initiated towards a re-appraisal of national spider status using the new IUCN criteria. JNCC will use the existing spider dataset to produce a draft analysis for subsequent expert examination by members of the BAS and SRS. This is an important initiative that we need to be fully involved in.

Please keep up the good work, and keep the records coming into the scheme. Although the submission of computerised data is preferred, record cards (including the old ones) will always remain welcome.

Area Organiser changes

Unfortunately Wayne Rixom has had to resign as Area Organiser for Herefordshire due to health problems. Wayne has done lot of work in the county and I would like to thank him for all his efforts and wish him a speedy return to good health. John Partridge has agreed to take over, and so is now AO for Hereford, Worcester and Shropshire (Salop) -VCs 36, 37 and 40. Records for these counties should be sent to John at 31, Duxford Close, Redditch, Worcs. B97 5BY email: perdex31@aol.com.

Andrew Phillips has taken over as Area Organiser of East and West Sussex (VCs 13 and 14). Please submit records for Sussex to Andrew at Flat 4, 45 West Hill Road, St. Leonards-on-sea, East Sussex TN38 0NA email: APhillips@hastings.gov.uk.

Dr Steve Hopkin, who is undertaking a lot of fieldwork in the county, has agreed to take over as Area Organiser for East and West Cornwall (VCs 1 and 2) from Peter Smithers. Peter remains AO for North and South Devon. Records for Cornwall should now be submitted to Steve at Division of Zoology, School of Animal & Microbial Sciences, PO Box 228, University of Reading, READING RG6 6AJ email: s.p.hopkin@reading.ac.uk

Steatoda grossa (C. L. Koch, 1838) (Theridiidae) in the Orkney Islands

Ross H Andrew Millfield Cottage, Costa, Evie, Orkney KW17 2NJ

A spider forwarded to me in October 2001 by environmental services officers of Orkney Islands Council was recognisably a well-marked immature female of the species *Steatoda grossa*. Environmental Services had obtained the specimen from a concerned householder living in the parish of Holm, Orkney East Mainland. A large globular black spider had been reported which, it was feared, might be a venomous black widow.

After making my provisional identification, I contacted Edward Milner (BAS Area Organiser for Orkney and Shetland) and Peter Harvey of the BAS Spider Recording Scheme, who asked for a mature specimen, if at all possible, to confirm the identification.

The householders explained to me that they had moved from Plymouth three years previously and that cases had been brought in from an unheated garage and unpacked in the conservatory, where spiders had subsequently been seen. I later visited the house to find five specimens of *S. grossa* in varying stages of maturity which had been retained for me. None were reported to be as large as the original specimen that had caused such concern, but which had not been kept. I sent a mature female to Peter Harvey, who confirmed the identification.

I am now attempting to rear three specimens of *S. grossa* to maturity, the original immature female, a more mature but completely unmarked purplish black juvenile female and an immature male. From the number of specimens observed (mostly female) of varying age, it would appear that the species may have established a colony within at least one Orkney house, a modern, centrally heated, well isolated bungalow with very large south facing conservatory.

This is the northernmost occurrence to date for the species within the UK, the previous northernmost record coming from Westmorland.

I have asked the householders to report any further sightings of large specimens with the possibility, bearing in mind their move from Plymouth, of other *Steatoda* species being present. My thanks to Peter Harvey for providing Provisional Atlas and additional information on *Steatoda* and for confirming the identification.

***Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914), a jumping spider new to Britain**

Edward Milner 80 Weston Park, London N8 9TB

During the London Natural History Society's spider foray to Mile End Millennium Park in the east end of London (in the Watsonian recording county of Middlesex and within the old county of London) on Sunday 12th May 2002, a number of specimens of an unfamiliar salticid were swept from young pine trees. Most of the specimens were juveniles but one appeared to be an adult or a subadult female, although the epigyne was not very well-defined. The spiders were quite strongly built and fairly similar in appearance to *Marpissa muscosa* although a little smaller and distinctively marked in reddish brown. Being unable to identify them I sent all the specimens to Peter Harvey who expressed the view that they were not a British species, and sent them on to Peter Merrett and John Murphy. They both thought the species to be *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914), but considered that an adult male would help confirm the identification. Among the other specimens obtained on the foray was an adult male of *Misumena vatia*, surprisingly a new record for London.

I revisited the park on the 2nd June to try to find males, and carefully swept the lower branches of all the groups of small pine trees which have been planted in the park on both sides of the "green bridge". This resulted in the capture of several further specimens; adults of both sexes and some juveniles, from four separate groups of trees. Sweeping of other vegetation in the park such as tall herbs, bushes and the lower branches of other trees did not produce any further specimens, although an adult male *Theridion pinastris* was obtained from the pine trees, this being the first record of the species for London.

The new specimens were sent to Peter Harvey and thence to John Murphy who confirmed the identity as *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914). This is a fairly widespread species of southern and central Europe. It is known from France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary as well as around the Mediterranean. The typical habitat is on the branches and trunks of trees especially pines according to Roberts (1995) who provides illustrations* of the species under the synonym *Eris nidicolens*.

Further enquiries at Mile End Park revealed that the pine trees, mostly *Pinus nigra*, had been planted in November 1998 and had been obtained from Hilliers Nursery in Hampshire. How and when the spiders colonised these trees is not known, and so far no search has been made of pine trees at Hilliers Nursery. This find may possibly be further evidence of global warming but the spider could have reached the London area from France and Belgium and become established without climate change. So far searches of small pines in other London parks (Holloway Rd, Hampstead Heath etc) have failed to produce further specimens of *M. nidicolens*.

Reference: Roberts, M.J. 1995. Field Guide to the Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe. Harper Collins. London

* Editorial note

the epigyne of the four females from Mile End does not closely resemble the figure in Michael Robert's Collins Field Guide. Illustrations are available on the internet at Proszynski's Salticids of the World website at <http://spiders.arizona.edu/salticid/CATALOG/>

***Callilepsis nocturna* new to Wales**

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On 27th May 2002 Dave Bangs, a member of BWARS (Bees, Wasp and Ant Recording Scheme), found a number of females and possibly some males of the extremely rare gnaphosid spider *Callilepsis nocturna* running very actively and ant-like on the bare rocks of the lower cliffs at Marloes Sands, Pembrokeshire (SM 785074). It was a sunny and warm day, and the spiders were very vigorously searching cracks in the almost vertical strata of the cliff. Dave collected one female which he confirmed at home by microscopical examination. He also subsequently sent the specimen to me for confirmation, due to the importance of the record.

The spiders were in the company of *Heliophanus cupreus* and an unidentified ant of similar size. Other species noted on the cliff were a ruby-tailed wasp in the *Chrysis ignita* group, the solitary wasps *Ancistrocerus parietinus* and *Podalonia hirsuta*, a blue-black species probably a spider hunting wasp, the bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*, the hoverfly *Eristalinus aeneus*, 24-spot ladybird, the click beetle *Agrypnus murinus*, Green Tiger Beetles, Oil Beetles, the Heath Snail *Helicella itala* (dead but recent shells) and the Point Snail *Cochlicella acuta*.

Dave remembers that the vegetation included a mayweed-type species and lots of Kidney Vetch, but of course this crumbly cliff-face vegetation is not the same as on the grassy cliff-top where there was Spring Squill, Primrose, Red Campion, etc.

This is only the third British site for *Callilepsis nocturna*, a Nationally Endangered (RDB1) species otherwise known only from Prawle and Signalmans Point in Devon, where it was first found by John and Frances Murphy in 1969, and Tennyson Down on the Isle of Wight (Alexander 1999). The discovery extends the known range of the species considerably and suggests that it might be worth looking for the spider at other sites on the coast of south Wales and southwest England.

References

Alexander K. 1999. *Callilepis nocturna* (L.) on the Isle of Wight. Spider Recording Scheme Newsletter, 35.

Uloborus plumipes joins the Welsh list

Richard Gallon 23A Roumania Crescent, Llandudno, North Wales LL30 1UP

Foot & mouth restrictions had seriously affected my spidering activity in 2001, so after reading Ian Dawson's piece (July 2001 SRS newsletter, **40**: 2-3) on locating *Uloborus plumipes*, I decided that this would be a worthwhile exercise.

On the 3rd September 2001 I called into Batty's Nurseries, Penrhyn Bay (SH816816; vc. 49) to see if I could locate any *Uloborus*. Mr. Neville - the owner - kindly allowed me to search the greenhouses for spiders. As I walked into the house-plant section, a large orb-web suspended in a corner caught my eye. In the web was what appeared to be a small, brown dried leaf. The 'leaf' soon came to life when I captured it, and it was indeed a mature female *Uloborus plumipes*. This spider had also secured an elongated, white, spiky egg sac to one of the greenhouse's wooden roof beams. No other specimens were seen, but this record appears to be the first for Wales.

I also heeded Ian's advice to look out for *Achaearanea tepidariorum*. Beneath the greenhouse staging were hundreds of female specimens of this theridiid, accompanied by their pear-shaped egg sacs. This spider was in every greenhouse I looked in, and several specimens were also observed under the outdoor plant staging. This unorthodox collecting trip was well worth the effort as both species were new to me.

Notes on *Hyptiotes paradoxus* (Koch) (Uloboridae) in Surrey

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The new Atlas points out that confirmation of the continued presence of *Hyptiotes* is required at many of the known sites. I found it at the first attempt by beating under yews on Mickleham Downs (TQ1753) on 23.vi.1995. I can also confirm that the population at Walliswood (TQ1238) is still extant and adults were present on scattered yews in otherwise deciduous woodland on clay in 2000. Similar conditions exist at another Surrey Wildlife Trust reserve at Vann Lake (TQ1539) some 4km to the east. I was not surprised to find *Hyptiotes* here in April 2001. I initially found a female on the bare twigs of a fallen ash, but further searches on yews produced more adults in May and June. The habitats in these small blocks of woodland are typical of woodland covering huge areas of the Weald through Surrey into Sussex. It is hard to believe that this spider is not much more widespread through the Surrey part of the Weald at least, especially as it seems able to find quite isolated Yews amongst oak dominated woodland.