

# SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME NEWS

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## EDITORIAL

### Included but Still Distinct

This is the first edition of the S.R.S. newsletter to be included in the B.A.S. Newsletter. The use of the word 'included' is quite deliberate: although physically incorporated into the Society's Newsletter, S.R.S. News will retain its distinct identity and continue to be edited by the S.R.S.'s National Organiser. The only really significant change is to the name: S.R.S. 'News' rather than 'newsletter'. An example of the suggested format for referencing [this article]: Harvey, P. R. (2002) Editorial. S.R.S. News No. 44. *In Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **95**: 7. This new arrangement has several advantages: crisper reproduction of half-tones, slight reduction in the task of the distribution team, lessening the likelihood of mislaying editions, availability of back numbers and, perhaps most important, circulation to our overseas members.

Inclusion of *Galea* has been postponed until next year. At the time of writing, this also applies to *Ocularium*.

### Phase 2 of the Recording Scheme

I am very grateful for all the feedback received over draft ideas for Phase 2 recording. Although feedback has not indicated any problem with the level of data suggested, I know that it may well be impractical to achieve this level in all cases. I am concerned about finding a practical balance between that which will enable us to achieve a better understanding of the ecology and management requirements of species, and what it is sensible to expect arachnologists actually to do. I am just as guilty as anyone else in not finding the time to supply everything required now, let alone in the future! Hopefully the *Provisional Atlas* and publications like the *Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* indicate the value of aiming high in recording schemes. It is important to recognise that we will always welcome record details with the minimum of species name, date, locality, grid reference, collector and determiner—although more information can be remarkably useful. Do not underestimate the value of structured data.

With this newsletter, I had hoped to publish a booklet outlining and explaining full details of Phase 2, with recommended data-collection information. Lack of time has prevented this, but it should certainly be available for the March mailing. Plans are afoot to allow Spider Recording Scheme data to be entered into standard packages such as Recorder with our new level of structured data incorporated. I continue to welcome feedback on what to record in Phase 2 and how best to achieve this.

### Records—Keep Them Coming In!

Thank you very much to all those who have continued to send in record cards, especially Tom Thomas who has sent in a large number of cards for Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire as well as for various other counties. We now have 729 cards sent in by Recorders since the *Atlas*, and BRC have indicated that they should be able to continue punching these.

### Area Organiser Changes

Ian Morgan has resigned as A.O. for Carmarthenshire. He feels that with changes in his circumstances, spider recording in the county will be helped by the appointment of a new volunteer. We are very grateful to Ian for his work in the past.

Tom Thomas has passed responsibility for Huntingdonshire over to Ian Dawson. Tom remains A.O. for Bedfordshire. Records for Huntingdonshire should now be sent to Ian Dawson at 100, Hayling Avenue, Little Paxton, ST NEOTS, Cambridgeshire, PE19 6HQ.

John Ewing has very kindly agreed to become A.O. for County Derry in Northern Ireland. John is keen to get local support and interest going. All records should be sent to him at 107, Killoween Drive, MAGHERAFELT, Co. Derry, Northern Ireland.

### *Argiope bruennichi* and *Uloborus plumipes*

I had hoped to run an update on these two species in this newsletter, but lack of time means that it will have to wait until the March issue. I have received quite a few new records for both species, and would welcome any more still to be fed into the system. Recent records for *Argiope bruennichi* seem to be filling in gaps in its distribution rather than extending its range.

### *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914)

At my request, Edward Milner went back to the Mile End Park site (SRS newsletter 43: 3) on 21st July 2002 and captured a live specimen of the jumping spider *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914) which he sent to me. I subsequently photographed the spider; one of the resulting photographs is reproduced below. (The spider died on 30th August 2002.)



My thanks go to all those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 45 will be published in March 2003. Please send contributions by the end of January at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32, Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

## Spiders in Houses and Gardens

by Tony Russell-Smith

I suspect that, when choosing places to collect, most of us tend to head for the nearest nature reserve or other protected area in the hope of finding interesting species. This undoubtedly helps to explain the strange gaps in distribution of otherwise common spiders that are obvious in the maps of the *Provisional Atlas*. I also suspect that many recorders rarely bother with searching their own gardens and houses, assuming that they only harbour common and widespread species. Certainly the number of records from 'buildings' that were included in the provisional atlas form a small proportion of the total although it is not clear how many records from gardens were received since these were lumped together in the general category 'cultivated ground'.

Recently, a colleague who produces a monthly wildlife column for the local newsletter asked me to collate my records from our own parish. In the process, I was astonished to find that over the past 11 years I have recorded 92 species from my garden and a further 12 species from the house. Since all the records have been from casual hand collecting and from beating bushes and trees rather than a result of systematic survey, I thought it would be worth a short article here, with the aim of encouraging others to record the spiders of their own houses and gardens.

Our house is in a rural setting on the edge of a small village on the North Downs in Kent. The garden is just under half an acre in extent and surrounded on three sides by a plantation of 50 year-old oak and ash, established by the Forestry Commission just after the Second World War. The garden is largely lawned (perhaps 70 percent of the total area), but with the usual flower borders (mainly perennials) and a small but productive kitchen garden. There is also a large shed *cum* garage and a smaller tool shed. The few hedges are mixed, with hawthorn, beech and some holly. The house is a mid-Victorian brick-built cottage with a cellar beneath.

The spider fauna of the garden consists of a mixture of species which might be expected from almost any habitat, the common *Pardosa*, *Erigone* and *Lepthyphantes* species, for example, with a woodland element (e.g. *Pardosa saltans*, *Achaearanea lunata*, *Monocephalus fuscipes*, *Microneta viaria* and *Anyphaena accentuata*) and an element perhaps associated with drier habitats. The latter includes species such as *Dysdera crocata*, *Drassodes lapidosus* and *Troxochrus scabriculus*. Many species are associated with particular micro-habitats. On trees (particularly a mature oak) and shrubs there are *Anyphaena accentuata*, four species of *Philodromus*, four species of *Theridion*, *Araniella cucurbitina* and (occasionally) *Cyclosa conica*. The gravel on the drive is inhabited by thriving colonies of *Micrargus subaequalis* (perhaps from nearby chalk grassland) and *Erigone promiscua* (origin unknown, the only other Kent record is from Dungeness !). The outbuildings are home to the usual collection of largely synanthropic species such as *Steatoda bipunctata*, *Nuctenea umbratica* and *Tegenaria gigantea*. A regular occupant of the compost heap is *Ostearius melanopygius*, while in the dark cavity beneath the cover of the septic tank is a small colony of *Meta menardi*. Some spider families are certainly under-represented in the garden and include Gnaphosidae (2 species, 1 regular), Salticidae (2 species, none regular) and Thomisidae (4 species, none regular).

In addition to the many commoner species, four nationally notable species have been recorded on at least one occasion: *Coelotes terrestris* (Nb, under logs), while nationally scarce is extremely widespread in all types of woodland in Kent and thus not unexpected (3 records). *Achaearanea simulans* (Nb,

beaten from a hedge) was quite unexpected, with only one other Kent record, from Ham Fen. Equally unexpected was a specimen of *Trachyzelotes pedestris* (Nb) from short grass. This species is quite widespread and not uncommon in chalk grassland in Kent and the chalk grassland on the valley side about a quarter of a mile away might have been the origin of this specimen. Finally, *Philodromus praedatus* (Nb) has been beaten from the mature oak in the garden on two occasions. Again, this species is widespread in Kent and probably much commoner than previously realised.

Inside the house there are good populations of *Pholcus phalangioides*, and *Tegenaria gigantea*. *Scytodes thoracica* and *Nesticus cellulanus* are also present, the latter principally in the cellar, although both species were seen much more frequently when we first moved in and before we installed central heating. Three species of salticid have been found either on the outside walls or inside the house. *Salticus scenicus* is a regular inhabitant while *Sitticus pubescens* and *Pseudeuophrys lanigera* have both been taken on three or four occasions each. Casual visitors to the house are a surprising mixture and include *Dysdera crocata*, *Achaearanea simulans*, *Theridion tinctum*, *Neriene peltata*, *Anyphaena accentuata*, *Clubiona compta*, *C. corticalis*, *Misumena vatia* and *Philodromus dispar*.

Although the garden is probably a bit larger than the average and has the advantage of being adjacent to woodland, it is otherwise not untypical of tens of thousands of rural gardens throughout the country. The value of gardens for conservation of biodiversity of other groups, such as birds or butterflies, has already been well established. Not only do they provide havens of high vegetation diversity in what is often an otherwise relatively impoverished countryside, they also provide 'stepping stones' which, in conjunction with linear features such as hedgerows or the verges of rural lanes, allow movement of populations from one habitat pocket to another. Indeed, this might explain the presence of such 'oddities' in my own garden as *Trachyzelotes* or *Philodromus praedatus*. I would therefore urge everyone to spend some time recording in their own gardens and houses (if they have not done so already). This is particularly the case if you happen to be situated in one of the under-recorded 10 km squares within your area. After all, nobody could complain about the effort involved: it is quite literally 'on your own doorstep' !

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## Notes on Home and Garden Collecting

by T. J. Thomas

Over the years, casual collecting of spiders and harvestmen from my house and garden has given a longish list of species. No serious attempts at collecting were made until 1995 when, during a casual sweep around my garden to test out a new sweep net, *Nelima gothica*, a harvestman new to Bedfordshire was captured. A pitfall trapping experiment was set up to establish if this was a 'one off'. The results since then have shown that this harvestman is resident in the area. In fact eleven species of harvestmen have been found in the pitfalls of which six species have also been found by other means. The spider results are fairly impressive as well: 87 out of the 113 species noted have been taken in the pitfalls. This shows that gardens may be more interesting habitats than is often appreciated. Mind you, my garden is now being turned from its 'unkempt'

state (see B.A.S. Newsletter 86: 9–10) to a more tamed site. This may show up by the changes in the arachnids caught, e.g. the wolf spiders are certainly down in numbers: 96 in May 2001 as against 235 in May 1998.

A plot of the results shows that fewer new species are being captured each year and the grand total is so far 'levelling' to 87 spider species. This implies that the 'capturable' limit may be close, even allowing for adventitious captures. Of these 87 species, 34 have been taken in every year of the trapping (1995–2001), implying that they are resident or active in the area. Several common species in the garden, e.g. *Salticus scenicus*, *Dysdera crocata*, have rarely been taken, which is not surprising as their habits are not likely to result in them being trapped regularly. Plotting the activity of some of the captured species from the numbers in the traps does show similarities to those given in the new provisional atlas.

Some odd captures have occurred. An immature *Anelosimus vittatus* was found indoors, but this may have been an escape from leaf litter that had been sorted in the kitchen some days previous to that capture. A mature male *Pachygnatha listeri* turned up in the pitfalls: I have no idea where this came from. Best of all, since finding *Enoplognatha latimana* at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon, in 2001, I have spent time in the northern uplands (at 90 m a.s.l.!) of Bedfordshire searching for this species. After one morning of this, once home all my captures were found to be *Enoplognatha ovata*. As an end to the day my garden pitfalls were checked. A male *E. latimana* was there. So, I might as well stay at home and let them come to me!

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## Check Those Nets!

by Steve Hopkin

The 'Biology of Spiders' course at Reading University ran successfully again this year; thirty-five students took the course. We have now been able to analyse the data in the recently published *Provisional Atlas* and, before this year's course, 158 species of spider had been recorded from Ordnance Survey 10 x 10 km Grid Square SU77. We found seven new species for SU77 bringing the total for the Reading area to 165. The best find was a single female of what we have christened the 'pale sewer money spider', *Lessertia dentichelis*, found by one of the students inside a toilet cistern in a house near Cemetery Junction in East Reading! We also found a healthy colony of *Segestria florentina* living in the walls of St Mary Butts Church in the town centre.

One surprising development was the frequency with which *Pholcus phalangioides* and *Scytodes thoracica* turned up on the University campus, well away from buildings. At first, I thought that the students must have got their collections mixed up but then it occurred to me that it could be the result of 'contamination'. When we checked the fieldwork equipment storage room (no windows, constant temperature, little disturbance for most of the year), we found several *Pholcus*, and a *Scytodes* on the wall. Thus it is possible that when the students removed the nets for their practical work, specimens of these species could already have been in the nets! Then again, the records may be genuine; *Pholcus* and *Scytodes* may be managing to survive out of doors in our milder climate. We just don't know. Next year we shall be more careful and check all our equipment for hitchhikers—something to bear in mind if you collect spiders by sweep netting!

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## *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer, 1802) in a Surrey Suburban Garden

by Clive McCarthy

On 5th June 2002, two adult female *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer, 1802) were captured from within a timber and brick garden shed at Molesey, Surrey (VC17, TQ139678). They were housed together in a clear perspex box 9 cm high and wide by 14 cm deep. They soon settled in opposite top corners, hanging upside down in the characteristic pose of their genus.

After a day, one of them captured and ate a small female *Enoplognatha ovata*, marginally smaller than herself. The attack did not occur on their first contact but on a later chance meeting, when the *Ero* swiftly seized her prey by the foreleg, as expected. This meal increased her girth by around 100 per cent and was, no doubt, beneficial towards the batch of ten eggs she produced eleven days later.

The other spider refused all offerings for over three weeks. Eventually, she ate an immature *Achaearanea lunata* which had been in the container, unmolested, for three days. By this time she was living alone, as the other *Ero* had been sent to Peter Harvey (who, in view of its surprising location, subsequently sent it to Dr Peter Merrett) for positive identification. She died about six days later, on 6th July.

To return to the first *Ero*: what would happen if she was introduced to a small, immature *Pholcus phalangioides*? This latter species is also adept at overpowering other spiders and very nimble of leg in escaping potential hazards. I once found one quietly feeding upon an adult *Scotophaeus blackwalli*! A young *Pholcus* of suitable size was selected from my resident population and introduced to the *Ero* quarters. Perhaps predictably, *Pholcus* immediately caught the advantage and, turning her back to the *Ero*, rapidly began swathing the other spider's legs in silken threads. *Ero* offered no resistance and her potential prey would soon have slain her had I not quickly intervened. My *Ero* was lucky to be alive; she was unable to bite herself free despite several persistent attempts. With much delicate and meticulous handling I was able to extricate her legs from their bindings with the aid of a pin and white spirit, which dissolved the silk wrapping. The freed spider appeared to recover immediately and continued her normal habits from then on. This experiment needs to be repeated, as I am sure this one encounter will not be typical of what could take place. Also, if an *Ero* was actively seeking prey in the vicinity of a *Pholcus* web 'in the field' the outcome might be different again.

On 17th June, the first *Ero* laid a batch of ten eggs—during the early hours of the morning, so the event went unobserved. The eggs were enclosed within the typical oval sac, with the usual wirey copper-hued threads spun over the surface. This sac was suspended from a small mat of silk, on the under surface of the box lid, by a 5 mm thread. The mother spider did not guard her egg cluster and took no further heed of her progeny. By 9th July pale spiderlings could be observed within the sac and on the evening of 21st July they emerged. All ten hatched successfully and took up various positions within their box. Some recently hatched *Theridion* sp. were introduced, and by 6 a.m. the next day the young *Ero* had found most of them.

Here is an excellent opportunity to rear *E. aphana* from the very beginning. Also some questions arise: why was *E. aphana* discovered inside a shed when its supposed habitat is outside, amongst dry heathland? Have all the many *Ero* egg-sacs I have seen in sheds and outhouses been of this species all along? (I have only previously ever found *Ero* egg-sacs in these areas). How does such a small spider escape the attention of all the resident *Pholcus* often lurking within the same location? And do the eggs develop at a faster rate than if they were laid outside amongst herbage? So far only *Ero* has the answers.

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## Another *Drassyllus* from the Great Orme, Llandudno, North Wales

by Carl Davies

Following on from the exciting discovery of *Drassyllus praeficus* (L. Koch, 1866) on 29th May this year on my first hunting trip on the Orme, I made further collections at a lower altitude—just above sea level. One area of particular interest was the abandoned Coastal Defence base (SH 750830). Though there are no longer any buildings there, except for a couple of small underground ammunition stores (surprisingly almost devoid of spiders), the area contrasts with the general rugged dry limestone habitat of the Orme, being more akin to a sandy heathland.

On 22nd June I was generally grubbing about turning loose boulders, some of which were very large (and in one instance had revealed a 'family' of about twelve beautiful Slow Worms, *Anguis fragilis*, that slithered sedately off into the grass) when I saw a concrete post lying on its side; it measured some five feet in length and a foot square in section. After much determined effort and with some assistance, I managed to roll the post over. This revealed little more than fresh wormholes until, on closer examination, I noticed a small black spider, obviously a *Zelotes* or *Drassyllus*, but decidedly smaller than the *D. praeficus* I had recently found.

Under the microscope I determined it as a mature female *Drassyllus pusillus* which, although not as rare as *D. praeficus*, is a local and not common species: this appears to be only the second record of the species in this 10 km square. In the following two weeks I set a number of pitfall traps in the locality and captured a further adult female.

I would like to thank Richard Gallon for confirming the identities of the two specimens.

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## Two Nottinghamshire Records

by Howard Williams

In late March 2002, I observed in a heated section of the Dukeries Garden Centre, some miles south of Worksop, several *Uloborus plumipes* Lucas, 1846 hanging in their somewhat flimsy webs. They were still there two weeks later, but when County Organiser Tom Faulds visited the spot some weeks after that he could find no trace of them. The owners had, however, been spraying, but if, as seems likely, the species is fairly well established there, I have no doubt it will reappear. As far as I know, this is a first record for the county, thus filling a gap between discoveries in Leicestershire to the south (in text of *Provisional Atlas of British Spiders, Volume 1*, 2002) and South Yorkshire to the north (Howes: S.R.S. Newsletter No. 41, November 2001).

A small garden centre just south of Worksop and another about 6 miles north of the town not far from the Yorkshire border had none as far as I could see from fairly brief visits. Roofs and walls in both these nurseries were spread with sheets of insulating plastic material which looked very new and clean. Maybe if this material is renewed every year, permanent settlement by the spider might be inhibited, though it seems hardly likely, given the abundance of plants and niches in which to hide or take up residence. Moreover, webs of *Teegenaria* and *Amaurobius* were plentiful and *Salcticus scenicus*

and a young *Araneus diadematus* were seen in one of the centres; *Teegenaria* and *Amaurobius* were also present in the other centre together with *Dictyna uncinata*. Most probably *Uloborus plumipes* has yet to arrive.

Another curious discovery occurred in April of this year in the bathroom of our house. Going to bed late one night I saw, as I thought, a shiny black linyphiid on the tiled windowsill walking with a slow jerky gait. I pooted it into a tube and put off looking at it until the next day. Under the microscope the entire dorsal surface was distinctly black, but this black coloration descended the flanks as bars between an orangey base colour, giving the sides a somewhat striped appearance. It no longer looked like a linyphiid either. A look at the eyes revealed it for what it was—*Oonops domesticus* de Dalmas, 1916—confirmed by the tibial spines of leg 1. This spider is very common in the house, moving as it does in a series of short jerky walks alternating with short jerky dashes, but the colour put me completely off my stroke. Has anyone else come across melanic versions of *Oonops*? I can find no references to it in any of my books.

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## New Locality for *Hyptiotes paradoxus* (C. L. Koch, 1834)

by Steve Hopkin

According to the *Provisional Atlas*, *Hyptiotes paradoxus* (C. L. Koch, 1834) is a Nationally Rare (RDB3) species. It has always been near to the top of my 'wants' list, so I was pleased when my wife and I found several of these spiders in a small Yew wood on a south-facing slope near to the National Trust Holies Hanging Reserve at Streatley (VC 22 Berkshire) on 22nd August 2002. The site is along the edge of the narrow road leading from Ashley Hill that follows the line of Grim's Ditch (SU 592795). The webs were extremely difficult to see: you have to get the angle of the light just right to spot them.

The first web I saw was about 1.5 m above the ground and consisted of the characteristic three sectors coming to a point from which a single strand of silk leads to the spider. It took us about ten minutes to locate the first specimen by following this strand between the leaves of the Yew. *Hyptiotes* is superbly camouflaged and would be impossible to find without following this strand of silk. Its posture resembles that of *Uloborus plumipes*, now a common species of glasshouses in Reading and elsewhere. I coaxed the spider into a specimen tube only to discover that there were two, a female and (a much smaller) male with huge palps. The web was much larger than the mental picture I had held in my head during the twenty years I have been looking for *Hyptiotes*. The sides of the triangle that formed the web were about 40 cm in length, and the strand of silk leading to the spider was about 80 cm. Once we had 'got our eyes in', we found another six webs in twenty minutes which we left undisturbed. In one of these webs, which was 3 m above the ground, the single strand of silk leading from the triangular web to the spider was at least 1.5 m in length!

Yew woods are not uncommon in the Chilterns and it seems likely that *Hyptiotes* is much more widespread than current records would indicate.

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