

# SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME NEWS

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## EDITORIAL

I am very sorry to have to announce the death of Alan Scott, the Cheshire Area Organiser, who passed away on 12th September 2004. Alan did a sterling amount of work for the recording scheme and was instrumental in making Cheshire one of the better recorded vice counties for spiders. His efforts will be sorely missed and our sympathies and good wishes go out to his family and relatives.

As some members will know I underwent major emergency abdominal surgery in June, and now have about a foot less colon! I am very grateful to all those people who have wished me a speedy recovery and can report that it does finally seem to have cured the ill health problem I had since last October. Unfortunately this has meant that plans to progress a review of national spider statuses based on the latest IUCN criteria and the production of guidance on the identification of difficult species have been delayed yet again.

I am very grateful for the MapMate sync files containing a large number of computerised records sent in by Paul Lee, Nick Law, Jennifer Newton, Andy Phillips, Ray Ruffell, Mark Telfer and Howard Williams and the large numbers of Excel records provided by Tony Russell-Smith. I have continued to receive cards and records from several recorders and Area Organisers, and I am especially grateful to John Bratton, Steve Hopkin and Tom Thomas for the large number of cards they have sent in. The post-atlas card total now stands at 1413, of which 1147 are the old RA65 cards and 133 new RA65 cards. If we want to update the atlas dataset, then these will have to be computerised. At the moment new records (on cards or computerised) seem to come in piecemeal, with many counties not represented. However now is the start of a blitz to get new data in.

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## A NEW DEADLINE FOR RECORDS!

The deadline for the provisional atlas data was the end of 2000, and it seems reasonable to aim to update the maps after 5 years. The plan is to update the maps available on the N.B.N. Gateway and to provide them in a printable PDF format at the B.A.S. website. Printed copies could also be produced at cost to members who do not have internet access.

Depending on the data received, it may also be possible to use the new phase 2 structural habitat and management information to start preparing more detailed ecological profiles for the different species.

**So, please start sending in your records and carry on doing so before the deadline: end of 2005.** MapMate data will not require processing, and hopefully other computerised data will not present too much of a problem. However card or paper data will take some considerable time to deal with, and the sooner we receive them the better.

My thanks go to all those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 51 will be published in March 2005. 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

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## A Self Support Group for Norfolk

by Peter Nicholson

I would like to contact individuals in my local area who might be interested in forming a self-support group. I am willing to be a focal point in organising this, preferably through the medium of e-mail. I do wish to make it very plain that I am a recorder and not an expert. The aim is to encourage those in the area, like myself, who have shared in the camaraderie of field excursions and have enjoyed the socialising of like minds.

The object would be to encourage each other into being more productive and possibly to take on projects in the future. We might meet regularly on an informal basis at some hostelry to discuss ideas and encourage field excursions. Individuals would share information, but records would be submitted to the S.R.S. on an individual basis. Depending on the expertise within the group help on identification/verification could be undertaken under the Spider Recording Scheme's and/or Deborah Procter's guidance.

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## *Araniella inconspicua* in Leicestershire

by Jon Daws

For the third year in a row, I went to Burbage Common in early spring (12th May 2004) to beat for *Araniella inconspicua* on the young oaks as their leaves were just opening. Burbage Common is a mosaic of heath, scrubby patches of woodland and mown grass areas, with two large adjacent woodlands (one of which is ancient). After an hour of beating juvenile *Araniella* from oak branches I gave up for another year and returned to the car. Since there was still a little time before I had to leave the site, I decided to try sweeping the edges of several of the scrubby areas. Within twenty minutes a male *A. inconspicua* had been swept from an area of tall herb/bramble/rough grass (SP446950) adjacent to one of the scrubby areas that contained a few oaks. This male *A. inconspicua* is a new county record, and I suspect this species is probably present in small numbers at this site. As this species is so difficult to find there is a possibility it may well be present



*Araniella inconspicua*, female. Photograph Peter Harvey.

elsewhere in the county. The other interesting record was of a female *Porrhomma campbelli*, which was also swept from the edge of an area of scrubby woodland and represents a fourth county record.

177, Featherstone Drive, LEICESTER, LE2 9RF.

### ***Theridion hemerobium* Update for Leicestershire**

by Jon Daws

Since the article in the S.R.S. News No. 47 (November 2003) on the discovery that *Theridion hemerobium* is much more widespread in Leicestershire than previously thought, more information has come to light. On the 13th October 2003 the Ashby Canal at Shackerstone (SK375066) was visited, with a range of sizes of *T. hemerobium* from small immatures to sub-adults being discovered, but no adults. This species was then ignored until the following spring, when the Ashby Canal was once again visited, with the following results:

30/03/04 1♀ SP406935 Ashby Canal, Hinckley: on canal pilings.  
 30/03/04 1♀ SP392964 Ashby Canal, Stoke Golding: on canal pilings.  
 30/03/04 1♀ SK395001 Ashby Canal, Shenton: on canal pilings.

Along with the adults that were collected, a large number of sub-adults and large immatures were also found. This would indicate that this species has a long breeding season with adults being present between March and September, with the breeding cycle only being interrupted by the onset of winter.

Until now all the British records of *T. hemerobium* have been connected to river or canal systems or their close environs, such as gravel pits or adjacent lakes. This restriction has been further borne out within Leicestershire, by the fact that this species has not so far been recorded from reservoirs, isolated lakes or non-navigable streams or rivers. This has meant that all Leicestershire records for this species have come from the navigable parts of the Rivers Trent and Soar, the Grand Union Canal and the Ashby Canal.

However on 21st June 2004 a visit to a garden centre in the village of Seagrave (SK613175) produced a single female *T. hemerobium* that was collected from the side of their large corrugated water container/reservoir. The garden centre is situated 3 km east of the River Soar/Grand Union Canal and 50 m above the base of the Soar Valley, so in all probability this specimen could have aeronauted from there. A further interesting fact was that it was collected in fairly

close proximity to a female *Achaearanea tepidariorum* that had emerged from one of the greenhouses. Prior to finding this specimen of *T. hemerobium* I had always worked on the theory that the species was accidentally introduced into the English canal system sometime within the last fifty years and has spread along our navigable waterways since then. This record would therefore be the first indication that the species probably uses aeronauting to get around.

These latest records also continue to confirm this species has an aversion to brick and concrete structures, with it being present on the metal pilings along the canal, but absent from adjacent bridges. This affinity for metal and wooden structures in themselves does not mean that this species will be present, since a collecting trip along a stretch of the Grand Union Canal close to the centre of Leicester failed to find this species on metal and wooden structures, with the conclusion that immature stages of *T. hemerobium* need adjacent wetland/bank-side vegetation to be present for either food or shelter, to maintain a local viable population.

Adults of this species could be collected within Leicestershire on a daily basis between March and September without much effort, so it could be under-recorded in southern Britain. These Leicestershire records have been compiled by a single collector, who will obviously present some bias toward certain collecting techniques (e.g. metal canal pilings). So it would be interesting to get other arachnologists' views on this species' distribution within their county and the habitat niche it occupies there.

The only other new records of *T. hemerobium* within Leicestershire are listed below; these bring the total number of 10 km squares this species has been recorded from within the county to fifteen:

20/07/04 8♀ SK376067 Ashby Canal, Shackerstone: canal pilings and fishing platforms.  
 18/08/04 1♀ SK491292 River Soar, Kegworth: on wooden bridge.

177, Featherstone Drive, LEICESTER, LE2 9RF.

### ***Philodromus albidus* Kulczyński, 1911 New Record for Lincolnshire**

by Annette Binding

From April to July of this year my husband, Allan, and I were conducting an invertebrate survey of a small area of land on and around the disused railway line at Coningsby. Known locally as The Pingle, the area consisted of a series of small ponds and wet woodland with mature oaks, willows, alder, ash and elm. The disused railway line itself had been grassed over and planted with widely spaced trees and the grass was kept short by regular mowing. The area is a proposed local nature reserve and had not been surveyed before for either plants or invertebrates.

On one of our visits during June, Allan beat a small pale spider from one of the mature oaks on the woodland edge adjacent to the mowed area. At first I thought it was a juvenile because of its small size and pale colouring. However, when I later examined it under the microscope I was surprised to see that it was a mature female which I identified as *Philodromus albidus* Kulczyński, 1911. Since this spider is relatively rare and was new to Lincolnshire, I took it to Tom Faulds, Nottinghamshire

County Recorder, and he confirmed my identification. Later Peter Harvey confirmed that this was the most northerly record of this species.



*Philodromus albidus*, male. Photograph Peter Harvey.

We made further visits to the site but found no more *Philodromus albidus*. We did, however, find *Tetragnatha nigrata* Lendl, 1886, a species which is very uncommon in Lincolnshire, this being only the fifth record. It was also confirmed by Tom Faulds.

I am grateful to Tom Faulds and Peter Harvey for their help with identification and information about these spiders.

6, Willow Court, Washingborough, LINCOLN, LN4 1AS.

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### *Argiope bruennichi* New to Lincolnshire 2004

by Annette Binding

On 26th August this year, I received a phone call from Phil Porter, the warden at Whisby Nature Park near Lincoln. He told me he had received a photograph, via an e-mail, of a spider which looked like a female *Argiope bruennichi*. Phil gave me the telephone number of the person who had sent the e-mail, Jane Paterson, who is a member of the volunteer wildlife survey team at Whisby Nature Park. The spider had been found by Paul Skelton, one of Jane's work colleagues, in the middle of a sugar beet field amongst trial plants near Navenby in Lincolnshire (SK998577).

The spider was collected by John Maddison, another work colleague, but had been released back at the field on the previous evening, after the photograph had been taken. Luckily someone had spotted the same spider earlier on the 26th August and John was dispatched to find it, which he did. Needless to say, Allan and I wasted no time in getting over to Navenby to collect the specimen, not least because the previous week a spider which was described over the phone as being very large with yellow-orange and black stripes, had turned out to be a female *Araneus diadematus*. This time, though, it was indeed a female *Argiope bruennichi*. Jane then took us out to see the area where the spider had been found and we found some remnants of web, but no other spiders. At this stage we thought the spider had probably come into the area via the beet seed boxes as the seed is grown in France and packed in Holland, both places where, according to my books, the species occurs on the continent.

The following day, I spoke to Peter Harvey on the telephone and he said it was more likely to be a result of the

species' spread northwards. Peter was able to give me much more information about the spiders' habitat preferences. It was only after I put the phone down that we remembered that the site where the spider was found is very close to an old Roman Road alongside of which some of the grass verges are left uncut. Part of the old Roman Road is now just a farm track and so vegetation there has been allowed to grow long. Since Peter told me that the spiders need rough, unmanaged areas of long grass, it would seem that these places would provide a more suitable habitat than the sugar beet field. Peter also told me that the spiders are often in large numbers, but difficult to spot owing to their cryptic colouring. We went back to the area two days later and explored the road verges and part of the Roman Road farm track, but found no more *Argiope bruennichi*. The day was quite breezy and it was difficult to spot any webs amongst the grass although there were good numbers of *Araneus diadematus* present.

*Argiope bruennichi* is a spider species I had wanted to see, but I never thought that one would be found in Lincolnshire. This is probably the most northerly record for this species.

I am grateful to Peter Harvey for information about *Argiope bruennichi* and to Paul Skelton for finding the spider, John Maddison for capturing it and to Jane Paterson and Phil Porter for passing the information on to me.

6, Willow Court, Washingborough, LINCOLN, LN4 1AS.

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### *Pardosa lugubris sensu stricto* in Britain

by Peter Harvey

This year I was identifying spiders and aculeate Hymenoptera for the R.S.P.B. from pitfall traps set in sample locations at the R.S.P.B. reserve at Abernethy (VC94) as part of an experimental study into the use of burning or cutting management in the forest field layer. *Pardosa lugubris/saltans* was present in a number of the samples and after various attempts to compare the palps to the drawings in Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.* (2000) I still could not make up my mind whether they were *P. saltans* or *P. lugubris*, since there always seemed to be some variation and no certain match to the figures. It was only when I went to Essex specimens of *P. saltans* that the difference was obvious. I sent several specimens to Dr Peter Merrett for his opinion and he agrees that they are *P. lugubris sensu stricto*. It is embarrassing to report that when working through similar samples in 2003 I had identified the spider as *Pardosa saltans*, despite checking against the figures in Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.* A total of 119 males and 13 females were present in the 2002 samples and 76 males and 17 females in the 2003 samples from various locations in the reserve.

Ian Dawson has checked about half a dozen each of male and female *P. saltans* in his own collection and a single male and two assumed females of *P. lugubris* from Abernethy in 1999. He also has two females that may well be *P. lugubris* from Corrimony (below Glen Affric to the N.W. of Loch Ness) which are a little bigger than those from Abernethy, but otherwise matching them (Ian Dawson, pers. comm.). I am very grateful to Ian for the following provisional summary of apparent differences from *P. saltans* and accompanying photographs:

***P. lugubris* males**

Apparent differences from *P. saltans*:

## Palps

- strong tooth at tip of cymbium in *lugubris*.
- shorter cymbium relative to longer, finer median apophysis.
- less strongly bristled, especially on palpal femur and tibia.
- cymbium more convex basally, with distal half of cymbium straight (almost all straight or slightly concave in distal half in *P. saltans*).
- distal half of cymbium paler brown.

Certainly the most obvious feature that I noticed was the strong tooth, compared with a very small or almost absent tooth in my Essex specimens of *P. saltans*. The shorter more convex cymbium is obvious when compared directly with specimens of *P. saltans*, but I found this much more difficult to appreciate when comparing specimens with the figures in Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.*

Ian notes in particular the strong dark bristles on the palpal femur and tibia, especially anterolaterally, in *P. saltans*. He reports that these seem to be obvious in life with a hand lens, suggesting that males may be separable in the field (but voucher specimens of both species will be essential).

## Upperside

- central pale carapace band is wider, with less straight sides, and more strongly tapering at rear.

## Underside

- contrastingly darker anterior spinnerets are very obvious.

***P. lugubris* females**

Tentative differences from *P. saltans*:

## Upperside

- as in the male the central pale carapace band is a little wider, with less straight sides, and more strongly tapering at rear (though one of Ian's *P. saltans* females tapers similarly). The central band is pinched in about a third back from posterior eyes with a 'tooth' of darker pigment.
- indistinct but complete narrow paler lateral carapace bands which are lacking, irregular or broken in *P. saltans*. (Increasing the brightness and contrast of the photos brings this out). Ian assumes this feature, if constant, is visible only in preserved specimens.

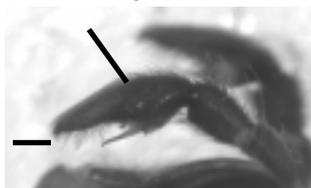
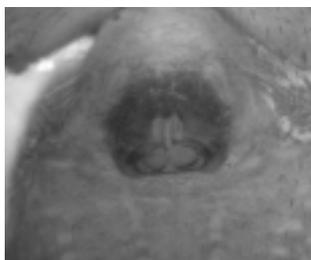
## Underside

- strongly contrasting dark area to sides and front of epigyne (any dark pigment more diffuse in *P. saltans*).
- contrastingly darker anterior spinnerets.

The underside features are perhaps more promising, especially as Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.* note that females from the Netherlands show darker spinnerets.

It is obviously unwise to draw firm conclusions until more specimens are available, and pigmentation may bleach in old specimens making identification of females impossible. However Ian has provided an excellent starting point to encourage people to check their specimens and provide feedback confirming or refuting these suggestions. Please send any feedback and possible *P. lugubris* to a member of the Verification Panel (see S.R.S. News 48 in *Newsl. Br. Arachnol. Soc.* 99).

I am very grateful to Mark Hancock (R.S.P.B.) for permission to report the identification of *Pardosa lugubris*. The sampling work was supported by the EU Life programme, BP (through the Scottish Forest Alliance) and Scottish Natural Heritage.

*Pardosa lugubris**Pardosa saltans*

Photographs by Ian Dawson.

**Reference**

Töpfer-Hofmann, G., Cordes, D. & Helversen, O.v. (2000) Cryptic species and behavioural isolation in the *Pardosa lugubris* group (Araneae, Lycosidae), with description of two new species. *Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc.* 11 (7), 257–274.

32, Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP.

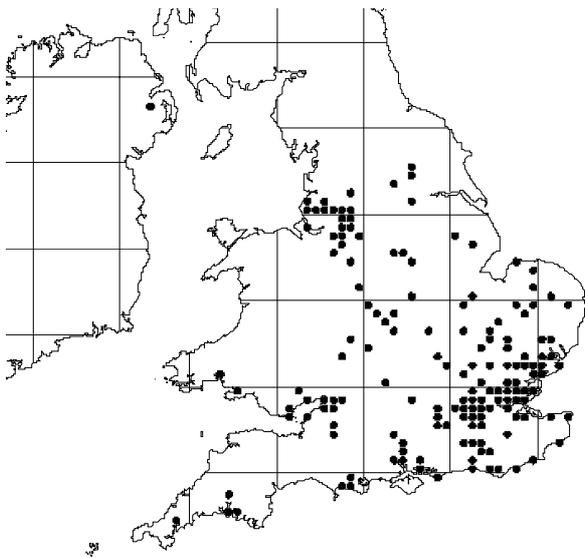
**Website Forms and an Update on *Argiope bruennichi***

by Peter Harvey

On the Essex Field Club website [www.essexfieldclub.org.uk](http://www.essexfieldclub.org.uk) I have a number of pages with information about invertebrate species that are relatively easy to identify, and forms that people can use to submit their records. Photographs often support records submitted, or if there is any doubt about the identification then I ask for a photograph or voucher to be posted to me. The response has varied widely from species to species, and the most

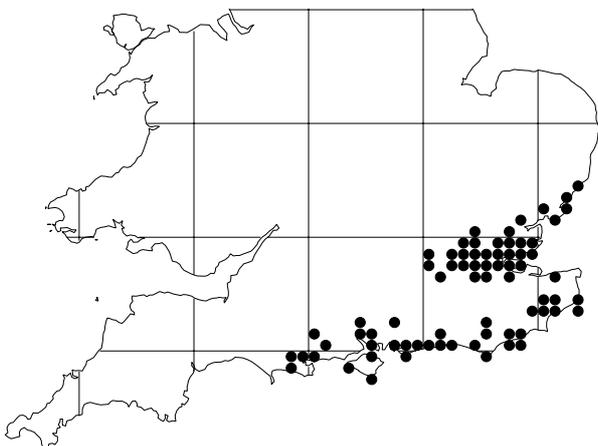
successful by far has been the Lily Beetle, with 250 responses to date this year, and wide coverage way beyond Essex even including nine responses each from Canada and the U.S.A. Only a small percentage of the records I receive are Essex ones!

*Argiope bruennichi* is the next most successful, with 60 British records submitted so far this year as well as ones from Guernsey, France, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Greece and the U.S.A. They are mostly from existing centres of population, but I have also had especially useful ones from people in the Colchester area and Suffolk supported by enough information or a photo to confirm the observation. It is interesting to compare the provisional atlas map with the map of website records and a map showing the distribution based on all records to date:

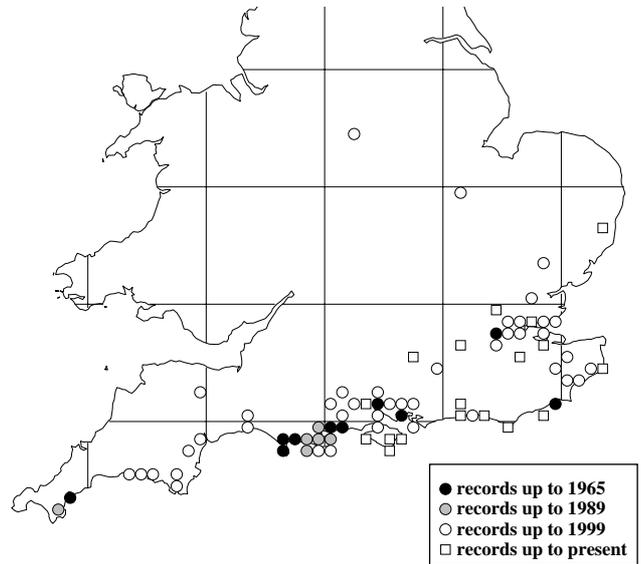


Lily beetle records received this year.

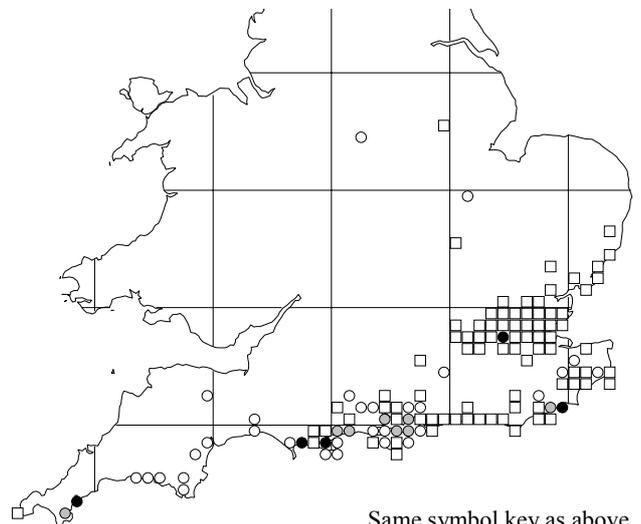
It is also interesting how the response to different species varies – I have had, for example, practically no forms submitted for *Salticus scenicus* (this year 5 UK and 1 each from Canada and U.S.A.) or *Araneus diadematus* (3 UK and 1 each from Canada and U.S.A.), yet these would be useful species for us to get more records. They must both be very under-recorded in coverage terms.



Website records for *Argiope bruennichi* this year.



*Argiope bruennichi* records in provisional atlas.



Same symbol key as above

All records for *Argiope bruennichi* to date.

The large number of people who submit records in many different counties and countries makes it clear that there is a big demand out there for people to be able to submit observations. Not surprisingly it is the large and striking species that seem to dominate. Every year in late summer and autumn, e-mail enquiries start to come in about large spiders that people see for the first time in their house or garden, usually just after their son/daughter has returned from far-flung foreign places. They are often concerned that the spiders may be a foreign import and deadly poisonous! In almost every case they turn out to be *Araneus diadematus* or one of the larger *Tegenaria* species that the person has never noticed before. On the other hand a number of enquiries and record forms about bites from the south coast and the Southend area in Essex have been confirmed as *Steatoda nobilis*, including a specimen from Ivybridge in Devon, the first record from that county since the original record near Torquay by Pickard-Cambridge in 1879.

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**Confirmed internet records of *Steatoda nobilis* this year.**

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### ***Araneus diadematus* in Shetland**

by Peter Harvey

On 28th July 2004 Alex Wylie e-mailed me pictures of a spider he had found in his greenhouse at Lerwick, Shetland (HU461405). These were of a very well marked *Araneus* that I identified as *A. diadematus* (a very variable spider in colour and pattern) and it was especially interesting because it seems to be the first record for Shetland, and the furthest north in Britain that any araneid spider has been recorded (reference to the maps in Harvey *et al.* 2002).

However just before I wrote this note I remembered someone had sent me a very similar well-marked *Araneus* from Illinois several years ago, and it occurred to me that there might just be another closely related species found in the U.S.A. I looked at garden spiders in my own garden, and the pattern was substantially different from that of the Ohio and Shetland spiders. The scape projecting from the epigyne of the Illinois *Araneus* was much longer and thinner than the sample female *A. diadematus* that I went and collected in my own garden. I therefore sent the Illinois specimen to John Murphy for his opinion. He has looked into whether there are other possible species, but can't find one that would match, and thinks that the Illinois specimen must be within the intra-specific variation of *A. diadematus* (John Murphy, pers. comm.). Michael Roberts has also considered the possibility of whether *A. diadematus* might comprise two or more closely related species, but has come to the conclusion that there is only one, extremely variable species (Roberts, 1987).

Presumably the amount of suitable habitat for large orb-web spiders like *A. diadematus* will be fairly limited in the Shetland Islands and it is most likely to be found in gardens where tall herbaceous plants and shrubs are growing. However it is interesting that the spider was established in Alex's greenhouse rather than garden, so perhaps the extra shelter and warmth are also factors this far north. I am very grateful to Alex for permission to report the discovery and to use his photographs in this note and to John Murphy for examining the Illinois specimen and providing his conclusion.

### **References**

- Harvey, P. R., Nellist, D. R. & Telfer, M. G. (eds) (2002) *Provisional Atlas of British Spiders (Arachnida, Araneae), Volumes 1 & 2*. Biological Records Centre, Huntingdon.
- Roberts, M. J. (1987) *The spiders of Great Britain and Ireland. Volume 2. Linyphiidae*. Harley Books.



**Greenhouse where *Araneus diadematus* was found.**



***Araneus diadematus* both photographs Alex Wylie.**

32, Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex RM16 2YP.

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