

SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME NEWS

srs@britishspiders.org.uk

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EDITORIAL

Jim Stewart has done an enormous amount of work in Scotland as Area Organiser for a remarkable number of vice counties: 82 (East Lothian), 83 (Midlothian), 84 (West Lothian), 85 (Fife and Kinross), 86 (Stirling), 87 (Perth West), 88 (Perth Mid), 89 (Perth East), 90 (Angus) and 98 (Argyll Main). Jim has now decided to give up the role, passing on 1240 tubes of his reference collection and 117 bottles of specimens of less common species to be lodged in the National Museum of Scotland. I would like to thank Jim for the enormous amount of work he has done as Area Organiser and for helping the provisional atlas to reach fruition with a remarkably well-covered Scotland.

So now a plea for volunteers to take on one or more of these vice counties and the following 5 others currently vacant north of the border: 72 (Dumfries), 78 (Peebles), 79 (Selkirk), 80 (Roxburgh) and 81 (Berwick). There is still a lot of work to be done and plenty of good spiders to find!

John Crocker and Jon Daws will both be familiar to members for the publication in 1996 of the remarkable county fauna on spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland, followed in 2001 by a substantial update in the form of a Millennium Atlas. John has finally persuaded Jon Daws to take over as Area Organiser for VC55 Leicestershire (with Rutland). Many thanks are due to John Crocker for his enormous efforts and achievements as Area Organiser and for the immense contribution the very large VC55 database made to the national atlas. I am very grateful to Jon for agreeing to take up the reins in one of the best recorded counties in the country. Jon is well known for his activities in sampling little investigated habitats and skill at finding rare and new species (for example see later in this News).

Don't forget the December 2005 deadline for new data

Thank you very much indeed to everyone who has started to send in new data, especially via MapMate. In particular I failed to thank in the last newsletter Michael Usher and Dick Loxton for the very large number of valuable records with phenology information that they had previously provided me with – my only excuse is that the data lay buried under newer workload and had been forgotten after I had made a start on entering it into MapMate.

Just to make sure protocol for the submission of records is clear, record cards are always welcome but will need to be inputted before the data become useful – this will take considerable time and effort, so if you are going to submit your data in this way please do so as soon as possible. If you have records in computerised format, but not in MapMate, then please send to Stan Dobson who will endeavour to collate the data for submission for the proposed updated maps. If you have your records held in **MapMate**, then do not convert the records to a spreadsheet in order to send them – this negates one of the most powerful features of the software. Use the MapMate sync facility to submit your records directly to me (centre 2gv). MapMate will keep track of what records you have sent or edited, and seamlessly keep up-to-date when you do more

syncs in the future. You can send sync files either as an e-mail attachment or via the MapMate website. One question I have been asked is whether the MapMate fields provide sufficient data for the S.R.S. MapMate has incorporated our phase 2 data requirements and guidelines since early 2003, when Technika Ltd modified the software in co-operation with the B.A.S./S.R.S. Assuming you are using an up-to-date version, and are using the S.R.S. data entry templates, then you will automatically fulfil what we want when you sync your data. This information will be the key to a better understanding of the autecology of our British species. The checklist in MapMate is completely up-to-date. It is best to select the filter described as Araneae: Spider Recording Scheme in your configuration, but it will not matter if you also include the Arachnida: Araneae option – the main difference is the inclusion in this list of Channel Islands species and certain other differences where species have been split or are unidentifiable as females. This will not cause a problem to the recording scheme.

Please send articles for the July S.R.S. News by the end of May to Peter Harvey at 32, Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freereserve.co.uk

A Shocking Experience

by Jimmy McKellar

Firstly I would like to state: I in no way cast blame on either manufacturer mentioned in this article as the problem was one of my own making. However I would like to alert other users to the potential hazard of this particular combination of circumstances.

On the 18th of November 2004 I was looking through my microscope when I received a nasty electrical shock. I was using a Meiji Techno, model SKC microscope with a separate Flexispot lamp, model SPU power supply.

I had pushed the stage clips to either side so that I could accommodate a larger object and reached out to adjust the illumination while continuing to look through the eyepieces. It was at this point I received an unpleasant electric shock.

I confess that because I was unhappy with the microscope's original lighting I simply cut the cable off at the entry point at the rear making it un-powered and un-earthed. On investigating the cause I discovered that the microscope stage clips droop down but have an upturned end, this terminates at about the same height as the ventilation slot on the side of the lamp's power source. When the lamp was lifted slightly for adjustment the stage clip entered the slot and must have come into contact with the mains. Fortunately neither the microscope nor I was earthed thereby alleviating any real danger. I was surprised the fuse on the lamp did not blow as the stage clip must have touched the lamp casing. To prevent a repeat event I simply plugged the lamp into a different socket at 90

degrees to the original position and now the side closest to the stage clip has no ventilation slot. The moral of this story is check all possible potential hazards out and take action before they become a problem.

24, Scorguie Gardens, INVERNESS, IV3 8SS.

Records of Uncommon Spiders from Southern England, 2004

by Jonty Denton

Theridiidae: *Dipoena tristis* (Hahn) (Notable A)
Southwood (SU8454) 7th July, adult female from gorse bushes on relict heath area. This appears to be the first record for North Hampshire (VC12).

Linyphiidae: *Erigonella ignobilis* (O. P. -Cambridge)
Southwood (SU8454) 25th September, adults found in suction samples taken in an area of open damp grassland surrounded by old woodland. According to Harvey *et al.*, (2002) this is the first post-1980 record from south-east England, and the first for North Hampshire (VC12). There are old records from SU94-96 in Surrey.

Tetragnathidae: *Meta menardi* (Latreille)
The awful weather in early July brought down a large beech tree near Heron Pond in Bushy Park (TQ1669). The tree had looked sound, but the basal 3 m or so of the trunk was hollow. On 9th July, inside the exposed cavity were two female *M. menardi*. The remaining bole of the tree was taken away to the estate yard, and a further female was found on the rim of the broken-off section of the cavity. Reference to the atlas shows that there are no previous records for this species in Middlesex.

Araneidae: *Araneus marmoreus* Clerck var. *pyramidatus*.
I took an adult female on the edge of Ashenground Wood, West Sussex (TQ3223) on 30th August. It was a surprise to find that the atlas had only one previous record from the Weald, which was a pre-1950 record, also from TQ32!

Salticidae: *Salticus zebraneus* (C. L. Koch)
Widespread on large trees in Bushy Park, Middlesex (TQ1470, TQ1569) in July.

Reference

Harvey, P.R., Nellist, D.R. & Telfer, M.G. (eds) (2002) *Provisional Atlas of British Spiders (Arachnida, Araneae) Volumes 1 & 2*. Huntingdon: BRC.

Kingsmead, Wield Road, MEDSTEAD, Hampshire, GU34 5NJ;
e-mail: JontyDenton@aol.com

Araneus alsine (Walckenaer, 1802) in West Inverness-shire (VC97)

by Duncan Williams

On 6th September 2004, I spent an afternoon sweeping field layer vegetation on the Allt Mhuic Nature Reserve, Loch Arkaig. The sample yielded several specimens of *Pachygnatha listeri* Sundevall, 1830 and *Xysticus ulmi* (Hahn, 1831). This seemed reasonable reward for the effort – with both of the above, at least in northern Britain, being

rather poorly known and seemingly local spiders. In addition, a single female of *Cercidia prominens* (Westring, 1851) was swept from low sparse *Myrica gale* Bog Myrtle and *Carex* spp. growing in a small flush in an area largely dominated by *Molinia caerulea* Purple Moorgrass (NN122913). This latter find would appear to represent a significant northern record: only four other Scottish records are evident in the Atlas of British spiders (Harvey *et al.*, 2002).

More excitingly, two juvenile specimens of *Araneus alsine* (Walckenaer, 1802), were swept from a weak *Juncus acutiflorus* Sharp-flowered Rush dominated flush (NN119913). Despite their small size (ca. 4 mm) the two specimens were still immediately recognisable as belonging to that highly distinctive species; being familiar from previous experience of *A. alsine* near Fort Augustus VC96 (Williams, 2003).

Despite my confidence in the identity of these two juveniles, I made a second visit to the site some three weeks later, on 24th September 2004 in an attempt to obtain mature specimens for absolute confirmation. Almost immediately on commencing sweeping of an open damp area dominated by low *Myrica* and *Molinia* among open oak/birch woodland (NN119912) two mature female specimens of *A. alsine* were duly taken. Further survey over the course of the day yielded specimens elsewhere along Loch Arkaig. A further mature female was located in an oak leaf spun to clumpy *Myrica* further down Loch Arkaig at Ardehive (NN145 899). At this site, grazing by cattle was readily apparent, even on the plants of *Myrica* to which the leaf was spun. One, strikingly dark female was found in a spun retreat of dead *Myrica* leaves among robust growth (>1 m tall) of Bog Myrtle growing through dense hummocks of *Molinia* (NN097913). This latter locality also yielded a female specimen of *C. prominens*, swept from *Myrica*.

On 8th October 2004 one further site was discovered – near Coire Choille (NN246809), Spean Bridge. Again, a single female *A. alsine* was found in an oak-leaf spun to plants of Bog Myrtle. Here, however, the *Myrica* grows in more discrete clumps, with the grass sward being more heavily grazed down by livestock.

Despite its large size and entirely distinctive appearance, there are remarkably few modern records of this Nationally Notable B spider in Britain. The Atlas (Harvey *et al.*, 2002) only lists five post-1979 records, though Denton (2003) adds two further southern records not included therein.

The 80-hectare Allt Mhuic Nature Reserve is managed (in partnership between Butterfly Conservation, Forestry Commission Scotland and Forest Research) with primary regard to its interest for Lepidoptera, most notably the Chequered Skipper Butterfly *Carterocephalus palaemon* (Pallas, 1771). The locality near Spean Bridge also supports this species. It is worth noting that this distinctive butterfly has been known from Scotland only since 1939. Only over the last 30 years or so has the true nature of its limited UK distribution in Lochaber and Argyll been elucidated. Given that a member of such a small and popular group of invertebrates could remain undetected over such a large area for so long it seems entirely plausible that *A. alsine* (which would appear to favour broadly similar damp clearings in open woodland) might be found elsewhere within the known range of the Chequered Skipper. Reference to the species richness map in the Atlas (Harvey *et al.*, 2002) suggests that the extensive areas of oak woodland to the west of Fort William would appear to have received scant attention from arachnologists.

I would like to thank Peter Harvey for confirming the identity of the spiders referred to above.

References

- Denton, J. (2003) Additional records of Notable spiders not included in the *Provisional Atlas*. S.R.S. News No.45. **In** *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **96**: 13.
- Harvey, P. R., Nellist, D. R. & Telfer, M. G. (eds) (2002) *Provisional atlas of British spiders (Arachnida, Araneae), Volumes 1 and 2*. Biological Records Centre, Huntingdon.
- Williams, D. (2003) A third Scottish locality for *Araneus alsine* (Walckenaer, 1802), the 'Strawberry Spider'. S.R.S. News No.45. **In** *Newsl.Br.arachnol.Soc.* **96**: 17.

Forest Research (TSU), Lairg Fieldstation, Ord Croft, LAIRG, Sutherland, IV27 4EG.

An Imported Pholcid in Felixstowe

by Paul Lee

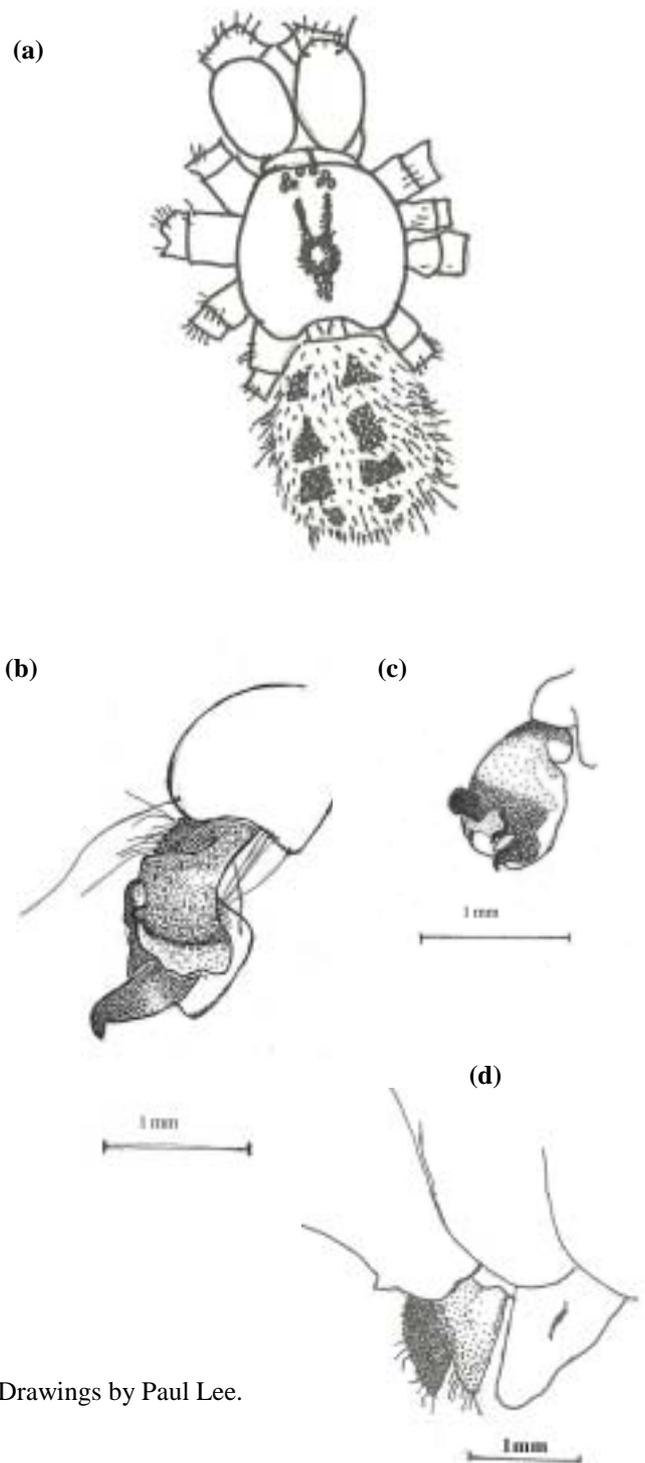
In July 2004 I was sent three spiders by Emma Costello of Igrox Ltd, a pest control company based in Worlingworth, Suffolk. These spiders originated from a container on Felixstowe docks which Igrox had been called in to fumigate. One spider was immature and I have been unable to get anywhere with naming it; I have not been able to identify even the family it belongs to. The other two spiders were adults, a male and a female pholcid. Although similar in body length to the very largest *Pholcus phalangioides*, the specimens from Felixstowe had longest leg lengths in excess of 55 mm. The body was also more globular and the legs stouter than in *Pholcus* and therefore gave the spiders a much bulkier appearance as well. The femur of the palp was very large and this was especially noticeable from above. Finally the male chelicerae each had a dark, granulated ridge protruding from the anterior face. Each ridge was almost as massive as the chelicera itself. Based on my drawings of the male palpal organs and chelicerae the spiders were identified as *Artema atlanta* Walckenaer, 1837 by Dr. Bernhard Huber of the Museum Koenig, Bonn.

Artema atlanta was originally described from specimens that had been collected in Brazil, but Brignoli (1981) has suggested that the species was introduced to the Americas from the Old World. Whatever its origins, this tramp species has been very successful in hitching a lift with man on his travels around the globe. It has now been reported from all the continents except Antarctica and has become an established part of the fauna in warmer climes. In 2001 it was reported as being imported into Antwerp (van Keer & van Keer, 2001), not that far from Felixstowe as the ferry sails!

The presence of two specimens of *Artema atlanta* in a container on Felixstowe Docks hardly merits an addition to the British checklist. However, it does further demonstrate the potential for the introduction of alien species and the risk of their becoming established should climatic change be favourable.

References

- Brignoli, P. M. (1981) Studies on the Pholcidae, I. Notes on the genera *Artema* and *Physocyclus* (Araneae). *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* **170**(1): 90–100.



Drawings by Paul Lee.

***Artema atlanta*: (a) Whole male spider, (b) Lateral view of tarsus of left palp, (c) Underside of palpal bulb, (d) Lateral view of left chelicera.**

Lee, P. (2000) Further notes on the long-legged spider, *Pholcus phalangioides*. *White Admiral*, **45**: 39.

van Keer, K. & van Keer, J. (2001) Ingeburgerde exotische trilspinnen (Araneae: Pholcidae) in Antwerpse haven en enkele algemene bedenkingen bij spinnenmigratie. *Nwsbr. Belg. Arachnol. Ver.* **16**(3): 81–86.

Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP9 2LX.

***Phrurolithus minimus* (C.L. Koch, 1839) in Cumbria, VC69**

by Jennifer Newton

On a visit to Holme Park Fell, SD5478, a National Trust property on limestone in south-east Cumbria, in March 2003 I was puzzled to see a number of tiny ant-like spiders under loose limestone rocks at the foot of a south-west facing slope of limestone pavement. The spiders were bright red in colour, very similar to the red of the *Myrmica* ants which were also present in large numbers. None of the spiders was mature, but I managed to rear a male to maturity to confirm my suspicion that it was *Phrurolithus minimus*, a Nationally Scarce, Na species. A return in early June produced one female. In 2004 there were excellent numbers of subadults in April, and on 8th May, on a visit with Cumbria Wildlife Trust and B.A.S. most of the eight members found adult specimens under rocks, including one mating pair photographed by Phil Shaw, the only other B.A.S. member. In October I found further immature specimens.



***Phrurolithus minimus* pair. Photograph by Phil Shaw.**

The colony extends for a few hundred metres along the base of the limestone pavement, crossing into the next tetrad, and is clearly a large and flourishing one. Although the site faces south-west it is at 150 m altitude in quite an exposed position. Holme Park Fell is part of the Hutton Roof Crags – Farleton Knott complex of limestone pavement, rock outcrops and scree, well known for its rich diversity of plants and invertebrates. However *Phrurolithus minimus* was not found by Chris Felton on a section of Hutton Roof surveyed recently by the Liverpool Museum team for the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. The nearest record for the species is in Dove Dale in Staffordshire, at 250 m altitude, with the few other British records all further south, mostly from south-east England. It is interesting that the other member of the genus, *P. festivus* is scarce this far north, with just a few records from Gait Barrows NNR in this area.

My thanks to Peter Merrett for confirmation of the identification and to the National Trust for permission to survey spiders on the property.

Holly House, 94, Main Street, Hornby, LANCASTER, LA2 8JT.

Spider records from the Butterfly House, Lancaster

by Jennifer Newton

I was invited to visit the Butterfly House in Lancaster in August 2004 to see if I could help with their spider problem – there is a build-up of numbers in the summer and these spiders attack some of the carefully nurtured caterpillars. In the very humid heat of the tropical butterfly house it soon became clear that the main culprit was *Achaearanea tepidariorum*: there were large numbers of males alongside females guarding their egg sacs under various large leaves. This is the first recent record for Lancashire. In addition I picked up a tiny spider which turned out to be an adult male, and also a tiny adult female. Both were distinctively marked spiders with clear genitalia reminiscent of Theridiidae but not fitting any of the British species. Tony Russell-Smith very kindly and rapidly identified both specimens as *Coleosoma floridanum* and I was able to read up about the species in Crocker & Daws (2001) and the Provisional Atlas. It seems that it is a tropical species which has been transported round the world, first recorded in this country from Kew in 1966, also from Rutland Water Butterfly Centre in 1999 plus a couple of other records from the south-east. It looks as if butterfly houses will be a good bet for finding new county records for these two species. I had hoped to find *Uloborus plumipes* but without success – perhaps they don't like the high humidity. British species inside the hothouse were *Scotophaeus blackwalli*, *Neriene montana*, *Enoplognatha ovata*, *Lepthyphantes minutus* and *Tegenaria* probably *saeva*, but I couldn't catch the adult specimens.

The Butterfly House in Lancaster is maintained at high temperatures and humidity throughout the year, as the tropical butterflies are kept through the winter.

Reference

Crocker, J. & Daws, J. (2001) *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland: Millennium Atlas*. Kairos Press, Newtown Linford, Leicester.

Holly House, 94, Main Street, Hornby, LANCASTER, LA2 8JT.

Some Spiders of Misson Carr Nature Reserve Nottinghamshire

by Howard Williams

In 2004 I obtained permission from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to survey, mainly for spiders and fungi, Misson Carr reserve in the north of the county. This large reserve, only acquired by the Trust in 2002, is a fragment of the county's formerly more extensive northern carrlands – themselves the southern fringe of the larger carr areas of South Yorkshire. Surrounded by arable and some pasture fields, it has been preserved thanks to its ownership by the MoD before its purchase by the Trust. It comprises wet scrub woodland with *Phragmites*, and an area of acid grassland; and is particularly known for its extensive macro and micro moth lists as well as for some uncommon breeding birds.



Synageles venator (Spain). Photograph by Peter Harvey.

A short walk-about visit here in February produced, after a brief grubbing session in one section, 18 species of spider, of which one was a female *Clubiona subtilis*, a scarce spider in most areas and a county first for us. Another uncommon spider taken was *Gongylidiellum latebricola*, a male.

A further visit in May produced a number of interesting species as a result of beating, sweeping and grubbing in a limited number of sections. These included: a second (male this time) *C. subtilis* in a different section from February's female; another spider uncommon in Notts and a county first, *Baryphyma trifrons* (f); *Trichopterna thorelli* (m, f), only the second record for Notts, the first being not far off on another damp reserve in 1998; another scarce spider in the county, *Ceratinella scabrosa* (m); a spider infrequently collected by us, *Xysticus ulmi* (m, f); *Araneus marmoreus* var. *pyramidatus* (immatures or subadults). The last-named species appears to be uncommon in the county, though abundant in parts of Sherwood Forest and apparently here at Misson. A female *Kaestneria dorsalis* was a pleasing find, being not common hereabouts.

It was a visit in August with County Organizer, Tom Faulds, that produced the most remarkable discovery at the site entrance (SK712971), and that after we had packed everything away in the car prior to leaving the site. I noticed on the wooden gatepost what seemed at first sight to be a pale brown ant. About 15 minutes before I had seen a similar thing on the other gatepost, but it had vanished into a crack before I could get a good look. After a rushed unearthing of pooter and tubes etc from the car, we captured it; but unable to make much of it there and then, pooted it into a tube of alcohol containing other spiders from that spot to be examined later.

It turned out to be the jumping spider, *Synageles venator* (f), a Notable A species, a scarce, mainly coastal species of the South Welsh and southern English shores and dunes. The nearest sites to us are some 100 km to the south near Peterborough. I understand from Peter Harvey that its location 3–4 ft up on a gatepost and fence is itself unusual, the species normally being observed on the ground.

The rest of the bag that day was undistinguished, so *Synageles* made up for the hours spent sweltering under a hot sun and swarms of biting insects, the concomitant, alas, of fenscapes in high summer. To date, the number of spiders recorded on this site after 3 visits – one very brief – is 70. There must be many more awaiting identification and hopefully the list will lengthen given time.

My thanks are due to Tom Faulds for his initial confirmation of *Synageles* and to Peter Harvey for his definitive one, and also for additional information.

References

- Harvey, P. R., Nellist, D. R. & Telfer, M. G. (eds) (2002) *Provisional atlas of British spiders (Arachnida, Araneae), Volumes 1 & 2*. Huntingdon: Biological Records Centre.
 Howitt, R. C. L. & Howitt, B. M. (1963) *A Flora of Nottinghamshire*. Derry & Sons Ltd, Nottingham.

131, Windsor Road, Carlton-in-Lindrick, WORKSOP, S81 9DH.

Walckenaeria mitrata Rediscovered

by A. Russell-Smith

The linyphiid *Walckenaeria mitrata* was first recorded in this country from Blean Woods NNR, near Canterbury, Kent in 1967 (Swann, 1971). A total of five specimens were taken in pitfall traps in mature (ca. 30 year old) mixed chestnut and beech coppice in Little Den Lees (TR 108608). Three males and one female were captured in the period 13th April to 11th May 1967 and a further female in the period 16th November to 14th December of that year. In 1968, a single female was taken in a quadrat sample of leaf litter at the same site on 19th December.

Since that date, no further specimens of this species have been collected in Britain, despite a considerable amount of hand collecting and some pitfall trapping in apparently suitable habitats in the Blean Woods NNR over the period 1991 to 2003. During 2004, Aaron Scarlet, an undergraduate student at Christchurch College Canterbury, carried out a field project to compare surface activity of invertebrates in three different ages of chestnut/birch coppice in Church Wood, part of the Blean Woods NNR (TR121597). Five pitfall traps were located in each of three adjacent areas of coppice, one cut the previous winter, one cut 5 years previously and coppice last cut 15 years previously. The pitfall traps were initially placed in the field on 11th May and then emptied at approximately 2 week intervals until the 28th October. Two males of *Walckenaeria mitrata* were trapped in the five year old coppice during the period 11th to 25th May. A single female of the species was taken in the area cut the previous winter during the period 5th to 22nd June. Interestingly, these areas were quite different from that in which the species was found in the 1960s. There, the over-mature coppice had a well developed canopy 7–10 m in height and a deep layer of leaf litter. The areas in which the species was found in 2004 were either bare ground with some resprouting of coppice or a dense thicket of five year old regrowth of chestnut and birch. In neither was the litter layer very well developed, except immediately beneath chestnut stools in the 5 year old coppice.

It seems therefore, that *W. mitrata* can exploit a range of woodland habitats and it seems strange that it has not been found in Blean Woods during the intervening 35 years since its first discovery. Like the thomisid, *Pistius truncatus*, confined in this country to East Blean Woods LNR, it may be able to survive at very low population levels. Given this, its discovery elsewhere in Britain will probably only come about as a result of intensive survey work.

Reference

- Swann, P. H. (1971) *Wideria mitrata* (Menge), a spider new to Britain (Araneae: Linyphiidae). *Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc.* 2: 11–12.

1, Bailiffs Cottage, Doddington, SITTINGBOURNE, Kent, ME9 0JU.

Megalephyphantes sp. n. in Kent

by A. Russell-Smith

On the 4th November 1999, Peter Harvey and Eric Philp were collecting at Minster on the Isle of Sheppey (Kent) when a male and two females of an unfamiliar linyphiid were taken by Peter and provisionally identified as *Megalephyphantes collinus*. The specimens were examined by Peter Merrett who found that they were very close to, but distinct from, *Megalephyphantes collinus occidentalis*. This subspecies is known only from Portugal but the nominate species is otherwise quite widespread in central Europe. Subsequent examination has convinced Peter Merrett that this actually represents a new species of *Megalephyphantes* which will be described in the near future. The collection site was in tall open herbage growing on stabilised shingle below a London Clay undercliff and in dense tall grass close to the beach (TQ962734). A further female was collected at the same site by this author on the 8th October 2000. The site was visited again by the author on 12th October 2001 but without finding any further specimens.

The author collected at Seasalter, Nr. Faversham (TR 060648) on the 21st September 2002 where two females of this species were collected while turning bricks and other debris in a dense stand of the grass *Arrhenatherum elatior* on shell sand. The same site was revisited on the 28th October when another solitary female was taken. A visit to Whitstable on 4th October 2002 revealed another male and two females at Castle Hill (TR120673). These were found in tall grass & herbs growing on shingle against a concrete groyne. Several more females were seen but not collected on this occasion. A repeat visit to the same site on 28th October produced three further females. Although the sites at Seasalter and Whitstable were revisited in October 2003, no specimens of *Megalephyphantes* were collected. The shingle was extremely dry at this time following the hot summer and very few spiders were seen.

Both the Seasalter and the Whitstable areas were visited again in October 2004. No further specimens were found at Seasalter but at Whitstable the species was found to be common at a location near Island Wall, about 1 km to the east of Castle Hill (TR097656) on the 18th October. A total of 4 males and 4 females were collected but overall between 15 and 20 specimens of both sexes were seen. Females spin a very loose and untidy sheet web about 20–25 cm above the ground. Here it was found in a similar microhabitat to that at Castle Hill, in tall grassy vegetation with many forbs against a concrete groyne. Subsequent visits in October 2004 to three sites on shingle on the east coast of Kent (Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown) failed to find the species in superficially similar vegetation to that at Whitstable. Finally, a single rather damaged male of this species was taken from a pitfall trap in Church Wood, part of the Blean Woods NNR near Canterbury (TR122597) about 8 km due south of Whitstable between the 14th and 28th October. The site was a 15 year old chestnut and birch coppice with the canopy about 5–6 m high and a fairly thick litter layer.

In summary, *Megalephyphantes* sp. n. is now known to occur in tall grassy vegetation on stable shingle/shell-sand along a short (ca. 12 km) stretch of the North Kent coast and also in coppice woodland in Blean Woods NNR. Although this seems a strange combination of habitats, it is matched by that of another uncommon species, *Trichoncus affinis*, which is now known to be fairly frequent in Blean Woods but elsewhere in Britain is confined to coastal shingle in the south-east.



Megalephyphantes sp. n. Top and middle, female; bottom male. Photos by Peter Harvey.

Adults of *Megalephyphantes* are present between late September and early November and the species is reasonably abundant at one site in Whitstable. A common feature of all the shingle sites from which it has been recorded was that the ground beneath the vegetation was fairly moist, perhaps due to the underlying layer of London Clay at Minster and to runoff from concrete groynes at Whitstable. This may explain its absence from sites on the east coast of Kent where the shingle below the vegetation layer was completely dry. While at present only known from North Kent, there is no reason to suppose that suitable habitats do not exist elsewhere along the south or east coast of Britain and it may well have been overlooked because it matures relatively late in the year.

Achaearanea riparia in Leicestershire

by Jon Daws

This species was discovered new to VC55 on the 20th July 1997, when a single male was swept from rough limestone grassland within the working quarry at Ketton (SK975059). The specimen was considered to be an aeronaut, with the possibility that this species could be established within the quarry or adjacent areas. No further records for this species were recorded until a subadult male was collected from its web at the side of the working quarry at Ketton on the 31st May 2004 (SK972056). The spider was found at ground level close to the base of a spoil heap, under a small rock outcrop, where its tangled web stood about 3 cm high. Although the adjacent spoil heaps and quarry sides were searched, no further specimens were found.

A month later (29th June 2004) a quest to find further sites for *Dictyna latens* in the north of the county involved sweeping some of the wide rough grass verges to the east of the village of Seagrave; but this search was unsuccessful. As part of this collecting trip a two metre wide field margin of fine grasses (SK627167) was also swept, which produced a male *A. riparia*. This record was unexpected and was initially written off as a stray aeronaut, but on talking to Peter Harvey I learned that the edges of ploughed fields are a possible viable habitat for this species with the small bank type habitat that is produced by ploughing.

177, Featherstone Drive, LEICESTER, LE2 9RF.

Adjusting to the Climate

by Jon Daws

The second record for *Scytodes thoracica* for Vice-County 55 came from the outside wall of Uppingham Church (SP866996) on the 24th July 2000. A female was found dead in a *Steatoda* web, with a further female taken alive from the inside wall of the church. The fact that a specimen of *Scytodes* was found outside was considered anomalous, the spider had possibly wandered out of an open window and had been unable to get back inside and had then succumbed to native aggression. This was until on a visit to Husbands Bosworth Church (SP644844) on the 7th July 2004, two female *S. thoracica* were collected from the outside of the church. One was found, five feet from the ground, on an old unused churchyard sign, leaning against the church wall; the other was collected from beneath a small pile of two high house bricks that were adjacent to the church porch. The church was locked and there was no time to gain access.

There is little doubt that this species would not survive our worst winters out in the open, but could they survive our mild ones, persisting long enough to colonise further distant heated buildings? There is evidence that other non-native species have survived our winters for at least a few years; John Crocker had a small *Achaearanea tepidariorum* population in an unheated glass house, in his Leicestershire garden for several years during the 1990s, until an unusually cold winter spell killed them off. Whilst living in Suffolk in the early 1990s a female *Pholcus phalangioides* survived a very cold winter in one of a block of free standing unheated garages, when temperatures fell to below

minus ten degrees some nights and remained below freezing for one particularly cold week. The female *P. phalangioides* mostly remained inert and immobile in its web during the very cold spells, but recovered and became active on some of the warmer winter days. In Leicestershire today, there are some large populations of *P. phalangioides* living and breeding within the county cable systems, with their only protection coming from the depth of the cable holes, some up to three feet deep. So perhaps with global warming these and other synanthropic species are on the verge of becoming a part of our urban or suburban fauna, or like the second *Scytodes* found within VC55 the climate may prove to be the least of their potential problems.

177, Featherstone Drive, LEICESTER, LE2 9RF.

Holocnemus pluchei in Leicestershire

by Jon Daws

On the 28th September 2004, whilst working in an Asda distribution warehouse at Lutterworth in south Leicestershire, I noticed a spider's web about a metre from the floor in a corner between a wall/roof balustrade and the wall. The web was triangular about 30 cm by 30 cm and looked like a *Linyphia* sheet web, there was a very active female spider adding silk to the web whilst hanging upside down beneath the web. The initial impression was of a *Pholcus phalangioides*, but the web was not the usual messy *Pholcus* affair, with the movements of a large long legged *Linyphia* species. The spider was collected and Mike Roberts 'Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe (1995)' was consulted, with the spider being initially identified as a *Pholcus opilionoides*.

The spider was sent to Peter Harvey for his opinion, who agreed that it superficially looked like a *Pholcus opilionoides* but noted the fact that the specimen had swollen palps, a character not mentioned in Roberts (1995). Peter knew that there are quite a few species of pholcids in central and southern Europe but did not have enough knowledge of the species or the relevant literature, so sent the specimen to John Murphy who identified it as a *Holocnemus pluchei* (Scopoli, 1763). The spider had probably been imported into the warehouse on one of the thousand or so pallets that come into the depot on a daily basis, but it remains to be seen whether this is a singleton or the possibility that there is a breeding colony.

I would like to thank both Peter Harvey and John Murphy for their help and identification skills.

177, Featherstone Drive, LEICESTER, LE2 9RF.

***Theridion hemerobium* Simon and Other Riverside Spiders**

by Tony White

In his interesting article on the distribution of *Theridion hemerobium* in Leicestershire (S.R.S. Newsletter 50) Jon Daws draws attention to the possibly neglected habitat of riverside or canal-side structures. Rivers and canals in general provide an abundance of potential insect prey and so it is not surprising that spiders are also abundant in riparian habitats. Certainly in the Northampton area (VC32) *T. hemerobium* is very common on bridges over the canalised River Nene. At Cogenhoe, for example (SP833613), it is present in large numbers, as it is on other riverside structures both to the east and west.



Larinioides patagiatus photo by Peter Harvey.



Larinioides sclopetarius photo by Martin Askins.

Well within the town boundaries of Northampton, boat moorings beside the river support vary large populations of *Larinioides* species. On a visit to the Far Cotton area (SP752596) on 3rd June 2002 I was able to take, from one structure, specimens of *Larinioides cornutus*, *L. sclopetarius* and *L. patagiatus*. The last of these three appears to be a new record for Northants. These spiders, like their relative *Nuctenea umbratica*, tend to be crepuscular or even nocturnal in their habits and during daylight hours can be almost impossible to lure from their

retreats, even when tempted by a tuning fork. My visit took place at dusk and each spider was occupying the hub of its web. For arachnologists a visit to their local river or canal on a summer evening can be a very rewarding experience.

25, Shelsley Drive, Parklands, NORTHAMPTON, NN3 6ET;
e-mail: diaea@yahoo.co.uk

***Ero tuberculata* in Norfolk**

by Tony Irwin

On 24th October 2004, my daughter found a spider sitting on the wall in the bathroom of our house in Norwich (TG211082). I recognised it as an *Ero* species and later identified it as *Ero tuberculata*. Peter Harvey tells me that it seems to be the most northerly recent record of this species in Britain.

While photographing it, I was intrigued by the various positions it adopted on a twig. It often preferred to sit on a small silk platform slightly away from the twig, with its legs well tucked-up, apart from one extended forward and another backwards. In appearance it appeared to be a discarded crane-fly carcass from a spider's web. At other times it closely resembled a bird dropping (as do many boldly-marked black-and-white or brown-and-white spiders, beetles and moths).



Ero tuberculata photo Tony Irwin.

Another pose was to sit with its legs more widely spread, so that the pattern on the abdomen and cephalothorax could be easily seen (see figure). When looking at this I was struck by its resemblance to a monkey's head. Perhaps the tubercles on the abdomen of this species are there to enhance this appearance. Although the scale may appear to be all wrong, it is known that predators are sometimes 'taken in' by the resemblance that beetles and caterpillars have to the heads of snakes. Could this be another example of mimicry? Or am I working too late at the office these days?

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, Shirehall, Market Avenue, NORWICH, Norfolk NR1 3JQ.