

# Spider Recording Scheme News

## March 2012, No. 72

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My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 73 will be published in July 2012. Please send contributions by the end of May at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk or grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk. The newsletter depends on your contributions!

### Editorial

As always, thank you to the contributors who have provided articles for this issue. Please help future issues by providing articles, short or longer, on interesting discoveries and observations.

I am enormously grateful to John Partridge for uploading numerous species notes to the SRS website from the digitised BAS Newsletters 1-100 (1971–2004) on CD. These are now automatically available from species summary pages on the website, and provide an extremely useful and valuable resource.

We now have 889,160 SRS records in total to date in MapMate. About 380,000 have at least some site-based habitat information, which provides valuable information to help us to establish a profile of the ecological characteristics of each British spider species. All these data are uploaded and summarised on the SRS website. Many thanks to all those Area Organisers and other recorders who have provided their records to the recording scheme. We depend on these records to provide up-to-date information on the distribution and autecology of our spiders. New records received electronically, especially by MapMate sync, are uploaded to the website within a short time, so the maps reflect absolutely the latest and most up to date information available.

Feedback on individual records can be submitted by logged-on members so that any errors can then be corrected. Following the last SRS News comments, we have had our first feedback provided on several records by Greg Hitchcock and Richard Gallon, and I have been able to correct these. This is an excellent way of helping to make sure that the data we hold is as good as it gets, so please take a look and report any errors you find.

We are now using Ordnance Survey OpenSpace on the website, where it is used in Site Accounts. Please take a look and try adding sites of interest to those already available. There are also now country, county and VC totals and lists available for logged-on members. Please bear in mind though that these are based on records submitted to the Recording Scheme, and there may be records for a vice county, county or country which are not included.

### Area Organiser changes

Tom Faulds has passed over the Area Organiser role in Nottinghamshire VC56 to Howard Williams. Howard emphasises how Tom has always been such a very good mentor, and I would like to add my thanks for all the work Tom has done in Notts and elsewhere on spiders. Please now send your records for Notts to Howard at 131 Windsor Road, Carlton-in-Lindrick, Worksop, Notts S81 9DH, email [howard.williams131@gmail.com](mailto:howard.williams131@gmail.com) and MapMate [cuk5gm](mailto:cuk5gm).

Jonty Denton takes over from Rod Allison as Area Organiser for Hants and the Isle of Wight (VCs 10-12), and we are very grateful to Rod for all the work he has done over the years in his role as AO for these VCs and wish him well. Please send records for these VCs to Jonty at 31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hants, GU34 5BX, email [jontydenton@aol.com](mailto:jontydenton@aol.com) and MapMate [cuk3wj](mailto:cuk3wj).

### New South Scotland Spider Recording Scheme Area Organiser

Chris Cathrine has taken on the responsibility as Area Organiser for the Spider Recording Scheme for Vice Counties in South Scotland. Chris takes over as Area Organiser for a suite of vice counties in Scotland, VCs 72 (Dumfriesshire), 73 (Kirkcudbrightshire), 74 (Wigtownshire), 75 (Ayrshire), 76 (Renfrewshire), 77 (Lanarkshire), 78 (Peebleshire), 79 (Selkirkshire), 80 (Roxburghshire), 81 (Berwickshire), 82 (East Lothian), 83 (Midlothian), 84 West Lothian, 86 (Stirling), 98 (Argyll Main), 99 (Dunbartonshire), 100 (Clyde Isles), 101 (Kintyre), 102 (South Ebeudes). Thanks are due to Dave Beaumont for his past role as AO for VCs 73, 74, 77, 99, 101 & 102. AOs in Scotland tend to have a multiple role!

Chris works as the Buglife Conservation Assistant (Scotland) and Planning Casework Officer (UK), while also running his ecological consultancy, Caledonian Conservation Ltd. It was spiders that sparked his interest in the natural world as a child, often setting pitfall traps with his grandfather. His interest in spiders has continued strongly ever since, and is central to his work in the conservation sector.

The Central Belt is the most populous area of Scotland, and this is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness and increase recording of spiders. Chris is looking into the possibility of arranging an informal South Scotland Invertebrate Group that can come together to target recording days for different sites. The first step for this is to put together an e-mailing list, so if you are interested please let him know.

Similarly, if you have any spider records for South Scotland, please send them to Chris – he'd be very pleased to receive them. You can contact Chris at 141 Clydesdale Avenue, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire ML3 7SU, mobile 07789771166 or email [chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk](mailto:chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk).

We could not have made spiders such a well recorded invertebrate group and published the provisional atlas and 2005 update without the efforts of Tom Faulds, Rod Allison, Dave Beaumont and other dedicated Area Organisers and recorders, and I repeat my thanks here.

**Figure 1.** Numbers of records submitted to the recording scheme for each VC post-atlas

VC	2000-on	2005-on	VC	2000-on	2005-on
1	358	92	57	2,351	658
2	220	42	58	180	66
3	2,314	347	59	1,153	1,025
4	146	59	60	8,241	4,641
5	1,140	155	61	577	126
6	249	34	62	437	192
7	2,695	232	63	4,243	1,611
8	3,272	380	64	2,059	1,566
9	5,904	3,233	65	365	199
10	1,512	224	66	77	33
11	1,705	651	67	39	20
12	1,281	365	68	36	3
13	863	261	69	3,938	2,175
14	3,331	975	70	4,550	2,567
15	10,867	3,993	72	24	5
16	4,641	2,024	73	117	23
17	9,918	4,062	74	49	4
18	22,344	14,571	75	11	11
19	5,177	2,501	76	22	5
20	3,775	1,614	77	120	95
21	2,722	766	78	25	16
22	2,580	1,345	79	30	19
23	925	677	80	1	1
24	487	248	81	1	0
25	7,061	4,825	82	38	0
26	4,619	1,395	83	109	13
27	4,923	4,185	84	23	0
28	1,209	1,045	85	242	37
29	2,398	427	86	384	216
30	7,553	1,887	87	583	570
31	3,966	1,730	88	779	426
32	1,073	113	89	377	220
33	1,072	148	90	270	202
34	791	205	91	1,151	817
35	438	10	92	1,903	1,503
36	837	356	93	1,152	775
37	4,545	1,283	94	155	129
38	1,249	1,160	95	4,028	2,656
39	671	139	96	9,415	4,041
40	1,686	969	97	412	222
41	563	228	98	134	55
42	261	169	99	9	9
43	36	12	100	107	102
44	42	13	101	231	220
45	746	302	102	503	330
46	281	10	103	439	398
47	94	26	104	507	259
48	675	24	105	85	19
49	2,085	285	106	1,375	838
50	377	46	107	3,550	2,499
51	116	23	108	302	224
52	299	53	109	6,438	57
53	1,730	853	110	34	2
54	3,365	1,523	111	1,279	1
55	1,011	61	112	22	9
56	5,395	2,500			

## Vice county, county and country totals

The SRS website now provides logged-on members with an 'Area Lists' page that provides species totals for vice counties, counties and countries (England, Wales, Scotland). Selecting the vice county, county or country will then generate a species list for that area from the records in the database, with national status and last year recorded. Hopefully members will find this useful.

There is also a new page 'Record Taxon Totals' I have produced which graphically presents the numbers of records in the database since 1900 to the present and the number of spider taxa over the same period. It is interesting how well the numbers of records tie in with the activity of arachnologists inspired by the publication of *British Spiders* by Locket & Millidge (1950 & 1953) and Locket, Millidge & Merrett (1974), then by *The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* (Roberts, 1985, 1987) and the start of the Spider Recording Scheme launched in April 1987 and spurred on by the remarkable enthusiasm and energy of the late Clifford Smith.

It is also interesting that the rate of new spider taxa recorded in Britain appears to have been pretty much unchanged over the whole period, with an average of something over one species per year added to the British list and no indication that this has actually changed in recent years.

All the information provided on the SRS website is derived from records provided to the recording scheme and the distribution and autecological information provided dynamically generated from the latest data, so is completely up-to-date with the data provided to the scheme.

I have summarised in Figure 1 the numbers of records we have received since publication of the provisional atlas by vice county, and I would urge Area Organisers from all vice counties to help fill in the gaps.



Chris Cathrine pooting in Scotland

## New *Anyphaena* species recorded in London, a second species new to Britain from Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets

by Edward Milner

A single female *Anyphaena* trapped by the author at Kirk's Place, Mile End Park in East London (VC 21, Middlesex) was sent to Peter Harvey, who provisionally identified it as *Anyphaena sabina* L.Koch. 1866 from figures available on the "araneae - Spinnen Europas" website at <http://www.araneae.unibe.ch/> and sent it on to Peter Merrett for his opinion. PM agreed *A. sabina* was likely but suggested John Murphy might have specimens from Europe and be able to confirm its identity, which John duly did. The epigyne of the specimen is shown in the photograph below in Fig. 1.



Figure 1. Epigyne of the Mile End Park *Anyphaena sabina* specimen, photograph © P.R. Harvey.

It is clearly different from the epigyne of *Anyphaena accentuata*, the sole member of this family previously represented in our fauna.

*Anyphaena sabina*, a Mediterranean species, was in a catch from pitfalls first set in a small relic brownfield site at the edge of a newly landscaped area; the trapping period was 16<sup>th</sup> June to 16<sup>th</sup> July. The habitat is typical of small neglected urban sites of overgrown rubble; long grass, herb-rich patches on shallow soil, tussocks, a nettle-bed, some small *Buddleia* saplings growing between some large fragments of old brick wall. The site has also produced a single gravid female of the extremely rare (Red Data Book 1, UKBAP) beetle *Brachinus sclopeta*.

This is the second spider new to Britain found in the Park. In June 2002 the salticid *Macaroeris nidicolens* was swept from several planted black pines (*Pinus nigra*) on the landscaped area known as the 'green bridge' (Milner, 2002). Specimens have been found on these pines every year since, but so far the spiders have not have spread to other bushes or trees in the Park. Since 2002, *M. nidicolens* has been recorded from several other sites in Essex and one in Surrey, swept from a variety of different shrubs (Harvey, 2008).

My thanks to Peter Harvey, Peter Merrett and John Murphy for the identification and information on this species.

### References

- Harvey, P. 2008. More records of *Macaroeris nidicolens* in Essex and a comparison with *Zodarion italicum*. S.R.S. News No. 61. In *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **112**: 16-17.
- Milner, J.E. 2002. *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon), a jumping spider new to Britain discovered at Mile End Park, east London. *London Naturalist* **81**:107.
- Milner, J.E. 2002. *Macaroeris nidicolens* (Simon, 1914), a jumping spider new to Britain. *Spider Recording Scheme Newsletter* **43**: 3.

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## Three new sites for *Heliophanus dampfi* Schenkel 1923 (bog sun-jumper) in Scotland

by Chris Cathrine

Previously known from only two sites in Scotland and one in Wales, *Heliophanus dampfi* Schenkel 1923 (bog sun-jumper) was found at three new sites in Scotland during 2011.

The first new site, Wester Moss, is a lowland raised bog of high quality in Stirlingshire. It is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and has recently become a Butterfly Conservation reserve for *Coenonympha tullia* (large heath butterfly). The specimens were found by Daisy Shepperd (BTCV Natural Talent Apprentice) on 13<sup>th</sup> July and collected by David Pryce (Entomology Officer, Perth Museum and Art Gallery) using a bugvac (modified leaf blower) during a Bio Blitz event.

Further specimens of *H. dampfi* were later collected by David Pryce from Dunmore Moss (Falkirk) on 27<sup>th</sup> July, also using a bugvac. Unlike Wester Moss, which is one of the better examples of a lowland raised bog, Dunmore Moss has been extensively cut over, and *H. dampfi* has survived in a tiny remnant of habitat that has remained untouched by peat extraction operations.

Letham Moss (Falkirk), the third new site, yielded a single *H. dampfi* specimen collected by David Pryce on 6<sup>th</sup> August, using the same bugvac technique. This site is in by far the poorest condition, and is an active peat works. *H. dampfi* appears to be restricted to the remaining small fragments of the original lowland raised bog habitat.

Specimens were identified by Chris Cathrine, and the Wester Moss specimens were verified by Mike Davidson.

*H. dampfi* was also collected at Ochertyre Moss SSSI by Chris Cathrine on 14<sup>th</sup> July using a sweep net, as part of Site Condition Monitoring surveys undertaken by Caledonian Conservation Ltd for Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Several juvenile *Heliophanus* sp. specimens were also collected at Flanders Moss and Ochertyre Moss by David Pryce and Chris Cathrine respectively. Both of these sites are designated as SSSIs and include *H. dampfi* as a qualifying feature, and it is likely that these juveniles belong to this species.



Figure 1. *Heliophanus dampfi* © Lorne Gill

With the exception of the sweep net specimen, all of the *Heliophanus* were found within the bases of well established tussocks, which were interspersed with areas of wet sphagnum. Pitfall traps set at Ochertyre Moss within the same microhabitats did not include any *Heliophanus* spp. in the catch. Surveys were all undertaken on dry sunny days with little or no wind in June and July, although these months were generally rather wet. After finding *Heliophanus* in the tussock habitat described at Ochertyre Moss on 30<sup>th</sup> June, specimens were found with relative ease and speed on the other sites by targeting this microhabitat with a bugvac.

David Pryce applied this technique to a number of other lowland raised bog sites in Scotland during the 2011 season, including Whitecairns Moss (Aberdeenshire), Langlands Moss (South Lanarkshire) and Barleyside Moss (Falkirk). Despite using the same technique and targeting the tussock microhabitat, *Heliophanus* was not found during searches at these other bog sites.

There is a popular belief that, historically, the lowland raised bogs in Stirlingshire were once part of a super bog. There is no evidence that such a super bog ever existed, although historic maps do indicate that the lowland raised bogs were once larger in extent than they are today, offering a greater supply of suitable habitat for *H. dampfi*. Furthermore, land use between bogs has also changed over time, and become less permeable to dispersing invertebrates in modern times. *H. dampfi* is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation prevents gene flow between isolated populations while land use between bogs may be a barrier to *H. dampfi* recolonising otherwise

suitable habitat fragments. Further surveys will provide a better understanding as to the range of *H. dampfi* in Scotland.

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### ***Theridion pinastris* in Cambs. and Beds.**

by Ian Dawson

A female *Theridion pinastris* was beaten from an area of scrub at TL193591, immediately to the east of the East Coast main railway line at St Neots, Cambridgeshire (vc31 Hunts) on 11th July 2010, which represents a significant northward UK range extension. The site is a piece of rough ground, formerly cultivated, but now largely overgrown with large areas of hawthorn, rose, bramble and blackthorn scrub, with a small stand of elm trees at the southeast corner, and is earmarked for possible housing development. In this and a few other closely related species, the female epigyne is plugged by the male after mating. Given that June is the peak month for this species and that this female remained unmated, this suggests that any population here is thinly spread.

On 16th June 2011 I potted a male *Theridion* dangling on a thread from the trunk of a large isolated beech on the east side of the old heath at The Lodge RSPB reserve, Sandy, Bedfordshire (vc30) at TL193479, which also proved to be *T. pinastris*. This site is almost exactly 11 km due south of the St Neots site above.

100 Hayling Avenue - Little Paxton, ST NEOTS,  
Cambridgeshire PE19 6HQ

### **Dramatic spread of *Nigma walckenaeri***

by Ian Dawson

In October 2007 my wife Debra noticed a silken tent sheltering a small green spider on the top of a leaf on the raspberry canes in our garden which proved to be a female *Nigma walckenaeri*, a first for Huntingdonshire (vc31). I assumed at the time that this was one of those odd out-of-range occurrences and there was no further sign of this species in our garden in subsequent years until August 2011 when we counted good numbers of webs, several of them occupied, on ivy, *Forsythia* and honeysuckle.

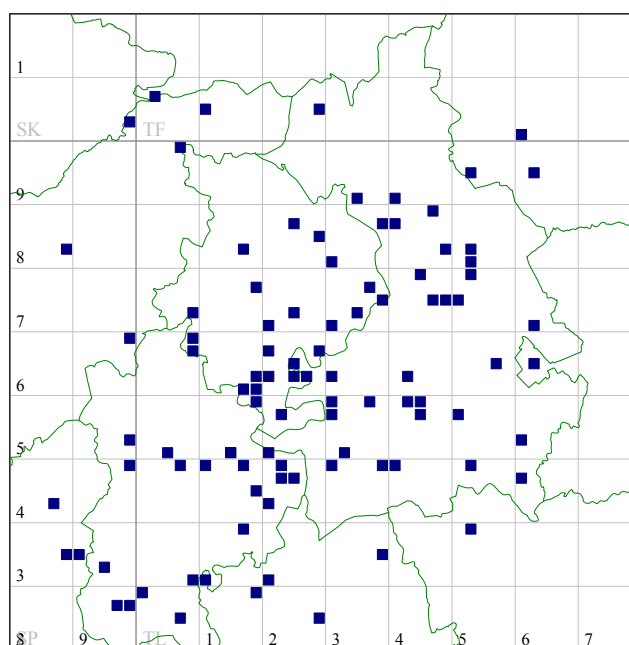
In late September 2011, Alan Outen sent me some spiders to identify which he had found and photographed on 22nd September. After photographing them he preserves them to ensure that the identifications can be checked if necessary. The batch included two small green spiders which he rightly could not reconcile with *Araniella*. These proved to be a male and female *N. walckenaeri*, from two different sites in the village of Clifton, mid Beds (vc30). Following my email to him suggesting that he might have found a new county record

he posted a message to the Beds Natural History Society newsgroup to alert other naturalists to this new arrival to the county. This brought to light an earlier record which proved to have been photographed in a Luton garden by Hugh Griffithsback in 2006.

With the stimulus of the above finds I wondered if *Nigma* was being overlooked locally and made a number of trips targeting the species within a radius of roughly 50 kilometres of my home in south Hunts. While I was expecting to find a few, I was quite staggered by how widespread and common it is in and around Cambridgeshire. Over a period of four weeks between late September and late October, with a few additional casual records until the end of the year, I recorded the species from 111 sites in 62 hectads in 11 vice-counties, namely: vc19 North Essex, vc20 Hertfordshire, vc24 Buckinghamshire, vc26 West Suffolk, vc28 West Norfolk, vc29 Cambridgeshire, vc30 Bedfordshire, vc31 Huntingdonshire, vc32 Northamptonshire, vc53 South Lincolnshire and vc55 Leicestershire. All these, apart from the records for vcs 30 and 31 noted above, would appear to be new vice-county records.

My searches were entirely visual, with no beating or sweeping. The species generally proved easy to find in urban areas, but often rather harder in villages and rural areas, and was almost always on ivy, though I concentrated my searches on this plant. The sheet web spun across the upper concave surface of a single leaf is very characteristic once you get your eye in. Other plant species on which I found the web included elm, *Forsythia*, Japanese privet, holly, lilac, *Cotoneaster*, *Pittosporum*, *Hebe*, *Pyracantha*, honeysuckle, elder, *Clematis* and *Cotinus*, though in almost every case webs were also

*Nigma walckenaeri*



**Figure 1.** Tetrad records of *Nigma walckenaeri* in Beds, Hunts, Cambs and immediate surrounds.

present on nearby ivy. The webs were usually well sheltered and occurred on ivy growing over walls and wooden fences, up telegraph poles, and up a variety of trees and shrubs. I found that ivy on ash, sycamore, willow and lime was always worth searching, but other

trees holding occupied ivy leaf webs included elm, oak, horse chestnut, alder, rowan, laburnum, hawthorn and ornamental beech hedge. Webs occurred from a few inches off the ground to 15 feet or more: a pair of close-focusing binoculars proved invaluable. The concentration of webs was considerable in a few sites, with for example over a hundred webs on a luxuriant growth of ivy up a telegraph pole in the village of Somersham, Cambridgeshire.

The spiders can be surprisingly hard to see beneath their tent unless actively poked, and once I had found one spider I tended to move on. I found that females generally remained in situ on their leaf, whereas the males readily dropped out when disturbed. A female was still in residence under her tent on an ivy leaf in St Neots on 27th December, suggesting the species may last into the new year. Because my searches did not start until late September I do not know when *Nigma* first becomes evident, but the SRS website suggests it is adult mainly between August and October, which agrees with our first garden record last year on 21st August, when it was already well established.

Although often easy to find in much of Cambridgeshire and counties to the south, I found it harder to find to the north and west. Thus Leicestershire and Lincolnshire both required several hours of searching before I found *Nigma*, suggesting that it may not yet have reached much farther north and west. Arachnologists are thin on the ground, but I am very surprised that such a distinctive and attractive spider living close to man and often in gardens has apparently escaped the attention of more general naturalists and photographers, as it has clearly undergone a dramatic northward range expansion in recent years largely unseen and unnoticed.

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## How common are common spiders?

by Howard Williams

In late December 2011 I was recording fungi on a reclaimed pit spoil heap at Langold Country Park, Nottinghamshire. I took back to identify one of a cluster growing in deep pine litter. On examining it at home, I noticed on the gills beneath a small female spider, probably a linyphiid. Under the x20 lens it didn't really look like a *Lepthyphantes*, though the abdominal pattern somewhat resembled theirs. I then thought perhaps *Bathypantes*. Later, after a look under the microscope, I discovered it was a spider new to me, described in the literature as widespread and common: *Tapinopa longidens*. I was pleased to have found it. Reflecting that I have been recording spiders for some 20 years in the north of the county and taken till now to discover this one, I looked it up on the species index on the SRS website for Nottinghamshire: only 3 other sites for it in the county recorded at long intervals from 1978. Not that common here then to all appearances.

I then felt curious as to how common it was in the

neighbouring East Midlands counties, so looked up the distribution maps in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire. In all cases I counted the rough number of sites where it had been recorded, clumping some sites which seem either truly adjacent or parts of a single larger site and counting city records as from one site too. Table 1 below shows that Lincolnshire and Leicestershire each had 8 sites and Derbyshire 9, or twice as many as Nottinghamshire - but not really that many places.

I thought it might be interesting to take 12 other species described as common and widespread and whose distribution pattern on the SRS maps look approximately similar to that of *Tapinopa longidens*, and see how the number of sites in the four East Midlands counties where these species occur compare to each other and to the distribution of *Tapinopa*. The results can be seen in Table 1.

Lincolnshire has 5 and Derbyshire 1 of these common species with fewer sites recorded (\* in Table 1) than for *Tapinopa longidens*; but overall these other species seem to be recorded in each county at many more sites than, or at least at as many sites as, *Tapinopa longidens*. (Incidentally, in South-west Yorkshire north of Nottinghamshire all these species are recorded at many more sites countywide than in the East Midlands with the exception of Leicestershire).

Species	Notts. sites	Lincs. sites	Leics. sites	Derbs. sites
<i>Tapinopa longidens</i>	4	8	8	9
<i>Macrargus rufus</i>	4	6*	21	13
<i>Diplocephalus cristatus</i>	5	8	29	14
<i>Lepthyphantes tenebricola</i>	7	3*	12	3*
<i>Lepthyphantes cristatus</i>	7	5*	13	11
<i>Diplocephalus latifrons</i>	10	24	59	18
<i>Bathypantes parvulus</i>	12	5*	38	14
<i>Gonatium rubens</i>	12	21	43	35
<i>Tiso vagans</i>	13	6*	30	25
<i>Savignya frontata</i>	14	22	44	19
<i>Linyphia hortensis</i>	14	22	44	37
<i>Diplocephalus permixtus</i>	18	4*	29	43
<i>Oedothorax gibbosus</i>	19	14	44	41

**Table 1. Some common East Midlands spiders**

What all this shows is how relative commonness is from place to place. In all the East Midland counties in the table *Tapinopa longidens* would seem to merit 'County Importance' or even 'Regional Importance' status – two terms used by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (and maybe other bodies) to rank plants and animals within its boundaries. Another thing the table suggests is that compared with the other two East Midland counties (and SW Yorkshire) Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire are less well covered. The reasons are not far to find: Lincolnshire is a huge county with, I suspect, few recorders; while Nottinghamshire is a long narrow county where only the northern half has been well covered, reflecting where most recorders live and work. Records from the southern half come largely by way of occasional visits by out-of-county recorders. Both Leicestershire and Derbyshire have more

records more evenly spread, suggesting they have or have had more or more energetic recorders. So, in judging commonness, those appearances mentioned above can be deceptive.

Finally, my *Tapinopa longidens* serves as a reminder of how many common and widespread spiders must be out there waiting to be found and recorded in all our counties.

### References

SRS Website: Species Index <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/A-Z+Species+Index> and Regional Distribution Maps <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Distribution/> accessed 23 Jan 2012.

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## *Neriene radiata* in Cambridgeshire and Sussex

by Ian Dawson

On 11th June 2011 my wife Debra called me out to the garden to see an occupied web spun low between plants of *Penstemon*, *Geum* and *Geranium* in a flower bed between the lawn and raised vegetable beds immediately to the east of our house in Little Paxton, Cambs, TL193628 (vc31, Huntingdonshire). She had tentatively identified the occupant as *Linyphia triangularis*, though the date seemed very early for this species. The spider in residence was clearly an adult female of the *Linyphia/Neriene* group of species, but looked interesting! After photographing her *in situ* I took her indoors to check under the microscope and was surprised and delighted to find myself looking at *Neriene radiata*, long known in the UK from only a few sites in the west of Scotland and the Wyre Forest in Hereford and Worcester. No new plants had been introduced to the garden, nor had we been anywhere earlier in the year from where we might accidentally have transported it. An intensive search of the garden produced no further specimens.

However, a former colleague, Graeme Lyons, now ecologist with the Sussex Wildlife Trust, sends me spider photos for identification from time to time. In June 2009 he sent me a photo of what looked like *Neriene radiata* from the Sussex part of Chiddingfold Forest, SU9931 (vc13, West Sussex). Given the significance of the record, I asked him to collect and send me a specimen to ensure that the identification was correct. It duly arrived and confirmed my tentative photo identification.

In the light of these two records it is also worth mentioning a further probable occurrence of this species in Sussex. Gary Bradley who runs the UK Safari website also sends me photos from time to time. In August 2010 these included one of 2 linyphiids in a Brighton garden, taken by Nik Hunt, on 31st July 2010, which with hindsight I am now confident were *N. radiata*, though they had unfortunately disappeared when searched for again.

It is clearly worth keeping an eye open for this species away from its traditional sites. Is it extending its range and spreading into gardens like *Ero aphana* (which also turned up in our garden in June 2009)? At a quick glance

it might easily be dismissed as one of the common *Linyphia* or *Neriene* species, though it is distinctive enough when looked at closely. The accompanying photos clearly show the deep abdomen with its characteristic black-and white pattern, the rearmost pale vertical stripe and ventral stripes strongly suffused with yellow and the thickened pale flange to the carapace (presumably the margin of the old specific name 'marginata'). The long hairs on the sternum should also be noted.



Figures 1-3. *Neriene radiata* © Ian Dawson

Hayling Avenue - Little Paxton, ST NEOTS, Cambridgeshire  
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## New spider records in NE Scotland

by Mike Davidson

This is a summary of the new records for vice-counties 90-95 during 2011 and the first for 2012.

Beating bushes in September at the Eastern Necropolis in Dundee proved to be very productive for spiders and harvestmen (reported elsewhere), with *Clubiona comta* and *Entelecara erythropus* adding to the Angus list. Earlier in the year a *Scotophaeus blackwalli* met an untimely end, trampled on a Dundee floor, before being recognised as new to the county.

The Loch of Leys, on the very northern edge of Kincardineshire, has produced the only specimens of *Neon reticulatus* and *Hahnia montana* so far from that county, common species which must be elsewhere.

The Aberdeenshires produced three new records. *Typhochrestus digitatus*, an uncommon species of heathlands and coastal grasslands, made its first appearance at St. Fergus dunes in November. *Walckenaeria nodosa*, a scattered species of damp places turned up at Dinnet NNR and Foveran Links. Perhaps the most interesting of this triplet was *Semljicola caliginosus*, a BAP species previously thought to be restricted to upland wetlands with only four other Scottish localities, which turned up at sea-level during March in reed-beds on the Ythan Estuary.

Banffshire produced *Oedothorax agrestis* from a patch of juniper scrub by a burn near the Lecht Ski Centre and *Halorates reprobus* turned up in litter on the shore at Macduff.

*Porrhomma montanum* was found in Moray (only just) by vacuum sampling in a pinewood, while *Pityohyphantes phrygianus* (common on conifers everywhere now) was found on juniper in the same November pinewood survey. It definitely pays to go "out of season" and use less usual sampling techniques.

The Grampian Spider Group has also made some good progress in searching out old and new sites for some of our BAP species. Notably *Silometopus incurvatus* was rediscovered on a cold and windy November day on the St. Fergus Dunes. It was last seen there in 1976 by a much younger R. Snazell.

2012 has already got off to a good start with the discovery of a species new to Banffshire. Jane Sim, who has a plant nursery at Aultmore near Keith, brought a spider, which she caught in her poly-tunnel (NJ404532, 11/01/2012), to one of our regular ID sessions. This was obviously interesting and turned out to be a female *Larinioides sclopetarius*, by far its most northerly location. This species was first recorded in Scotland in 1988 and had reached Pitlochry by 2010.

Jane tells me she receives deliveries of plants, pots and trays from European sources as well as Stratford-on-Avon, Eyemouth and Lancashire, so plenty of scope for importation, if it didn't arrive under its own steam. Of course it may have been in the north for a while before Jane's beginner's luck picked it out for examination. Hopefully, now she has started, Jane will keep adding to the Banffshire list.

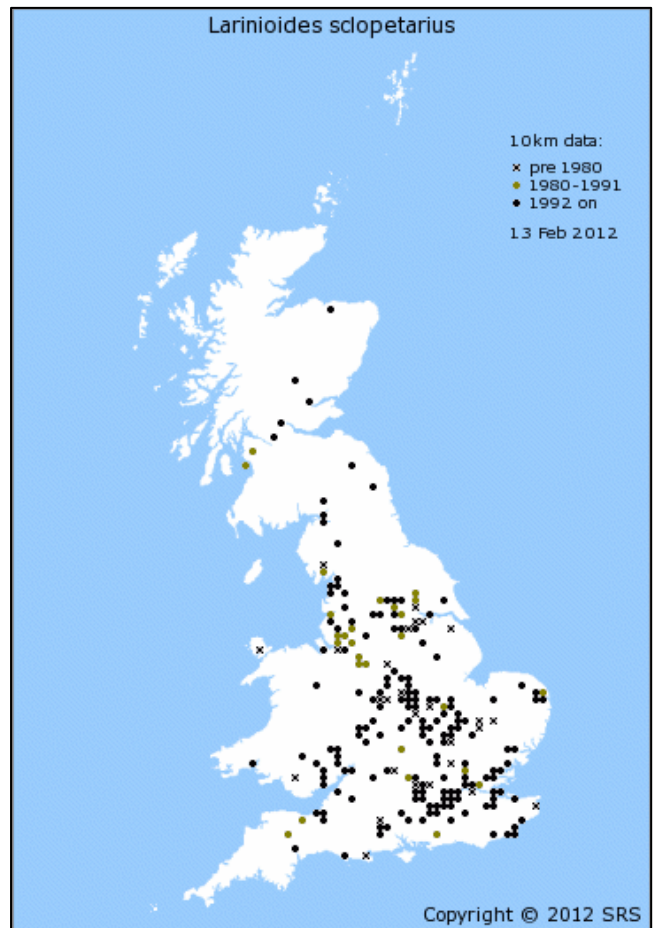


Table 1. New records from VC90-95 during 2001

Vice County	Species	Records
90 Angus	<i>Entelecara erythropus</i>	2
	<i>Clubiona comta</i>	2
	<i>Scotophaeus blackwalli</i>	1
91 Kincardineshire	<i>Hahnia montana</i>	1
	<i>Neon reticulatus</i>	1
92 South Aberdeen	<i>Walckenaeria nodosa</i>	2
	<i>Typhochrestus digitatus</i>	1
93 North Aberdeen	<i>Semljicola caliginosus</i>	4
	<i>Oedothorax agrestis</i>	2
94 Banffshire	<i>Halorates reprobus</i>	2
	<i>Porrhomma montanum</i>	1
95 Moray	<i>Pityohyphantes phrygianus</i>	1

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## An elusive spider: Surveying for *Midia midas* in 2011

by Tony Russell-Smith

Following the successful rediscovery of the nationally endangered linyphiid *Midia midas* in Epping Forest in 2010, the BAS decided to undertake a wider survey for this UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. Currently it is known from only five sites in the UK, where it is always found on ancient trees, either in forest or ancient wood pasture settings. With funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation, survey work started in May 2011. The surveys were geographically wide-ranging, covering ancient woodlands in Essex, Kent, Suffolk, Dorset/Hants, Wiltshire and Worcestershire, and were undertaken by small groups of BAS volunteers.

Surveys were carried out at a total of ten sites in five counties between May and July 2011 (Table 1). Survey methods included sorting litter, old birds' nests and squirrel dreys from ancient trees, pitfall traps placed in the crowns of trees, and the use of a suction sampler to sample from tree trunks and witch's brooms.

In general, the number of samples containing any spiders, the number of individuals and the number of species recorded at each site were extremely low compared with the results from earlier surveys in Epping Forest (Table 2). The number of spiders per sample ranged from 0.56 to 3.50 with the exception of litter and nest samples from Hatfield Forest where a remarkable 27.3 were recorded from each sample. Likewise between 1 and 7 spider species were recorded from each set of samples except in the Hatfield Forest litter samples where 18 species were found. At none of the sites were any specimens of *Midia* collected and in all of them money spiders (Fam. Linyphiidae) in general and lepthyphantines (the group to which *Midia* belongs) in particular were noticeable mainly by their absence.

The reasons for both the low numbers of spiders found and for the absence of *Midia* are not entirely clear. In some cases *Midia* may be genuinely absent from a site and in others the number of samples taken may have been too small to actually detect a species that normally occurs

at very low densities. However, a particular factor operating in 2011 was the extreme drought in March, April and May. This period was the driest in southern Britain since records began, with some areas receiving less than 20% of the long-term average rainfall for that period. We believe that the drought may have severely impacted both abundance and activity of spiders in general, making it significantly more difficult to find *Midia* even in sites where it may occur. The drought perhaps explains why 75% of all spiders captured were the common dysderid *Harpactea hombergi*, a widespread spider in the southern half of the British Isles which is found in dry situations, particularly on old trees. While normally present on ancient pollards, the high proportion among all spiders suggests it may be at a competitive advantage in particularly dry years.



**Figure 1.** Placing a pitfall trap in ancient chestnut tree, Knole Park, Kent. June 2011, copyright M. Fountain

County	Site	Visits	Methods
Kent	Knole Park, Sevenoaks	3	Litter, Pitfall traps
Kent	Lullingstone Park, Eynsford	3	Litter, Pitfall traps
Essex	Hatfield Forest	3	Litter, Pitfall traps
Essex	Hylands Park, Chelmsford	1	Litter
Worcestershire	Ipsley Alders LNR	1	Suction sampler
Worcestershire	Pipers Hill	1	Suction sampler
Worcestershire	Hanbury Park	1	Suction sampler
Worcestershire	Spetchley Park	1	Suction sampler
Wiltshire	Savernake Forest	1	Litter
Suffolk	Captain's Wood, Sudbourne	1	Litter

**Table 1.** Number of sites, number of visits and methods used in *Midia midas* survey work, 2011.

Note: "Litter" refers to leaf litter, bird nests and squirrel dreys.

Site	Date	Method	Samples	With spiders	Individuals	Species	spiders/sample
Knole Park, Kent	10.v.2011	Litter/bird nests	14	8	36	6	2.57
Knole Park, Kent	2.vii.2011	Pitfall traps	21	8	12	7	0.57
Lullingstone Park, Kent	18.vi.2011	Litter/bird nests	7	3	9	3	1.29
Lullingstone Park, Kent	21.vii.2011	Pitfall traps	9	3	5	1	0.56
Hatfield Forest, Essex	25.v.2011	Litter/bird nests	17	0	465	18	27.35
Hatfield Forest, Essex	22.vi.2011	Pitfall traps	18	6	10	7	0.56
Hylands Park, Essex	20.vi.2011	Litter/bird nests	11	4	27	4	2.45
Captains Wood, Suffolk	26.vi.2011	Litter/bird nests	6	3	21	6	3.50
Pipers Hill LNR, Wores.		Suction sampler	8	7	12	4	1.50
Hanbury Park, Wores.		Suction sampler	8	5	7	6	0.88
Savernake Forest, Wilts	14.vi.2011	Litter/bird nests	12	12	30	25	2.5

**Table 2.** Summary of samples taken, numbers of individuals and numbers of species taken during the *Midia* survey in 2011

Although relatively few spiders were collected, a number of interesting species were obtained. Single specimens of the money spider *Monocephalus castaneipes* were found in Knole Park (Kent) and Savernake Forest (Wilts.), in an ancient chestnut and an oak tree respectively. This is a Biodiversity Action Plan species which, although widespread in the UK, has declined by 50% in the past 20 years. In southern England it is normally associated with moss on trunks and branches of trees. At Hatfield Forest (Essex), an immature specimen of the daddy long-legs spider, *Pholcus phalangioides*, was collected in litter from the crown of an ancient hornbeam pollard (Fig. 2). This is a very common species inside houses in southern Britain but it is very rare indeed to find it outside, although there are a few previous records from hollow trees.

In addition to these spider species, a number of endangered or notable beetle species were collected during the survey. A single specimen of the vulnerable (RDB3) soldier beetle *Malthodes crassicornis* was collected in an oak pollard in Hatfield Forest. This species is a speciality of relict old forest with open-grown ancient trees. Nationally notable beetles from Hatfield included the clerid *Opilo mollis*, the staphylinid *Aleochara stichai* and the scirtid *Prionocyphon serricornis*. At Knole Park in Kent, notable beetles included the staphylinids *Aleochara stichai* and *Quedius scitus*, the mycetophagid *Mycetophagus 4-guttatus*, the lathridid *Enicmus rugosus*, the meloid, *Pseudocistela ceramboides* and the aderid *Euglenes oculatus*. All of these species are associated with rotting wood and the last two are particularly associated with ancient woodland. There remain a number of beetles

from the survey yet to be identified but it is clear that the techniques used are useful for sampling saproxylic beetles as well as spiders associated with ancient trees.

#### Problems encountered

The principle problem during the 2011 season was undoubtedly the extremely dry conditions during spring and early summer, which are thought to have seriously impacted spider populations in general. Secondly, the fact that the spiders are only adult for a relatively short period – between early May and mid-July – means that surveying must also be crowded into a relatively short period. Another problem at several of the sites visited has been the highly scattered distribution of the ancient trees. This considerably increases the time needed to carry ladders and other equipment between individual trees, particularly if they are surrounded by dense brambles or other tall vegetation. Finally, with regard to the use of pitfall traps in trees, these were frequently choked with wood frass and dead leaves etc., making it considerably easier for spiders to escape if they did fall into them. Where pitfall traps are employed in 2012, a domed wire-mesh will be used as a cover over each trap, reducing the amount of debris in them while still allowing small spiders to enter the traps.

#### Survey work during 2012

Following extensive discussion amongst participants in the survey and the BAS Conservation sub-committee, it was decided that we should include two sites where *Midia* has been recorded in the past but have not been re-surveyed for at least 30 years. These are Hainault Forest



**Figure 2.** An ancient hornbeam pollard in Hatfield Forest, Essex, sampled for spiders in 2011, copyright Tony Russell-Smith

(Essex) where it was last recorded in 1980 and Windsor Forest (Berks.) where it was last recorded from a Jackdaw's nest in 1928. The aim will be to establish whether *Midia* is still present at these sites and whether the techniques used can detect it. If possible, intensive sampling using pitfall traps will be carried out in Hatfield Forest (Essex), Burnham Beeches (Bucks.) and Lullingstone Park (Kent). New sites where surveys will be undertaken, should initial reconnaissance prove successful, will include Cobham Park and Mersham Hatch Park (Kent), Langley Park (Bucks.), Hatfield Park (Herts.), Ashstead Common (Surrey) and Wytham Woods (Oxfordshire), all of which have good populations of ancient pollard trees. At Hainault Forest and Windsor Forest we are hoping to involve local conservation volunteer groups in the work while at Burnham Beeches will be in collaboration with the City of London ecologist based there. If we can reach agreement on these collaborations, we hope to be able to sample more than once during the season, significantly increasing the chances of finding this elusive spider.

#### Call for volunteers

More volunteers to assist in the survey work are urgently needed. We are particularly anxious to find people willing to help in the Buckinghamshire, Surrey and Essex areas but if you would be interested in surveying in other counties, please contact the author at the e-mail address below.

#### Acknowledgements

The project would have been impossible without the

dedicated efforts of the BAS surveyors, Michelle Fountain, Greg Hitchcock, Richard Pierce and Robin Rigby (Kent); Ian Dawson and David Nellist (Essex); Rod Allison, Martin Askins and Chris Spilling (Wilts.) and John Partridge (Worcs.). We are particularly grateful to the Garfield Weston Foundation for funding to cover the travel costs for these volunteer surveyors.

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## Alien harvestmen in Scotland

by Mike Davidson

There has been something of a renewed interest in harvestmen in Scotland recently. The new FSC guide and some funding for training courses have helped introduced a new group of people to the delights of the Opiliones and this is beginning to pay dividends with new recorders producing interesting records. Thanks to everyone who has been sending me harvestman records.

Of course the first thing you do when you start out with a group is go out and find something new to the area. Mike Taylor, moth recorder for Moray, decided he would like to know how to ID the harvestmen he was finding at his moth traps and various locations he recorded at. A flood-lit wall at Brodie, near Forres produced his major triumph, in November 2011, with the first Scottish record of *Opilio canestrinii*. So far only a single specimen has been found. The location is a busy tourist visitor centre and it is possible that this specimen came directly from Europe rather than from one of its other UK locations. Multiple points of introduction may well be normal with recent alien species.

My own efforts in 2011 relate to *Dicranopalpus ramosus*. Having found it in some numbers at a cemetery in Dundee, I was quietly waiting for it to move up the east coast and meet me in Aberdeen. However, when checking out Mike Taylor's site for *O. canestrinii* in Moray, I found it had already reached Forres! It was found on building walls in the Grant Park which is known for its floral displays for Britain in Bloom.

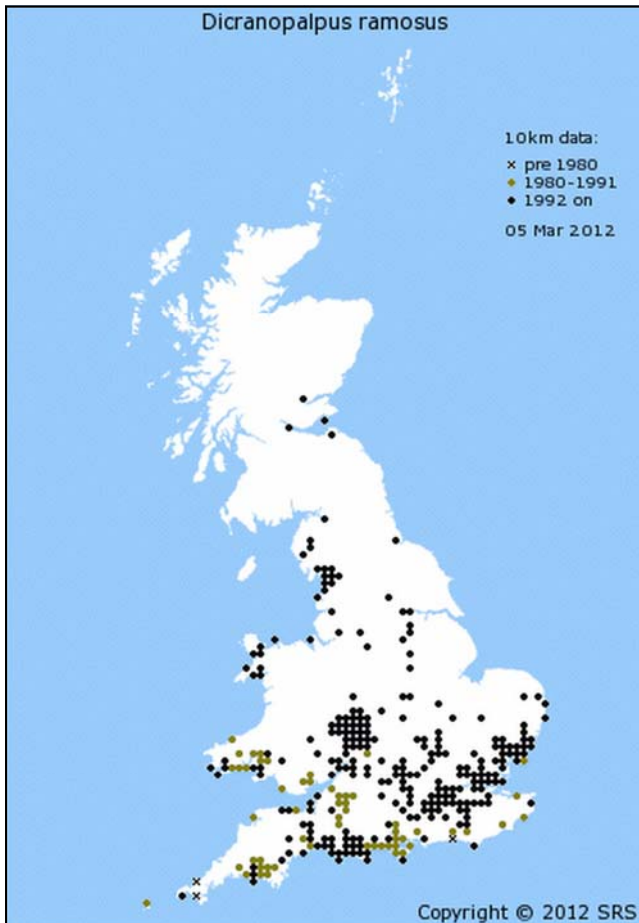
## Scottish Leiobunid Questions

Peter Nicolson, in a recent newsletter, raised the issue of John Sankey's mystery *Leiobunum* which he found at various places on his visits to East Scotland. These included the Den of Finella and the Burn at Edzell (VC91). These are all treacherous places and John induced me to revisit these around 1979-80 to collect more specimens. Looking back at our correspondence it seems early optimism that we had found it, gradually turned to acceptance that they were in fact varieties of *L. rotundum*. Of course today's genetic methods might produce a different result.

As a relative novice, I also remember quizzing John about his Scottish specimens of *Leiobunum blackwalli* - which he found at stopping points on those same trips north. Unfortunately they had been lost to dehydration,

and although I have seen this species “down south” I have not been able to find a Scottish specimen. Since John’s pre-1980 records there have been only four others; J. Richardson in Ross-shire 1983; J. Stanney on Skye 1986; D.T. Richardson in Wigtonshire 1989; P. Smithers on Rum 1994. I would be delighted to see a Scottish specimen of this species, either one of the above specimens or something more recent.

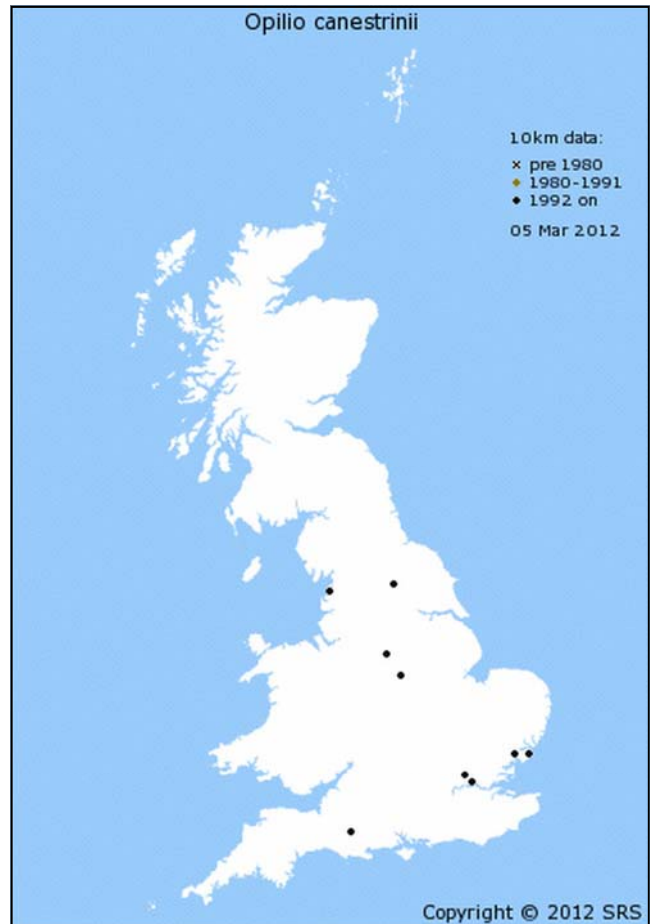
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**Figure 1.** Current distribution map for *Dicranopalpus ramosus* from records submitted



**Figure 2.** *Dicranopalpus ramosus* © Peter Harvey



**Figure 3.** Current distribution map for *Opilio canestrinii* from records submitted to the Harvestmen Recording Scheme



**Figure 4.** *Opilio canestrinii* © Peter Harvey

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