

Spider Recording Scheme News

Summer 2024, No. 109

Scheme Organiser & News Editor: Richard Gallon; rgallon47@gmail.com

SRS website: <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk>

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Review of the Spiders Recorded (2015–2023) and Harvestmen of Watsonian County Durham and Northumberland

by Richard Wilson

Introduction

The following article represents the third review covering spider recording in Watsonian County Durham (vice-county 66) and Northumberland (vice-counties 67 and 68), collectively referred to in this series as north-east England. The two previous articles separately covered County Durham (Wilson, 2018) and Northumberland (Wilson, 2015); whereas this article covers all three VCs combined because of limited recording effort in this region.

The previous two reviews focussed solely on the spiders (Araneae) whereas this, for the first time so far as the author is aware, provides an overview of the harvestmen (Opiliones) fauna of the three vice-counties.

Spiders (2015–2023)

Overview

In the last nine years, a total of 1,154 records of 195 species have been recorded from the two Northumberland vice-counties; and 763 records of 135 species from Durham. Across north-east England, 226 species have been recorded from the combined 1,917 records. Records have been submitted to the scheme by 31 recorders including myself during this period, though only seven individuals have made contributions that reach or exceed double figures: myself (874 records), Richard Gallon (399), Andy Musgrove (276), Jeremy Poole (75 records), Richard Burkmar (69), Geoff Oxford (41) and Ian Bond (21). Durham and Northumberland remain an under-recorded region of England.

A total of 49 hectads have been visited during this period (Fig. 1), representing 46% of the 107 hectads that cover the three vice-counties, of which just five (NU03, NY68, NY67, NZ42 and NZ52) recorded fifty or more species. Of the 49 hectads visited during this nine year period, 44 (90%) recorded fewer than 50 species, of which 29 hectads recorded under 10 species. This suggests that recording effort for the most part represents brief forays rather than any concerted effort. At the tetrad level, there is some clustering around Teesside as a result of contract work undertaken by myself and Andy Musgrove; and around the Kielder Mires, but otherwise records are thinly scattered (Fig. 2).

New county and vice-county records

The last nine years has added 32 new spiders to one or more of England's north-east vice-counties (Table 1); and confirmed the presence of *Micaria pulicaria sens. str.* as all records of this ant-mimicking spider before 2015 are in the wider sense following its recent split from *Micaria micans*, which has yet to be recorded. Eleven of these

spiders are entirely new to the region and they are described in more detail in Table 2. An additional species, *Ozyptila praticola* (Thomisidae) has been tentatively identified from a subadult specimen collected by vacuum sampling the hedgerow edge of a hay meadow. This represents the second record for VC 67 but the first since the late Victorian/early-Edwardian period when the Reverend Hull was active. Table 3 summarises recording effort to the end of 2023 for the three vice-counties, Northumberland combined and the north-east England region they represent.

These totals compare favourably and fall within the range of the five individual Yorkshire vice-counties which have recorded between 238 and 372 species up to the end of 2022 (Wilson, 2023). To my knowledge, there has not been a published recent review of either VC 69 (Westmorland) or VC 70 (Cumberland) to offer detailed comparisons from north-western Britain. The Spider Recording Scheme's website provides a figure of 361 species for VC 69 and 369 species for VC 70, supporting the view that north-east England remains under-recorded for spiders, and indeed, many other invertebrate groups.

Harvestmen (Opiliones)

To my knowledge, the earliest reference to a harvestmen recorded in Northumberland is *Mitostoma chrysomelas* (then *Nemastoma chrysomelas*) collected by a Mr James Hardy sometime between October 1871 and October 1874 from Cheviot Hill (Pickard-Cambridge, 1875). No other details are provided and this briefest of mentions is not expanded upon by Hull (1896) in his catalogue of spiders recorded in Northumberland. It would take another fifty years before a sufficiently comprehensive account of Britain's harvestmen was completed, which mentions Durham and Northumberland. Bristowe (1949) described and mapped the then known British fauna by vice-county. He noted ten species had been recorded in County Durham (VC 66) and 14 for Northumberland (VCs 67 and 68). The following year, Sankey (1950) added two species (*Oligolophus tridens* and *Opilio parietinus*) to County Durham and *Opilio saxatilis* to both Northumberland and Durham (see Table 4).

In the subsequent seven decades to the end of 2023, an additional five species have been recorded for the region, seven new to County Durham and five new to Northumberland, bringing the total recorded in north-east England to 20 species (Table 5) out of the current British list of 31.

The new species are *Paroligolophus meadii*, *Platybunus pinetorum*, *Opilio canestrinii*, *Dicranopalpus ramosus* agg. and *Nelima gothica*. Two, *P. meadii* (7 records) and *N. gothica* (4 records) are native species and rare in north-east England. Both are associated with dry, warm habitats such as sand dunes or base-rich grasslands. The other three species are relatively recent arrivals/introductions to the British fauna. *D. ramosus* is one of now three similar 'fork-palped' harvestmen present in Britain. Prior to 2017, all specimens were attributed to *D. ramosus* in the strict sense but with the arrival of

Table 1: New vice-county spider records (2015 to 2023) with year of first record

Family	Species	VC 66	VC 67	VC 68
Theridiidae	<i>Episinus angulatus</i>	2023		2023
Theridiidae	<i>Steatoda nobilis</i>		2017	2018
Theridiidae	<i>Cryptachaea riparia</i>		2023	
Theridiidae	<i>Phylloneta impressa</i>	2023	2015	2019
Theridiidae	<i>Platnickina tincta</i>	2020		
Theridiidae	<i>Enoplognatha latimana</i>	2023		
Theridiidae	<i>Enoplognatha thoracica</i>			2023
Theridiidae	<i>Theonoe minutissima</i>			2023
Linyphiidae	<i>Walckenaeria atrotibialis</i>		2015	2023
Linyphiidae	<i>Walckenaeria clavicornis</i>		2023	
Linyphiidae	<i>Hylyphantes graminicola</i>	2023		
Linyphiidae	<i>Minyriolus pusillus</i>			2023
Linyphiidae	<i>Notioscopus sarcinatus</i>	2023		
Linyphiidae	<i>Erigone aletris</i>			2019
Linyphiidae	<i>Prinerigone vagans</i>	2023	2023	
Linyphiidae	<i>Agyneta olivacea</i>		2023	
Linyphiidae	<i>Agyneta saxatilis sens. str.</i>	2023		
Linyphiidae	<i>Agyneta mossica</i>	2023	2023	
Linyphiidae	<i>Maro lepidus</i>		2023	
Linyphiidae	<i>Sintula corniger</i>			2023
Linyphiidae	<i>Taranucnus setosus</i>			2023
Linyphiidae	<i>Walckenaeria cucullata</i>			2023
Araneidae	<i>Araniella opisthographa</i>	2023		
Araneidae	<i>Mangora acalypha</i>	2023		
Lycosidae	<i>Pardosa prativaga</i>		2015	
Hahniidae	<i>Hahnia nava</i>	2023		
Clubionidae	<i>Clubiona neglecta sens. str.</i>	2023		2023
Cheiracanthiidae	<i>Cheiracanthium erraticum</i>			2023
Gnaphosidae	<i>Scotophaeus blackwalli</i>	2015		
Gnaphosidae	<i>Micaria pulicaria sens. str.</i>	2023	2023	
Philodromidae	<i>Tibellus maritimus</i>	2023		
Thomisidae	<i>Xysticus kochi</i>	2023		
Salticidae	<i>Hypositticus pubescens</i>		2020	

D. caudatus and *D. larvatus* (neither have yet to be recorded in Durham or Northumberland), all historical records are presented as the aggregate. *O. canestrinii* was first recorded in Britain in 1999, in County Durham in October 2011 and Northumberland in August 2017. Within a decade, it has become widespread in urban and rural areas alike.

Platybumus pinetorum was first recorded in Britain in 2008 and to date, it has been recorded at two localities in Northumberland, in April and May 2022.

Harvestmen are comparatively poorly recorded when compared to their arachnid cousins, the spiders, though reasonable coverage at the hectad level has been achieved (Fig. 3). However, of the 76 hectads where harvestmen have been recorded in north-east England, 70 have

recorded fewer than 5 species.

Conclusions

Sporadic recording in England's north-east continues to reveal new species of spider within these under-recorded counties as evidenced by the 31 new species recorded in one of the three vice-counties covered by this regional update. An updated species-richness map is presented (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, of the 95 hectads with a spider record, 19 have had no records since 2003 and a further 16 hectads have never had any spider records (Fig. 5). There are clearly abundant opportunities for the spider enthusiast who wishes to explore new places and generate useful distribution records in this northern corner of England.

Table 2: New north-east England spiders recorded (2015–2023)

Species	Vice-counties	Year of First Record	Details
<i>Cryptachaea riparia</i>	VC 67	2023	A single female was collected from exposed riverine sediments from the River South Tyne at Beltingham (NY789643), about 5 km west of Haydon Bridge by Richard Gallon on the 29 th June 2023 during the B.A.S. field weekend to Northumberland. This represents the most northerly record in England.
<i>Phylloneta impressa</i>	VC 66, 67 & 68	2015	The first record was from VC 67 with a female collected from shrub in South Tynedale on the banks of the River South Tyne, near Featherstone Castle, south-west of Haltwhistle (NY671607) on the 25 th July 2015. It has subsequently been recorded in VC 68 in Warkworth Dunes, north of Amble (NU260058) in August 2019; and in VC 66, within the mosaic of brownfield and coastal habitats within the lower Tees Valley, Teesside (NZ5125) in June and July 2023.
<i>Platnickina tincta</i>	VC 66	2020	A single individual, photographed from a relatively new housing estate within a residential dwelling in Stockton-on-Tees (NZ443180), close to the River Tees. One of the most northerly records in Britain.
<i>Enoplognatha latimana</i>	VC 66	2023	A single individual collected by Andy Musgrove from a brownfield site within the Teesside industrial complex (NZ5225) in August 2023. Represents one of the most northerly records in Britain.
<i>Erigone aletris</i>	VC 68	2019	A single female was collected in August 2019 from Warkworth Dunes (NU266052). <i>E. aletris</i> is presumed to be an introduction from North America, having been first recorded from Leith Docks, East Lothian in Scotland in June 1976. It has spread throughout the coastline either side of the Firth of Forth; and has recently been recorded in Yorkshire and a cluster of records within central London, many on greenroofs.
<i>Prinerigone vagans</i>	VC 66 & 67	2023	First record for VC 66 was collected from RSPB Saltholme nature reserve (NZ505216) in May 2023. The second, from VC 67, was collected from Falstone Moss Nature Reserve (NY707860) during the B.A.S. field weekend in June 2023. These represent the most northerly records in England.
<i>Agyneta mossica</i>	VC 66 & 67	2023	<i>Agyneta mossica</i> was separated from its closely related sibling species, <i>A. saxatilis</i> by Schikora (1993). <i>A. mossica</i> was recorded from Falstone Moss Nature Reserve (VC 67) on the 24 th June 2023; and from a couple of locations on Killhope Moor, Weardale (NY800434) in VC 66 on the 29 th June 2023 as part of the B.A.S. field weekend. The genus <i>Agyneta</i> includes very similar species and in the opinion of the author, represent one of the more challenging linyphiid taxa to identify. The distinction between <i>mossica</i> and <i>saxatilis sens. str.</i> relies on noting the number of paracymbial teeth (one in <i>mossica</i> , two in <i>saxatilis</i>) and a couple of other subtle differences in male palpal structures. Females are even more challenging with the epigynal notch more variable (Schikora, 1993), and possibly not reliably separated. <i>A. mossica</i> may be associated with mires and <i>Sphagnum</i> -rich vegetation, whereas <i>saxatilis</i> might have a broader association; but this is not mutually exclusive. The difficulty and challenges in reliably identifying <i>Agyneta</i> probably means <i>A. mossica</i> is very under-recorded within north-east England.
<i>Maro lepidus</i>	VC 67	2023	A single female was collected from the Kielder Mires (NY610825) in June 2023 as part of the B.A.S. field weekend. <i>M. lepidus</i> is an Endangered and Nationally Rare spider associated with <i>Sphagnum</i> on raised bogs and mires. It has only been recorded from 16 hectares in Britain, 10 since 1992, with a westerly distribution. The Kielder Mires' record represents the most easterly record in Britain, and northerly in England.
<i>Mangora acalypha</i>	VC 66	2023	This small araneid is widespread in southern and south-east England, becoming scattered and by comparison, rare in the English Midlands and the Welsh borders. A single individual was collected in May 2023 by Andy Musgrove from a Teesside brownfield site, representing a substantial range extension north.
<i>Cheiracanthium erraticum</i>	VC 68	2023	A single individual was collected from Holburn Moss (NU047367) in June 2023 as part of the B.A.S. field weekend. A widespread species nationally, this record reflects the under-recording in north-east England.
<i>Micaria pulicaria sens. str.</i>	VC 66 & 67	2023	The ground-dwelling ant-mimicking spider has recently been confirmed as two valid species, <i>Micaria pulicaria</i> and <i>M. micans</i> that were previously overlooked as a single taxon. The aggregate <i>M. pulicaria sens. lat.</i> is widespread in Britain though rare in north-east England. The records for <i>M. pulicaria sens. str.</i> within the Teesside brownfield sites in June and July 2023 are the first Durham records since the taxonomic split; as is the June 2023 record from VC 67 at Carter Bar, Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve on the England/ Scotland border (NT696067).

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all who have submitted records to the recording scheme including the numerous individuals not mentioned in the main text. Particular thanks is offered to Andy Musgrove who provided records of the surveys completed in County Durham in 2023; and Richard Gallon, Bill Parker, John Wilkie and Jeremy Poole whose records from the 2023 British Arachnological Society's extended field weekend have been incorporated in to this account.

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Table 3: Number of species recorded in each vice-county, Northumberland and north-east England to end of 2023

	VC 66	VC 67	VC 68	Northumberland	North-east England
Species List to end of 2014	292	322	265	342	358
Additions (2015 to 2023)	17	12	13	12	11
Total species	309	334	278	354	369

Table 4: Harvestmen recorded in County Durham (VC 66) and Northumberland (VCs 67 & 68 combined) to 1950

Family	Species	County Durham	Northumberland
Nemastomatidae	<i>Nemastoma bimaculatum</i>	•	•
Nemastomatidae	<i>Mitostoma chrysomelas</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Oligolophus tridens</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Oligolophus hansenii</i>		•
Phalangiidae	<i>Paroligolophus agrestis</i>		•
Phalangiidae	<i>Lacinius ephippiatus</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Mitopus morio</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Phalangium opilio</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Opilio parietinus</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Opilio saxatilis</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Megabunus diadema</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Platybunus triangularis</i>	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Lophopilio palpinalis</i>		•
Leiobunidae	<i>Leiobunum rotundum</i>	•	•
Leiobunidae	<i>Leiobunum blackwalli</i>	•	•
Species-richness	15	13	15

Table 5: Harvestmen recorded in County Durham (VC 66) and Northumberland (VCs 67 & 68 combined) to end of 2023

Family	Species	VC 66	VC 67	VC 68
Nemastomatidae	<i>Nemastoma bimaculatum</i>	•	•	•
Nemastomatidae	<i>Mitostoma chrysomelas</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Oligolophus tridens</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Oligolophus hanseni</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Paroligolophus agrestis</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Paroligolophus meadii</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Lacinius ephippiatus</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Mitopus morio</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Phalangium opilio</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Opilio parietinus</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Opilio saxatilis</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Megabunus diadema</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Platybunus triangularis</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Platybunus pinetorum</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Lophopilio palpinalis</i>	•	•	•
Phalangiidae	<i>Opilio canestrinii</i>	•	•	•
Leiobunidae	<i>Dicranopalpus ramosus</i> agg.	•	•	•
Leiobunidae	<i>Leiobunum rotundum</i>	•	•	•
Leiobunidae	<i>Leiobunum blackwalli</i>	•	•	•
Leiobunidae	<i>Nelima gothica</i>	•		•
Species-richness	20	20	19	19

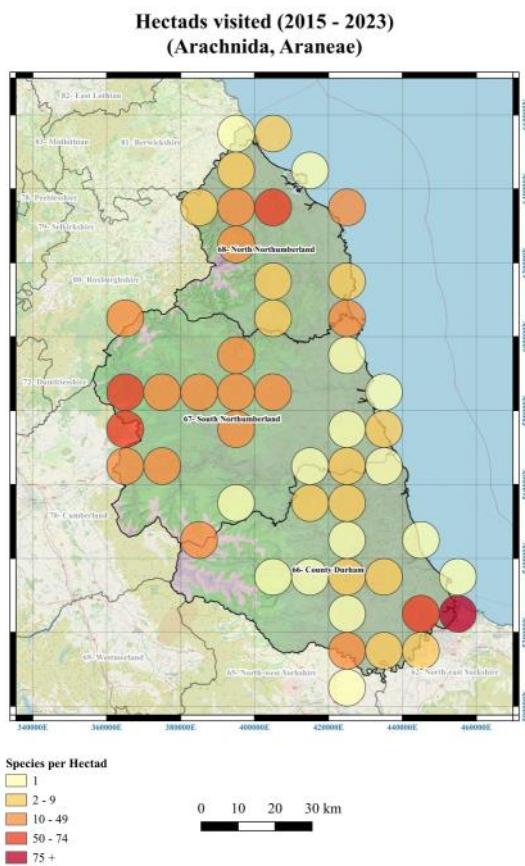


Figure 1. Hectads visited (2015 to 2023) in north-east England.

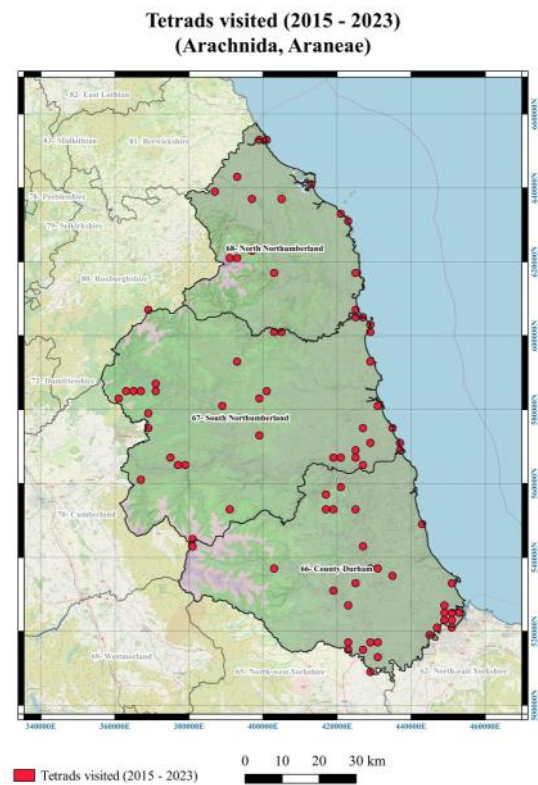


Figure 2. Tetrads visited (2015 –2023) in north-east England.

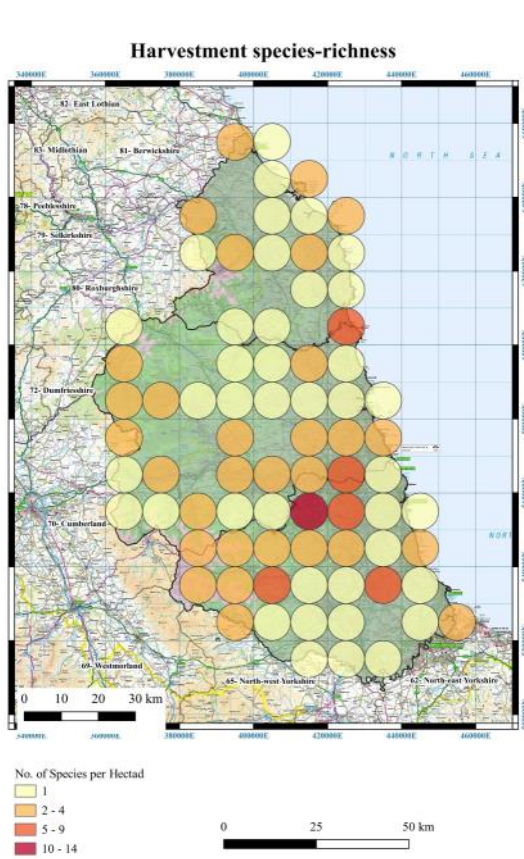


Figure 3. Harvestmen species-richness (to end of 2023) in north-east England.

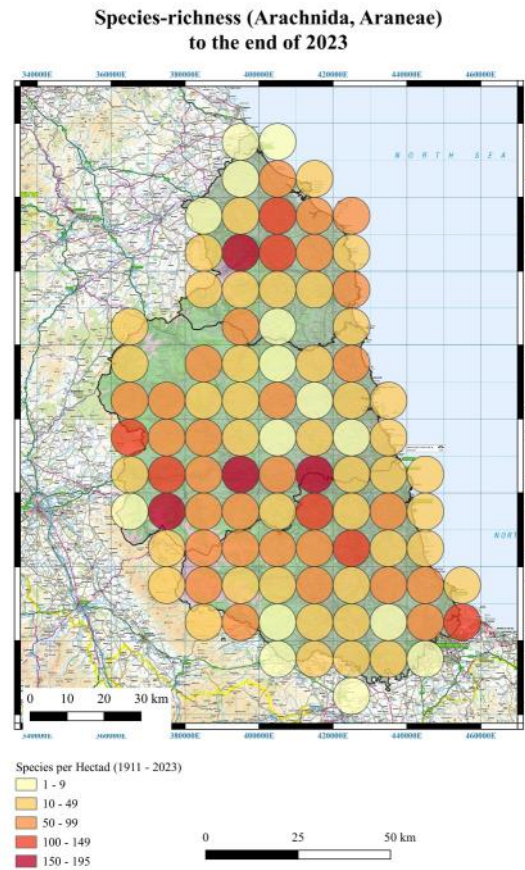


Figure 4. Spider species-richness in north-east England to the end of 2023.

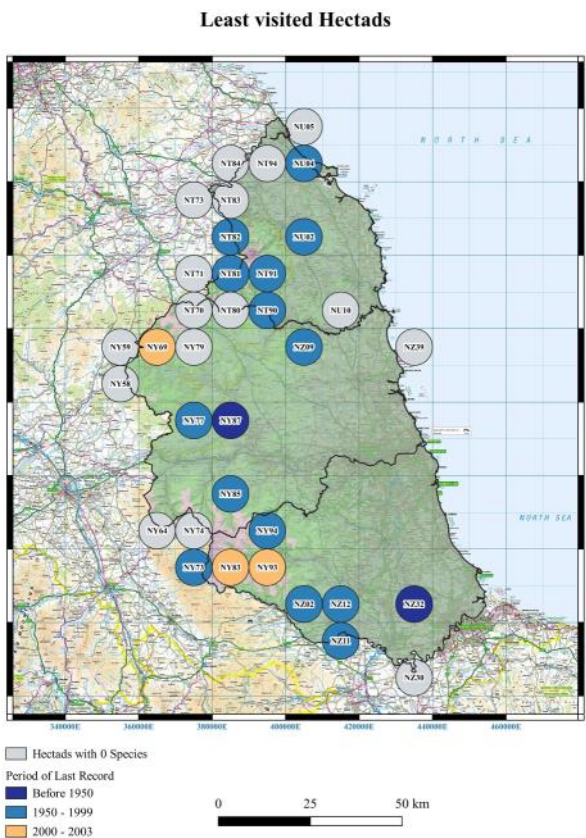


Figure 5. Under-recorded areas of Durham and Northumberland based on spider records.

New Records of British Spiders from the Counties of Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire in the Period September 2022 and December 2023

by David Carr

Essex (VC18)

Hybocoptus corrugis. Two adult females were beaten from a gorse bush at Claybury Park, Woodford (TQ4291) on 10th July 2023.

Hertfordshire (VC20)

Episinus maculipes. An adult male was swept from low vegetation beside a green lane that runs north from Washall Green (TL4430) on 18th July 2023.

Microctenonyx subitaneus. Several adult females were found amongst dry straw in a barn at Nicholls Farm, Redbourn (TL093128) on 13th December 2023.

Hypsosinga albovittata. During a Hertfordshire Invertebrate Project (HIP) field meeting held at Archer's Green, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) nature reserve on 13th May, one of the participants (Rory Dimond), swept two adult females from low vegetation in a meadow known locally as Poplars Green (TL2813) (Fig. 1).

Dictyna pusilla. Several adult females of this species were beaten from the branches of a Larch tree that were



Figure 1. *Hypsosinga alбовittata* (female), Archer's Green. © Gail Ashton.

overhanging a footpath at King's Meads, HMWT nature reserve (TL3413) during a HIP field meeting held there on 23rd July 2023 (Fig. 2).

Anyphaena sabina. An adult female was beaten from the low branches of an oak sapling at Bushey (TQ1393) on 21st June 2023.

Philodromus buchari (*longipalpis*). A late stage immature female, of what was considered to be the species we know of in Britain as *P. longipalpis*, was beaten from the low branches of a large, isolated oak tree growing on a meadow, during a HIP meeting held at Archer's Green HMWT nature reserve (TL2813) on 13th May 2023. The spider was retained until it made its final moult (which occurred 11 days later), when the initial identification was confirmed. Photographs of the epigyne (Fig. 3) and vulva (Fig. 4) of this specimen are shown below. Many apparently suitable looking oak trees in suitable locations can be sampled, in an attempt to find this elusive species, without success.

Philodromus rufus. Immatures of both sexes were found to be fairly numerous on gorse bushes in a hedgerow on the northern side of The Warren, Colney Heath (TL2005) on 29th April 2023. One spider of each sex was retained to raise to maturity. After their final moults (5 and 8 days later for the male and female respectively), identification was confirmed. Adult females were subsequently recorded during a HIP field meeting held at Hertford Heath, HMWT nature reserve on 2nd June 2023 and at Bushey on 21st June 2023.

Thanatus striatus. A record of this species was submitted to the iNaturalist website by Brian McRae along with supporting photographs. The record related to him finding this species at King's Langley (TL077024) on 29th April 2023. An adult male was swept from sparse vegetation on 29th May 2023 at Spitalbrook (TL3706), a Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) disused gravel extraction site, where there is no public access.

Cambridgeshire (VC29)

Cryptachaea blattea and *Silometopus reussi*. Records of both species were received from Graeme Lyons from Hope Farm (TL36) on 1st March 2023.

Nigma puella. A record of a female, with supporting



Figure 2. *Dictyna pusilla* (female) arrowed, King's Meads. © David Carr.



Figure 3. *Philodromus buchari* epigyne. © David Carr.



Figure 4. *Philodromus buchari* vulva. © David Carr.

photographs was submitted to iRecord by Paul Rule. It was recorded at Cambridge Research Park (TL477678) on 13th September 2022.

I am very grateful to Ian Carle and Gail Ashton for organizing and leading the HIP field meetings to HMWT nature reserves where many interesting spiders were recorded, Peter Tallantire for allowing me to record

spiders at Nicholls Farm in Redbourn and Tajinder Lachhar of Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure for permission to survey Claybury Park and for her help with these surveys.

I would also like to thank LVRPA for allowing survey work to continue at Spitalbrook and Gail Ashton for permission to use her *H. albovittata* photograph.

E-mail: david.carr38@zoho.com

Spider Records from Surrey and West Sussex

by Mike Waite

VC17 (Surrey)

I have recently joined the ranks of those going D-VAC-equipped, and have immediately felt the benefits to my recording. Indeed the tiny dictynid *Lathys heterophthalma* (Fig. 1), a Surrey heathland speciality, would appear to be virtually undetectable without one. Pirbright Range is a closed MoD site managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust, with very few days per annum when survey access is available. So, on a rare occasion this spring, whilst targeting *Enoplognatha oelandica* (no joy there unfortunately), I did however secure Surrey's first record since 1971 for *Centromerus prudens* (Fig. 2). Next, this time looking for *Araniella alpica* (another threatened species with few modern records - none since the early '90s in Surrey), I swept the jumper *Evarcha arcuata* (two males, one female) on the North Downs from south-facing chalk downland. This is a completely novel habitat for this species, at least regionally, which in Great Britain is typically found in damp heathland and mires.

West Sussex (VC13)

Again targeting *Araniella alpica*, I also made a cross-border raid into the South Downs of Sussex - to Heyshott Down, the site of its most recent national record. Although much beating of Dogwood and Yew yielded plenty of *Araniella*, they all turned out to be *A. cucurbitina*. However, whilst walking out of the site, I noticed a dark gnaphosid creep from a large anthill and managed to pot it. On examination at home my assumed *Zelotes* species turned out to be a male *Drassyllus praeficus* (Fig. 3), complete with its rufous tarsi (see



Figure 1. *Lathys heterophthalma* female.
© Mike Waite.

picture). This nationally scarce species, and this time genuinely of calcareous grassland, has a British range mainly centred on the south-west chalk plateau, and although there is a disjunct population further east on coastal cliffs at Hastings, this was in fact a first for the South Downs chalk.



Figure 2. *Centromerus prudens* female. Pirbright Range. © Mike Waite.



Figure 3. *Drassyllus praeficus* Heyshott Down.
© Mike Waite.

Editorial

by Richard Gallon

I'm pleased to report that the BAS SRS/HRS iRecord data entry form is proving popular with recorders. We now have 1069 records submitted to the scheme using this online form. It's encouraging to see many recorders are also adding high quality images and even microscopic shots of palps and epigynes. These photographs are particularly useful to our ever-growing numbers of vice-county recorders, since it's far easier to verify a record if it has accompanying photographic evidence.

Please continue to submit your records here:

<https://irecord.org.uk/enter-srs-records>