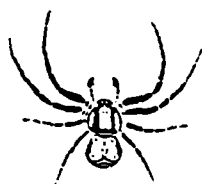


British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

David R. Nellist
198A, Park Street Lane
Park Street,
St Albans,
Herts, AL2 2AQ.

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 27.
March, 1997.

Tel 01727.872981

email 100555.635@compuserve.com

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Recording cards.

In the November Newsletter I estimated that the total number of RA65 recording cards received in 1996 would be about 1750. In fact the final total was 1844, taking the grand total, accumulated since the scheme began in 1987, to 19,277. The annual total compares with figures of 1721 (1995), 1467 (1994) and 2201 (1993). This excellent result is due to the efforts of a good number of Area Organisers and Recorders. Unfortunately I haven't the space to list all the names, but I was pleased to receive large numbers of cards from Wayne Rixom (Hereford, VC36), Tom Thomas (Beds., VC30), Alan Scott (Denbigh, VC49) and Jim Stewart (E. Lothian, VC82; Midlothian, VC83; Fife and Kinross, VC85). Thanks to all.

1.2. Publication of the Provisional Distribution Maps.

In the last Newsletter I also set out, very briefly, the reasons for the delay in publishing the provisional distribution maps. One of those reasons was the uncertainty about the funding available for the work until the outcome was known of the application to the Millennium Commission by the JNCC, NERC, Natural History Museum, Wildlife Trusts consortium. You will remember that the purpose of the application was to obtain support for the establishment of a National Biodiversity Network. Very recently the Millennium Commission has informed the consortium that the application has been rejected. The consortium is now working through a contingency plan, considering its future options and possible alternative sources of funding. At the time of writing I don't know how this new situation will affect the timing of the publication of the provisional maps and I await further information. In the meantime, as mentioned in the last Newsletter, finding other resources to support the computerisation of the data on our accumulated record cards is being considered.

1.3. The S.R.S. Questionnaire.

During December 1996 questionnaires were sent to all the 150 Recorders in the scheme. By the end of February this year just over 70 had been returned, most pledging continued support but there were also a few resignations - as expected. But clearly there are still many questionnaires yet to be returned, even from Recorders that I know are active. So, if you have not yet returned your copy then please do so as soon as possible so that I can compile and distribute updated lists of both Recorders and Area Organisers.

1.4. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Area Organiser :

Dr. Iain Downie, Environmental Services, S.A.C., Auchincruive, Ayr, KA6 5HW, who takes over vice-counties Ayr (VC75) and Renfrew (VC76) from David Beaumont.

b). The following Recorders have new addresses :

Miss Isobel Baldwin, 44 Murrayfield Drive, Brandon, Durham, DH7 8TG.

Mr Clive Carter, Woodbank, Northfield Lane, Chawton, Alton, Hants., Gu34 1SN.

Mr Jon Daws, 67 Crophorn Avenue, Leicester, Leics., LE5 4PZ.

Mr S. Gregory, 3 Riverview, Kennington, Oxford, Oxon., OX1 5QJ.

Ms. Kate Hawkins, The Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 3LY.

Dr. D. McFerran, CEDUR, Ulster Museum Botanic Garden, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT9 5AB.
Dr. Don Roscoe, Bwlch Y Fron, Llanddaniel, Anglesey, LL60 6DT.

1.5. Biological Record Centre Numbers for New Species.

You may have noticed that the B.R.C. Species Number allocated to Scotophaeus scutulatus, which I listed in Newsletter No. 26, was incorrect. The number should have been 2002.

2. Uloborus plumipes Lucas 1846 - HAS IT TRULY INVADED BRITAIN YET ?

- Mike Roberts.

Burns Farm, Cornhill, Banff, AB45 2DL.

The purpose of this note is to ask Recorders to search for Uloborus plumipes in their local garden centres. The story leading to this request is a little strange and might be of interest.

In March 1992, Roy Kent was asked to identify a spider found by Rex Johnson, a naturalist colleague, on a recently purchased plant. The plant had been bought from Stephen Smith's Garden centre in Scunthorpe. Roy was unsure of the spider's identity, and it was in poor condition, so he sent it to me together with a few other species. In June 1992, I had a telephone call from Roy asking about the spiders he had sent; usually I send specimens back by return. In this case the package had not arrived and we just had to accept that it had been lost in the post. In January 1993 a small battered package was delivered here; the broken container within still had a £1 coin taped to the top (return postage), the accompanying note wished me a happy Easter and the spiders were.....well, not in the best of spirits. I identified the material with some difficulty; the remains of the spider from the garden centre were clearly of a female Uloborus which I assumed to be U. walckenaerius.

Very recently I have been working on spiders from the Netherlands, including Uloborus plumipes. This is an Old World species which has been widely introduced and is becoming increasingly common in greenhouses in Holland and Belgium. It appears to have a considerable effect in controlling whitefly and seems relatively unaffected by pesticides. My thought went back to 1993 and the Uloborus from Scunthorpe. Roy kindly sent the specimen back to me for a second look and there is no doubt that it is U. plumipes. A description of the species is given below. The Scunthorpe specimen had only two legs and the critical legs I were missing. The abdomen was shrivelled but there does seem to be evidence of a pair of tubercles. Despite the poor state of the specimen, the carapace markings are those of U. plumipes and, having now seen numerous specimens, I'm sure this character is very reliable. Incidentally, a specimen sent to the Natural History Museum in London by the garden centre staff had been returned labelled "from Africa; not poisonous"

So, has U. plumipes truly invaded and colonised our garden centres and greenhouses, or are we (so far) just getting the occasional import with Dutch plants? It shouldn't be difficult to investigate this fairly quickly; the typical Uloborus web and the spider itself may have already been noticed by the greenhouse staff. I'll be interested to hear of any records, either single specimens or established colonies. If you do find the species make sure you tell the staff what a good job it does on whitefly.

Postscript:

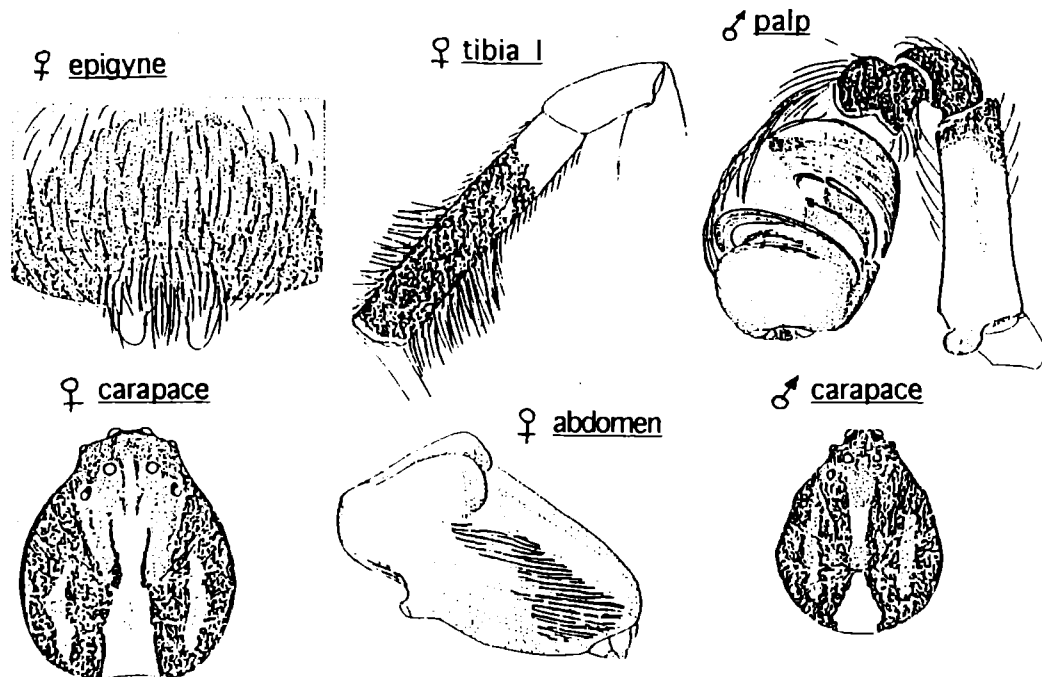
I sent a copy of the above to Roy Kent (in January 1997) and on 13th. January he and Rex Johnson paid a visit to Stephen Smith's Garden Centre in Scunthorpe (Grid Ref: SE 869116). The staff were most helpful and had indeed noticed rather a lot of spiders. They had also, for some time, considered themselves very fortunate to have had no problems with whitefly! However they had begun to think that the increasing number of webs was making the greenhouses look a little unkempt and had fairly immediate plans to begin steam-cleaning. Roy quickly found hundreds of U. plumipes, easily recognised by the feathery hairs on tibia I. Frequently the webs were made horizontally across the top of plantpots. Roy also found a couple of egg sacs suspended from a mass of greyish cribellate silk. The egg sacs are cream-coloured, elongate and have a number of shallow, angular projections. The spiders themselves are extremely variable in colour and markings, and the hairs on legs I may be pale or black; occasionally there are a few of these long hairs on tibia II. Roy found adult females,

subadult males and immatures, also a female of Achaearanea tepidariorum . The temperature inside the greenhouses does not drop below 15.5°C/60°F and no specimens were found outdoors. Needless to say, Stephen Smith's Garden Centre abandoned their steam-cleaning plans, were grateful for the advice and interested to learn why they had no problems with whitefly. So, off to the garden centre. If you find U. plumipes give the advice on whitefly control, suggest that the staff keep the spiders when they sell the plant.....and ask for a 10% discount on anything you buy !

Uloborus plumipes Lucas 1846.

Length; ♀, 3.3-5mm; ♂ 2.5-4mm. The epigyne of this species is very similar to that of U. walckenaerius, but the female is easily distinguished in the field by the long, pale hairs, dorsally and ventrally, on the distal half of tibia I (these absent in U. walckenaerius), and by the additional pair of tubercles on the abdomen. Both sexes may be distinguished by the carapace markings, illustrated . The male palp is very similar to that of U. walckenaerius but the tubercle at the base of the femur lacks the long, pale hairs and the patella and tibia are relatively much darker. Mature in spring and summer, and possibly at other times.

Uloborus plumipes



3. Rugathodes bellicosus NEW TO WEST LANCS., VC60. - Jennifer Newton.
94, Main Street, Hornby, Lancaster, LA2 8JB.

On August 31st. 1996, I was surprised to see a tiny, dark, Linyphiid-like spider carrying a white egg-sac as I turned over angular limestone rocks in a jumbled pile near the top of Warton Crag Nature Reserve near Carnforth, Lancs., (SD47). The pile, about 3 by 3 metres, appears man-made, perhaps a collapsed hut (there are Iron-Age ramparts encircling the summit), the remains of a wall, or rejects from an old quarry. The rocks range in size from a few inches to a foot or more, and form a pile with many cavities of varying sizes. I had turned over rocks here on several occasions, but until then had only found the occasional Textrix denticulata or Euophrys frontalis. Scattered rocks on the ground nearby had yielded Drassodes cupreus, Zelotes latreillei, Coelotes atropus, Trochosa terricola and Neon reticulatus and (more surprisingly) one male Satilatlas brittteni from a nearby stone wall.

Examination of my find under the microscope showed it to be Rugathodes bellicosus, later confirmed by Chris Felton. This species is given Nationally Notable (Nb) status by P. Merrett (*A Review of the Nationally Notable Spiders of Great Britain, Rpt. 127, NCC, 1990*) where he lists W. Yorkshire, Westmorland, N. Lancs., and Northumberland as the English counties in which it has been found, in

addition to sites in N. Wales and Scotland. The use of old counties leads to great confusion as far as Lancashire is concerned, since the boundaries were completely changed with the 1974 reorganisation. N. Lancs. in the above context refers to Lake District Lancashire, part of VC69, not what is thought of as N. Lancs., the Lancaster district of Lancashire in which the present record is placed, in VC60. Stan Dobson gives a recent Derbyshire record from Great Rocks Dale (in *Endangered Wildlife in Derbyshire*, ed. *Elkington and Willmot, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, 1996*). Peter Merrett gives the habitat as under large stones, usually on high ground, but also on the coast and shore of inland lakes. Warton Crag, a typical limestone hill rising to 163m, with a warm south-facing scarp face, supports a number of southern species, such as Atypus affinis and the snail Pomatias elegans. The pile of stones with Rugathodes is north-west of the summit, SD 491731, on fairly level ground at 140m, in limestone grassland and scrub. It hardly counts as high ground, and certainly not waterside. It lies within the area managed by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, part of a larger nature reserve under the control of four separate bodies. Management is for wildlife, especially the nationally endangered high brown fritillary butterfly, and involves limited grazing by a few cattle in an attempt to control the spread of bracken and scrub.

3. Pardosa palustris and Pardosa monticola IN WARWICKSHIRE. - Richard Wright.
70, Norman Road, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 1DN.

Until 1995 there were very few records of Pardosa palustris in Warwickshire. I did not find this surprising as the literature usually describes it as a typical species of heathland and moorland, habitats absent from most of the county. However, during 1995 the species appeared in several sites with coarse long grass, while in 1996 it became one of the commoner Pardosa in the county with more records than the previously much more abundant P. amentata. Many of the sites from which I recorded the species in abundance in 1996 were ones where I had previously collected numerous Pardosa specimens without ever finding P. palustris. As I used the same collecting methods, particularly pitfall traps, in the same habitats, and in the same seasons each year, I can only conclude that this species has genuinely undergone a massive expansion of range and abundance in recent years. I would be most interested to hear if any other Recorders have noted a similar change in their region.

The species which superficially most closely resembles P. palustris is P. monticola. However this species remains very scarce in Warwickshire. I have found it at only two sites in the county both of which are among the extremely few remaining ancient hay meadows. The literature always describes this species as common, though local. I understand from Wayne Rixom that P. monticola is equally scarce in other West Midland counties. It would be interesting to hear from any Recorders who find the species to be at all common in their area, or who have suggestions as to habitat. P. monticola is usually said to frequent areas of short grass, but extensive searching and trapping of this habitat has failed to produce the species.

4. Zelotes longipes AT WOOLMER FOREST, NORTH HAMPSHIRE. - Jonty Denton.
26 Bow Street, Alton, Hants., GU34 1NY.

Two males of this rare species were found on the western edge of Woolmer Forest (SU 786325) on the 1st. September 1996. The spiders were running over open exposed ground in hot sunshine. The capture site was 50% bare sand with bryophytes (Campylopus intraflexus) and scattered ragwort and Viper's bugloss. other species present included Steatoda phalerata and Xerolycosa nemoralis. This may be the first record for VC 12, although the species is known from heathland nearby, over the border in Surrey.

o - o - O - o - o

My thanks to those who supplied the notes for this issue. My apologies, firstly, to those whose contributions have had to be held over because of lack of space and, secondly, for not being able to include the note on computing issues which I mentioned on the questionnaire.

David R. Nellist, National Organiser.