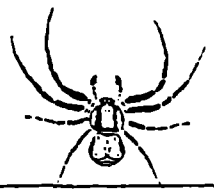
British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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July, 1997.

1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Recording cards.

Just a very brief update on recording cards. I noted in the last Newsletter (No. 27, March 1997) that 1,844 RA65 cards had been submitted in 1996 taking the grand total to 19,277. During the first half of this year we continued to do well, 1,141 cards being received by the end of June, and the grand total now stands at 20,418. In addition I know of many other records going into computer databases rather than onto cards including, for example, a large number of records generated by the identification of over 2500 specimens from pitfall traps in Wales.

1.2. Publication of the Provisional Distribution Maps.

Efforts continue to expedite computerisation by the Biological Records Centre of our accumulated records so that we can progress towards publication of provisional distribution maps at the earliest opportunity. We have so much valuable information in our large and growing database, most of it stored on record cards, and it continues to be a source of great frustration that the information remains largely inaccessible because it is simply impossible to sort and extract data from the 20,000+ cards we have in store. The number of enquiries I receive requesting information on sites or habitats continues to grow and I can do little to satisfy these requests. Achieving publication of the maps remains a top priority.

1.3. An Apology.

In the last issue, in the note by Mike Roberts describing the discovery of Uloborus plumipes in a garden centre, a short comment implied that the Natural History Museum had replied very tersely when a specimen was submitted for identification. These were my words, included after a conversation with Mike when I was seeking clarification on a number of other points in his note, and there was certainly no intention to imply that the Museum had responded in any way other than by its usual courteous and helpful letter. So, apologies to the Museum - I am suitably contrite.

2. VICE-COUNTY SPECIES LISTS. - Michael Kilner.
8 Viaduct Court, Lower Cwm, Pontypool, Gwent, NP4 5SP.

For many of us in the SRS the maps in the third volume of *British Spiders* (Locket, Millidge and Merrett, Ray Society, 1974) are the only source of information for species records from our local areas. The maps are obviously out of date, but it occurred to me to update my personal copies by shading in counties for species mentioned in Peter Merrett's updates to the county lists published in the BAS Bulletin in 1975 (Vol 3[5], pp. 140-141), 1982 (Vol. 5[7], pp. 332-336), 1989 (Vol. 8[1], pp. 1-4) and 1995 (Vol.10[1], pp. 15-18). Having done this for my own personal satisfaction it then occurred to me that I might be the possessor of a unique data set, and one which might be of use to other SRS members. I have therefore transcribed all of the county records in my possession, including some unpublished records, into a species total for each of the counties used by Peter Merrett in his original maps, and I give the totals in the table below broken down for England,

Scotland and Wales, with the counties ranked according to the total number of species.

A. ENGLAND											
1	Dorset	471	25	Oxfordshire	294	2	Caernarvonshire	289	13	East Lothian	199 *
2	Hampshire	465	26	Westmorland	289	4	Pembrokeshire	239	14	Angus	194
3	Sussex	429	26	Shropshire	289	5	Denbighshire	218	15	Skye	176
4	Surrey	423	28	Cambridgeshire	282 *	6	Merionethshire	206	15	Stirlingshire	176
5	Kent	405	29	Bedfordshire	281	7	Anglesey	191	17	Sutherland	173
5	Essex	405	30	Leicestershire	274	8	Flintshire	188	18	Dunbartonshire	170
7	Staffordshire	399 *	31	Lincolnshire	273	9	Monmouthshire	170	19	Dumfrieshire	164
8	Suffolk	386	32	Warwickshire	269	10	Montgomeryshire	152	20	Ross	158
9	West Yorkshire	369	32	Worcestershire	269	11	Carmarthenshire	141	21	Kincardineshire	150
10	Devon	368 *	34	Northamptonshire	267	12	Breconshire	126	22	Renfrewshire	133 *
11	North Yorkshire	367	35	Herefordshire	265 *	13	Radnorshire	79	23	Caithness	131
12	Berkshire	366	35	Derbyshire	265				24	Roxburgh	129
13	East Yorkshire	354	37	Gloucestershire	254		C. SCOTLAND		25	West Lothian	125
14	Cheshire	350 *	38	Cumberland	252	1	Perthshire	320 *	25	Banffshire	125
15	Somerset	347	39	Middlesex	248	2	Inverness	297	27	Selkirk	113
16	Lancashire	340 *	40	Nottinghamshire	246	3	Aberdeenshire	267	28	Wigtownshire	111
17	Cumbria	326	41	Huntingdonshire	212	4	Argyll	243	29	Orkneys	106
17	Norfolk	326	42	London	196	5	Midlothian	233	30	Peebleshire	103
19	Buckinghamshire	324	43	Isle of Man	195 *	6	Ayrshire	222 *	31	Hebrides	99
20	Northumberland	323	44	Durham	183	7	Kirkudbrightshire	217	32	Shetland	94
21	Isle of Wight	310	45	Rutland	62	8	Lanarkshire	216	33	Clackmannanshire	93
21	Cornwall	310		B. WALES		9	Fifeshire	212	34	Nairn	85
23	Hertfordshire	303	1	Cardiganshire	296	10	Clyde Isles	206 *	35	Islay & Jura	81
24	Wiltshire	297	2	Glamorgan	289	10	Moray	206	36	Mull	63
						12	Berwickshire	201	37	Kinross	40

[Notes: - totals marked * include unpublished records based on my own records, or upon regional lists kindly provided to me by other Recorders.
- the total for Cornwall includes records for the Isles of Scilly. Other islands are included with the nearest county.
- thus far I have not generated any data for Ireland, given the general scarcity of records from that region.]

There are a number of drawbacks to this data set:
- Firstly the lists are based upon the old counties, rather than the vice-county system used by the SRS. In some cases, in particular for North Lancashire, this may be a source of confusion, as the boundaries of the old counties and the vice-counties do not correspond. However, in other cases such as my home area of Monmouthshire, the two are identical.
- Secondly, I would be willing to bet that the totals in my lists are a significant under-representation of the true figures. I would be very interested to see species lists for specific areas, and would be very grateful if any Area Organiser or Recorder could send me lists for their area. I will then update my lists accordingly. My own sources are fairly limited. In an ideal world I would hope to hear from every active Area Organiser who is in possession of a species list for his or her area. Were this to happen the data set that would result could be a very valuable resource for the scheme and to the BAS as a whole.
- Thirdly, my lists give no indication of which species are present in an area or how abundant they are, nor do I have any record of the grid reference for any species other than those that I have taken personally. However I can provide a list of the species for each county, and I will be very happy to provide such a list to anyone who requests one.

If anyone has questions about these lists, or any records that they feel they can add to them, I will be delighted to hear from them.

[Editor's Note: Totalling the species recorded for each of the vice-counties, as Michael has done above, was a task I thought of tackling some time ago, indeed when I first took over as National Organiser. I balked at the amount of work involved but consoled myself with the thought that the provisional maps would in any case be appearing in 1997. The maps would, of course, have the advantage of incorporating all those additional vice-county records, marked on record cards currently buried in the vaults at BRC, but not noted as new records at the time the card was

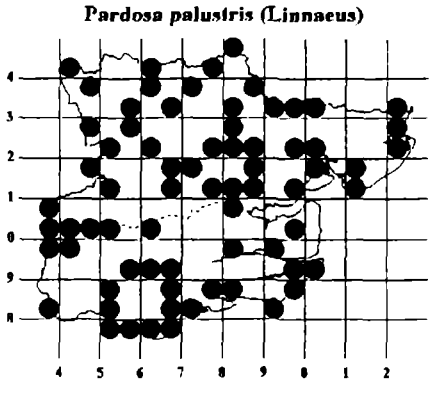
completed, as well as other records such as those included on computer. I was in no doubt that the totals would be a serious under-estimate of the true position and indeed Michael has made this very point in his text above. Just by way of example the total for Herts., my own patch, now stands at 323 as a result of the work of David Carr, Doug Marriott and David Powell. In the recently published book by John Crocker and Jon Daws (*The Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland*) the total is given as 326. Martin Askins has taken the total for Wilts (north and south combined) to over 300 whilst, as a result of the Mid-Wales Survey in 1995, the totals for Brecon and Radnor are now 174 and 146 respectively. All this highlights how much the distribution maps are needed, but in the meantime I support Michael's call for those with more up-to-date information to send it in.]

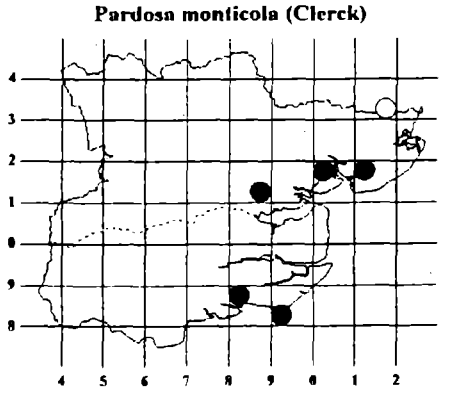
3. Pardosa palustris and Pardosa monticola IN ESSEX. - Peter Harvey.
9, Kent Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6DE.

I read with interest the note by Richard Wright in the last Newsletter about these two Pardosa species in Warwickshire and the occurrence of Pardosa monticola at only two sites, both ancient hay meadows. Pardosa monticola is evidently also very rare in the Leicestershire area where the only record given in the *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland* by John Crocker and Jonathan Daws (Kairos Press, 1996) is of four females taken at Ives Head in 1966. On the other hand Pardosa palustris is shown to be widely distributed in a variety of habitats. The situation in Essex is very similar and I have long been puzzled by the description in the literature of Pardosa monticola as a common species. It seems worth detailing the status of the two species in Essex to stimulate further contributions and comments about their frequency and ecology in other parts of England.

Pardosa monticola is extremely rare in Essex where it has only been found in a few localities, all near the coast where the habitat has probably remained open and unimproved. In particular it has been found in quantity only in relic dune grassland at Shoebury Old Ranges (TQ 9284). A single female was taken in a pitfall trap at Hadleigh Downs (TQ 8185), and there are older records from North Essex at Tiptree Heath, Fingringhoe Wick, St. Osyth and the Stour Estuary.

Pardosa palustris on the other hand is mainly a spider of disturbed ground with a good proportion of bare earth, typically arable fields and their edges, or heavily grazed grasslands. It is extremely common and widespread in Essex and is recorded from almost every 10km square in the county (see the maps below). It is significant perhaps that in the *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland* the species is noted as a successful aeronaut and also records it from various habitats with bare ground.





Readers need to remember that Essex is nowadays a heavily agricultural county and very little unimproved grassland remains, other than ancient woodlands which are usually surrounded by arable fields. Grasslands have either long been ploughed up or are improved. Even the extensive network of sea walls has largely been raised and the vegetation disturbed by improvements. Most heathland was already lost by the end of the last century. Almost everything that remained was either ploughed during the war period or has become scrub and secondary woodland through neglect.

I have visited chalk downland habitats in North Kent and Surrey and found Pardosa monticola to be abundant. At the risk of unscientific extrapolation I would suggest that Pardosa monticola is probably a spider of old unimproved grasslands or heathlands and as such may be a valuable indicator species. On the other hand Pardosa palustris, as a successful aeronaut, and with a preference for habitats containing bare ground, is a species which has readily been able to colonise various disturbed sites.

I would be interested to know if the massive expansion of sites in Warwickshire noted by Richard Wright is associated with the appearance of increased bare ground in the habitats, perhaps due to the extensive droughts that have afflicted some areas of southern England in the last few years.

4. Zodarion italicum DISCOVERED IN HERTFORDSHIRE - Doug Marriott.
19 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts., WD3 3RF.

The parish of Croxley Green lying between Watford and Rickmansworth in Herts., contains an unusual habitat on the north side of the Grand Union Canal (TQ 078950). This site, on a level plateau at approximately 60 metres altitude and 10-15 metres above the canal bank, was used as engineering sidings for the London Underground and Metropolitan Railway. The sidings fell into disuse around 15 or so years ago and the rails etc. removed. What was left was "derelict" land with granite, railway ballast chippings covering much of the site. In addition the spoil from the engineering work on the system was dumped here, together with additions from local builders before access was denied. This stony habitat has subsequently been colonised by masses of Buddleia, Teasel, Bristly Ox-tongue and a spectacular array of Evening Primrose and Mullein. With all the stones and debris there are innumerable colonies of ants, mostly Lasius niger. As a site for spiders it is of considerable interest and several species have been added to the Herts. list. It is the only known site in Herts. for Pardosa hortensis, and Hahnia nava was also added from here recently.

On the 24th. April 1997 I spent some time turning over stones, and collected a number of specimens of Phrurolithus festivus which occurs here in abundance. When examined under the microscope one specimen was found to be a male Zodarion italicum. David Nellist confirmed my identification and together we visited the site in the hope of discovering more specimens. Subsequently I have re-visited several times but no more Zodarion specimens have been found.

The species was originally found in the UK in the Grays area of Essex where Peter Harvey tells me it is fairly common. So, has it always been at this site in Croxley or has it been brought in from elsewhere in with the railway spoil ? It should be noted that the Underground and London Transport network does extend into Essex. The species does appear to have an affinity with stony substrates and with ants, and might be found in other disused sidings and goods yards.

5. THREE NOTABLE Philodromus SPECIES FROM THE SAME TREE - Jonty Denton.
26, Bow Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 1NY.

In 1995 I surveyed Odiham Common, North Hants., (SU7553) for invertebrates, and using a beating tray collected Philodromus albidus, P. praedatus and P. margaritatus from a single large oak tree on the woodland edge. The single female P.margaritatus was knocked from a dead terminal branch, but the other two species were abundant amongst the healthy leaf-covered branches.

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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, in some cases for the second time and, secondly, for not yet being able to include the note on computing issues which I mentioned on the questionnaire.

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