British Arachnological Society

SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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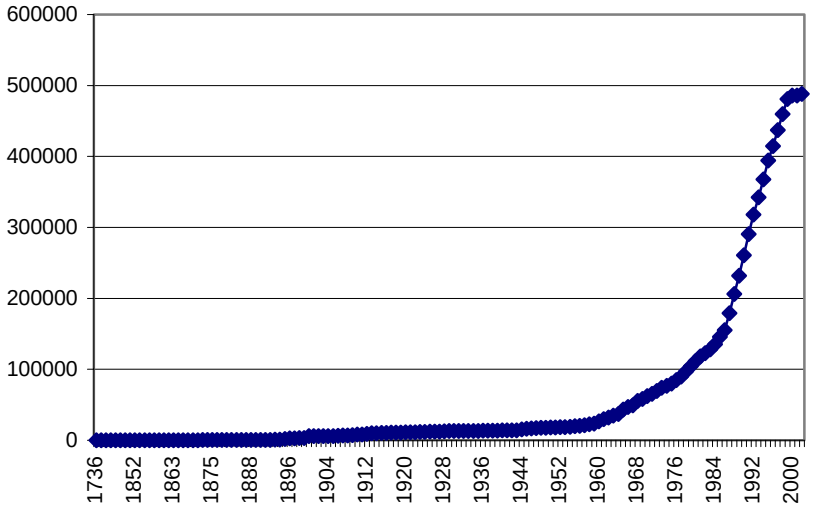
Many thanks to those who have contributed articles, notes and information for this issue. Newsletter No. 41 will be published in November 2001. Please send contributions by the end of September at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP email: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

Progress towards the provisional atlas

Currently nearly 488,000 records have been submitted to the scheme, by cards and in computerised format. All punching and validation of card data was completed at BRC earlier in the year and all electronic records received have been validated. There still remains some further data to be submitted in electronic format via Stan Dobson. An analysis of records in the dataset year by year is interesting, showing very clearly the dramatic effect and importance of the late Clifford Smith and his work in getting the Spider Recording Scheme up and running, and on the importance of the Spider Recording Scheme to the recording and submission of spider records in this country (see fig. below)

Accumulated numbers of records



All the species accounts have been drafted, and nearly all have been available either on request or on the NBN Gateway for perusal and comment from registered SRS members (at www.searchnbn.net, or via the SRS pages of the BAS website). Draft distribution maps have also been available on the NBN Gateway since the beginning of June. Well over thirty arachnologists have taken advantage of the facility to access the accounts and maps and to help identify errors and provide additional information. This has proved to be extremely valuable.

While going through all the draft spider accounts, it became clear that quite often the information on adult season available in standard texts leaves a lot to be desired. As well as a large amount of computerised data recorded by the Essex Spider Group, male/female date data has now also very kindly been provided by Martin Askins, John Crocker,

Francis Farr-Cox, Richard Gallon, Paul Lee, John Murphy and Jennifer Newton to bring the total number of records available with male/female date information to over 125,000 covering quite a wide range of the country. More data have been subsequently supplied by Bob Merritt, but I have yet to include this in the main male/female dataset. With the help of Martin Askins the data have been used to produce adult season charts, which have now been used to inform the revised species accounts. The provisional atlas will also provide a chart for most species summarising the available male/female data.

With the availability on the internet of checklists for a number of European countries, together with other published checklists, it has also been possible to update each species accounts with a brief summary on the distribution in western and central European countries. This does not include any assessment on the status of the species in these countries, where they may be widespread and very common or very rare. This information does not appear to be readily available.

Finalised text will be supplied to BRC by the end of August, and the atlas should be published in two volumes by the end of the year.

After the provisional atlas
The submission of computerised data will be encouraged, so that we can maintain an up-to-date dataset. Plenty of work will remain to be done after the provisional atlas is produced – as well as providing much-needed information on the modern status of each species to help in the conservation and management of spider biodiversity, it should provide the focus on where most recording effort remains to be done. Analyses of the atlas dataset should help target under-recorded parts of the country and provide the means to investigate the reasons for different species diversity in different counties, as well as to help understand the distribution and ecology of each species. Adult male/female date data is clearly something that we should now collect as part of standard recording for the scheme. There is already some very interesting data suggesting different patterns from the south to the north of the country, but we need more information.

Computer data

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Until early last year, I was going into Manchester Museum every week to work on the spider collections there. At the beginning of May, due to a massive rebuilding project, the laboratory facilities were closed down and everything was put into storage and will remain so until well into next year. At the Museum, I had an e-mail address which I can no longer use, and unfortunately, nothing was forwarded to me at home.

I have recently discovered that at least one person sent their Atlas records to that address and, of course, I never received them. If anybody else sent records to me at stan.dobson@man.ac.uk and these weren't acknowledged, would they please resubmit them **urgently** to my home address which is stand@beeb.net.

Finding *Uloborus plumipes*

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This interesting recent addition to our fauna (Roberts,1997) has spread rapidly in garden centres, though few records have been submitted to the Spider Recording Scheme and it must be grossly under-recorded. It would be good to document its spread across the country, though I suspect it may already be too late: I have found it in every garden centre where I have looked for it in the last twelve months, mostly in central east England, but ranging from Cumbria to Kent. If *U. plumipes* is present it is usually easy to find, especially once you get your eye in.

The best place to start looking is in the roof area, often but by no means always in the house plant section. Many garden centres seem to have polycarbonate roofs with aluminium supports which the spiders use to attach their webs. It is easier initially to find the very distinctive creamy or off-white papery eggsacs which look like tiny shriveled holly leaves, about the size of a finger nail. However, looking up at the eggsacs in the roof, they may look dark, no doubt partly a result of looking into the light and partly a result of their becoming browner/dirtier with age. The spiders themselves are cryptic, hanging upside down in their horizontal webs with the long front pair of legs, with their curious usually dark 'feathered' tibiae, stretched out in front. The variably coloured abdomen is strongly humped and triangular in profile. Even tiny spiderlings are instantly recognisable. The adults are quite small, rarely exceeding much more than a centimetre, extended legs included. If it is present in the roof area you may also be able to find it on plants, though its cryptic posture and small size make it harder to find in this situation. I have not yet found it outside, but individuals I have kept in captivity are very

tough and will live and breed with a minimum of care. I would be surprised if it has not by now found its way on plants into some conservatories.

Despite looking at hundreds I have yet to find a male and it has been suggested that the species can breed parthenogenetically. However, the website Spinnen Mitteleuropas states "in glasshouses reproduction by parthenogenesis has been assumed as apparently only females occur, but due to the cryptic way of life of the males this must be doubtful" [my translation]. It would be interesting to know if other observers have found males in this country. Mike Roberts' note on the initial discovery of the species referenced below notes that subadult males were found at Scunthorpe in January 1997 and Rowley Snazell reports that in two garden centres locally (Dorset) males are not at all difficult to find.

While looking for *U. plumipes* why not also check the inside walls low down for *Achaearanea tepidariorum* which I have also found in several local garden centres?

References

Nentwig, W., Hänggi, A. Kropf, C. & Blick, T., eds. Spinnen Mitteleuropas. Version of 07.05.2000.
www.araneae.unibe.ch
Roberts, M. *Uloborus plumipes* - has it truly invaded Britain yet? *SRS Newsletter* **27**: 2-3, March 1997

A day at Foulness, and *Arctosa fulvolineata* rediscovered in Essex

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On 19th May 2001 the Essex Spider Group visited Foulness, an event kindly organised by Ken Hill. Access to Foulness is controlled by the MOD and is restricted to a few areas only. This time our time was spent at Wakering Stairs and Haven Point to the south of Foulness Island itself. We had previously visited this area on 12th June 1999 and did not really expect the interesting haul of species that the day finally provided.

First David Carr found a male *Haplodrassus minor* in tidal litter on a small sand and shell shingle bank at Wakering Stairs. This Nationally Vulnerable (RDB2) species has been found at five other places on the coast in Essex, all in similar situations. At the same location David found a male and female of the Nationally Scarce (Notable A) salticid *Sitticus inexpectus*, also collected in similar habitat at other coastal locations in the county.

The sea wall here has been reinforced on its seaward side with a concrete facing. The litter and tidal debris which accumulates at the base of this and around the vegetation which manages to grow in cracks in the concrete was a productive place for spiders. Eating our lunch sat on the concrete near the top of the sea wall also proved interesting. Amongst the occasional *Zelotes apricorum* and numerous *Salticus scenicus* seen running or jumping over the concrete, a female *Zodarion italicum* was spotted by David's eagle eye and captured. The spider is widespread along the East Thames Corridor and has been recorded previously as far east as Barling and Shoebury Old Ranges, so it is not altogether unexpected to find it four to five kilometres further on.

In the afternoon we moved on towards Haven Point to the northeast. Sea Purslane grows sporadically on the landward side of the sea wall and on small islands in the borrowdyke, evidence of the very brackish nature of the borrowdykes in this region. At one point we stopped to investigate an area of obviously saline mud and vegetation on the landward side of the sea wall. Whilst Ken settled down for an afternoon nap, David Carr and myself both found males of the Nationally Scarce (Notable B) *Agraecina striata*, in Essex typically found in this kind of brackish habitat. The prize of the day however went to a lycosid with a whitish marking on its back which rapidly disappeared as David turned over a small rock. Although about the right size, it did not look quite right for *Trochosa ruricola* and we spent some time trying to locate the spider, eventually successfully capturing a male *Arctosa fulvolineata*. A female then turned up under a nearby stone and David found another pair under a piece of wood a few metres away. At Haven Point itself, another four males and two females were found in an area of saltmarsh where the mud was covered with a variety of litter and pieces of wood. These are the first records of this spider in the county since the old Flatford Mill Spider Group days! Over the years we had searched all the old locations and likely habitat elsewhere in the county without success, and had come to the conclusion that this species was probably extinct in Essex. We had even looked for spiders at this very same place at Haven Point at about the same time of year only two years previously.

It just goes to show how much of a sampling exercise fieldwork represents, where absence in itself proves very little. There is no substitute for being in the right place at the right time!

The increased distribution of *Nigma walckenaeri* (Roewer, 1951) in North Gloucestershire

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Although the species became a new Gloucetershire county record with its discovery in 1993 from my own garden in Alderton (GR SP005343), the species has now arrived in and around Tewkesbury and including a number of key sites.

During routine fieldwork in late summer 2000, it was noticed that a fair number were occupying ivy on a bridge over a disused railway at Beckford (GR S0980356). In early October 2000 a good-sized population was discovered on a protected embankment just east of' Tewkesbury, a notable site for Glow-worm *Lampyris noctiluca* and the reason for halting Phase II of a proposed relief-road. The area is part of an extensive wet flood-plain which surrounds the town.

Nigma walckenaeri also occupied sites previously recorded for the Spider Recording Scheme and although its presence was unnoticed until last year it seems unlikely that the species was overlooked during past fieldwork. Queen Margaret's Camp (GR S0896314) has been subjected to beating and sweeping techniques since 1991, and from April-November. Also, Tewkesbury Abbey Gardens (GR SO891324) has been surveyed 1994-1996 and yet *Nigma walckenaeri* is now a likely occurrence for late summer/autumn during this year's recording programme.

Good numbers were also discovered on ivy, elder and lilac alongside the cemetery in Priors Park Estate (GR SO892318) just south of the town in September 2000.

To the west of Tewkesbury very little evidence of the species is known although it is hoped that 2001 fieldwork may confirm my assumption that the species is spreading westward.

It would be interesting to hear from recorders in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and the Welsh Counties as to the likelihood of the species appearing in their vicinity.

Editorial note: it should be noted that a distribution centred in the Severn Vale and Thames Valley regions, as shown by *Nigma walckenaeri*, is a situation known for a number of other invertebrate species, such as the ant *Lasius brunneus* (Alexander, K.N.A. & Taylor, A. 1997. The Severn Vale, a national stronghold for *Lasius brunneus* (Latreille) (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* **10**: 217-219), and reflected in a number of other spider species.

Philodromus collinus, an urban spider?

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In Leistershire *Philodromus collinus* had previously been collected from scrubby situations on limestone grassland, the ride of a coniferised ancient woodland site and a rural churchyard, all in the far east of the county. In the late Spring/early Summer of 2000 a concerted effort was made to collect records of *Atea sturmi* from urban parks around Leicester, by beating yew and other conifers. While beating for *A. sturmi* all other spiders were potted up for identification later. Amongst the collection from Monk's Rest (a former suburban large house and gardens, now a public park) on the 11/06/00 were 4 males and one female *P. collinus,* which had been collected along with *P. aureolus*.

This led to a rethink of this species' distribution within the county, since it had been assumed that *P. collinus* was not only confined to the far east of the county but also to 'natural' habitats. Several days later a male *P. collinus* was collected from Gilrose Cemetery (a Victorian cemetery in suburban west Leicester) again by beating conifers. There were two further records for this species for that year, both from the west of the county, one from a rural churchyard and the other from the open ride of a coniferised ancient woodland site (this later collection also included a female *P. praedatus*).

All the records for *P. collinus* are from habitats with similarities to parkland (churchyards, scrub mosaics, open rides, etc.), so it should come as no surprise that this species has colonised city parks and cemeteries that contain reasonable amounts of yews and other conifers. These areas of public open space mimic this species 'natural' habitat of parkland and is one which should not be ignored by arachnologists. The list of other species that have been collected from Leicerter's city parks also include*: Tetragnatha obtusa, Gibbaranea gibbosa, Atea sturmi, Cyclosa conica, Hypomma cornutum, Panomomops sulcifrons* and *Pityophantes phrygianus*.

Lepthyphantes insignis in Leicestershire

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One female of this spider was first recorded for the county by D.A. Lott from pitfall traps set on a reclaimed open cast site at Ravenstone, on the 26/06/1991. Since then there have been a further nine records, all except one of single individuals, with five coming from pitfall trap material. The majority of these pitfall traps were set in arable/ley with one set in heathland adjacent to permanent pasture, and in the author's opinion concern dispersing aeronauts. The remaining four records were collected by hand; two were swept from the same ride of ancient woodland just over three years apart, with the remaining two records coming from dark subterranean type records.

The latter two records come from 2001, with the first of these concerning a single female that was discovered beneath a hollowed-out cast iron flower holder situated at ground level on top of a concrete grave cover amongst lush growth of Spanish Bluebells and partly shaded by a large tree. When the flower holder was rolled over the female was situated in her web, with two white egg sacs adjacent to the web stuck to the side of the flower holder. The second record concerns two males and five females that were found in a row of recently constructed drainage culverts in an extension to an ever increasing Victorian cemetery. The culverts were about 1m by 0.5m and 0.5m deep with water in the bottom, all interlinked by a pipe at either end.

The pale spiders were collected in the hope that they were *Lessertia dentichelis*, but then in the belief that they were *Lepthyphantes pallidus* since they were not white enough (both species have been taken from sewer systems in Leicester with the *Lessertia* the commoner of the two in the habitat). The females were taken from their webs made in the corners of the culverts and the males from under the manhole covers. Several of the female webs had white egg sacs adjacent to them, stuck onto the concrete wall of the culverts.

Only two of the line of culverts were investigated with L. insignis being present in both of them, the other four culverts being left since sufficient specimens had been collected. In the second culvert several pale female spiders close to the bottom were left, so this species seems to have a well established and viable population here.

The above records suggest that this spider lives a subterranean life style (possibly gregarious in favourable conditions), with possible affiliations to woodland and the ability to disperse successfully over large distances. These statements are based on relatively few records and the author would welcome any comments and observations on this elusive species.

Nigma puella in Leicestershire

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On the 10/06/0l I visited one of my local parks in west Leicester. Braunstone Park and surrounds were the estate of the Winstanley family that was compulsory purchased in the 1920's, with much of the land going for council housing. This left 168 acres of land around the former ancestral home to be used as formal gardens and open space. Although over the years council management policies and vandalism have degraded the park it can still boast; two lakes, a stream, many old oaks, formal gardens and areas of scrub with tall herb and rough grassland.

It was while beating a holly bush at the edge of an open spinney that a male *Nigma puella* fell onto the beating tray. This species presence in the county came as a bit of a surprise at first, since on consulting the draft distribution map for *N. puella* from the forthcoming national atlas I found that most records came from around the coast with the two nearest places it had been found being South Wales and Suffolk (both over a 100 miles away). The habitat for this species is on bushes and overgrown hedgerows in gardens, park land and field boundaries, so old suburban and urban parks and gardens anywhere in southern England are worth investigating for this species.

Two other species collected at the same time that are worthy of note where *Philodromus collinus* and *Achaearanea lunata*. A male of the first species was beaten from ornamental conifers, with two adult females and five sub-adult males of the second species being taken from their tangled webs which were found in the many corners of the walled gardens wall buttresses.

Spider Recording in Rye Bay boosted by Interreg II Project

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The Two Bays, One Environment Interreg II Project has enabled an increase in the wildlife recording in the Rye Bay area, which extends from the Rother valley in the north to Pett Level in the west and Camber and the Midrips in the east. Recording work has concentrated on the UK Biodiversity Priority habitats, with particular focus, with regard to spiders, on the vegetated shingle at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, and the sand dunes at Camber.

An intensive year-long pitfall trapping study was carried out on the *bare* shingle at Rye Harbour during 1999-2000. This habitat is sometimes regarding as being of low importance for wildlife, even amongst invertebrate ecologists. Spiders are extremely difficult to find on bare shingle and even harder to catch! Pitfall trapping was considered the most effective way of recording the surface dwelling invertebrates on this habitat type. Some very interesting results were observed.

A different community of spiders occurred during the late spring to late summer season compared to the late autumn and winter period. During warmer weather *Drassodes lapidosus*, *Zelotes apricorum*, *Salticus scenicus*, *Euophrys obsoleta*, *Sitticus inexpectus*, (*Neon levis/picta)* and *Pardosa agricola* dominated the catch. During autumn and winter a number of different species started to appear, with some surprises. The omnipresent *D.lapidosus* still dominated the catch, but species that have never been found on shingle at Rye Harbour before appeared regularly in the catch. These included the woodland and cave dwelling species *Cicurina cicur*, the wetland species *Crustulina sticta*, and the synanthropic species *Tegenaria domestica*. The latter species occurred regularly in traps set as far away from buildings and manmade structures as is possible at Rye Harbour. Other invertebrates never recorded before at Rye Harbour also occurred, including the millipede *Nanogona polydesmoides*, which was found in large numbers during cold weather.

Pseudoscorpions were also recorded regularly in small numbers throughout the year, including *Chthonius tenuis*, *C.orthodactylus* and *Roncus lubricus*.

The results of the survey are still being collated, and when complete a full report will be published including a phenological analysis.

A superb community of spiders was found at Camber Dunes including, *Lathys stigmatisata, Haplodrassus dalmentensis, Philodromus fallax, Marpissa nivoyi, Attulus saltator, Phlegra fasciata, Synageles venator, Neoscona adianta, Trichopterna cito*, and *Ceratinopsis romana*. The pseudoscorpion *Dactylochelifer latreillei* was very common throughout the dunes.

The wetland habitats within Rye Bay are next to be targeted, including reedbeds, reedfen, fen marsh and wet woodland.

The Salticidae of Rye Bay and Hastings

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The unique, complex geology of Hastings has created a compact mosaic of habitats which when viewed in combination with the adjacent area of Rye Bay represents an incredibly rich and diverse area of southern England.

Fine examples of ancient woodland, reedbed, fen marsh, sand dunes, vegetated shingle, saltmarsh, maritime cliff and slope, dwarf scrub, dry acid grassland and lichen heath occur throughout the area, as well as urban built up areas and agricultural land.

The invertebrate fauna of this area is incredibly rich and the jumping spiders of the area are no exception. The following is a brief summary of the species and distribution of the Salticidae of Rye Bay and Hastings.

Salticus scenicus (Clerck 1757)

Very common throughout the area on buildings and manmade structures, also common on the shingle at Rye Harbour and the cliff fall boulders at Hastings.

Salticus cingulatus (Panzer 1797)

Uncommon within the region, the only records being from shingle at Rye Harbour, on Camber Castle and on cliff face scrub at Hastings.

Heliophanus cupreus (Walckenaer 1802)

Very common and widespread within Hastings amongst low vegetation, although unusually is quite uncommon within Rye Bay where it seems to be replaced by the following species.

Heliophanus flavipes C.L.Koch 1848

Very common and widespread within Rye Bay amongst low vegetation and on shingle at Rye Harbour, but only occasionally found within Hastings.

Marpissa muscosa (Clerck 1757)

Locally very abundant on old fence posts and adjacent trees on small farms within Rye Bay.

Marpissa nivoyi (Lucas 1846)

This spider used to be very common on the dunes at Camber but seems to be declining in recent years. It still occurs at Camber but is only found rarely.

Ballus chalybeius (Walckenaer 1802)

Occasionally found in sweet chestnut coppice woodlands within Hastings.

Neon reticulatus (Blackwall 1853)

Common in leaf litter within woodland at Hastings and Rye Bay.

Neon pictus Kulczynski, 1891?

First recorded in Britain on shingle at Rye Harbour in 1998. The species occurs abundantly on shingle throughout the reserve.

Bianor aurocinctus (Ohlert 1865)

There is only one record of this species, a male on the edge of an arable field in the Brede Valley. The spider was found on dried, cracked, compacted ground feeding on ants.

Euophrys frontalis (Walckenaer 1802)

Very common and widespread throughout the area usually found at the base of vegetation and under stones.

Talavera aequipes (O.P.-Cambridge 1871)

Occasionally recorded from shingle at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Pseudeuophrys lanigera (Simon 1871)

Frequently found in Hastings on buildings and other manmade structures.

Pseudeuophrys obsoleta (Simon 1868)

Very common and sometimes abundant on shingle at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Sitticus pubescens (Fabricius 1775)

Frequently found in Hastings on buildings and other manmade structures.

Sitticus inexpectus Logunov & Kronestedt 1997

Very common and sometimes abundant on shingle at Rye Harbour and the Midrips.

Sitticus (Attulus) saltator (Simon 1868)

Occasionally found on the sand dunes at Camber.

Evarcha falcata (Clerck 1757)

Frequently found on bushes and trees on the edge of woodland and hedgerows within the region, although seems to be absent from Hastings.

Phlegra fasciata (Hahn 1826)

Occasionally found on shingle at Rye Harbour and sand dunes at Camber.

Synageles venator (Lucas 1836)

Recently found amongst vegetation on the stabilised dunes at Camber bordering the Rye golf course.

Myrmarachne formicaria (DeGeer 1778)

Recently found amongst low vegetation on the cliffs at Hastings.

Web sites

Richard Gallon has set up a website for the spiders of North Wales at http://www.geocities.com/north_wales_spiders and viewing this site is highly recommended. It contains vice county lists, site species lists for the Great Orme and Cadair Idris, coverage and topography maps, and distribution maps for all the species recorded in the region.

Millennium Atlas - Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland

by John Crocker and Jonathan Daws. 120 pages A4. Loughborough Naturalists' Club.

This new Atlas (see Newsletter No. 39) is now published and brings the recording of the spider fauna in Leicestershire and Rutland up to date. It is an essential companion to the earlier publication (Crocker & Daws, 1996) which covered the topography of the two counties and traced the history of arachnology in the Vice-county. Style and format have been maintained such that the two parts, 1996 volume and the Atlas, complement each other, but each is complete in itself.

After problems which resulted in the rejection of the original print run, the atlas has now been printed by new printers. The result is absolutely excellent, with high quality reproduction of the outstanding spider drawings by Michael Robert. The maps plot the distribution of 341 species, representing over 30,000 records for Leicestershire, including 12,000 records new since the 1996 atlas. Detailed commentaries are given of all the 14 new county records and of some of the rarest species where additional records have been obtained, with a wealth of other supporting detail directed at the present emphasis on biodiversity. My only gripe is that instead of confining consideration of status to a ***regional*** level, the national status has been unofficially altered for a number of species. For a variety of very good reasons this cannot be done except by publication of a new Red Data Book or official national review. Changing national status is not the role of a county atlas, and for me it detracts from an otherwise unsurpassed production. In one case, *Maso gallicus*, the draft national map shows clearly that the official status is correct and should not be altered, and I would also argue about several of the other 'changes' made.

However this is an important book on the British spider fauna and is definitely a book to buy. It is available to BAS/SRS members at the discounted price of £13 post free from John Crocker at 34 Bramcote Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2SA. A few of the companion 1996 publication are also available for sale at a discount. If you have not yet ordered this book or its 1996 complement, both of which are likely to become collectors items in the future, do so now!

Peter Harvey