SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME NEWS

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EDITORIAL

Unfortunately, I have not been very well for several months, and this has delayed plans to progress a review of national spider statuses based on the latest IUCN criteria and the production of guidance on the identification of difficult species. Hopefully progress can be made in the near future.

With respect to difficult species or unusual records, I am sure misidentifications can easily be made with species such as *Dysdera erythrina*/*crocata*, *Pocadicnemis pumila*/*juncea*, *Pseudeuophrys erratica*/*lanigera*, *Pardosa agricola*/*agrestis*/*purbeckensis*/*monticola* and *Trochosa spinipalpis*/*terricola* females, to name just a few. I would urge arachnologists to recognise when something is unusual and should be checked. One of the main aims of phase 2 of the recording scheme is to increase our knowledge on the ecology of all British spider species, and this can only be done when identifications are reliable. Unexpected records outside the known distribution, unusual habitats or maturity dates, distorted palps and specimens in poor condition from pitfall material, are all things that should trigger the need for extreme caution in identification and, where there may be any doubt specimens should be checked by another arachnologist, preferably one the members of the new Verification Panel of the British Arachnological Society:

Peter Merrett, 6, Hillcrest, Durlston Road, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2HS
Tony Russell-Smith, Bailiffs Cottages, Doddington, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 0TU
Rowley Snazell, 10, Bon Accord Road, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2DS
Ian Dawson, 100, Hayling Avenue, Little Paxton, St Neots, Cambs, PE19 6HQ
and myself, Peter Harvey, 32, Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex, RM16 2YP

Eric Duffey has asked me to request recorders to look out for specimens of *Nigma puella* to help a study by a Czech student (Jiri Kral, e-mail: spider@natur.cuni.cz) who is researching the chromosomes of *Nigma* species. However *Nigma puella* does not occur in his country. He would prefer immature or subadult specimens, i.e. before mating, so that he can examine the chromosomes in the sex glands. Fortunately in Britain female *N. puella* (when live) is a distinctive species even when juvenile or subadult, with its characteristic red abdominal markings. If you can help please contact Jiri.

In Issue No 14 of the Pisces Conservation newsletter, Pisces Conservation Ltd report that they are currently working on an e-book of Locket & Millidge, the standard work on British Spiders before the publication of Michael Roberts' *The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland*. Locket & Millidge (Vols I & II, 1951, 1953) and Locket, Millidge & Merrett (Vol. III, 1974) is still an extremely valuable work, with drawings of palps and epigynes and excellent descriptions that can often help identify 'difficult species'. The target release date is mid-March, and their website is at: www.pisces-conservation.com/softebooks.html

Figure 1. ***Nigma puella*** **- photograph © Peter Harvey.**

My thanks go to all those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 49 will be published in July 2004. Please send contributions by the end of May at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32, Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk.

An Essex Population of *Segestria florentina* (Rossi, 1790)

by Peter Harvey

The only previous Essex records of the large and impressive 6-eyed spider *Segestria florentina* (Rossi, 1790) are a female found on the wall of a bedroom in Southend-on-Sea (Payne 1994), and a large female in November 2002 at Leigh-on-Sea in a box containing a toy that had been sent by mail order from West London (R. G. Payne, pers. comm.). Now Fred Stevens has identified a flourishing colony of *S. florentina* at Tiptree in Essex (TL892159).

The original Tiptree spider, or its cast 'skin', was found in the garden of Fred's sister by his 6-year-old niece, Tara, who thought it looked 'different' from the usual garden spiders. Fred searched on the web and identified it as *Segestria florentina*. He sent me photographs showing the characteristic green iridescent jaws of adult *S. florentina* and I was able to confirm his identification.

Fred looked where his niece found the original spider and discovered the characteristic webs high on the wall. During the daytime the webs' owners were too shy to

show more than the tip of a couple of black legs, but at night at least 6 live *S. florentina* were confirmed.

Bristowe (1958) describes the web of *Segestria* with its characteristic long straight 'fishing lines' radiating from the tubular entrance, quite unlike the matted silk of the common *Amaurobius similis* frequently to be seen on walls and fences in houses and gardens. Brushing one of the fishing lines very gently with a fine tip of grass should get the owner to dart out of her tube with the speed of lightning, biting fiercely and then once more backing into her tube—all in the space of about two seconds.

Of three British *Segestria* species, only the smallest, *S. senoculata*, is at all widespread, and *S. florentina* is scarce with scattered records in southern England. When Bristowe wrote *The World of Spiders* the spider was only known to be established in a few southern towns near to the sea, but it has increasingly been found inland as far north as Oxford, and it seems to be increasing in numbers and distribution.

Reference

Bristowe, W.S. (1958) *The World of Spiders*. Collins, London.
Payne, R. G. (1994) Two large foreign spiders in Southend. *Essex Field Club Newsletter*, **12**: 7.

32, Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP

Figure 1. *Segestria florentina* - photo © Fred Stevens.

Instant Results with *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer, 1802)

by Jonty Denton

On the 7th August 2003, I was up early, sorting through the previous night's moth catch, when the post arrived. Opening the latest B.A.S. Newsletter I was immediately distracted from assorted Lepidoptera, and muesli, by the article on *Ero aphana* by Harvey & Hopkin (2003). They reported a capture just up the road from Alton, and provided a super photo by Ian Dawson, which made me even more envious, and their concluding remark of 'keep a look out', certainly hit home. I tossed the Newsletter onto the table with a brooding 'mmmmmm', and shovelled up another heap of cereal, only to stop half way from the bowl. The Newsletter collided with the moth-trap light, and out of the corner of my eye I noticed a spider wobbling from its thread attached alongside the rain guard. It was an adult female *Ero aphana*, the first I had ever seen! At this ungodly hour my brain was only partly engaged, so the complexity of this extraordinary coincidence took a while to hit home.

Perhaps the conclusion to draw from this bizarre event, is that the probabilities come down if you assume that *Ero aphana* is far more widespread than current records suggest. Garden sheds would appear to be a good place to start!

Reference

Harvey, P. & Hopkin, S. (2003) New records of *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer, 1802). S.R.S. News No. 46. **In** *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **97**: 14.

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Recent Records of *Philaeus chrysops* (Poda, 1761) (Beautiful Jumper) in Britain

by M. E. A. Shardlow

Although included in several recent books on British and European spiders, and listed as being absent from the British Isles, there are in fact a small number of British records of the large and stunningly attractive jumping spider, *Philaeus chrysops* (Poda, 1761). All records have been from in and around London, and, while there is no evidence of it having established a breeding population, it is a potential colonist.

Philaeus chrysops is an epilithobiont, a species associated with open, stony and rocky habitats, occurring up to an altitude of at least 380 m (Růžička, 2000). The spider has only been widely recorded in the Mediterranean region, although there are records from eastern Europe and through Asia to Japan. The spider occurs through much of France, but is rare outside the south. It is rare in Poland and threatened with extinction and red-listed in Germany.

David Nellist was sent a male *P. chrysops* which had been collected on 18th June 1992 in the front garden of a house on the Cassiobury Estate, about 2 km west of Watford town centre (TQ095975). It appears that the specimen had been spotted just at the edge of the drive in front of the house, and that the car which occupied the drive had recently returned from the south of France. It was concluded that the specimen had hitched a lift and then dropped off onto the drive.

In June 2001 Peter Harvey was sent a male *P. chrysops* from a garden in Muswell Hill, North London (TQ290903). The family living in the attached house had stored tiles in the garden originating from Portugal and it was concluded that the spider had been imported with the tiles.

On 3rd August 2003 another male specimen was collected in a garden by Stefan Farrelly in Herne Hill, London (TQ319744) and sent to the author. The origin of this specimen is unknown.

While a number of southern European jumping spiders are recorded from groceries and other plants, there are apparently no such records for *P. chrysops*. This is perhaps a result of the species' ecology and its positioning of retreats on solid, inanimate surfaces, usually stones or rocks in the wild, rather than amongst vegetation. The preponderance of male records perhaps results from the

Figure 1. *Philaeus chrysops* - photo © Peter Harvey

spectacular red coloration of the male's abdomen.

While perhaps an unlikely colonist, it does occur at the same latitudes as Southern England in Eastern Europe (Prószyński, 1976), and in Lithuania at 54°23'N, 25°09'E, at the same latitude as Northern England (Rëlys, 2000). Considering how many species in other taxa are now spreading North and expanding their range as a result of climate change, we should not be too surprised should it succeed in persisting through the English winter.

I am grateful to Peter Harvey and David Nellist for permission to publish their records of *Philaeus* and assistance with this article, and to Stefan Farrelly and Louise Dean of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency who found the most recent specimen and gave permission to publish the record.

Figure 2. *Philaeus chrysops* - photo © Peter Harvey.

References

Prószyński, J. (1976) Studium systematyczno-zoogeograficzne nad rodzina Salticidae (Aranei) Regionów Palearktycznego i Nearktycznego. *Rozpr. W. S. P. Siedlce*, **6**: map 112.

Rëlys, V. (2000) Contribution to the knowledge of the spider (Araneae, Arachnida) fauna of Lithuania. *Acta zool. lituan*. **10**(2): 47–53.

Růžička, V. (2000) Spiders in rocky habitats in Central Bohemia. *J. Arachnol*. **28**: 217–222.

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Theridion hemerobium Simon, 1914: New to Shropshire

by Nick Law

It was with some interest that I read the article by Jon Daws on *Theridion hemerobium* Simon, 1914 (S.R.S. News No. 47), having encountered this species last year in Shropshire. During some M.Sc. course field work, (Biological Recording: Collection and Management; Birmingham University), I undertook a brief sampling survey of Yell Wood which forms part of Cole Mere S.S.S.I. Beating mature *Rhododendron* overhanging the north shore of the mere, I collected a single mature female, along with mature female *T. pictum*, *T. varians* and *Kaestneria dorsalis*. This proved to be a first county record for Shropshire (13/07/2003, SJ43023354).

Previous records show a strong association with water: lakes, rivers and the canal system. At Cole Mere the Llangollen Canal borders the north side of the mere with an overflow ditch connecting the two water bodies thereby effectively linking the Shropshire record to the canal system.

From the *Provisional Atlas* it would seem that most of the records for this species have, like the Leicestershire and Wanlip ones Jon has detailed, been made either on man-made structures or from marginal emergent vegetation. As the Cole Mere specimen was beaten from a bush we should perhaps be careful not to restrict searches specifically to man-made features and make sure other natural habitats are examined carefully as well. However, it would be interesting to return to Cole Mere and search more widely to see if *T. hemerobium* is also present on man-made structures.

Jon's comment that he believes the species is overlooked and likely to be commonplace is also of interest. Cole Mere is the only English site for *Nuphar pumila* (Least Water-lily), and past and recent survey work has shown that the population, along with the wider aquatic macrophyte fauna of the mere, is in decline. *Nuphar pumila* is now only to be found at one point on the north shore of the mere, very close to where *T. hemerobium* was collected. In an attempt to overcome this problem there is an ongoing programme to remove overhanging vegetation to reduce shading on the water and the dense stand of *Rhododendron* on the north shore was due to be removed sometime early in 2004. The fact that *Nuphar pumila* is rare in England is undisputed (it holds Nationally Scarce status), but is *T. hemerobium* equally rare or simply under-recorded? At Cole Mere there is therefore a possible conflict between the conservation management for these two species. This dilemma serves to highlight the differences that exist in our knowledge of invertebrate populations and distributions compared to our more popularly and extensively recorded flora.

I would like to thank Stan Dobson and Peter Harvey for confirming my identification and commenting on the distribution of this species, and Peter Merrett for confirming the New County Record.

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