

Spider Recording Scheme News

July 2007, No. 58

Editor: Peter Harvey; srs@britishspiders.org.uk

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 59 will be published in November 2007. Please send contributions by the end of September at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

Pierrepont Farm, Tilford. Surrey

Pierrepont Farm was donated to the Countryside Restoration Trust in 2006. The Trust, which has charitable status, was formed in 1993 as a reaction to the over-intensification and "chemicalisation" of farming. Its primary objective is to demonstrate that modern day farming can be done successfully without harm to the environment, and that proper farm management can actually be beneficial to the countryside and its flora and fauna.

Pierrepont Farm is a 206 acre dairy farm. 148 acres is pastureland for the Jersey herd. The remaining comprises 48 acres of woodland (mostly deciduous, and thought to be ancient) and 23 acres of watermeadow. The River Wey, a chalk stream, runs through the farm.

The Trust has a local Volunteers' Group who will undertake conservation and related work. During the initial stage, a sub-group, the Monitoring Group, is recording the existing state of the flora and fauna so that, hopefully, we have a clearer picture of the current state of the farm's ecological condition. This, we believe, is critical before undertaking any conservation work. Clearly, we do not want to undertake a particular conservation initiative to assist one specific species or group of species only to find that it has an unforeseen detrimental effect on other species.

With the above in mind, if any British Arachnological Society member would be prepared to visit the farm and provide any input with regard to the spiders currently present (including whether any are rare) and what they should be doing to encourage the spider fauna, please contact Ross Williams, Chairman, Pierrepont Farm Volunteer Group, The Old Vicarage, Tilford, Surrey GU10 2DA Tel: 01252 790931 Email: ross.williams@clydeco.com

Prey capture by *Pholcus phalangioides*

by Jeremy Early

The property is a four-bedroomed in Reigate, Surrey and I have seen *Pholcus phalangioides* in most of the rooms as well as up the stairs and in the boiler/washing machine section. The image was taken in the front room, where a fair-sized (but unfortunately unidentified) spider ran across the carpet at 10.30pm and fell foul of the *P. phalangioides* web which, unlike the vast majority that I've noticed, was virtually at ground level, across the lintel and skirting board.

The prey attempted to escape but the resident, staying out of reach, used principally the front two legs to pull the strands of the web swiftly but carefully and make a parcel. It looked for all the world as if she was playing the organ. The process took four minutes, whereupon she hauled the prey out of sight behind a small box used in connection with the telephone.



Pholcus with spider prey
photograph © Jeremy Early

For the record, the only prey I have previously seen *P. phalangioides* catching were crane flies, which were not wrapped anything like so 'remotely'.

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Norfolk Spider Group and new Area Organiser

by Peter Nicholson

I am very grateful to be asked by Deborah Procter retiring Area Organiser to take on the role of SRS Area Organiser/ County Recorder for Norfolk and will endeavour to continue raising the profile of spiders in Norfolk and generating records for the SRS. I will be glad of all the support of those in the group and to thank Peter Harvey and Tony Irwin Curator of Natural History at the Castle Museum for their encouragement

The Norfolk Spider Group is active but thin on the ground, which is not to be unexpected. It is supported by a group of 12 people who are not necessarily in Norfolk but record occasionally here and others who are prepared to come to surveys. I am building links with the Norfolk and

Norwich Naturalist Society (N&NNS) through their Scientific Committee. Pip Collyer a member of the group and keen recorder and N&NNS Council Member and myself support projects such as the Little Ouse Headwaters Project, Catfield Hall Fen survey, where we undertake spider recording for interested landowners / organisations and provide reports on our finds.

Last year I also represented spiders at the N&NNS stand at the Norfolk Show, Wild About Norfolk and a couple of NWT Reserve Open days, finishing the year with a Beginners Spider Day at Wheatfen.

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Second site for *Steatoda albomaculata* in Wales

by Simon Warmingham

On April 4th 2007 I decided to visit a part of Merthyr Mawr N.N.R. which I hadn't worked before; namely an area of dune on the visible remnant limestone outcrop on the north-east side of the site (SS8677). Soon after getting down on hands and knees to grub about, I came across a smallish, plump spider on the underside of a low lying web. The white chevron marks on a predominately dark abdomen made this instantly recognisable as a subadult female *Steatoda albomaculata*.

Has the species been overlooked or blown over with a frequent westerly from the other site where the species is found in Wales – Kenfig N.N.R.? Could it be present at other south Wales dune systems?

9 Maerdy Park, Pencoed, Glamorgan CF35 5HF

Cicurina cicur New to Lincolnshire

by Annette Binding

In February 2006 I was given a number of spiders collected in Lincolnshire by Colin Smith, Lincolnshire county moth recorder.

One of the specimens got overlooked until recently when I discovered it whilst tidying my desk. I identified it as a female *Cicurina cicur*, a species I had not come across before. Colin had collected the spider at Wickenby Wood TF033827 on the 16th March 2005. A search of the Lincolnshire records showed that the species had never been recorded in Lincolnshire before.

Wickenby Wood SSSI is part of the Lincolnshire Limewoods ancient woodlands, which are mentioned in the Domesday Book and like most of the Limewoods it is on clay. Parts of the wood are very wet and like many of the other Limewoods, Wickenby Wood is somewhat under recorded for spiders.

6 Willow Court, Washingborough, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN4 1AS

Nesticus cellulanus, is this as scarce as records show?

by Peter Nicholson

I was recently asked to visit a site near to Hoveton by Stewart Wright a keen naturalist and member of Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society. He had come across a spider which had attracted his attention in one of the glass/green houses he was responsible for. *Nesticus cellulanus* is a species which requires damp conditions and prefers dark and shady places. It is generally associated with caves, mines, cellars, drains and in this particular case the underside of a timber trapdoor covering a reservoir for water in the floor of the green house.

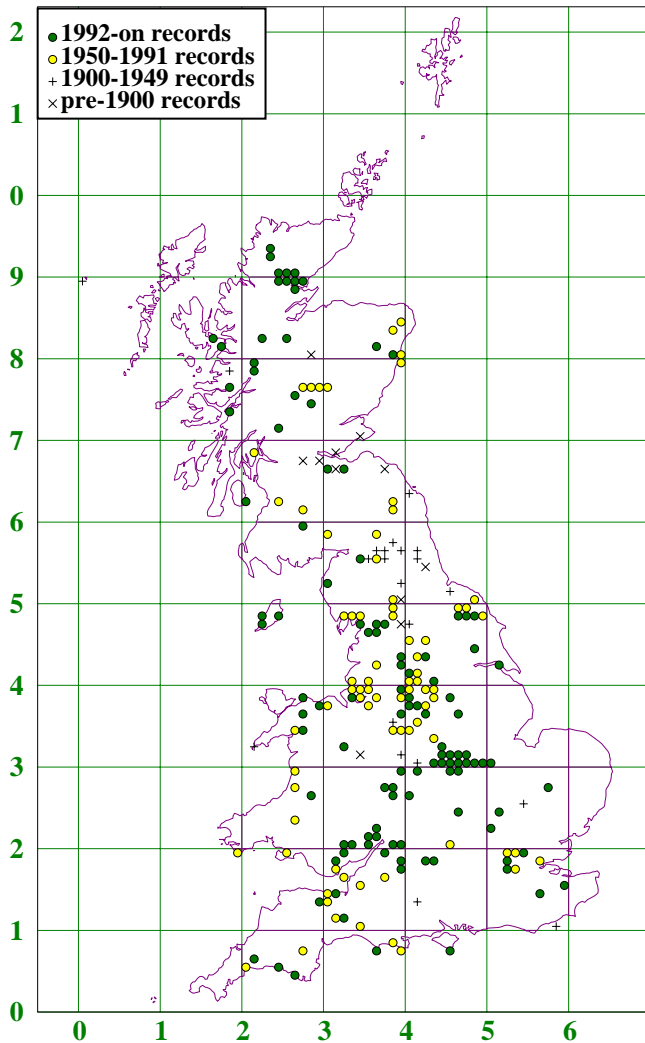
On being shown the species, which were not immediately obvious, the colouration varied from being a pale brown colour to an off white to pale yellow with little or no annulations to the legs. This is not the colour or pattern expected when referring to Roberts. Examination of various specimens showed that the females found were mature but the males not, this being early February. It should be noted that mature spiders are generally found in most seasons. As for the variation in colour Bristowe states that those that live in darkness are paler than others collected in place where there is light and this seems to be born out here.



Nesticus cellulanus
photograph © Stewart Wright

Having identified the species I was concerned at the variation in pattern and had the species confirmed by Peter Harvey. I was also surprised to find how under recorded this species is. In Norfolk there are no records on the British Arachnological Society database or other County records which I have to hand. There appears to be only one 10km in Suffolk and two in Essex; in fact according to the NBN Gateway there is a lack of records in the South East in total. Is this a true reflection of reality?

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Records of *Nesticus cellulanus* submitted to the Spider Recording Scheme to the end of 2005.

A spider's plunder

by O. Crundall

On the 24th May I sauntered down to the River Thames in Kingston, Surrey. It was a warm sunny day and occasionally an enormous carp, resembling a torpedo, would loom up in the water at the confluence with the River Hogsmill. I looked down from the low wooden bridge onto the waterside sedges and indulged my senses on the titillatingly grotesque morphology of gravid *Tetragnatha extensa* specimens basking languidly on their hubs. My eyes moved to the railing I was clutching, and there I saw a wandering adult male *T. extensa* having some difficulty clawing his way towards the hub of an adult female *Larinioides sclopetarius*'s web.

I feared for his safety, expecting the unseen proprietor to surge forth at any second, but he went completely unmolested as he slowly gathered up Chironomid flies caught in the web. Having almost reached the hub, he performed an about-turn and started to leave the web. Near the periphery he inadvertently startled an *Araneus* sp. spiderling that had cheekily incorporated its orb into the stocky outer support threads of the

Larinioides web. The *Tetragnatha*, having reached the safety of a wooden pole, stopped to consume his plunder.

I regard this incident as being a case of a male spider stealing prey to give him sustenance during his travels. Are there any other non-*Argyrodes* species in which the adult males steal the prey of other spiders?

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Catfield Hall Estate, Norfolk – spider recording 2006

by Peter Nicholson¹ and Pip Collyer²

Summary

In summary the years spider recording was successful with the total number of species recorded during the year 102 species in 17 different families [see Appendix 1]. It is very unlikely that this number is anywhere near the total range of species to be found at this site, but it does give a very good feel that the present management practices have enabled a wide diversity of spider species to be successful in this range of habitats. Further recording at varying times throughout the year would be beneficial for evaluating the possible number of species at this site.

The methodology of recording was speculative and left purely to the knowledge and field craft of the two recorders. This enabled flexibility and the ability to sample different habitats to see what each had to offer. Each habitat required a different approach to sampling and so the variability of methodology meant it was not possible to analyse the species data to give any clear guide lines on site management practices.

Methods and results

Recording was confined to four main areas on one day each month from March to September inclusive. This total is therefore likely to represent a significant under-recording, especially as the search was concentrated on the wetter areas of the Estate where the more unusual spiders were likely to be found. Also some species of Linyphiidae are more readily found in the autumn and winter months and no pitfall trapping, which might be expected to record some different species to those found by hand collecting and vacuum sampling, was employed.

There were four main sites recorded within the Estate, their titles and notes indicating the nature and composition of the selected areas:-

SRA 1 North Marsh TG375214

Fen where rushes provide stalks and heads for secure retreats and web building for *Larinioides cornutus*. Mid height vegetation such as Willow herb gives similar structure for *Araneus marmoreus* and *A. quadratus*. Lower vegetation gives ideal micro habitats' for a variety of spiders and prey invertebrates. The ground layers provide ideal substrate for ground hunting Lycosids and Linyphiids.

SRA 2 North Marsh Carr TG 372214

The area varies from damp to wet under foot and

composed mainly of Silver Birch with an under story of brambles. There is an accumulation of leaf litter and dead wood with moderate low vegetation.

SRA 3 Woodland strip TG376212

Essentially a strip of mixed woodland with an under story of holly bushes and a tall mixed hedge to one side. Either side is pasture. The shrub / low canopy structure is good for a number small web builders and the leaf litter for many small ground hunting spiders including the Linyphiidae.

SRA 4 Boat-house area TG 374211

This is a mown marsh and orchid area at the right season, but from our point of view it was essentially a wet moss / short grass area with good potential for the small specialised spiders associated with this type of area.

In addition, some occasional recording was made around Rose Marsh [TG 376207], the enclosure just north of the woodland strip [TG376213] and around the pond to the north of the access drive, adjacent to the cottages [TG378213]

Around half of the spiders found were in the family Linyphiidae which is to be expected as this family represents approximately half of the British spider fauna. Of the 36 species of Lycosidae on the British list, 9 were recorded at Catfield. Only one spider, *Kaestneria dorsalis* [family Linyphiidae] was recorded at all four sites, and only one, *Zora spinimana* [family Zoridae] at three of the sites. Whilst *Zora spinimana* is common and found in a range of habitats from heath land to raised bog, *Kaestneria dorsalis* is less common, being somewhat local in distribution and not particularly associated with damp habitats.

The following spiders are particularly noteworthy as being uncommon or rare:-

Centromerus semiater [Linyphiidae] Nationally Vulnerable [RDB 2] Boat-house area.

Hypomma fulvum [Linyphiidae] Nationally Scarce [Notable A] North Marsh.

Sitticus caricis [Salticidae] Nationally Scarce [Notable B] Boat-house area.

Philodromus albidus [Thomisidae] Nationally Scarce [Notable B] North Marsh Carr and Woodland strip

Erigonella ignobilis [Linyphiidae] Very local distribution. Boat-house area.

Pirata tenuitarsis [Lycosidae] Local distribution. Boat-house area.

Trochosa spinipalpis [Lycosidae] Rare or local. North Marsh Carr.

Tetragnatha nigrita [Tetragnathidae] Generally uncommon and confined to southern counties. Boat-house area.

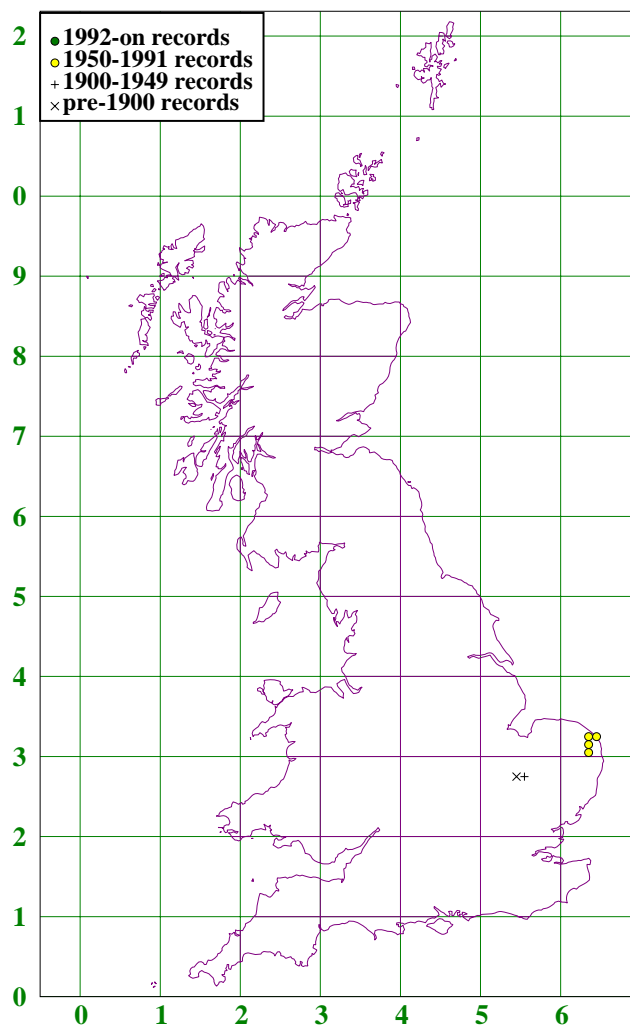
As can be seen from the distribution map below, *Centromerus semiater* is confined to the extreme eastern part of the country with only one other record since 1980 [Catfield Fen – 1989]. It is a species of wet habitats as is

Hypomma fulvum which is most common in reed beds in eastern England. *Sitticus caricis*, whilst more widely scattered, is a spider of bogs, marshes and fens.

Comments

The principal threats to all these spiders is drainage of land and in particular, the abandonment of traditional management of sedge beds by summer mowing leading to encroachment of scrub and Carr woodland.

Little recording has been carried out on the southern part of the Estate and whilst the habitats are likely to be very similar to those chosen for study, some further recording in these areas would be worthwhile.



Records of *Centromerus semiater* submitted to the Spider Recording Scheme to the end of 2005.

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