

Spider Recording Scheme News

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SRS website: <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk>

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 72 will be published in March 2012. Please send contributions by the end of January at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk or grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk. The newsletter depends on your contributions!

Editorial

Once again thank you to the contributors who have provided articles for this issue. Please help future issues by providing articles, short or longer, on interesting discoveries and observations.

We now have 878,265 SRS records in total to date in MapMate. About 378,413 have at least some site-based habitat information, which provides valuable information to help us to establish a profile of the ecological characteristics of each British spider species. All these data are uploaded and summarised on the SRS website. The ORS data are also uploaded to the website.

As readers will know the key aim of the SRS website is to provide a collaborative resource on distribution and autecological information on British spiders. This means it needs input from as many registered users as possible. The facility set up last autumn in response to a BBC Autumnwatch enquiry to enable the public to submit records for a number of 'easily recognisable' spiders has resulted in a number of submitted records, principally for *Araneus diadematus*, *Argiope bruennichi* and *Pholcus phalangoides*. Although only few in number, these have helped fill some gaps and the SRS contact link has resulted in more records, some of much greater interest, either with photographs or the actual spiders being sent to me for identification.

Any logged-on user can submit a site location entry for a site of interest for spiders or other wildlife interest. Logged-on members can generate or access a site species list for an entry and this should be of interest to those members who regularly record at or have a special interest in a particular site - but of course there needs to be a site entry for this to function!

Coverage and diversity maps at national and regional scale are now available in a much faster form by using summary information held in a database table rather than it being created each time from the main Records table. Any logged-on member can refresh a map if required, repopulating the summary database table with the latest information for that map.

The regional maps provide coverage, diversity in terms of numbers of taxa, numbers of records, numbers of UKBAP species and numbers of species with nature conservation status (existing and by the new status review) at 10km, 2km, 1km options. Clicking on any of the dots on these maps will provide a logged-on member with a list of the relevant species behind the dot and last year recorded etc. All records behind dots on regional distribution maps are also shown to members if dots are clicked. Details of each record can be viewed and feedback submitted if an error is seen. No feedback has yet been submitted, which either means no errors have been found, or more likely no one has actually used the

facility and looked! Please do so, since this will help us to iron out errors in the dataset.

Difficult species guidance and reports for the UKBAP spiders *Clubiona rosserae* and *Midia midas* are available through links on the relevant species summary pages and we hope to add to these in the future.

In addition any registered member can provide tips on identification and useful guidance, illustrative images etc on the website, automatically linked to the relevant species. Collaborative pages are open to all registered logged-on users to contribute to and Species Notes can be added either at a national or regional/county level. Please help to improve the scope of these resources by helping to input to them.

Another location for *Neoscona adianta* (Walckenaer, 1802) (Araneidae) in North Yorkshire?

by Geoff Oxford

Neoscona adianta is a beautiful spider readily identified in the field by its characteristic colours and markings and by its orb web, which usually contains a silk platform at the hub. The species has its stronghold in south-eastern England but with a rim of populations stretching around the coasts of Devon and Cornwall and west Wales (SRS website, 2011). Interestingly, this is almost exactly the same distribution as shown by the theridiid *Enoplognatha latimana* Hippa & Oksala, 1982, so they may be tracking similar environments.

Neoscona adianta has only one known location in North Yorkshire – its northern limit in Britain – and that is on Strensall Common near York (SE6561). Here the late Clifford Smith collected material between May 1965 and June 1978. In South Yorkshire the species has been found on both Thorne Moor (SE7214, SE7315, SE7515; between July 1972 and June 1994) and Hatfield Moor (SE7006; July 2000) and is also recorded from Conesby Mine, Scunthorpe (SE9014; May 1994) in north Lincolnshire.

On 25 July 2011, a mature female *Neoscona adianta* was discovered in her web on a plant of *Verbena rigida* at Vertigo garden centre on the outskirts of York (SE647567). This site is due south and approximately 5 km, as the crow flies, from the previous Strensall Common location. The habitat between the two comprises heathland (the northern 3 km) and arable fields. Given the relatively short distance, in ballooning terms,

from Strensall Common (minimum 2 km) to the garden centre, this individual could have originated locally. On the other hand, this was a garden centre and one has to be wary of records from such places given the import of



Figure 1. *Neoscona adianta* © Geoff Oxford

horticultural goods from elsewhere.

A thorough search of the Vertigro site on 27 July 2011 revealed no more specimens of *Neoscona* but, to my amazement, a mature female *Synema globosum* (Fabricius, 1775) (Thomisidae) (see Figure 2) was spotted on a *Polygonum* flower. *Synema globosum* is on the SRS list but with only three records in south-east England (SRS website, 2011). It is common across Europe, as is *Neoscona adianta* (Helsdingen, 2011). The garden centre regularly brings in plants from Italy, France, Spain and Holland, countries where both species occur, so the *Synema* is most likely to have been a recent import. The question remains, was the *Neoscona* specimen home grown or another import?



Figure 2. *Synema globosum* © Geoff Oxford

Spurred on by the *Neoscona* record, I also examined on 27 July the area of Strensall Common sampled by Clifford Smith and confirmed the species' continued presence there. In about 20 minutes of sweep-netting I took four mature females and one mature male.

References

- Helsdingen, P.J. van (2011) Araneae. In: *Fauna Europaea Database* (Version 2010.1). <http://www.european-arachnology.org>
 SRS website (2011) <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Welcome>

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Xysticus luctuosus (Blackwall) (Thomisidae) rediscovered in Surrey

by Jonty Denton

On 26.7.2011, I swept a large, very dark *Xysticus* from herbage at the edge of deciduous woodland on the chalk, at Silent Pool, Surrey (TQ0648). This proved to be *X. luctuosus*, the first record in Surrey since W. Bristowe took it near Horsley in 1922 (Peter Harvey pers. comm.). The habitat was in keeping with previous, albeit limited autecological information. Amazingly the same sweep captured a female *Nigma walckenaeri*, a spider which appears to be spreading into the centre and south of the county from the London suburbs (where it can be very abundant in gardens and parks).

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Identification of *Porrhomma* species – a correction

by A. Russell-Smith

It has been pointed out to me by Mike Davidson that there is an important error in my account of the identification of *Porrhomma* species that appeared in the SRS Newsletter No. 114 (March 2009). Figure 6, purporting to be the epigyne of *Porrhomma pygmaeum*, is in fact that of *Porrhomma convexum*, illustrated in Figure 9. The correct illustration of the epigyne of *P. pygmaeum*, arguably the commonest species of the genus in Britain, is shown below.

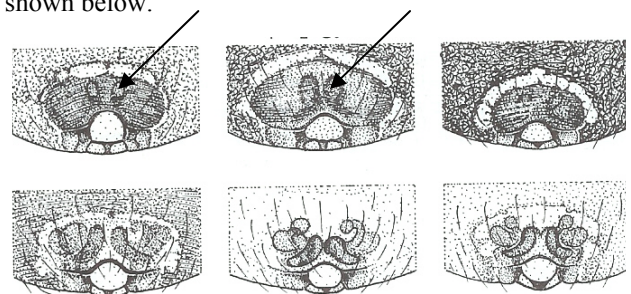


Figure 6. *Porrhomma pygmaeum*. Top row, epigynes in ventral view. Arrows indicate spermathecae as seen through the cuticle, often less clearly visible than this.



Cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

The correct figure has also now been inserted in the account on the website. I apologise to readers for this error and thank Mike Davidson for bringing it to my attention.

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An Opiliones Recording Scheme update. A call to armature and legs

by Peter Nicholson

I am writing this note towards the end of September 2011, a period when harvestmen live up to their name and I am pleased to report that there is an increasing number of reports coming from outside BAS membership in the form of reserve wardens. I would dearly like to receive any notes on any interesting finds from our membership for inclusion in the newsletter.

I can report that MapMate has issued the revised update which adds new species *Leiobunum tisciae* and *Platybunus pinetorum* and changes *Rilaena triangularis* to *Platybunus triangularis* and adds a synonym *Rilaena triangularis* for this.

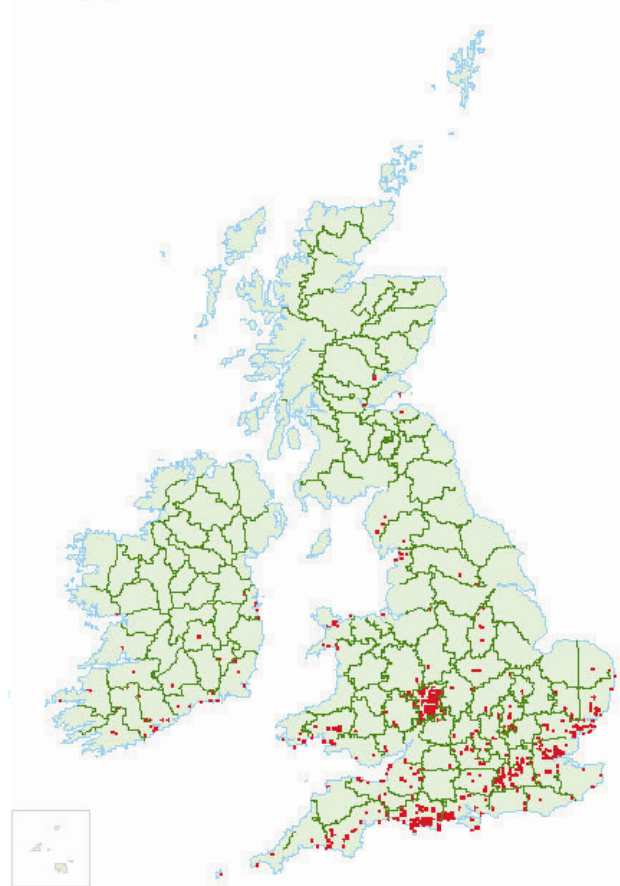
I can also report that I will have moved house to the address at the bottom of this update.

One of the species raising interest is *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, it being a readily identifiable species due to its habit of holding its very long legs out straight and together at right angles to its body when at rest. The other fairly obvious character can be seen in the forked (bifurcated) pedipalps. This is useful both in identification but also to separate the sexes. If you look at the pedipalps you will see that the apophysis of the patella on the female is almost as thick and long as the tibia, whereas the male's are thinner and shorter.

The name of the species comes from the forked appearance (bifurcated) of the pedipalps. The construction from Greek being 'dicranos' meaning two-headed, 'palpus' being palp and 'ramosus' being branch in Latin referring to the apophyses of the pedipalps or possibly the legs.

The first British record (Sankey & Storey, 1969) when it was known as *Dicranopalpus caudatus* was by E. Rix at Bournemouth in 1957. The species distribution now extends from the south coast, where it is well recorded, up as far as Dundee (see Mike Davidson's note in this newsletter). The distribution that we have now is very much recorder-biased, hence the density of records towards the south of Britain. Examination of the habitat data from the SRS/ORS website suggests strongly that parks and gardens are a significant choice of habitat with deciduous woodland being next. Its preference in these habitats is strongly for the shrub/ low canopy with beating

Dicranopalpus ramosus



being the most successful means of finding this species. It is stated by Paul Hillyard (*Harvestmen*, p.138) that it is mostly synanthropic in its choice of habitat. This is certainly borne out by the present distribution but I feel that records are very much recorder-biased. It can be seen that many counties have few or no records so please can everybody help to fill the gaps. There is still time when you read this to find this species as it is around until December.

References

- Hillyard, P. 2005. *Synopses of the British Fauna* (New Series) No.4. (3rd Edition). Harvestmen.
 Sankey, J.H.P. & Storey, M.W. 1969 *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Dressco: first record in Britain and France. *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* **105**, 106-107.
 SRS/ORS Scheme website : <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk>

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Harvestmen identification and ecology, 30 Sept - 03 Oct 2011

by Alan Salkild - Opilionologist Nymph

As a newcomer to and working my way through Paul Hillyard's key, I have to admit that my progress had been slow and I was keen to find an opportunity to gain some expert guidance, so I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw that Mike Davidson was running a weekend course at the Kindrogan FSC in September 2011.

We started out with an evening lecture introducing the British harvestmen and an overview of what Mike had in store for us. I must say I was slightly dubious when he prophesied that we would all have successfully identified 60% of the UK species by the end of the weekend!!

The following morning we were all keen to get out and start collecting despite the heavy rainfall and after a hearty FSC breakfast we got ourselves kitted up and set off into the wilder parts of the Kindrogan grounds. Unfortunately our 8-legged friends did not share our enthusiasm for the soggy conditions and we returned to the lab with only a few specimens each. However, this was ample to get us started and we were now able to get to grips with the opilione morphology and everyone had identified at least two species by the time we stopped for lunch. Continuous rainfall prevented any more collecting that day but Mike had a comprehensive collection of specimens and there was no risk of running out of things to identify. Mike was keen to encourage us to master some of the more delicate procedures including extracting the opilione genitalia and other key diagnostic features. The participants enthusiastically continued to key out specimens until the evening session when we tore ourselves away from the microscopes for Mike's second presentation on species ID which included some useful information on some of the common pitfalls.

One of the most useful aspects of the course was Mike's box of 'Mystery Harvestmen'! This consisted of 10 species in numbered containers which we had to identify. This was a great way to put our new skills to the test and everybody got at least 9/10.

As we continued to identify new specimens during Sunday morning, Mike asked each member of the group if there were any particular species or features that they wanted to look at. Throughout the afternoon, Mike called us over to examine one of the species from our wish-lists as well as important features for identification. We also benefited from additional information which was not in the key. I also took the opportunity to feed cake crumbs to my captive *Mitopus morio* which were enthusiastically received...that's not in the key either!

Overall the course was an excellent launch pad for my interest in harvestman recording and thanks to Mike's expert guidance and infectious enthusiasm I have come away feeling confident about my approach to collecting and identification. With only 27 UK species (currently) this is a group where there is an opportunity to quickly become competent enough to produce reliable records but still with enough rarities and new arrivals to keep more experienced recorders on their toes! I look forward to contributing my records and filling in some of the gaps in the north-east section of the map!



Figure 1. Harvestman under microscope at Kindrogan weekend identification course 2011



Figure 2. Harvestman workshop, Perth 2010
© Mike Davidson

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