Spider Recording Scheme News Summer 2013, No. 76

Editor: Peter Harvey; srs@britishspiders.org.uk **SRS website:** http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 77 will be published in Autumn 2013. Please send contributions by the end of September 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

As always, 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 947,447 SRS records in total to date in MapMate, 400,924 of which have SRS Phase 2 site-related information on broad habitat and other site-related data. All these data are uploaded and summarised on the SRS website.

We have to date had 85,631 visits, 52,454 unique visitors and 548,902 page views from 152 countries/ territories since the Spider and Harvestmen Recording Scheme website went live in July 2010.

After the discovery of an established population of *Zoropsis spinimana* in a home in London since at least 2008 and another record from near the Natural History Museum in 2011, there is now a page and form on the website to submit records for this spider, in the hope that we can monitor its spread in the London area and Britain. No new records to date have been submitted, but any that might be provided in the future will provide valuable information.

Dr. Ambros Hänggi, Curator of Biosciences at Naturhistorisches Museum Basel, is sure (pers. comm.) that *Zoropsis* soon will be quite frequent in London and surroundings. Dr Hänggi says that in Basel it took only about 10 to 15 years from the first record to be a "rather normal" inhabitant of the city and also in the surroundings - but only lowland where the climate is fine.

There have been a surprising number of reports and photographs recently of cave spiders. Where it has been possible to actually examine the spider, examples of *Meta bourneti* have outnumbered those turning out to be *M. menardi*. This raises the question of exactly how common each species really is, and the importance of not relying on assumptions or photographs when identifying these spiders.

Area Organiser changes

Apologies for an error in SRS News 75, Claire Geddes will act as mentor to the Highland Spider group, but it is Dave Holloway who has taken on the role as Regional Coordinator for the BAS in Highland.

It is a testament to how active arachnologists are becoming in Scotland that Katty Baird is taking over as Area Organiser for East Lothian (VC82) from Chris Cathrine and Grant Brown is taking over as AO for Fife (VC85) from Mike Davidson. Katty's contact details are:

4 Rhodes Holdings, North Berwick, East Lothian EH39 5PH; email: kattybaird@gmail.com

Grant's contact details are:

Room E27, Bute Building, University of St Andrews, Fife KY16 9TS; email grb31@st-adrews.ac.uk

Dave Blackledge is taking on the role of Area Organiser for VC's 69 and 70 from the late Jennifer Newton (see below). His contact details are:

6 Scotch Street, Port Carlisle, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 5BZ; email blackledge68@btinternet.com. If you use MapMate for recording and have Cumbria records to submit, Dave's MapMate cuk is 2kf.

Recording in Cumbria

by Dave Blackledge

Following the sad news of Jennifer Newton's death earlier this year, I have taken over as Area Organiser for vice counties 69 and 70, which is almost co-incidental with the modern county of Cumbria. Cumbria currently ranks 17th in the list of spider diversity of counties with 362 recorded species, though large areas of the county have no or very few records. There can be few places in the UK where such diversity and extremes of habitats exist. Coastal dunes, shingle, saltmarsh and sea cliffs give way inland to lowland valleys, peat bogs and lakes, with 3000 ft mountains of the Lake District and the blanket bogs of the high northern Pennines beyond.

The county is one of the main UK strongholds for *Semljicola caliginosus*, has an old record of *Hyptiotes paradoxus* and provides England's only records of *Pardosa trailli* along with another mountain specialist *Hilaira frigida*.

It is this diversity of landscapes which attracts visitors, particularly to the Lake District of course, and I'm sure many SRS recorders must visit the county from time to time. If you do record in Cumbria I would be grateful to receive any records (either ad hoc or by MapMate sync to CUK 2kf at the email address below). Even if you usually sync directly with Peter Harvey, it would be good to be able to keep abreast of any new records for the county.

6 Scotch Street, Port Carlisle, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 5BZ
E mail blackledge68@btinternet.com

Difficulty obtaining Industrial Methylated Spirits (Denatured Alcohol)

by Annette & Allan Binding

Every two to three years we buy around two litres of Industrial Methylated Spirits (now referred to as Industrial Denatured Alcohol or IDA) from the local chemist (Lincoln Co-op Society). When we tried to order our usual amount this year we were told that they could no longer obtain it. We contacted other large chemist chains (Boots & Lloyds Pharmacy) and received the same response. We telephoned Peter Harvey for advice and discovered that he was having the same problem obtaining Industrial Methylated Spirits. We decided to research suppliers on the internet and eventually came across ReAgent. The price of Industrial Methylated Spirits has increased quite considerably since we last ordered some. ReAgent were very helpful and would supply 2.5 litres on overnight delivery provided we e-mailed a photocopy of our Custom & Excise Licence for Industrial Methylated Spirits (Denatured Alcohol). Other companies we looked at on the internet were more costly or wanted to supply larger quantities. ReAgent charged £26.00 + delivery costs, a total cost £36.62. Payment can be made by credit card. It was delivered the next day at 7.50am. We received excellent service from ReAgent.

A few days later while in our local Co-op chemist shop we were offered a 600ml bottle of Industrial Methylated Spirits as they had found a new supplier. This bottle cost £9.09 which is roughly the same as the cost of obtaining it from ReAgent including delivery cost.

Contact details for ReAgent.
Tel. 0800 990 3258
http://www.reagent.co.uk

6 Willow Court, Washingborough, Lincoln, LN4 1AS

Platybunus pinetorum: a new harvestman (Opiliones) to Northern Ireland

by Stephen Foster

Northern Ireland records:
21.05.2012 Larne, County Antrim, D390400338, 1 female
03.06.2012 Larne, County Antrim, D390400338, 1 female
27.05.2013 Larne, County Antrim, D390400338, 4 female
08.06.2013 Larne, County Antrim, D390400338, 1 female
16.06.2013 Larne, County Antrim, D390400338, 2 female

A specimen is located in the Natural History Collection of the Ulster Museum. Photographs have been submitted to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR).

In May and June 2012 I encountered an unusual harvestman on my mother's house in Larne, County Antrim. It was striking in appearance with dark markings and impressive white spines on the pedipalps. The appearance of the oculariu m reminded me of *Platybunus triangularis* but it was very different from the pale brown specimens I normally encountered. I wondered if it was something new but after referring to *Harvestmen* by P.D. Hillyard and *A Guide to Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe* by Dick Jones I couldn't find any that matched. I had noticed that some spiders and harvestmen appear to darken in colour by late autumn and decided that they must be *Platybunus triangularis* and that their unusual coloration was due to lengthy survival.

In May 2013 I again found harvestmen with the same features and I realised there was something unusual going on so I explored their identification once again. I tried a different strategy this time and simply typed "Platybunus" into Google Images. A screen full of thumbnail images appeared and I picked one that looked most like my harvestman. It came up as *Platybunus pinetorum* and looked identical to the harvestmen I'd found at Larne. Further searching on the internet revealed that this species had been found in a number of western European countries and that there was a record for Scotland in 2012. Then I found the account by Paul Richards of the first British records in Sheffield in 2010. Identification criteria in his article and in other articles on the internet all helped to support my belief that I had now found *Platybunus pinetorum* in Northern Ireland. I submitted the record through the local online record submission system run by the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR). The record was passed on to Peter Harvey and Paul Richards and I was delighted to receive confirmation of the identification on 12 June 2013. In subsequent e-mail correspondence with Paul Richards I was amazed to learn that the only records in Britain are from Edinburgh and Sheffield, so I couldn't believe my luck!

Figure 1. *Platybunus pinetorum* at Larne on 27 May 2013. Photograph © Stephen Foster

Figure 2. *Platybunus pinetorum* at Larne on 16 June 2013. Photograph © Stephen Foster

My mother lives a housing estate and her garden is tidy with two small lawns and beds of evergreen shrubs and heathers. Most of the individuals have been found on the walls of the house but I did find one individual hiding in a store of roof tiles when I was looking for the spider *Amaurobius ferox*. Larne is a ferry terminal with daily sailings to Cairnryan in Scotland but I can only speculate as to whether this is why *Platybunus pinetorum* has appeared there.

Acknowledgements
Many thanks to Peter Harvey and Paul Richards for confirming the identification. Thanks also to Fiona McCrory and Damian McFerran at CEDaR for help with processing the record.

References

http://www.spiderling.de/arages/Fotogalerie/species_fg.php?name=Platybunus%20pinetorum
Spider Recording Scheme News November 2010 No.68 in Newsletter of British Arachnological Society 119
http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Platybunus+pinetorum
http://spinnen-forum.de/smf/index.php?topic=3780.5;wap2

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Notes on *Atypus affinis* in a Hampshire garden

by Peter Harvey, using notes provided by Dennis Trunecka

Dennis Trunecka is in the fortunate and special position of having a colony of *Atypus affinis* in very close proximity, giving him a special opportunity to observe them (Trunecka, 2013). He has provided me with notes on observations he has made on a number of occasions earlier this year, and these form the basis of this article, but Dennis writes that most of the time there is nothing to observe! He also notes that the European Society of Arachnology has made them European Spider of the Year 2013.

At 2.30 pm on 15 April 2013 there were 8 *Atypus affinis* spiderlings climbing the same house wall as last year, only this year 7 weeks later. They had clearly come from a web at the bottom of the wall. The weather was cloudy, although there had been a little sunshine earlier, and the temperature was 14 Celsius. Dennis saw two of the spiderlings get carried away by a breeze, but only apparently as far as a hedge a few metres away.

For over an hour early in the afternoon of 16 April Dennis was able to watch more *A. affinis* spiderlings dispersing. At the very top of the purse web on the part resting against the wall was a neat tiny hole where the spiderlings had been exiting it. This must have been made by the spiderlings, as it was just big enough for them to get through. Round the hole was fresh fine silk and fine lines going to the wall. Most spiderlings went straight up the wall to the sill unless ballooning off before they reached it. Some went horizontally along the wall, none climbing higher than 90 cm. Dennis watched one go horizontally when it reached the damp course and he followed it as it walked over three and a half metres along the wall and across the front doorstep until it vanished in bluebell leaves the other side.

There were 16 to 18 spiderlings that Dennis saw, but undoubtedly there were more which had already previously dispersed. What first brought his attention to the same wall was that there were two adult *Salticus scenicus* on it. Looking closely, he saw that there were about seven or eight *A. affinis* spiderlings on the wall and the two *S. scenicus* were in the process of sucking the juices out of a spiderling each! He stayed to see if anything else predated them in this vulnerable state. He did not see *S. scenicus* kill any others although he saw one in a *Gazania* plant where he had seen two *A. affinis* spiderlings walk into from where a leaf was touching the wall. Dennis did see an adult *S. scenicus* stalk and kill a 2mm spiderling of its own species on his front doorstep!

A *Heliophanus* spider walked along the soil to the purse web, stopped; walked up to the top of the web, stopped again; then carried on up the wall to about 30 cm up before dropping down. Then for a second time it walked up the web before returning along the soil. Was it hunting or just curious?

There were Black Garden Ants which did not come into contact with spiderlings. There was also a small Ground Beetle (*Notiophilus biguttatus*) which did not come into contact with them either and paid no attention to the purse web despite walking right by it. There was a *Pardosa* sp. which seemed to be interested only in warming itself on the dampcourse. On the underside of the wooden window sill in the groove for the drip bar there was a resting small (7mm or 8mm) *Steatoda nobilis* which ignored everything going on around it, probably waiting for nightfall.

On 17 April Dennis saw no activity at the site of the webs except that since the previous day there were three or four large purse webs which had appeared against the wall, or at least the visible top parts. There were already around four thin webs against the wall, which being so late in the season, he assumed were made by immature spiders. He had wrongly surmised that would be all for

this year, as there is a deep groove in fine soil caused by the run-off from the window sill. The new webs are immediately behind this little rut, so clearly it has not affected the adult spiders that have been underground. Although less than a day old, these top parts had the usual thin camouflage of soil so they are no more obvious than they usually are. The sudden temperature change that brought out so many insects the previous day must have spurred the building of the above-ground part of the webs.

The previous day Dennis had collected two of the spiderlings in an insect pot and put them on a stone partly under the Cherry Laurel hedge near the front of the garden. Immediately, they walked off the stone and into the sandy soil on the south side of it. He does not know what they do as soon as they disperse, but assumes they must very soon hide in the soil. Dennis surmises the small *Atypus* must feed on something tiny like springtails or other small detritivores. Eight days after putting two spiderlings on a piece of concrete, one tiny purse web (9 mm long; 1.5 mm diameter) had appeared on 25 April at the exact spot where one entered the soil. It had not been there the previous day, as he had looked. The piece of concrete is 90 mm x 90 mm on the surface; the back part is in the soil on a negligible slope; the face of the south side, where the web is attached vertically, is 22 mm high and sitting on soil.

On a count on 25 April there were 29 purse webs in the colony including 5 of spiderling size. A few days previously Dennis had noticed a fresh little heap of soil that had not been there the day before. He had thought at first that it was the nest of a mining bee as there are some of those in the garden. When gently prodded, he found the top of a purse web (15 mm long; 5 mm diameter) lying on the surface of the more compacted ground level. He thinks that when the web is first made from below, it pushes up fine soil grains that stick to it and camouflage it. Considering the size this web may be the result of a female coming out of hibernation in an already underground web. If so, it would have been a very long hibernation period.

Although some web tops merely lie on the surface of the soil, when attached to brick or stone there are many fine lines of silk at the top attaching it to the vertical surface. This is true of the one that Dennis is certain is a spiderling's web, although he needed a lens to see these lines.

On the morning of 16 May Dennis found a 10 mm shell of an adult Girdled Snail (*Hygromia cinctella*) stuck to one of the largest purse webs in the garden. When removed with some difficulty (as he did not want to damage the web), the shell contained only a little slimy, sticky substance at its entrance where it was attached to the web. Dennis cannot categorically state that the snail was eaten by the spider, yet in the eyes of a layman the evidence points to that.

On 22 May for the last three mornings there had been evidence of birds pulling out the larger purse webs. In total there were six or seven holes where webs had definitely been. There is evidence of pecking by birds, likely blackbirds, but similar to marks left by Green Woodpeckers on ants' nests. Some years ago Dennis saw a blackbird carrying off a purse web, although he thought it unlikely there would still be a spider in it. There have been some remains of webs left around and this morning there was a web of 50 cm long left on the soil. This is always done very early in the morning so he has not seen it occurring. He has seen no remains of the spiders around, so has concluded that they have either been carried away or they have somehow managed to remain below. If the latter was the case, he would not expect the bird(s) to keep returning. If the webs were to be used in nest building then they would not have left some around. Very intriguing!

Dennis says that the fact that the *Atypus affinis* are still there after all these years is a pleasure to him. He is sure the lack of disturbance has contributed, and he does not intend to disturb them now.

References

Trunecka, D. 2013. *Atypus affinis* in a Hampshire garden. S.R.S. News. No. 75. In *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **126**: 17-18.

32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex RM16 2YP

Figure 1. *Atypus affinis* male.
Photograph © P.R. Harvey

Figure 2. *Atypus affinis* purse web.
Photograph © P.R. Harvey

Identification of *Philodromus praedatus*

Like many other species *Philodromus praedatus* and *P. aureolus* show variability both in general appearance and in details of genitalia, especially in the degree of sclerotisation. However both species usually have a reasonably consistent appearance in life and once one is familiar with both species in the field, it is possible to provisionally determine them with some degree of certainty. However no species of *Philodromus* in the *aureolus* group should be recorded without the confirmation of voucher specimens examined by microscope, and in the case of females examination of the epigyne dorsally after dissection is usually necessary for absolute determination of *P. praedatus* (and *P. longipalpis*).

In ecological terms *Philodromus praedatus* is usually found on the lower branches of large oak trees in open situations, in woodland clearings, rides, hedgerows, etc whereas *P. aureolus* is more often found on scrub, young oaks, gorse etc.

Females, which present the greatest difficulty in identification

Females of *P. praedatus* have an overall lighter appearance than *P. aureolus* females. In particular the homogeneous dark brown lateral carapace bands found in *P. aureolus* are absent, except sometimes for small dark areas at the extreme rear of the carapace sides. Instead the lateral sides of the carapace are heavily mottled in white or light yellow giving the whole carapace a light coloration. **If you have a *Philodromus* with dark unmottled lateral carapace bands, then it is not *P. praedatus*.**

In *P. praedatus* the dark brown sagittate mark on the abdomen does not normally reach the second pair of impressed dots, and chevrons are usually absent or faint. However individuals do occur where the sagittate mark does extend to the second pair of dots and the chevrons are more clearly defined.

Unfortunately the colour markings may be much less clearly defined after the specimens have been stored in alcohol and they would probably be lost altogether after some years.

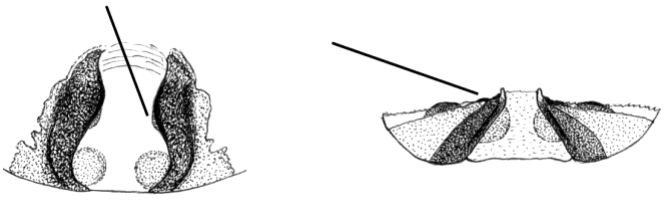
Like other females of the *aureolus* group the epigyne and vulva can show considerable variation in overall appearance and sclerotisation and this can make determination ventrally somewhat unreliable. Also characters can be obscured or appear misleading due to plug matter and debris. However if the epigyne is removed and examined from behind the genitalia are characteristic.

Philodromus praedatus

The legs of *P. praedatus* females are more clearly annulated than those of *P. aureolus* females. All 4 pairs of legs are pale except for dark brown annulations at the distal ends of all the femora and at both ends of tibiae I-III. The patellae may also be darkened distally or at both ends. There is darkening at the distal ends of the metatarsi and at both ends of the tarsi.

In *P. praedatus* the copulation ducts are curved outwards posteriorly to more or less enclose the spermathecae. If viewed laterally or posteriorly the spermathecae can be seen to be at more or less the same level as the ducts. Anteriorly the copulation ducts are broad and funnel shaped and when the epigyne is viewed ventrally the posterior part of the funnel can usually be seen projecting underneath into the epigynal channel. In all the specimens that I have examined there have been chitinous ridges crossing the anterior end of the vulva and these are usually visible when the epigyne is viewed ventrally.

female genitalia, dorsal view (left); lateral view (right)

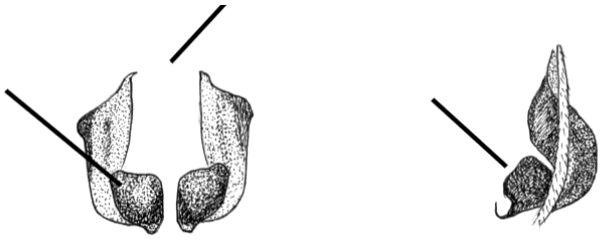


Epigyne, ventral view (left); genitalia, posterior view (right)

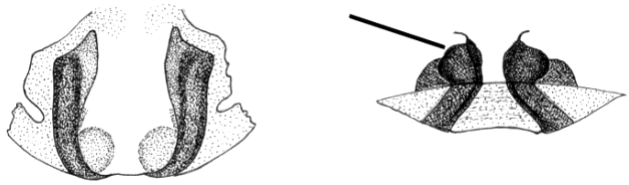
P. aureolus

In contrast the leg segments of *P. aureolus* females are brownish with a gradual darkening distally which does not amount to an annulated appearance. The difference is particularly noticeable when the femora of the first two pairs of legs are compared.

Viewed ventrally without dissection the epigyne of *P. aureolus* can be very variable and superficially resemble *P. praedatus*. In *P. aureolus* the copulation ducts are relatively straight and the spermathecae are positioned dorsally to the ducts. Although the copulation ducts broaden they do not appear funnel shaped. Each duct narrows to a forward projection which may curve inwards anteriorly. There are normally no chitinous ridges across the anterior end of the epigyne.



female genitalia, dorsal view (left); lateral view (right)



Epigyne, ventral view (left); genitalia, posterior view (right)

Figure 1. *Philodromus praedatus* female. Photograph © P.R. Harvey

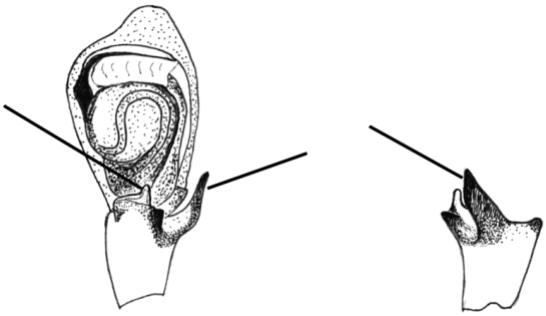
Figure 2. *Philodromus aureolus* male. Photograph © P.R. Harvey

Identification of *Philodromus praedatus*

Males

Philodromus praedatus

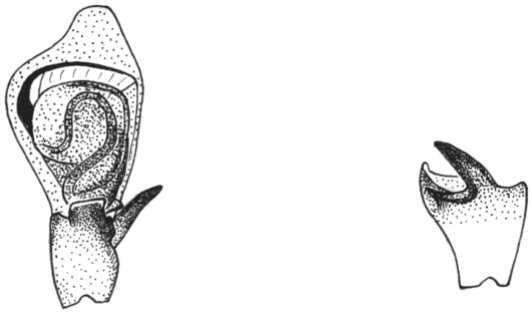
Identification of male *Philodromus praedatus* should be straightforward by examination of the ventral and retrolateral apophyses of the palp, which are very clearly distinct with careful examination at different angles.



Male palp, ventral view (left); palpal tibia, mesal view (right)

The carapace and abdomen of the male *P. praedatus* is covered with pale yellow or brown hairs, masking the iridescence to be seen on the almost black P. aureolus males.

P. aureolus



Male palp, ventral view (left); palpal tibia, mesal view (right)

The carapace and abdomen of the male *P. aureolus* is usually iridescent black. Some males of *P. aureolus* are rather larger than those of *P. praedatus* but this does not seem to be a constant feature.

Any very large *Philodromus* in the *aureolus* group should be examined carefully for *Philodromus longipalpis*, and identification confirmed by an arachnologist familiar with this species.

Figure 3. *Philodromus longipalpis* female. Photograph © P.R. Harvey

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