

Spider Recording Scheme News

Autumn 2016, No. 86

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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. 87 will be published in Spring 2017. Please send contributions by the end of February at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk or grayspeterharvey@gmail.com. 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.

Spider news

Two male *Philodromus rufus sens. str.* collected by Toddy Cooper at an Exeter Park & Ride in 2004 and Shillingford St George, a few miles to the south, in 2014 are confirmed and indicate that *Philodromus rufus sens. str.* may turn up elsewhere in warm situations in the south.

I can also now confirm the presence of *Philodromus buxi* in Middlesex, on the western side of the River Lea near the Olympic Park, as predicted in the article on this species in the Summer SRS News.

Tone Killick has also sent me a photograph of what is a probable *Philodromus buxi* taken by Michael Collins in Deptford. It will be very interesting to see how this species spreads in the years to come.

Spider records

After receipt of a large dataset from Liverpool Museum at the end of April, we now have 1,017,200 spider records in total in MapMate. About 420,492 have at least some site-based phase 2 habitat information, all uploaded and summarised on the SRS website. A backlog of data in very user-unfriendly format remains to be dealt with.

Submission of records through the website contact us page and forum posts

There has been the usual late summer/early autumn influx of contact us queries involving house spiders, garden spiders and 'false widow' spiders, including ones where members of the public think they have a brown widow or various other supposedly dangerous spiders. To date we have gained nearly 1000 usable records from these.

On the website forum, it is quite remarkable how often the highlighted statement in capital letters at the top of the page "If you want help with identification, please provide a full postcode or grid reference and date of the record so that it can be added to the recording scheme" is ignored. I no longer respond to posts wanting an identification if these details have not been provided, although of course, any other logged-on user can reply if they wish.

'Easily recognisable' species

To date 308 records have been submitted by members of the public. Once validated and approved, these are automatically mapped on the species pages. A summary of these and when they were first made available for submission is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of 'easily recognisable species'

Taxon	Records	From
<i>Argiope bruennichi</i>	85	13/10/2010
<i>Pholcus phalangioides</i>	62	14/10/2010
<i>Araneus diadematus</i>	47	14/10/2010
<i>Araneus quadratus</i>	26	13/10/2010
<i>Zoropsis spinimana</i>	24	22/12/2012
<i>Nuctenea umbratica</i>	18	03/07/2012
<i>Dolomedes</i> species	14	13/10/2010
<i>Dicranopalpus ramosus</i>	12	05/11/2015
<i>Pisaura mirabilis</i>	6	29/01/2016
<i>Salticus scenicus</i>	5	14/02/2016
<i>Segestria florentina</i>	3	14/02/2016
<i>Paidiscura pallens</i>	1	26/09/2015
<i>Uloborus plumipes</i>	0	26/09/2015

A user has to register to be able to submit a record, and they can then already automatically see and edit their own records by looking at "My Records" in their "My stuff" page. These records don't become visible on the maps until they have been accepted and validated, something which experience shows is important in ensuring identifications are correct and the mapped data have scientific value.

Following a suggestion that it might help build enthusiasm if non-BAS members who register and submit Scheme records for 'easily recognisable species' could see their own name against their records by clicking on the dots on the maps, I have now developed and put this in place. Now if someone submits records for the 'easily recognisable species', dots which include their records will be shown in a different colour (orange) on the national and regional maps (if they are logged-on). When they click on their own dots, the details will be given, but not if they click on other dots. Members will continue to get information on all dots, and this is intended to be a feature to encourage people to join the BAS!

Species pdf report generation

Since March and April 2015 the website has recorded file downloads, such as Species Report downloads, the Difficult Species guidance, SRS News issues, UKBAP Priority species resource reports and BAS leaflets. To date we have had 67,793 species report downloads, 4,967 Difficult Species downloads, 10,388 SRS News downloads, 1,735 UKBAP Taxon Resource downloads and 1,643 BAS Leaflet downloads.

Figures for the top 10 species report downloads are interesting, with *Steatoda nobilis*, *Meta menardi*, *Segestria florentina*, *Pisaura mirabilis* and *Misumena vatia* all in the top 10.

Area Organiser changes

Alastair Lavery takes over as Area Organiser for Fife VC85. Alastair's MapMate cuk is amr and contact details are Burach, Carnbo, KINROSS KY13 0NX, email: lavery@carnbo.freeserve.co.uk. Please send records for Fife to Alastair.

An update on *Nigma puella*

Tone Killick has given an update on the female *Nigma puella* he has in his garden in Gloucestershire. He has been checking her regularly and noticed that she was getting quite thin, so assumed her days were numbered. Then on Saturday 15th Oct he went out to the garden to photograph her and was surprised to see her with an *Erigone* sp. prey (Figs. 1 & 2), the first time he had seen mesh weavers with spider prey. She has now filled out a bit and hopefully will make it through to November.



Figure 1. *Nigma puella* female with *Erigone* prey.
Photograph © Tone Killick

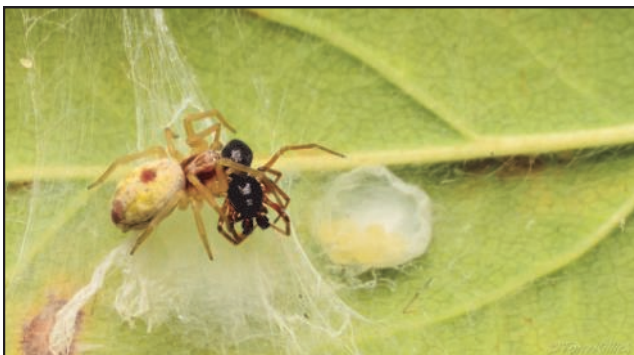


Figure 2. *Nigma puella* female with *Erigone* prey.
Photograph © Tone Killick

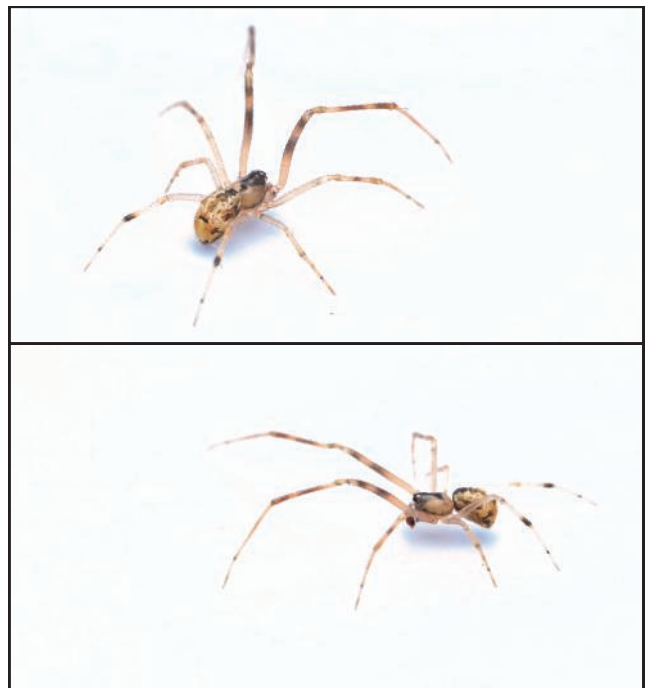
Fourth record for *Cryptachaea blattea* in the UK

by Tone Killick

On the evening of the 16th Sept 2016 I was in my garden, headlamp on, checking the *Nigma puella* spiderlings on the *Buddleia*, scanning amongst the flowerbeds, the usual stuff us arachnid enthusiasts get up to. After about an hour I called it a night and headed indoors. On the way in, my torch shone on a spider travelling along a silk line from my conservatory to a fence. As usual, I had no

collecting tubes on me and ran indoors to pick up a container. When I got back outside, it took me probably 5 minutes to locate the spider again. I collected the specimen, had a quick look under a hand lens and assumed it was a male *Achaearanea* sp. It wasn't until the following morning that I had a proper look at a very small male adult spider and started to doubt my original assumption of *Achaearanea* species.

I'm not an expert when it comes to identification, but something didn't look right. I took some photos which wasn't easy due to its size and the fact it wouldn't play the game and smile for the camera! I posted them on some forums and social media and a few suggestions were thrown at me, *Cryptachaea* sp. being the most obscure. I checked SRS for *Cryptachaea* sp. and saw that there was one species showing on the mainland, *Cryptachaea blattea* and then I got goosepimples!! This spider had only been recorded at three locations in the UK and am I really to believe that one has virtually dropped into my lap.



Figures 1 & 2. *Cryptachaea blattea* male.
Photographs © Tone Killick

It was maybe a couple of days later, after I had dismissed any thoughts that my mystery spider was a *C. blattea*, that I posted my photos to Matt Prince via Twitter. Matt is the Area Organiser for VC 3 and 4 and replied to my photos fairly sharpish. His response was a bolt from the blue! "Is that a tubercle on its back?" To which I replied, "what, are you thinking, *Ero* species? This spider is lacking the distinctive leg spines of *Ero* species" and finally Matt dropped the bomb, " nah, *Cryptachaea* " Now, if you don't know, Matt found one of the previous *Cryptachaea blattea*'s, in Plymouth I believe. So I sent my specimen off to Matt and waited in anticipation and stressing that the Royal Mail wasn't going to let me down. After what seemed like a lifetime (hmm, does that sound dramatic) I received a tweet from Matt and I was a very happy chappy. My mystery spider was indeed a *Cryptachaea blattea* and only the 4th record for the UK.



Figures 3 & 4. *Cryptachaea blattea* male.
Photographs © Tone Killick

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A modern record of *Thyreosthenius biovatus* (O.P.-Cambridge) from North Yorkshire

by Jonty Denton

A brief investigation of a roadside nest of the wood ant *Formica lugubris* in Cropton Forest (SE7492) (VC62) on 13th May 2014 yielded numerous adults of *Thyreosthenius biovatus*. The nest was one of several small pyramids scattered on a recently ‘coppiced’ gully in a mixed plantation. There are several records from the area but none since 1980 in SRS.

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Lessertia dentichelis new to Lincolnshire

by Jon Daws

On the 20/07/2016 I dropped off some items at a charity shop on Drummond Road, Skegness, after which I had a quick wander round the immediate area and spotted two manhole covers down an alley between two shops off Drummond Road (TF566623). I returned to my car to collect an old screw driver and went to investigate the manhole covers. The first still had its handles and was easily removed to reveal a two foot deep

working sewer, inside there was little arachnological activity. A five minute search produced two *Tenuiphantes tenuis*, which had constructed their webs across the corners of the sewer. The second manhole cover had lost its handles so I used the screw driver to prise it up enough to get my fingers underneath and lift it out of its housing. The second sewer was almost identical to the first in size but slightly damper. There were *Amaurobius ferox* females with egg sacs webbed up on the underside of the manhole cover and on the walls of the sewer. After a few moments I spotted a pale money spider on the underside of its triangular web, which was situated across a corner of the sewer just over a foot down. I pooter-ed up the specimen (which later, under the microscope was identified as a female *Lessertia dentichelis*) and then had a further visual search before replacing the manhole cover.

On the way home I stopped off at the Anglican Church on Lumley Avenue in Skegness, which is situated at the heart of a traffic island (TF566635). Within the grounds are two manholes that needed the screwdriver to remove them. Both sewers had good populations of *A. ferox*, with one of them again having a pale money spider in a web across a corner, but this time it was only a female *Palliduphantes pallidus*.

I contacted Annette Binding who confirmed *L. dentichelis* as a new county record. *L. dentichelis* is an infrequent to frequent species of the British sewer system and rarely of the cable system, with both sexes being found throughout the year and humidity being an important part of its habitat preference. I believe this species will be found to be as common across most of Britain as it is in Leicestershire, with concentrations around the medium to larger towns and cities.

Any mobile, youngish and fit arachnologist (this rules out most of us!) with a couple of months to spare, armed with a couple of medium to large screwdrivers and having a strong stomach could easily treble or quadruple the number of British records for *L. dentichelis*, *Palliduphantes insignis* and *Nesticus cellulanus* by investigating this subterranean habitat.

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Matriphagy and *Amaurobius similis*

by Tone Killick

Matriphagy is well documented in the species of lace web spider, *Amaurobius ferox*, but I could find no documentation on the UK’s other 2 species practising this behaviour. On the 18/6/16 I found a female *Amaurobius similis* and retained her for observation.



Figure 1. *Amaurobius similis* female with eggsac on 18/06/16. Photograph © Tone Killick

One thing that has stood out was the size of the female's abdomen after producing such a large egg sac. The black lace web weaver, *A. ferox* is known to produce a second clutch of eggs for her young to feed on before ultimately consuming her. Was this going to be the case with this female *A. similis*?

The first spiderlings started to emerge on the 13/07/16. Over the following days I continued to check the progress and as the days went by and all of the spiderlings had left the egg sac, I started to have my doubts.



Figure 2. *Amaurobius similis* female with first emerging spiderlings on 13/07/16. Photograph © Tone Killick

On the 21/07/16 at 6am before going to work, I checked on the female and she was very much alive. She was still very large and healthy looking, but when I returned from work in the evening, the case for *A. similis* and matrophagy was proven. The spiderlings had mainly consumed her abdomen, which makes sense, but also one leg was eaten. The engorged spiderlings were released under my garden hedge never realising the ultimate sacrifice that their mother paid, so they can receive a fighting start in life.



Figure 3. *Amaurobius similis* female with spiderlings on 20/07/16. Photograph © Tone Killick



Figure 4. *Amaurobius similis* female with abdomen consumed by spiderlings on 21/07/16. Photograph © Tone Killick

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Variation amongst *Pardosa monticola* and a possible hybrid strain in Norfolk

by Andrew Bloomfield

On May 25th 2015 I found a very distinctive looking female lycosid amongst some low growing vegetation in an old dune slack at Holkham NNR in Norfolk. Its abdomen strongly resembled a *Pardosa monticola/palustris* type yet its carapace did not. It showed a very two toned effect caused by buffish/white hairs breaking up the normal dark lateral markings, leaving the dark bands as small, isolated horizontal lines. The markings were almost symmetrical and the pale patterning looked so distinctive that from a distance with the naked eye it stood out as a spider with a pale carapace rather than having the normal 'striped' effect.

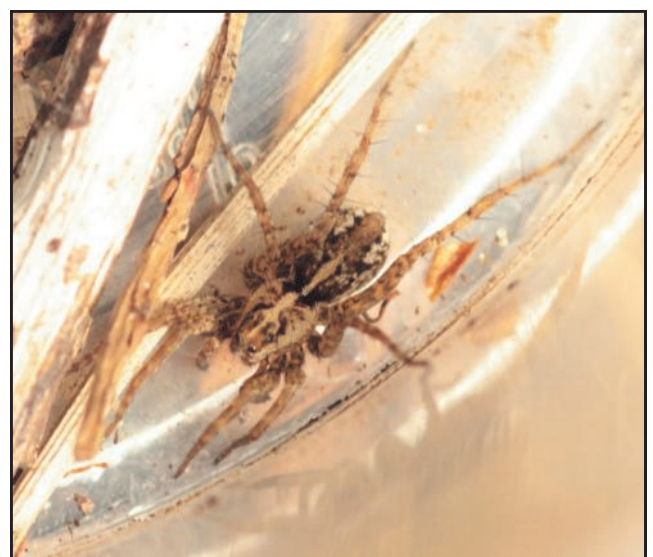


Figure 1. Mystery *Pardosa* from Burnham Overby Dunes, part of Holkham NNR found on 25th May 2015. Photograph © Andrew Bloomfield

At the time I was only feeling my feet with identifying the spiders of my local patch, so I felt a photograph of such a very distinctive looking spider would have been identifiable and easily found within the pages of a field guide. Alas, this was not to be and I could find no pictures of such an individual either in Roberts, Jones or indeed on the internet, following an extensive search. Perplexed I posted the picture on both the British Spider Identification Facebook page and at the end of August on the SRS forum. Peter Harvey suggested that it could be a *Pardosa palustris* var *herbigrada*, but stated that "in many cases lycosids have to be identified by their adult female epigyne and male palp, examined under a microscope, and even then some species can be very difficult, such as the *Pardosa agrestis* group (*agrestis*, *agricola*, *monticola*, *palustris*). Your photos probably show a variation of *palustris* (var *herbigrada* or similar), usually found on heathlands". I felt it did not resemble a typical example of one of those either.

Pardosa monticola is an extremely common spider on the sand dunes at Holkham and into the rabbit grazed field transition where old grey dune and meadow edge occurs, whilst further into the fields *Pardosa palustris* becomes the more common species. In two years of searching I have yet to collect and identify a *P. palustris* var *herbigrada* at the site. With the site not being heathland or with any heather present it was not a form I had expected to encounter. So was my spider a variety of one or the other that had not been noted before, was it a localised form or even a new species? These were all the questions I was left pondering.

The story did not end there as on June 18th 2016 whilst accompanied by Norfolk Spider County Recorder Pip Collyer and visiting naturalist Matt Prince I found another spider in the same area exhibiting the same patterned carapace. This time it was a mature female with an egg sac. If anything its pale carapace markings were even more pronounced. Pip took the spider away for a critical examination (along with some typical *P. monticola*) and found that the spider showed an epigyne that was indeed a good match for *Pardosa monticola*. On July 21st 2016 I found a third individual with the same pale patterned carapace, again in the same area and another female carrying an egg sac. Clearly this was not just a one off aberration.



Figure 2. June 2016 *Pardosa monticola* variety from Holkham NNR. Photograph © Andrew Bloomfield



Figure 3. July 2016 *Pardosa monticola* variety from Holkham NNR. Photograph © Andrew Bloomfield

Consulting Roberts, Jones and Locket & Millidge again there seems to be no mention of such an extreme variation in the carapace patterning of *P. monticola*, although Roberts does mention that 'sometimes' the 'lateral light bands are broken'. The patterning of the Holkham spiders was clearly a bit more pronounced and different than that. Jones does mention in his text for *Pardosa palustris* 'that some specimens indistinguishable from *P. monticola*, especially males'. With this in mind all the spiders collected were sent initially to Peter Harvey and then Peter Merrett. Peter Harvey's comments were as follows:- 'I would agree that all these are *P. monticola*, and that the one with a pattern rather similar to *Pardosa palustris* var. *herbigrada* is an interesting variety I have not seen in *monticola* and which I am unaware has been reported. However, Dick Jones in his Country Life field guide to spiders states that "Some specimens of *Pardosa palustris* var. *herbigrada* are indistinguishable from *P. monticola*, especially males. Females may be separated by epigyne which is subtriangular and wider than a third of the abdomen. Peter Harvey went on to say 'I suspect only DNA studies will get any closer to sorting out whether this is just a variation or whether there is any genetic grouping involved. L&M have a separate entry for *Pardosa palustris* var. *herbigrada* (as *Pardosa tarsalis* var. *herbigrada*) where the variability of this variety is described and they state that *L. tarsalis* will mate with var. *herbigrada* and that fertile eggs are produced. This is probably also true for *P. monticola*.'

Peter Merrett's reply was 'I think all the specimens must be called *monticola* as the genitalia are closer to *monticola* than anything else. The male and the (dark) female appear to be typical *monticola* but the two paler females resemble *palustris* / *herbigrada* more in colour of

both carapace and abdomen. The central plate of the epigyne of these too is also rather wider posteriorly than is usual for *monticola* but nothing like *palustris*. It looks to me as if they might be hybrids between *monticola* and *palustris/herbigrada* but I didn't know that might be possible'.

Whilst we all realise the variation shown by spiders, particularly lycosids, the markings of the Holkham ones seem so distinct I felt they surely warrant a mention here even if the mystery remains unsolved, particularly as I photographed them all. I wonder has anyone else out there seen such individuals in the past anywhere else? The hybrid theory might well prove to be the answer. I found all three individuals within 100 metres of the same spot where grey dune (full of *monticola*) and grazing marsh (full of *palustris*) meet. There is certainly scope for further studies and I will certainly be looking out for more next year. Interestingly all three spiders were females, posing the question what would a mature male look like?

Thanks to Pip Collyer for his help identifying the second specimen and to Peter Harvey for confirming Pip's identification and his and Peter Merrett's comments. If anyone wants to do a more in depth serious study or scientific piece of research please contact me.

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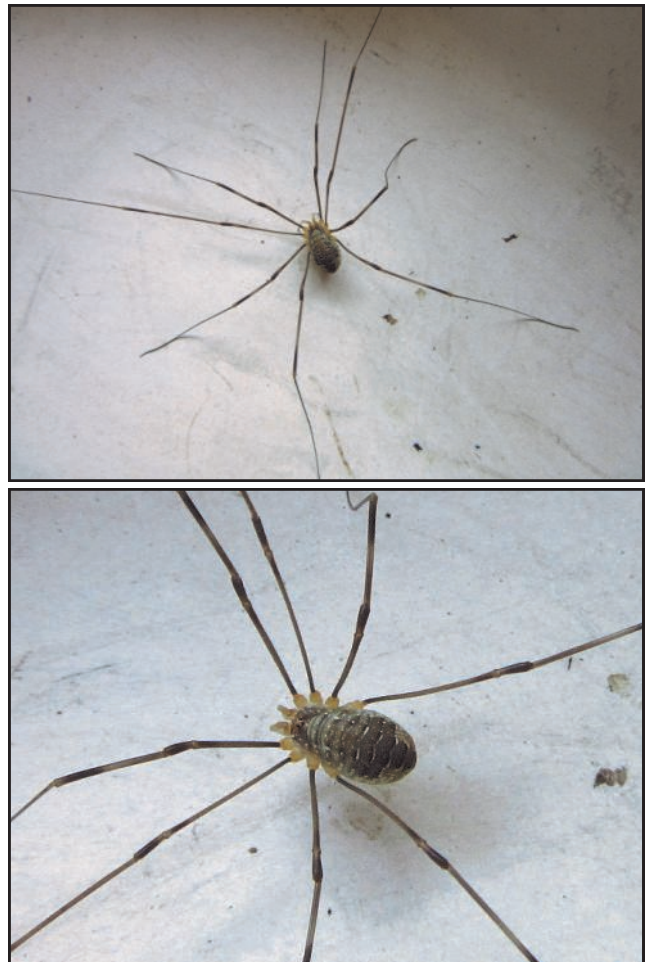
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Opilio canestrinii, a second Nottinghamshire record

by Howard Williams

On August 27th 2016 I was deadheading a *Buddleia* in the garden and noticed two large harvestmen dropping to the ground from the flower-heads I was holding. They were a rather dark grey colour. I caught one of these and put it in a glass tube I keep handy in the garage to look at later.

I had thought they might belong to the Phalanginae with their long legs and substantial bodies, or perhaps be *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, now common in the area. A brief look was enough to discount the latter. A striking thing was the contrast between the pale yellow trochanters and the darker legs and body. The same contrast was apparent between the numerous white tubercles and the white ocularium with 4 or 5 hair-tipped medium-sized tubercles against the almost black-brown cephalothorax. The abdomen, paler but still dark, was characterized by dark transverse bands separated by thin, contrasting white lines. Whatever it was, it was not in "Harvestmen" by Hillyard & Sankey, but I recalled an



Figures 1 & 2. *Opilio canestrinii* in Nottinghamshire. Photographs © Howard Williams

article by Peter Nicholson in an SRS News about a new arrival in Britain. I found this in the Autumn 2014 issue of the newsletter – *Opilio canestrinii*. It all fitted except for the dark greyish-black of my specimen which was a female, as opposed to the reddish-orange colour in Peter's photo, and also in Paul Richard's picture in "The Harvestmen of the British Isles". I looked up some pictures on the internet and found that a minority of them can be dark greyish, but most were a rufous colour. Later, Peter Nicholson confirmed the identification from some photos I sent him and remarked that occasionally some *Opilio canestrinii* can indeed be dark. It might be interesting to see if, as more records come in and the species moves ever northwards, there is a trend for it to be darker the further north it spreads. Probably, however, it is all down to chance.

This is not a first Nottinghamshire record, that being a find in Long Eaton, Nottingham in 2015, but it does seem to be a second county record and the first in the north of the county.

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Invasion of the blue and green bobbers. A *Leiobunum* miscellany

by Mike Davidson

Many of you will be familiar with the common British leiobunids: *Leiobunum rotundum*, *L. blackwalli* and the closely related *Nelima gothica*. These all have characteristically long thin legs between which hangs a small body. In recent years we have been invaded by two further species of large long-legged *Leiobunum*. We should be aware of these and make every effort to record their spread and any effect on the populations of other species.

The leiobunids have a habit of forming chummy aggregations in sheltered locations during the day, before splitting up to go hunting at night. Natural habitats include rock faces and tree trunks but very often they are to be found on walls and buildings in urban areas - so they are easy to monitor. I call them bobbers because - well they bob up and down when disturbed before running off - and the name helps me to communicate their jizz to non-specialists at public events. A wave of bobbing can spread rapidly through an aggregation of *Leiobunum* (and sometimes an audience), presumably helping to distract a predator while they make their escape.

In 2007 a new British species of *Leiobunum* was found in Aberdeenshire (Davidson, 2009) and soon began turning up in various places across Scotland. It was larger than the native species and the body had a distinct metallic-blue sheen (due to the nature of their dorsal micro-sculpture). There was some discussion with continental colleagues about the identity of this species, with those in the Netherlands favouring *L. rupestre*. Axel Schönhofer, in Austria, however was confident that this was a species known as *L. tisciae*, described by Avram in 1968 from specimens from the Tisza Valley in Hungary. According to Hillyard & Sankey (1989) a specimen had been found in Derbyshire in 1975. Its identity had been confirmed by Prof. J. Martens but presumably this introduction had not persisted and its occurrence is not mentioned by Hillyard (2005).



Figure 1. *Leiobunum tisciae* now *L. gracile*
Photograph © Mike Davidson

The taxonomy of the *Leiobunum rupestre* group, which includes *L. tisciae*, has been very confused but a recent paper by Martens & Schönhofer (2016) has set out to resolve these problems and, for those with internet access, is freely available from the *European Journal of Taxonomy*. The authors re-examined specimens of *L. rupestre*, *L. tisciae* and the closely related *Nelima apenninicum*. They provide a useful table of somatic characters, full descriptions with photographs, line drawings and distribution maps.

The upshot for us in Britain is that *L. tisciae* has been confirmed as a separate species from *L. rupestre* but that it should be correctly named *L. gracile*, based on the original description of the species by Thorell, in 1876, using specimens from Southern Sweden. The validity of the genus *Nelima* is questioned, with *Nelima apenninicum* confirmed as correctly belonging to the genus *Leiobunum*. We can expect further changes in these genera in future.

Another, as yet, unidentified species of *Leiobunum* (not part of the *L. rupestre* group) was described by Wijnhoven et al. (2007) as "alarmingly invading Europe". From about 2000 it had spread widely in Central and Western Europe. Its origin is unknown. This is an even bigger beast than *L. tisciae/gracile*, with a maximum leg spread of about 180mm. It normally has a metallic-green sheen (lost in alcohol). Its biology in the Netherlands have been described by Wijnhoven (2011). Across Europe they have been found in very large aggregations of hundreds or thousands, sometimes inside buildings.

So far this species has been recorded at three locations in England since 2009 (all in a relatively small area east of the Peak District) and one in Wales - but there are likely to be more, given their ability to multiply and spread. The first record was in 2009 at Worksop (SK 59226 80970) on a building wall (see Trevor & Dilys Pendleton's website for Nottinghamshire's Invertebrates <http://www.eakringbirds.com/eakringbirds3/arachnidsleiobunumsp.htm>). This population has persisted to 2016.

In 2012 it turned up at Barnsley, South Yorkshire (Blacker Hill, SE 36502 02374) on a factory wall (pers. comm. Paul Richards). There have been subsequent records in this area. A male specimen was found at Talbot St., Maesteg, South Wales (SS852913) by Greg Jones (pers. comm. Paul Richards).

Most recently, aggregations were found at houses in Ripley, Derbyshire (SK3850) in 2016. Paul Ewings was kind enough to send me specimens for confirmation and the excellent photographs reproduced here. Paul found two colonies, one of about 12 individuals and the other 20. The numbers gradually fell off over a few weeks in late August to early September.

We would be pleased to receive photos and (ideally) specimens of these species so we can keep track of their spread.

I am grateful to Paul Ewings for supplying specimens and photographs of the Ripley (and bobbing) *Leiobunum* sp. aggregations.

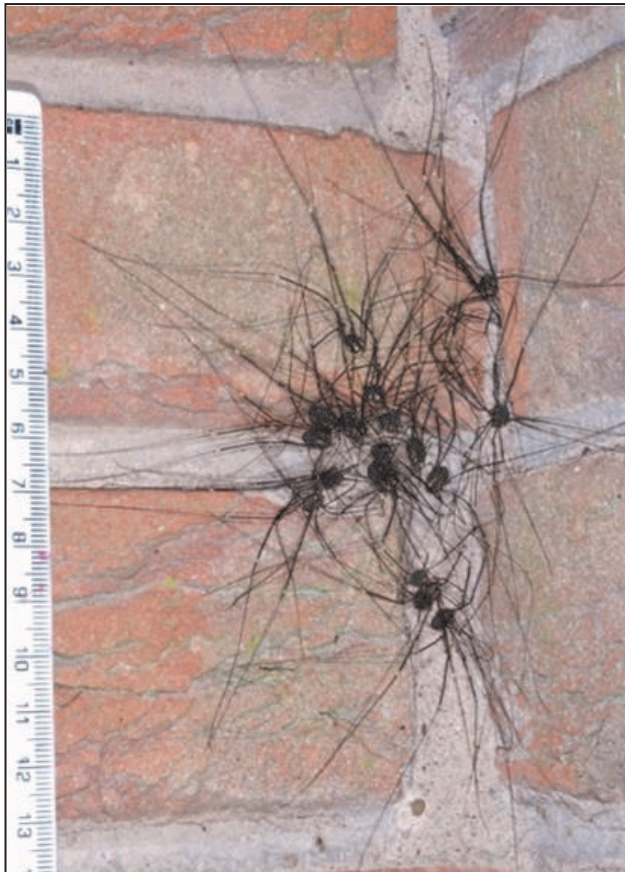


Figure 2. *Leiobunum* sp. aggregation.
Photograph © Paul Ewings



Figure 3. *Leiobunum* sp.
Photograph © Paul Ewings

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Identification of females of British *Oedothorax* species

There are five British species of *Oedothorax*, four of which are among the most widespread and frequent spiders in our fauna. Identifying male specimens, using the form of the modified carapace and the tibial apophysis of the palp, presents few problems. By contrast, distinguishing the females requires very meticulous examination of the epigynes which closely resemble one another. This is particularly important when females are collected in the absence of males or, as is frequently the case, when more than one species of the genus is found together in the same habitat.

Oedothorax gibbosus

Perhaps the most distinctive species is *Oedothorax gibbosus* in which the central plate of the epigyne is almost triangular in shape with the dark lines on either side of the central area converging anteriorly to a greater degree than in the other four species (Fig. 1).

Habitats. *O. gibbosus* is found in wetland habitats, including marshes, bogs, fens, wet meadows and damp grasslands among others. It is common and widespread throughout Britain and peak adult activity is in mid-summer from May to August.

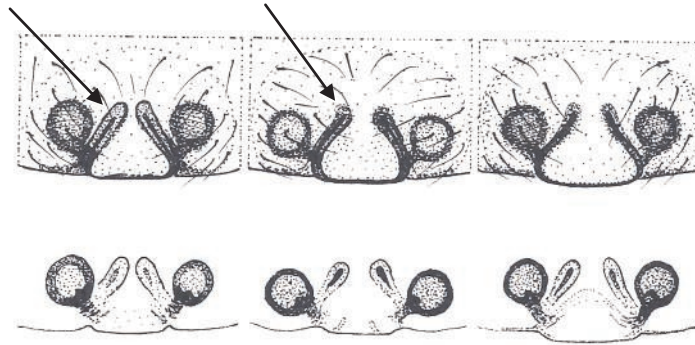


Figure 1. Upper row, epigynes of *Oedothorax gibbosus* viewed ventrally.
Lower row, cleared internal structures of the epigyne.

Oedothorax retusus

Females of this species are sometimes confused with those of *O. gibbosus*. The epigyne has the lateral borders somewhat converging anteriorly but they are less so than those of *O. gibbosus* and are more curved. They also have a pair of minute circular structures which are normally visible anteriorly. These two structures are joined by a slightly darker curved line and the central plate is more or less uniform in colour (Fig. 2).

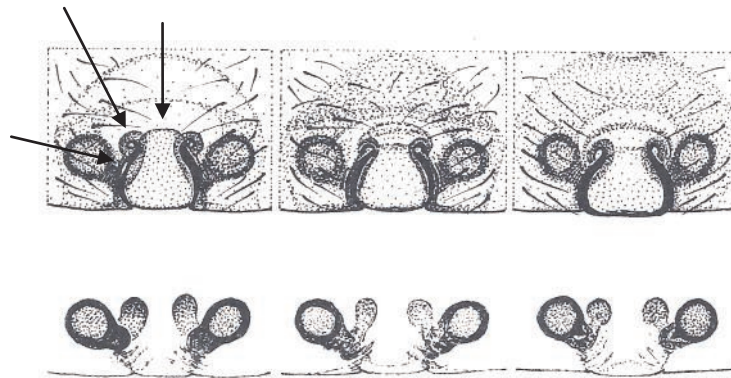


Figure 2. Upper row, epigynes of *Oedothorax retusus* viewed ventrally.
Lower row, cleared internal structures of the epigyne.

Habitats. This species is found in a wide range of habitats but is usually most abundant in various types of grasslands and agricultural habitats including arable fields. It disperses widely by ballooning which explains its frequent occurrence in disturbed agricultural habitats. Adults are active in mid-summer as in the previous species.

Oedothorax apicatus

The epigyne of this species closely resembles that of *O. retusus* in the outline of the central plate. It differs in the lack of a dark curved line across the anterior margin of the central plate and the presence of a clearer central portion to the plate which differs somewhat in extent in different specimens but is always present (Fig. 3). Another useful difference between the two species is that the length of the spine on tibia IV is usually less than 1.8 times the width of the tibia in females of *O. apicatus* while it is usually at least twice the width of the tibia in *O. retusus*.

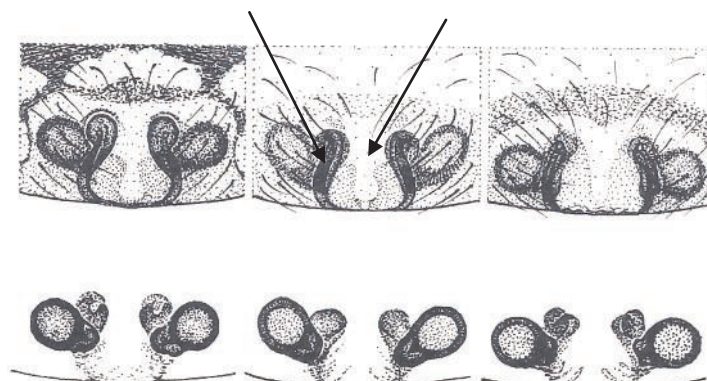


Figure 3. Upper row, epigynes of *Oedothorax apicatus* viewed ventrally.
Lower row, cleared internal structures of the epigyne.

Habitats. As with *Oedothorax retusus*, this species is found in a wide range of open habitats including grasslands, arable fields and shingle. It is also a frequent aeronaut with a peak of adult activity in July.

Oedothorax fuscus

Although the epigyne of this species can occasionally resemble that of *O. apicatus*, it differs in having somewhat smaller spermathecae and a nearly rectangular central plate. The lateral borders of the central plate at first converge slightly anteriorly but then diverge again (Fig. 4). The female abdomen usually has a longitudinal dorsal pale band that is normally lacking in *O. apicatus*.

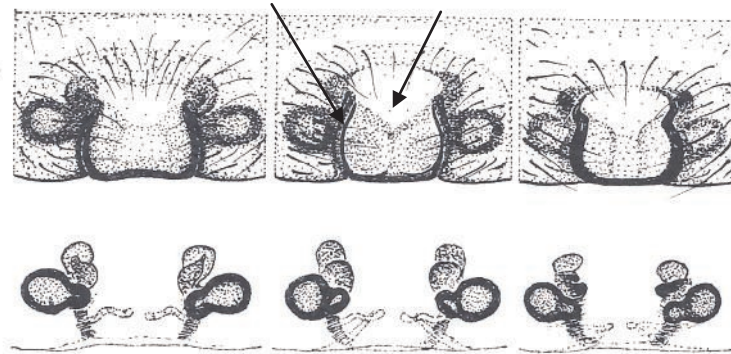


Figure 4. Upper row, epigynes of *Oedothorax fuscus* viewed ventrally.
Lower row, cleared internal structures of the epigyne.

Habitats. *Oedothorax fuscus* is typically found in a variety of grasslands, arable fields, recently burnt heathland and wetland habitats. In coastal areas it is found in salt marshes, shingle and sand dunes. As with other members of the genus, it is a frequent aeronaut and it is possibly the commonest member of the genus in Britain.

Oedothorax agrestis

The epigyne of *O. agrestis* is usually less heavily sclerotised than that of other members of the genus but in form resembles that of *O. fuscus*. It differs in that the central plate is bordered by thinner lines which curve slightly outwards at their anterior ends. Just outside each tip there is a short, faint ridge, convergent anteriorly (Fig. 5). *Oedothorax agrestis* also lacks the light abdominal dorsal band found in *O. fuscus*.

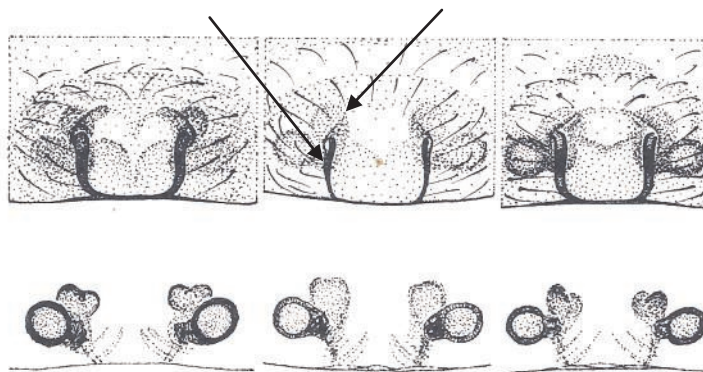


Figure 5. Upper row, epigynes of *Oedothorax agrestis* viewed ventrally.
Lower row, cleared internal structures of the epigyne.

Habitats. In Britain, this is the least frequent member of the genus but still very widespread. Like *O. gibbosus*, it is found in wetland habitats. In the north it is frequently found near upland rivers and in the south is nearly always found in flood debris of streams or ponds. Any individuals, especially females, not found in this habitat should be checked by the BAS Verification Panel. Adults have two peaks of activity, in June and September.

Acknowledgements

It is my pleasure to once again thank Michael Roberts for permission to reproduce the figures which are taken from "The spiders of Britain & Ireland" (1987). The information on habitats is from the Spider Recording Scheme database (<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk>).

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