

# Spider Recording Scheme News

## Autumn 2018, No. 92

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

S.R.S. News No. 93 will be published in Spring 2019. Please send contributions by the end of the first week of February at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: [grayspeterharvey@gmail.com](mailto:grayspeterharvey@gmail.com).

### Editorial

**Please help future issues by providing articles**, short or longer, on interesting discoveries and observations. **The newsletter depends on your contributions!**

We now have 1,073,207 spider records in total in MapMate. Of these records, around 40% have some site-based habitat information associated with them.

Between the SRS website going live in 2010 and moving to a new server in April 2014 there were approximately 158,336 visits from 106,092 users from 171 countries/territories, with 871,104 page views. Since April 2014 the website has had 465,266 sessions from 354,539 users from 202 countries/territories, with approaching 1.8 million page views. The facility enabling members of the public to submit records of 14 "easily recognisable" spider species has generated a rather unimpressive 466 records. The SRS website allows logged-on users to create and download individual species reports, comprising distribution maps and ecological information, as a pdf. Since 12 March 2015, there have been 112,724 downloads of species reports, 14,660 downloads for identification guidance on 49 "difficult" species groups and 33,235 SRS News downloads. There have been 6,556 downloads of BAS Factsheets since 28 Oct 2015.

The website's 'contact us' link continues to attract large number of emails from the public, most seeking help with spider identification. There continues to be a completely unjustified fear of the danger of spiders in many people's minds and the media's totally irrational obsession with 'false widows' is beyond a joke.

It was always the intention that the SRS website would be an interactive resource maintained by BAS members, Area Organisers, Council and SRS recorders, and I would urge everyone to get involved.

**Google maps.** Recently Google have made a change to google maps (and the associated aerial photography) which has had a major impact on features the website provides. The locate page and other pages which use the feature don't load Google Maps correctly, and the map shows very dark with "For development purposes only" repeatedly across the maps and a window with a link "Do you own this website". Google now wants a website to register for a new API key with a direct payment method (a credit card) and with billing enabled on the account. We are looking at alternatives but then there will be a fair amount of work to put in place an alternative that provides comparable resources.

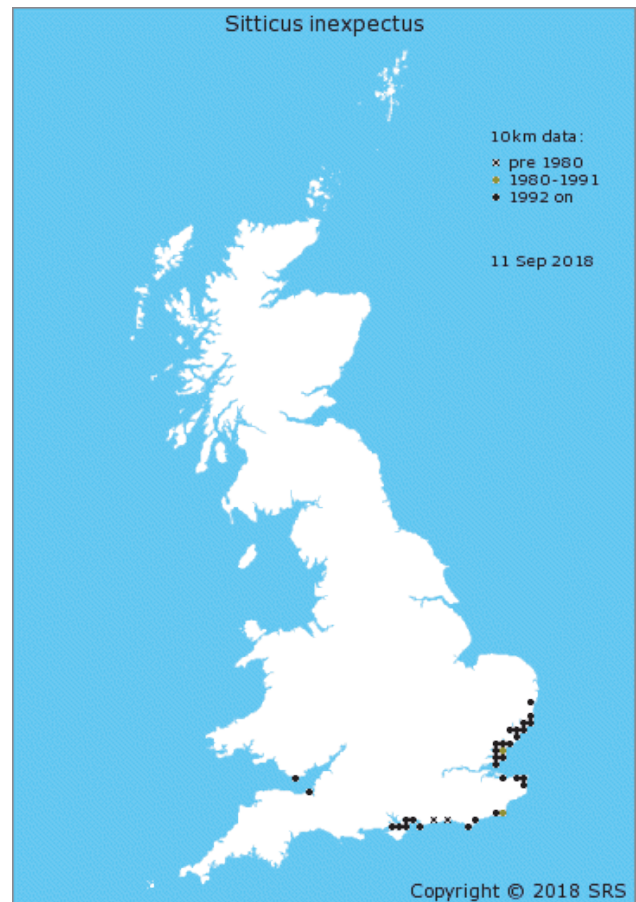
### New sites for *Sitticus inexpectus* along the East Sussex coast

by Richard Price<sup>1</sup> & Richard Burkmar<sup>2</sup>

The south coast of Sussex, Rye Harbour in the east to Selsey Bill in the west, consists largely of shingle beaches. These are often managed as part of sea defences or trampled on by tourists or locals enjoying a weekend

walk. On 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018 my friend Rich Burkmar and I were walking from Hastings to Bexhill on Sea when I spotted a jumping spider on the top of a stone on the shingle beach; it was duly collected and vouchered in 70 per cent industrial methylated spirits.

We later identified the spider as *Sitticus inexpectus*, a Nationally Scarce spider in the UK. Data submitted to the Spider Recording Scheme show that the species is mature from April to September and that it has a preference for shingle as well as sand and is also found on shell beaches adjacent to saltmarshes. The spider we found identified a new 10 km square for the species – TQ70.



**Figure 1.** UK distribution of *Sitticus inexpectus* at 10 km level from the SRS website

SRS data for East Sussex shows that the species has been found at a number of coastal locations in ten separate tetrad squares, only six of which are outside the well-studied area at Rye Harbour.

Richard visited me again in August 2018 and we planned an outing to look for *S. inexpectus* in other locations along the East Sussex coastline. Our field trip was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup>, but before going into the field

we used GIS, including QGIS and Google Earth, to identify thinly vegetated areas of shingle beach within an hours' drive of Hastings, excluding well studied sites such as Rye Harbour nature reserve. These areas seemed as rare as the spiders that we were searching for. With shingle movement and trampling there are very few areas of vegetated shingle. The SRS website states that "shingle habitats are prone to damage by leisure activities, commercial activities and exceptional tidal and wave conditions."



**Figure 2.** Female *Sitticus inexpectus* on shingle. Photograph © Richard Burkmar

We visited two main areas – a stretch near Bulverhythe between Hastings and Bexhill (near the place we found our first one) and a stretch near Norman's Bay – south of the Pevensey Levels. We located areas of vegetated shingle and watched closely for jumping spiders.

The first site we visited at Bulverhythe was in front of a line of beach huts about a quarter of a mile west of where we found the spider in April (TQ782086). It took some time to find the species and our discoveries seemed

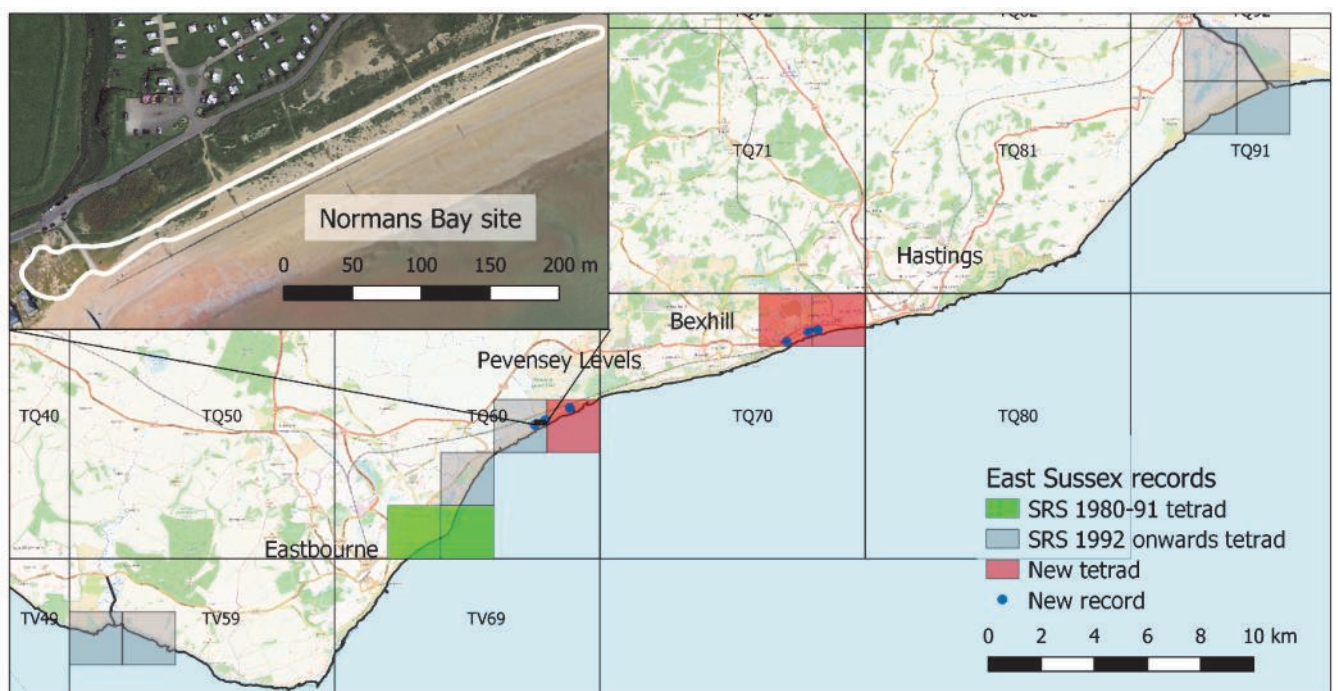


**Figure 3.** Richard Price searching for *Sitticus inexpectus* at the new Normans Bay site. The plant in the foreground is Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*). Photograph © Richard Burkmar

to coincide with the sun coming out, but it may also have had something to do with it taking a while to 'get your eye in'. Eventually, we noticed the spiders sitting on the top of stones in shingle amongst vegetation. Attempting to catch them was difficult as they would quickly disappear into the shingle when disturbed. A careful approach with a pooter was the most effective method we employed on the day, but we were unsuccessful more times than we were successful.

We were approached by representatives of the beach hut owners who wanted to deter criminals. Luckily they believed our story! Possibly the footfall in this area is discouraged by the presence of the beach huts (and their owners) enabling the survival of the shingle vegetation and consequently *S. inexpectus*.

We travelled further west to Galley Hill and again found our quarry (TQ770081). The half a mile stretch between this site and the beach huts has been subject to



**Figure 4.** Existing tetrads (from the SRS) and new tetrads (from this study) for *Sitticus inexpectus* along the E. Sussex coast. The new site at Normans Bay is shown on the inset.

coastal works that are aimed to prevent erosion by placing large granite blocks on the beach. It is possible that the spider previously occurred between Galley Hill and the beach huts before the coastal works altered the habitat.

Next we travelled towards Penvensey Bay where *S. inexpectus* has been found before, but we searched the beaches at Norman's Bay east of Pevensey where it has not been recorded. Here we found the spider at two locations about 1 km apart (TQ688056 & TQ677051). But between these two sites were a number of inaccessible sites, including beachfront gardens, which included vegetated shingle habitat that appeared in excellent condition and very suitable for *S. inexpectus*.

The westernmost of the two Normans Bay sites (shown in detail on the map) was the largest and best we found for *S. inexpectus*. It is wide stretch of vegetated shingle bank around 20 metres wide and 450 metres long (between TQ67540503 and TQ67940523). We recorded *S. inexpectus* at both ends of this stretch of vegetated shingle and observed them at many points in between.

Shingle habitats are difficult to survey because spiders disappear into the gaps between stones when approached. A vacuum sampler may help surveying but because of the limited areas of habitat great care should be taken not to damage populations. For *S. inexpectus* at least, we found, patience, persistence and a pooter to be sufficient. A good marker for suitable habitat was the plant Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*) with which we often found it associated – sometimes on the plant itself.

Our searches resulted in us recording *S. inexpectus* in four tetrad squares along the East Sussex coast, three of which were new for the species. The new site for the spider we found at Norman's Bay is large enough to be an important site for *S. inexpectus* and other species and would likely repay further survey.

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### ***Sitticus floricola* and *Sitticus caricis* from Fenn's & Whixall Moss, with *Carorita limnaea* new to Wales**

by Richard Gallon\* & Richard Burkmar<sup>o</sup>

*Sitticus floricola* was last recorded from the Marches bog complex in 2004 (Whixall Moss), 1993 (Fenn's Moss) and 1988 (Bettisfield Moss). Last year an extensive resurvey of all the English and Welsh populations of *S. floricola* failed to reconfirm its presence on these bogs (Gallon, 2017), although a previously unrecorded population of *Sitticus caricis* was discovered at Fenn's & Whixall Moss (both English and Welsh parts).

On 30th June 2018 RG, Mike Howe (Natural Resources Wales) and Stephen Barlow visited Bettisfield Moss in an attempt to locate further *Sitticus* spp. sites. The exceptionally dry summer had impacted the bog and the only suitably wet habitat that could be found was on

the English side of the border at SJ48063523, the so-called Bog Garden (a schwingmoor already identified in 2017 as holding an exceptional arachnid fauna). A G-vac was used recording the following species of note: *Glyphesis cottonae* (3 females), *Carorita limnaea* (1 male, 11 females), *Sitticus caricis* (2 males, 2 females) and an immature *Sitticus* sp. This immature *Sitticus* was dark grey in colour suggesting that it might not be *S. caricis*, although it was too small to be confident that it was *Sitticus floricola*. As such, this immature specimen was only identified to genus.

On the 25th August 2018 RG, RB, Stephen Barlow and Andrew Allott revisited Fenn's and Whixall to investigate potentially suitable areas of habitat identified from aerial imagery by RG. At SJ48343546 (Whixall Moss, Fig. 1) an area of wet *Sphagnum* lawn yielded *G. cottonae* (1 male, 2 females), *Carorita limnaea* (1 female) and more importantly *Sitticus floricola* (3 males, >10 immatures) by using a G-vac (Fig. 2). Andrew found an additional male *S. floricola* here by hand searching the edge of the *Sphagnum* lawn.



**Figure 1.** *Sphagnum* lawn habitat at Whixall Moss (SJ48343546) supporting *S. floricola*. Photograph © Richard Gallon.



**Figure 2.** Adult male *Sitticus floricola*, Whixall Moss (SJ48343546). Photograph © Stephen Barlow.

Crossing the border into Wales (Fenn's Moss, Fig. 3) a similarly wet area at SJ47923561 produced more *Sitticus floricola* (3 males, 7 immatures), *Sitticus caricis* (1 male, 1 immature), *G. cottonae* (2 females) and *Carorita limnaea* (3 females).

Returning to the car park we sampled at another spot on Whixall Moss (SJ48863576) recording *Sitticus floricola* (1 male), *Sitticus caricis* (5 males, 1 female, 4 immatures) (Fig. 5), an unidentified *Sitticus* immature and *G. cottonae* (3 males, 2 females).

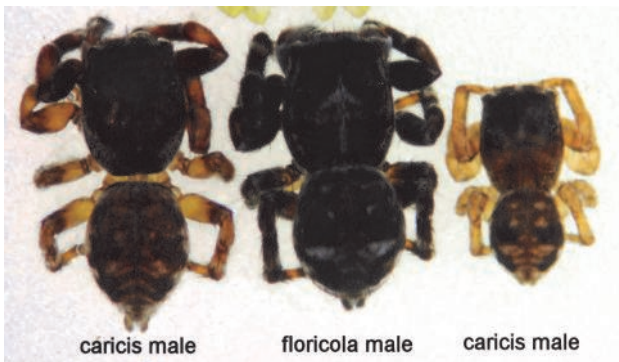
This survey recorded *Carorita limnaea* as new to Wales (vice-county Denbighshire), reconfirmed the presence of *Sitticus floricola* and also pin-pointed three occupied areas on this extensive raised bog complex. The Marches Mosses complex is the only area in the UK where *S. floricola* and *S. caricis* are found together.



**Figure 3.** Habitat at Fenn's Moss (SJ47923561) supporting *S. floricola* and *Carorita limnaea*. Photograph © Stephen Barlow.



**Figure 4.** Successful Fenn's Moss (SJ47923561) survey. RG left, RB right. Photograph © Stephen Barlow.



**Figure 5.** Mature male *Sitticus* from Whixall Moss (SJ48863576) showing the coloration difference between *S. floricola* and *S. caricis*, and the relative size differences within *S. caricis*.

We would like to thank Peter Bowyer (Natural England), Joan Daniels (BogLIFE) and Mike Howe (Natural

Resources Wales) for enabling this survey. Stephen Barlow is thanked for his site guidance and photography and Andrew Allott for his help in the field.

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## *Hasarius adansoni* - a cosmopolitan species

by Tone Killick

I've rescued many spiders that have been accidental imported into the UK but unfortunately this one was not to be. On the 1st of December 2017, a male jumping spider *Hasarius adansoni* was found in a bedroom in Bath, Somerset. A friend and fellow BAS member Jenni Louise Cox who runs the British Spider Identification Group, put the lady who found it in contact with me and she kindly dropped the spider off at my work place. Unfortunately by the time I got back to the office he had died so I didn't manage to get any shots of the spider alive though I did take a couple of shots after his demise. It's a shame as these males are quite stunning when alive and the palps, in the normal position, give the impression that the spider has a brilliant white moustache. Initially I accepted that the spider had been accidentally imported from the USA as the lady had recently returned from a holiday in Nevada but a friend, Sue Johnson, mentioned that she had found specimens at Edinburgh's Butterfly and insect world and I decided to look more into this spider's distribution.



**Figure 1.** *Hasarius adansoni* male. Photograph © Tone Killick

These are commonly known as Adanson's house jumper and are a synanthropic species meaning they live near, and benefit from an association with humans. Originally

a tropical species, it seems it has pretty much established itself around the world including the glasshouses in the colder climates of Europe and the UK.

I believe the earliest record for *Hasarius adansoni* in the UK is from a conservatory at Burnham, Somerset in 1862. It was also recorded at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 1904 by W. Edgar Evans in the Orchid House and rediscovered at RBGE 108 years later, on 22nd December 2011 by Lynsey Wilson. (RBGE, 2011). An immature male and female were recorded at the Eden Project by Nicholson (2009) and apparently it has also been found at Kew Gardens amongst other places, Gómez (2015). Looking at the evidence, it seems that this male *H. adansoni*, could just have likely hitched a lift from a UK glasshouse as stowed away on a plane from Nevada, though we will never know for sure.

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## An unusual habitat for *Theridion hemerobium* Simon, 1914 in North Yorkshire

by Geoff Oxford

Some spider species have specific requirements that restrict them to a very narrow range of habitats. A well-known example is *Larinioides sclopetarius*, which is almost always found near or over water on man-made structures, such as fencing and bridges. Another species intimately associated with water is *Theridion hemerobium*. The first British specimens were found by Dick Jones in 1982 on a fence by the side of a lake at Petworth, West Sussex (Jones, 1994). Subsequent records have been from waterside locations such as gravel pits, lakes, rivers and canals (e.g. Daws, 2003, 2004). In continental Europe, it is reported from similar habitats (Bosmans, Vanuytven & Van Keer, 1994; Peter Harvey, pers. comm.) although also from 'pine or oak forests, gardens, among vegetation or stones' (Araneae, 2018). The known British distribution encompasses central England but with an outlier population in east Norfolk (S.R.S., 2018). All of the more northerly records are from the edges of canals.

On 2nd September 2018 I took a female theridiid from fence uprights in the outdoor perennials area at Vertigo Plant Centre on the outskirts of York (SE646566). Although identified as *T. hemerobium*, given its unusual habitat away from open water, I sent the specimen to Peter Harvey for confirmation. This was the first North Yorkshire record of the species. Two additional mature females were taken in the same area of the plant centre on 16th September although, unlike the first, they were not



**Figure 1.** Female *Theridion hemerobium* from Vertigo Plant Centre, York. Total body length = 2.8 mm. Photograph © Geoff Oxford.

associated with an egg-sac. Jones (1994) and Bosmans *et al.* (1994) comment on the extremely variable coloration shown by this species. Indeed, Bosmans *et al.* (1994) noted 'In some specimens, the colour of the abdomen resembles *T. varians* Hahn and *T. blackwalli* O. P.-Cambridge, in others it is similar to *T. pictum* but less reddish'. One of the York specimens (Fig. 1; Fig 2a) approximated the coloration of *T. blackwalli*. It may be the colour form Jones (1994) described as having an abdomen with 'a broad, irregular black dorsal stripe with light yellow sides'. A second, the specimen confirmed by Peter Harvey, had a dorsal pattern like some *T. varians* (Fig. 2b) while the third was much paler form with a pair of large dark patches on the abdomen, as described by Jones (1994) and used to illustrate *T. hemerobium* in Bee, Oxford & Smith (2017: 143) (Fig. 2c). This latter form resembles the image of *Platnickina tincta* (then *Theridion tinctum*) in Jones (1983: 229). Jones (1994) reared an egg-sac produced by a female with the broad, black dorsal stripe on the abdomen. The offspring ( $n = 14$ ) segregated in a perfect 1 : 1 ratio of black stripe and normal coloration (it is not clear what he meant by 'normal'), suggesting that some of the colour/pattern variation in this species is polymorphic.



**Figure 2.** All three specimens after preservation, presented in the order mentioned in the text. Photographs © Geoff Oxford.

Species found in plant centres always have question marks hanging over them. The origin of the Vertigo *T. hemerobium* population is unknown but it is clearly

established and breeding. The area in which it is found has an extensive sprinkler system and is presumably kept fairly damp, which might explain the spider's persistence. Daws (2004) reported finding a single female in a garden centre at Seagrave, Leicestershire, which, as in the present case, was captured in a damp microenvironment (the side of a large water container). The garden centre was some 3 km from the River Soar and the Grand Union Canal, and Daws speculated that specimen might have ballooned from there. Despite no open water immediately adjacent to Vertigo, a check on maps and aerial photographs revealed two lakes in the vicinity; 260 m to the north-east (area approx. 0.32 ha) and 130 m to the south-west (area approx. 0.24 ha). Aerial dispersal from these might explain the founding of the Vertigo population.

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## Spider survey at Knettishall Heath, Suffolk

by Alan Thornhill

On two dates in 2018, 23 June and 15 Sept, teams, mostly of BAS members, carried out a survey of spiders at Knettishall Heath. The reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, is largely heathland or grassland but this is interspersed with extensive areas of woodland. The River Ouse marks its Northern boundary. It is now owned by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and is its largest reserve (175 ha).

Although Knettishall Heath can, at times, be a wonderfully peaceful place to stroll around it has long been a favourite spot for picnickers, dog walkers and ramblers. On sunny summer weekends it can attract hundreds of people. During our June visit a family walked right through an area of heathland that we were



Figure 1. Purse web

searching, and in September a lady with two large dogs wandered through the same area as I was gathering up the equipment I had used during the visit. Whilst it is heartening to see people enjoying the countryside we hoped all this human activity hadn't affected spider numbers greatly.

We began our June visit by looking for the purple webs of *Atypus affinis* close to where an adult male had been observed the previous autumn. We soon found several webs (Fig. 1) around Hut Hill, a bronze age burial mound, perhaps appropriately historic for a spider of ancient lineage. After assessing the extent of the colony we devoted most of our time to searching the heathland using various techniques - vacuum samplers (Fig. 2), atomiser (to reveal webs), beating trays etc. A prolonged drought prior to our visit seemed to have reduced spider activity and there were, for example, very few wolf spiders visible. Nevertheless we recorded 26 species of spider on this visit, and found one or two more purple webs well away from the earlier ones we found.



Figure 2. Pip Collyer using a vacuum sampler

A team of nine people returned in September (adding dry pitfall trapping to our list of sampling methods) and

found 34 spider species. Four species were found on both visits, so a total of 56 species of spiders, and 6 of harvestman, were recorded. If the site were surveyed again in a less harsh June many more species would likely be found.

Knettishall Heath is one of very few locations in West Suffolk where a colony of the Nationally Scarce *Atypus affinis* is known. Other Nationally Scarce spiders we recorded were *Cercidia prominens* (Fig. 3) and *Hypsosinga albobittata* amongst the heather. Of the harvestmen found, the *Oligolophus hanseni* beaten from a Scots Pine was particularly interesting as it is recorded infrequently in East Anglia.



**Figure 3.** *Cercidia prominens*, an adult female

Those attending were : Andy Beaumont (Sept), David Carr (Sept), Philip Collyer (June), David Hewitt (Sept), Jeanne Hewitt (Sept), Paul Lee (both), Joe Myers (both), Helen Smith (both), Terry Stopher (both), Alan Thornhill (both).



**Figure 4.** Paul Lee examines a spider for the September team

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## Harvestman Recording Scheme Newsletter Autumn 2018 Editor: Mike Davidson

Following the recent retirement of Peter Nicholson, the British Arachnological Society has asked me to look after the Harvestman Recording Scheme. Peter has done a great job during his tenure, managing the HRS data, helping recorders and data users benefit from Mapmate™ as a platform for HRS records, improving resources and generally promoting harvestman recording. We would like to thank Peter especially for the effort he put in to the project to produce an English translation of *De Nederlandse hooiwagens* with our colleagues in the Netherlands.

Over recent weeks I've been giving some thought to how we can build on Peter's foundations. Clearly the internet is a key component of today's recording scene and communication with HRS participants is a vital part of the job. With this in mind I have been considering how we might improve on what is currently on offer both on the BAS website and the linked Spider and Harvestman Recording site, e.g. raising the profile of harvestmen on the BAS website and providing clear linkage to sources of information. Some of this is already underway but we would welcome your ideas and feedback.

I have already added a few items to the resources page on the recording scheme website (<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Harvestman+Resources>), including the thirteen newsletters edited by John Sankey between 1982 and 1994. These are well worth exploring and I will plunder them shamelessly for newsletter items if you don't provide new copy!

Other items which I hope we can add include an updated identification key or chart, to try and overcome some of the existing pitfalls in harvestman ID. Alongside this I hope to provide an ID crib sheet for each species, highlighting the known problems and hopefully providing some reliable guidance. It turns out the even the "Forked-palp Harvestman" (*Dicranopalpus*) isn't so easily identified as we thought, with two species now known to be in Britain. Of course I need your help as recorders to flag up your handy ID hints and useful characters.

The scheme is nothing without its recorders and the newsletter is an important communication tool for us all. The original newsletters were circulated to recorders by BRC, but in recent years there has been no stand-alone HRS Newsletter, with harvestman-related items included within the SRS News in the BAS Newsletter. We will continue with this arrangement, however the harvestman-related items will also be available as a pdf in the harvestman resources section of the website and available to download by all recorders, whether BAS members or not.

**Succession Planning and a role for you in HRS?**

To avoid any future hiatus between HRS organisers we are looking for a trainee(s) who can help mind the shop and hopefully take on the full role in due course. We also think that it would be a good idea to get more harvestman enthusiasts involved in the promotion of the scheme. We are looking for more active recorders, mentors to help new comers, newsletter contributors, ID workshop organisers, photographers, etc.



volunteer today!

**Harvestmen today and tomorrow**

We now have 30 species in Britain and undoubtedly more to find - especially in places associated with import of plants, raw materials, brown-field sites and international transport. Most of the soil species will be present throughout the year so get out now and see what you can find over the winter.

If you are like me you will have a backlog of records to submit to HRS (or even specimens to ID). Drop me an email and we can discuss how best to submit your records. Do send me any ideas, feedback on the site, tips for ID, etc.. And don't forget to write something for the newsletter!

Mike Davidson      [hrs@britishspiders.org.uk](mailto:hrs@britishspiders.org.uk)

Short Notes:***Opilio canestrinii* - new records in Scotland**

During the autumn this recent immigrant has been recorded across Scotland from St. Andrews on the East Coast of Fife (Grant Brown), in and around Perth and at Irvine in North Ayrshire in the west (Mike Davidson). Of course it is already well established much further north on the Moray Firth.

The abdomen of this female looks like it has Tudor slash and puff decoration.



*Opilio canestrinii* ♀ © mike davidson 2018

***Dicranopalpus* spp. Request for Specimens**

Of course we now have two species of this harvestman genus in Britain. At least some of the early records in the South were *Dicranopalpus caudatus* s.s. More recently, perhaps since the 1970s, we have had a big influx of *D. ramosus* which has spread throughout Britain. To start to untangle the true identity of existing records I'd be interested to hear from anyone with specimens collected before 1980 who would be prepared to lend them for examination. Please contact me via [hrs@britishspiders.org.uk](mailto:hrs@britishspiders.org.uk).

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