

Spider Recording Scheme News

Spring 2020, No. 96

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

S.R.S. News No. 96 will be published in Summer 2020. Please send contributions by the end of the last week of June 2020 at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: 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!**

Many thanks are also due to those Area Organisers and recorders who have continued to send in their records to the recording scheme. An updated summary of the numbers of records in the scheme for different Vice Counties is provided overleaf, but does not include a backlog of database-unfriendly data which are still to be imported. If you have a data to submit, please do send them in. The maps and autecological information available on the website is only as up-to-date as the data provided.

We now have 1,164,376 spider records in total in MapMate. 457,813 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 644,005 sessions from 498,147 users from 206 countries/territories, with 2,331,522 page views.

The SRS website has now been updated to follow the new checklist of the spiders of Great Britain and Ireland published in *Arachnology* **18** (3): 196-212 by Alastair Lavery. The website species list also includes an additional revalidated species *Micaria micans* formerly included in *M. pulicaria* which has been published in Muster, C. & Michalik, P. (2020) Cryptic diversity in ant-mimic *Micaria* spiders (Araneae, Gnaphosidae) and a tribute to early naturalists *Zoologica Scripta* **49**: 197-209, and recently accepted by the World Spider Catalogue Version 21.0 at <https://wsc.nmbe.ch/>. A MapMate patch adds these species to the MapMate taxon dictionary. This situation is managed in MapMate and the SRS species list by retaining all existing records of *Micaria pulicaria* as *M. pulicaria* agg., with two additional taxa, *M. pulicaria sens. str.* and *M. micans*. Hopefully there will be more on these two new taxa in BAS publications soon. As well as genitalic characters separating the two cryptic species, specimens of *Micaria micans* apparently have a dark longitudinal striation at the dorsal face of the femora III and IV, which is caused by stripe-like arrangement of dark hairs and dark pigmentation of the cuticula. According to Muster & Michalik, *M. micans* prefers dry and warm open habitats such as grassland, fields, gardens and forest edges, while *M. pulicaria* is associated with habitats of higher humidity such as forests and bogs.

At least for the moment, until we are sure this works in Britain, identifications should be confirmed by microscopical examination of adult palp or epigyne. Existing material will also need to be re-examined so that the very large number of existing records can be re-determined, an example of a situation that emphasises the importance of collections, voucher material and reference specimens. There are currently nearly 4000 records of *M. pulicaria* agg. in the scheme, of at least 4370 individuals, so this will be a major task, even where specimens are readily available.

Area Organiser changes

The sudden unexpected and terribly sad news of the passing of Craig Slawson leaves Staffordshire without an Area Organiser. We are enormously grateful to Craig for all the work he undertook, especially in the earlier years of the Spider Recording Scheme and during the preparations for the publication of *The Provisional atlas of British spiders* in 2002. Our thoughts are with his family.

Due to ill-health Annette Binding can no longer continue as SRS Area Organiser for Lincolnshire (VCs 53 & 54). Annette has been an exemplary AO for many years and we owe a great debt of gratitude for all her work.

Andy Phillips is stepping down as Area Organiser for Sussex, although he will still retain the role of BAS Regional Coordinator and will continue recording spiders. We are very grateful for all his work now and in the future. Graeme Lyons is taking over, he can be contacted on GraemeLyons@hotmail.com

Matt Prince is taking over as caretaker AO for Dorset as well as continuing his role for Devon (VCs 3 & 4). Matt can be contacted on mattprince1969@gmail.com or by post at 3 Allhallows Court, Bartholomew Street West, EXETER, Devon EX4 3BJ. His MapMate cuk for syncs is 'brb'.

Finally Tylan Berry is taking over AO for Cornwall (VCs 1 & 2), from the caretaker role undertaken by Peter Smithers. Tylan's contact details are by email tylan_berry@msn.com or by post 29 Pentewan Road, St. Austell, Cornwall PL25 5BU; Tylan's MapMate cuk is 'dtg'. You can see from his two articles in this issue, Tylan has already been very busy in the county and will be putting Cornwall on to the map!

An update of VC record totals

The table below gives an update on VC totals based on numbers of records in the recording scheme mid-March 2020. Many thanks go to Area Organisers, and especially those who have regularly provided records to the recording scheme. If you have records to send in, please do so that our distribution maps and autecological data remain up-to-date. Data in any form are gratefully received, but unfortunately these will go into a backlog if in a user- and database-unfriendly format.

VC	Records	2000-on	2010-on	2015-on	VC	Records	2000-on	2010-on	2015-on
1	3733	1268	849	560	57	16306	3692	477	131
2	2422	1021	458	368	58	11897	1856	1592	1248
3	14341	8109	5375	3861	59	18064	6654	4570	3305
4	8882	6348	6156	4786	60	19071	9985	1912	517
5	9904	5878	4644	4275	61	8153	1112	307	100
6	8549	3925	3342	3068	62	10897	1488	1035	346
7	14867	2966	285	201	63	23173	7491	1658	522
8	13851	3465	161	127	64	13624	4325	1875	443
9	24378	11444	5054	1880	65	3039	1276	923	394
10	2687	1902	87	65	66	4035	406	284	34
11	20619	6973	2137	702	67	5823	819	770	272
12	12380	6612	3075	1264	68	1461	162	131	56
13	10243	5116	2784	1748	69	13353	6382	987	704
14	12287	8147	3515	1723	70	16802	7689	3035	1410
15	25487	15286	4611	1941	71	4185	104	104	93
16	14180	6731	1624	342	72	6509	4227	3165	3152
17	50224	28147	11797	2558	73	11604	3627	3501	3369
18	86213	36552	14900	9720	74	2260	1115	1038	969
19	58382	7874	3181	1933	75	2273	131	115	105
20	14745	4194	540	215	76	2346	100	60	15
21	14853	4616	1559	773	77	3862	1053	902	124
22	8516	4773	974	228	78	1034	173	164	108
23	5607	1100	134	81	79	474	56	45	9
24	5486	1300	809	419	80	859	179	177	140
25	25240	9081	2416	659	81	869	68	58	26
26	11100	6736	2190	666	82	3335	1043	1004	237
27	19890	6884	1472	368	83	5333	239	127	51
28	13863	9088	8085	6883	84	941	26	3	1
29	9051	3264	1210	102	85	5192	806	586	296
30	33838	9326	1294	76	86	6664	507	188	57
31	10853	6103	2456	19	87	2899	1219	469	186
32	9580	1247	104	21	88	7194	2241	1729	62
33	4284	1324	149	77	89	3298	528	261	1
34	4862	969	145	66	90	8318	495	223	52
35	3298	651	113	33	91	2798	1454	508	4
36	4315	1013	121	13	92	6362	2720	1422	4
37	12623	5892	740	256	93	3721	1669	408	7
38	8172	1574	228	39	94	1261	382	218	1
39	26462	854	163	96	95	7234	5914	1880	135
40	15767	6704	4548	1875	96	18400	13781	3830	300
41	7001	2446	1551	919	97	1927	745	330	275
42	2269	472	194	51	98	1914	228	120	17
43	1563	107	28	9	99	2471	69	48	4
44	3923	100	48	8	100	1250	406	294	284
45	11248	2210	196	111	101	1001	315	287	16
46	12262	2473	592	148	102	2228	735	386	138
47	2423	145	24	17	103	768	624	142	
48	6371	1620	773	314	104	2629	1133	514	392
49	14898	5487	2616	1746	105	2370	416	327	33
50	7761	1752	1179	772	106	3220	2271	1271	151
51	5611	618	484	170	107	6312	5440	3239	
52	6877	1475	1052	281	108	1807	354	124	18
53	6372	2785	1089	445	109	25029	7924	25	2
54	15319	5212	1440	865	110	1064	133	98	67
55	41316	12882	1037	868	111	2280	1632	352	302
56	12933	7329	2060	428	112	660	25	2	2

Observations on the habitat of *Hyptiotes paradoxus* at two sites in Devon and Hampshire

by Keith N.A. Alexander

The habitat of *Hyptiotes paradoxus* is said to be evergreen trees and shrubs but experience with the species during 2019 suggests that this may no longer be the case. A sub-adult male was knocked from aerial deadwood on old hazels in Ausewell Wood SX735705, south Devon, on 4th July 2019, while searching for saproxylic and epiphytic invertebrates. The area is mixed woodland of oak, ash, sycamore and hazel with some holly, but the precise spot was a stand of old hazel. Immature spiders were later beaten from old heather bushes in a large heathy glade about 1km to the north-west near Raven Rock SX730715, 2nd August. This section of the wood is largely conifer plantation. Further subadults were found by beating old hazels at another site, this time south-east of Totton, Southampton in south Hampshire SU39 10th July and 21st August. The woodland here is of an oak-hazel composition with some holly.

Although holly is present at the two hazel sites, the spiders were actually associated with the aerial deadwood networks in the tops of the old hazels which form a sub-canopy beneath the main canopy-forming broad-leaved trees. The association of the immature spiders with old heather is also a departure from the conventional habitat associations.

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Oecobius navus – a self-sustaining population in York?

by Geoff Oxford

Oecobius navus (Blackwall 1859) was first described from Madeira but is now reported worldwide (Nedvěd *et al.* 2011; World Spider Catalog 2019), presumably as a result of human transport. There are several records from Britain but only one plotted on the SRS map for the species.

In 2015, I reported a mature female *O. navus* from my office at the University of York (SE619505), its identity confirmed by Peter Harvey (Oxford 2015). It was found running on my arm and was not associated with any obvious means of importation e.g. recent parcels from abroad. I put down sticky traps on the floor for several weeks afterwards but failed to find other specimens. Almost four years later, on 11th December 2019, I noticed a tiny spider running at extremely high speed on a wall of the same office. It turned out to be a mature male. The office is no longer shared and so recent importation can almost certainly be eliminated as an explanation for the spider's presence. Finding two specimens of a non-native species in the same office four years apart without obvious means of independent introduction might suggest

that a population might have established in the Department of Biology at the University of York. However, this conclusion, based on just a couple of specimens, may be premature! Certainly close attention will be paid to office walls in future. A self-sustaining population of the spider, then called *O. annulipes*, was discovered in the Natural History Museum, London, in the 1970s (Richie 1978) but apparently disappeared after the entomology building was redeveloped (Oxford 2015).

References

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Stars of the South West

by Tylan Berry

In 2019 I found myself with more spare time on my hands than I have ever had in the last fifteen years, and I decided to invest that time by indulging in some proper spider hunting; something that in the past I have only been able to afford one or two days a month to. Spurred on by the encouraging discoveries of *Cryptachaea blattea* further afield (and also Matt Prince and Graeme Lyons' challenges with the year listing!), I endeavored to try and find as many spiders as I could and get an understanding of the fauna of the multitude of different habitats that Cornwall is home to. It was an incredible year with so many stand out moments; from locating new species to the county, to seeing some very rare spiders, to just spending more time outside searching. For the first time ever, I had the opportunity to carry out recording through the cold and wet winter months, which proved amazingly productive with surprises being found until the closing hours of New Year's Eve.

One of the highlights of the year was certainly discovering the populations of *Gnaphosa occidentalis* at Penhale Point and Kynance Cove in the summer with Matt Prince and others.

This is an incredible looking spider that seems to require scattered stones lying on top of well drained clifftop grassland. The spiders are found underneath the stones, especially where they lie on the friable soil near the roots of Thrift and Heather (Roberts, 1985). This is



Fig. 1. Typical habitat for *Gnaphosa occidentalis* at Penhale Point. Photograph © Tylan Berry



Fig. 2. *Gnaphosa occidentalis*. Photograph © Tylan Berry

certainly a habitat niche that Cornwall has in abundance, yet I have failed to locate the spiders at any other similar locations so far. Hopefully 2020 will be more fruitful in this respect.

One fantastic surprise came during a trip to St. Anthony Head on the South Coast in May. I was turning loose stones whilst halfway up an old, vegetated cliff slip in search of *Euophrys herbigrada*, a south coast specialist (Roberts, 1985) that I had located populations of a week prior, about a mile or so to the east.



Fig. 3. *Euophrys herbigrada*. Photograph © Tylan Berry

The salticid wasn't present, but underneath one stone was an unusual looking Thomisidae spider. It was certainly recognizable as *Ozyptila* sp., but was markedly different in being brown and with dense covering of clavate hairs (Locket & Millidge, 1951, Roberts, 1995). After getting the spider home for a closer look under the microscope, it dawned on me that I had collected a rather rare spider indeed: *Cozyptila blackwalli*! This spider is seldom seen in the UK and is restricted to coastal sites in the south (Locket & Millidge, 1951).



Fig. 4. *Cozyptila blackwalli*. Photograph © Tylan Berry

Another success story comes after locating *Cryptachaea riparia* new to Cornwall in 2016 at the base of a cliff bordering a sand beach on the south coast. I have since been fortunate in locating populations of this spider in a handful of locations throughout the county, not only in similar wild situations, but also in synanthropic locations in built up areas. In clifftop grassland, the web is spun over hollows in the ground created by slippage in the



Fig. 5. *Cryptachaea riparia* web and retreat found on the external wall of my house. Photograph © Tylan Berry

substrate, whereas in synanthropic locations, the web is found at the base of walls and plant pots where there is an adequate anchor point to attach the detritus made retreat (Roberts, 1995). Wherever this spider occurs, there is always an abundance of ants nearby which the spider primarily feeds on (Roberts, 1995). This has been especially true in synanthropic locations where every time I have found the web of a female, there has been a nest of *Lasius niger* in close proximity.

It would be remiss of me not to mention an extraordinary trip to Kynance Cove with Graeme Lyons in December. The Lizard Peninsula is truly an incredible location and Kynance Cove in particular is extremely special, holding such a high density of nationally rare and scarce species. Within about an hour, at small area of cliff-top grassland, we had located *Gnaphosa occidentalis*, *Euophrys herbigrada*, *Porrhoclubiona genevensis* and *Segestria bavarica*.



Fig. 6. *Porrhoclubiona genevensis*. Photograph © Tylan Berry

More was to come however, as with a few samples with the vacuum sampler, Graeme picked up *Phycosoma inornatum* and the spider that knocked me for six: *Agroeca cuprea*! The latter has not been seen at the site 1968 (Spider Recording Scheme, 2019) and was not a spider I was expecting to see at all. Thanks Graeme! I am confident that this area of the Lizard Peninsula has more surprises in store and I am looking forward to returning and spending more time discovering what other hidden gems are present.

The following are species that were new to the Spider Recording Scheme from Cornwall in 2019:

Holocnemus pluchei - From a shop stock room in Falmouth.

Parasteatoda simulans - Various suburban locations in the St. Austell Area.

Sardinidion blackwalli - Two locations in gardens in St. Austell.

Porhomma pallidum - From ground moss at a spruce plantation near Bodmin.

Centromerus serratus - From ground moss at a spruce plantation near Bodmin.



Fig. 7. *Centromerus serratus*. Photograph © Tylan Berry

Clubiona subtilis - From the base of marram tussocks of dune systems on the North coast.

Clubiona brevipes - Beaten from mature Oak on the South coast.

2020 is already off to a good start with three species being located new to the county:

Macrargus rufus - From ground moss at a spruce plantation near Bodmin.

Sintula corniger - From ground moss at a spruce plantation near Bodmin.

Robertus neglectus - From cliff-top grassland.

As of 2020, I will be taking the helm of the Area Organizer role for Cornwall and would like to thank Peter Harvey for giving me the opportunity to become a bigger part of the Spider Recording Scheme. It will be a pleasure to be more involved with the scheme and to continue to highlight the phenomenal spider fauna of the county. I would also like to thank Matt Prince for putting up with my incessant questions over the last couple of years regarding all manner of record related matters!

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SRS summary for *Agroeca cuprea* (Araneae) <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Agroeca+cuprea>

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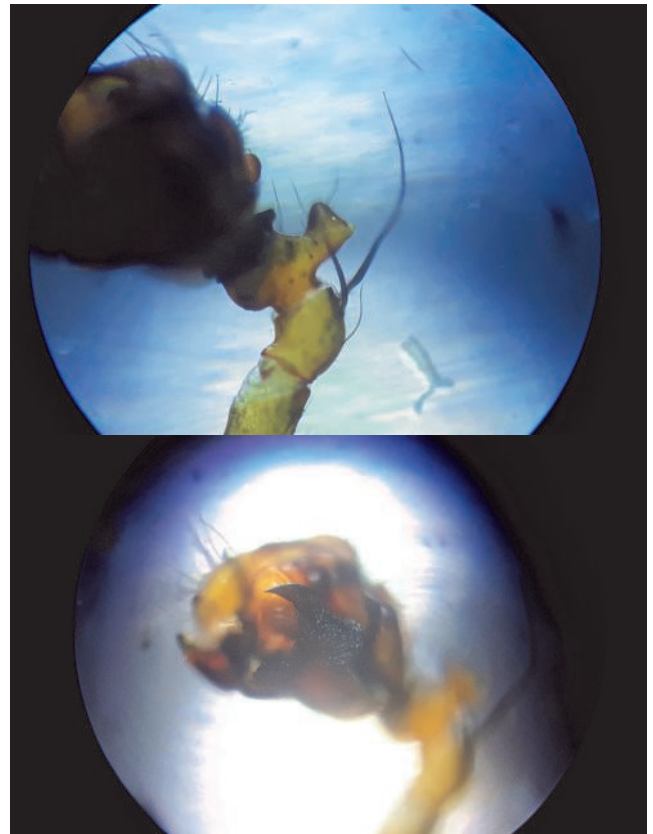
Megalephyphantes on the move

by Tylan Berry

Whilst cooking dinner one evening in 2018, I noticed I noticed a medium sized spider scaling my kitchen wall and, naturally, I downed tools to get a closer look at the interloper. To my surprise it was a large Linyphiid with distinctly annulated legs, but it wasn't the *Labulla thoracica* that I expected; it was a *Megalephyphantes nebulosus*, or so I thought. Remembering that we still have our unresolved *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* in the UK, I decided to take a closer look at the guy and to my amazement; the palps matched the characteristics seen in our taxon (Harvey, 2001)! I was shocked as, at the time, the only records for the spider were from the south-east and London area and a find in Cornwall was completely out of known range. I put the specimen aside until further developments would arise and thought no more about it. It wasn't until reading Frances Farr-Cox's article in the recent autumn edition of the SRS Newsletter (Farr-Cox, 2019) that I remembered that I had it sitting with my vouchers.



Fig. 1. *Megalephyphantes* near *collinus* male.
Photograph © Tylan Berry



Figs. 2 & 3. *Megalephyphantes* near *collinus* male palp.
Photographs © Tylan Berry

There are now a handful of sightings for the spider in the West country, with others from Francis Farr-Cox and James McGill (Spider Recording Scheme, 2020) and I would imagine that we will see more in the coming years given the spiders' indicated spread in the south-east. As Francis comments, it certainly seems odd that there are no records between the few in the West country and those in the south-east (Farr-Cox, 2019). It is also worth noting that this is the only individual in the *Megalephyphantes* genus that I have ever seen in Cornwall, both prior to and since the finding of this spider in 2018 and, at the current time, is the only record for the genus in the county (Spider Recording Scheme, 2020).

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