

Spider Recording Scheme News Autumn 2020, No. 98

Editor: Peter Harvey; grayspeterharvey@gmail.com

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

S.R.S. News No. 99 will be published in Spring 2021. Please send contributions by the end of the end of February 2021 at the latest to: e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk

Editorial

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

I have been without landline and internet access with no reconnection in sight, after the telegraph pole which services the line of houses including ours was knocked down on 17 September. At the time of writing the current situation is that channelling work to move cables to a new telegraph pole is planned for 16 November, with reconnection after this date. Trying to manage with only a mobile phone is a nightmare, so please excuse the lack of editorial information in this issue.

Re-discovery of *Alopecosa fabrilis* at Hankley Common in Surrey

by Mike Waite

Alopecosa fabrilis is an edge-of-range species and apparently very rare in the UK, only ever being recorded at two physiographically related sites in Dorset and one other in Surrey. Moreover these records are now quite old and the 2017 IUCN GB spider review consequently allocated the species a threat status of Critically Endangered. The three sites are all extensive, largely dry and steeply undulating heathland where the wolf spider was found in areas of patchy mature heather juxtaposed with open, stony bare ground. As it happens, some records by the late Dick Jones had subsequently come to



Male *Alopecosa fabrilis* *Alopecosa fabrilis* at Hankley Common. Photograph © Mike Waite



Male *Alopecosa fabrilis* *Alopecosa fabrilis* at Hankley Common. Photograph © Mike Waite

light and were incorporated into the national recording scheme (see srs.britishspiders.org.uk) which indicated that Dorset's Morden Heath had been the most recent site and not Hankley as previously thought.

I began my quest to re-find the Great Fox-spider in late 2018, after our VC recorder Jonty Denton threw me a gauntlet in characteristic fashion earlier that year. I started by nocturnal hand-searching and used up quite a bit of head-torch battery time as this site is truly vast. Last year I began some limited pit-falling and focussed on the area where *A. fabrilis* was last seen in 1993, but an immature *A. barbipes* was the closest I got. This year I have been part-time furloughed with my employer the Surrey Wildlife Trust, which has allowed me far more time as a *bona fide* field ecologist. So I set myself a task to update various aging records for all sorts of BAP priority/S.41 wildlife on our nature reserves and have had a fair degree of success. I decided to approach *A. fabrilis* more methodically this year and whilst on a walkover to locate suitable pit-falling areas I came across a (relatively) tiny immature *Alopecosa* which bore several strong pointers to *A. fabrilis*. Here then was where I would concentrate my trapping and on 2nd September 2020 my first mature male showed up. Trapping (without preservative) has continued and I have had several more since, though so far all males. The by-catch has been impressive too, including the rare *Zelotes petrensis*,



Possible *Alopecosa fabrilis* immature, Hankley Common. Photograph © Mike Waite

Attulus saltator, *Scotina gracilipes*, *Atypus affinis*, *Xerolycosa nemoralis*, *Cheiracanthium virescens*, *Poeciloneta variegata* and *Eratigena agrestis*, a few of which are new to the site while most of the others have not been seen for some while. I feel the original 'slip-trenches' locality has now probably lost *A. fabrilis* due to habitat maturation and loss of the bare sand-faces created by military training of yesteryear. A strong population of

Oxyopes heterophthalmus is present here though, with mature females still guarding egg-sacs well into August.

Now I have a proven technique, my hope is to seek out new sites for this impressive lycosid in suitable habitat on neighbouring Frensham and Thursley Commons.

Surrey Wildlife Trust, School Lane, Pirbright, Surrey GU24 0JN; email: mike.waite@surreywt.org.uk

***Neriene emphana* (Walckenaer, 1841) discovered in Kent**

by Tylan Berry

On the morning of 10th August 2020, I was casually scrolling through the posts on the British Spider Identification page on Facebook when photos taken by member John Draper of a strange looking Linyphiid caught my eye. It appeared similar to the larger and lighter species of the Linyphiidae family but the abdomen was a much brighter white. Such was the excellence of John's photography that the dorsal shot of the spider clearly revealed a characteristic abdominal pattern that is described in both Jones (1985) and Roberts (1995) for *Neriene emphana*: three transverse black bars at the posterior of the abdomen. There was little doubt in my mind that John had discovered something special!



Neriene emphana female. Photograph © John Draper

Neriene emphana has previously only been seen on one occasion in the UK in 2000, when a single female was taken by beating Holly in Brighstone Forest on the Isle of Wight (Dawson & Merrett, 2002). It is largely described as a woodland species that creates its sheet web on the lower branches of trees (Jones, 1985; Roberts, 1995), with Dawson & Merrett (2002) suggesting a possible connection with Beech and confirming that the Brighstone Forest location contained many Beech trees. The spider that John had found was located away from the original Isle of Wight find, at Denge Wood in Kent, and indeed the web was spun at the terminal branches of a Beech. After contacting John to gain a greater understanding of the find, it became apparent that more



Neriene emphana female. Photograph © John Draper

than one specimen was seen at the location and, fantastically, John was prepared to return to Denge Wood to locate a specimen that could be sent to me for verification.

No time was wasted and on 12th August 2020 I received a female spider from John that was an exact match to the photograph of the live spider in Jones (1985), and identified microscopically as *Neriene emphana*. Details of the find were passed to Peter Harvey, to be added to the Spider Recording Scheme, and Tony Russell-Smith, who has since located specimens at the nearby Blean Wood in Kent. It is suggested (Dawson & Merrett, 2002) that *Neriene emphana* is a recent colonist and it is likely that the Kent records are also recent arrivals as the county's spider fauna is well recorded (Harvey, 2020). Hopefully more locations will be discovered for this species in time and I for one will certainly be paying closer attention to those sheet webs in woodland trees that are very easily passed off as yet more *Linyphia triangularis*!



Neriene emphana web. Photograph © John Draper

My thanks to John for swiftly returning to Denge Wood and sending me a specimen for verification and also for allowing the use of his excellent photographs of the spiders.

References

Jones, D. 1985. *The Country Life Guide to Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*. 3rd ed. Middlesex: Country Life.

- Roberts, M. J. 1995. *The Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*. Collins Field Guides. London: HarperCollins.
- Dawson, I. & Merrett, P. 2002. *Neriene emphana* (Walckenaer, 1841), a linyphiid spider new to Britain (Araneae: Linyphiidae). *Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **12**: 295-296.
- Harvey, P.R. 2020. Editorial. *SRS News 96*. In *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* **147**: 2.

29 Pentewan Road, St. Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5BU.
Email: tylan_berry@msn.com

***Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 New to Caernarvonshire, North Wales, with notes on identifying females of all three British *Episinus* species**

by Richard C. Gallon

During the compilation of the latest British spider checklist (Lavery, 2019), Alastair asked me about a number of species which might just make it onto the Welsh list. *Episinus maculipes* was one of these species, but at the time no Welsh records could be found. There were English records from the Gloucestershire side of the River Wye, but all were on the wrong side of the border to count on a Welsh checklist.

On the 28th July 2020 I was brushing my teeth at my bedroom sink and noticed a spider shinning up the wall (Craig-y-Don, Llandudno, SH797814). Initially I assumed it was just a *Zygiella x-notata* that had come in through an open window, its annulated legs being very obvious. However, this spider was far more nimble on its silk dragline than an araneid, so I gave it closer attention. Peering at it through the sample pot I realised it was an *Episinus* sp., but far more patterned than those I had seen previously. In the morning, my suspicion that it was an adult female *Episinus maculipes* were confirmed microscopically (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. *Episinus maculipes* adult female from Llandudno, North Wales. Photograph © Richard Gallon

Although *Episinus maculipes* is now reasonably widespread along the southern part of Britain, and increasing its range, I was surprised that my specimen

was almost 200 km NNW of the nearest SRS record (Fig. 2). However, given that my next-door neighbours had moved here from Devon several years ago, it is quite possible that my specimen's ancestors had arrived on garden plants they had brought with them. At the time I thought this was the first Welsh record of this species, however I have since discovered that George Tordoff has found it near Caerphilly in South Wales on the 21st June 2020.

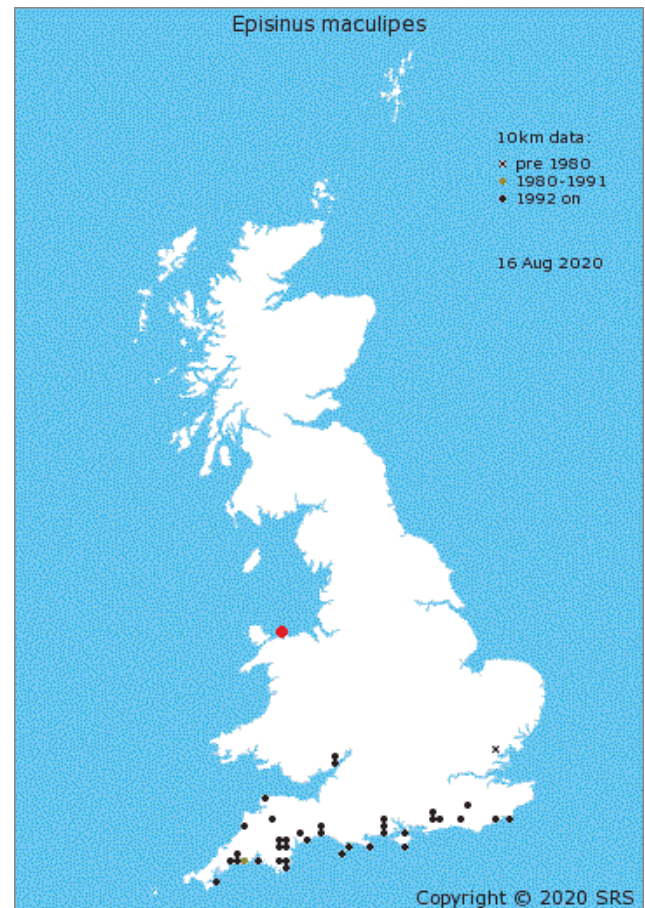


Figure 2. *Episinus maculipes* British distribution, showing the Llandudno record in red (SRS website)

There are three British *Episinus* species; *E. angulatus* is widespread, but both *E. maculipes* and *E. truncatus* are distinctly southern in their distributions. Llandudno now represents the most northerly locations for both *E. maculipes* and *E. truncatus* in Britain.

I rarely come across *Episinus* specimens and admit to finding their identification using British literature somewhat arduous. I think this is largely down to the way key colouration differences are rendered in words, rather than more user-friendly diagrams or clear comparative photos. To help clarify these colouration differences I have taken photographs of the females of all three species (Fig. 3). *Episinus* epigynes are not always that distinctive, so colouration differences play a significant role in the identification of all three species.

Some of the more obvious colouration differences are highlighted and should be used in combination for identification, referring to Figure 3. As with all species, some colour variation is to be expected. Particular care should be taken with freshly moulted specimens that have not developed their patterning fully.

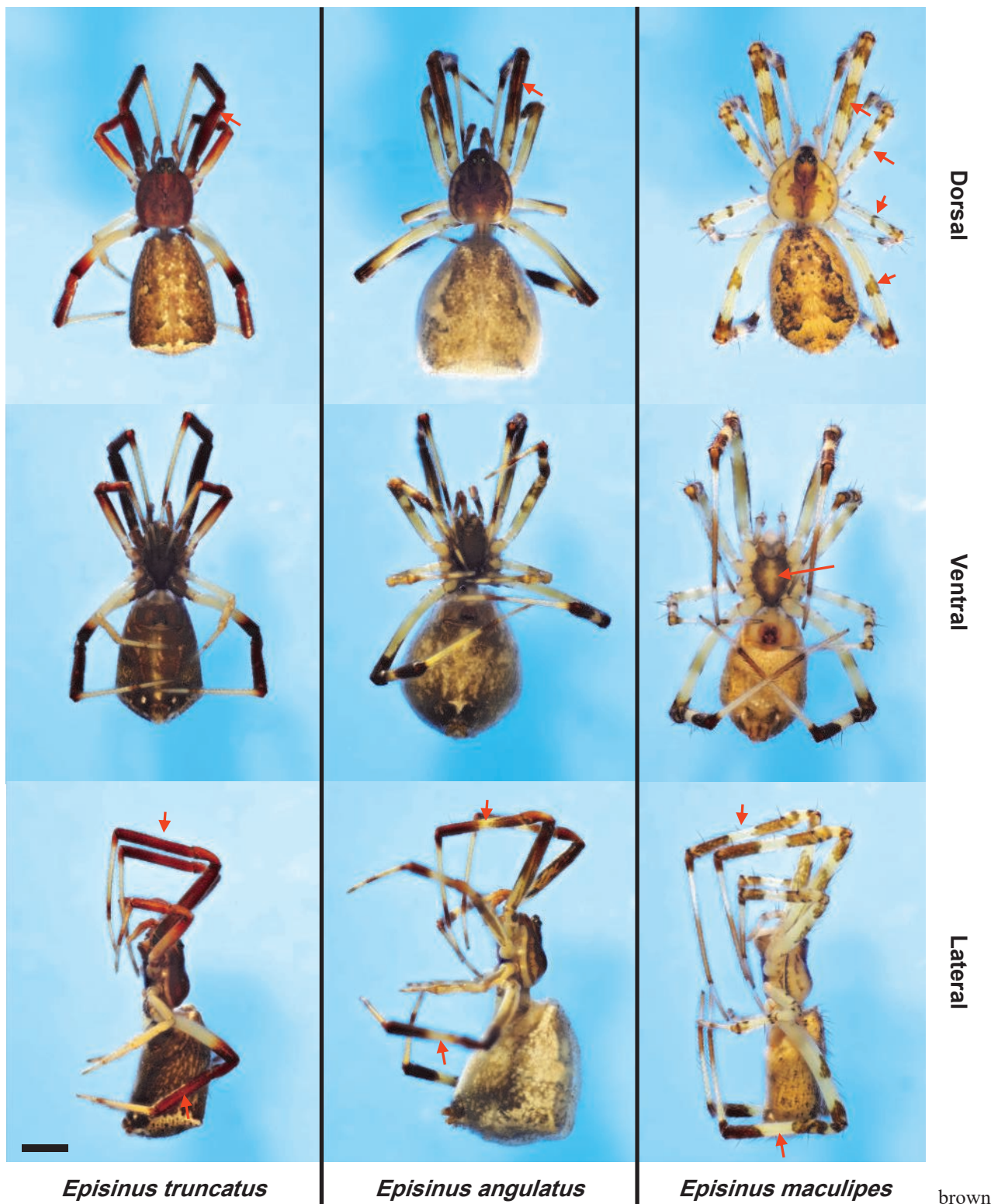


Figure 3. Adult female *Episinus* species from North Wales: *E. truncatus* (Great Orme); *E. angulatus* (Llanrwst); *E. maculipes* (Craig-y-Don, Llandudno). Particularly useful identification markings arrowed. Scale 1 mm.

***Episinus maculipes* (adult female)**

- Dark dorsal marking in the middle of each leg femur in *E. maculipes* (not present in *E. angulatus* or *E. truncatus*).
- Sternum with a pale mid-band in *E. maculipes* (sternum uniformly dark in *E. angulatus* and *E. truncatus*). Note that small immature *E. angulatus* can also have a pale sternal mid-band!

***Episinus truncatus* (adult female)**

- Tibiae of front and rear legs uniformly chestnut

in *E. truncatus* (with a pale annulation in the middle of the front and rear tibiae in *E. maculipes* and *E. angulatus*).

***Episinus angulatus* (adult female)**

- Dorsal surface of front femurs dark in the distal two-thirds in *E. angulatus* (front femur entirely dark in *E. truncatus*). In *E. maculipes* the dorsal surface of the front femur is marked with alternating dark-pale-dark-pale markings).

Reference

Lavery, A. 2019. A revised checklist of the spiders of Great Britain and Ireland. *Arachnology* **18**: 196–212.

23a Roumania Crescent, LLANDUDNO, North Wales, LL30 1UP; e-mail: rgallon47@gmail.com

Sibianor larae Logunov, 2001 (Salticidae): a third British location and first for Scotland

by Robert Merritt

On 24 August 2020 I recorded two immature *Sibianor larae* at Dergoals Moss (Figs. 1 & 2), NX255601, a lowland peat-moor in The Machars area of the former county of Wigtownshire (Vc74), now Dumfries and Galloway.

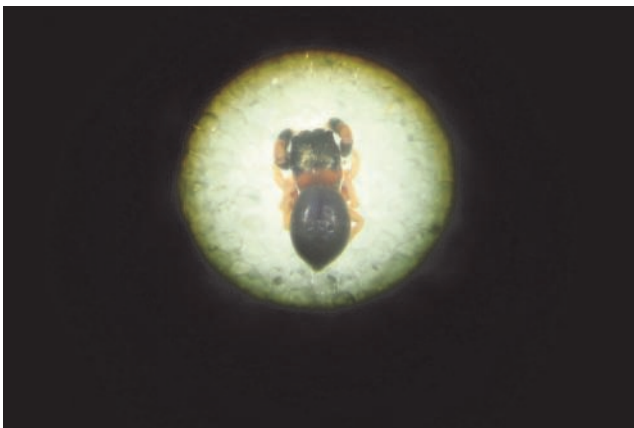


Fig. 1. Juvenile *Sibianor larae* from Dergoals Moss. Photograph © R. Merritt



Fig. 2. Juvenile *Sibianor larae* from Dergoals Moss. Photograph © R. Merritt

S. larae was recently described as a distinct species by Dmitri Logunov in 2001. Previously, it had been misidentified as *S. aurocinctus* (Ohlert, 1865). Apart from differences in the genitalia, the two species also differ in the colour of the patellae on the forelegs, this being red in *S. larae* but dark brown in *S. aurocinctus*. This feature was clearly evident in my two specimens.

Prior to its discovery at Dergoals Moss, *S. larae* had been recorded at only two sites in Britain, namely Holcroft Moss in the vice-county of South Lancashire (Vc59), now in Cheshire, where it was found on various dates in 2018, and Kirkby Moss, also in Vc59, from where two museum specimens of *S. aurocinctus* dated 8 September 1924 were re-identified in 2018 by Dmitri Logunov (Burkmar & Gallon, 2019).

The two specimens at Dergoals Moss were obtained by swinging a long-handled pond-net through low vegetation which included *Molinia caerulea*, *Myrica gale*, *Trichophorum germanicum*, *Carex* spp., *Juncus* spp., *Menyanthes trifoliata* and *Erica tetralix*. I returned on 30 August in order to take a photograph of the site (Fig. 3). Despite sweeping the same area of the moss for approximately 45 minutes, using a standard sweep-net, I failed to find any more *S. larae*. Of the 20 taxa I recorded during the two visits, three others are of interest for their regional scarcity, namely *Agalenatea redii* (Scopoli), *Hypsosinga pygmaea* (Sundevall) and *Hypselistes*



Fig. 3. Dergoals Moss, Wigtownshire, site for *Sibianor larae*. Photograph © R. Merritt

jacksoni (O. Pickard-Cambridge).

It is interesting to note that an immature specimen of a salticid, identified as a possible *Sibianor aurocinctus* with a note to return during the adult season, was collected by Chris Cathrine and Glen Norris at Carsegowan Moss, NX425590, Wigtownshire, on 23 September 2014 (Peter Harvey, pers. comm.). It is quite possible, even probable, that this specimen would have represented the first confirmed record of *S. larae* in Scotland.

I thank Dmitri Logunov for confirming the identity of my *S. larae* specimens from photographs.

References

Sibianor larae Logunov, 2001 a Salticidae new to Britain, with notes on *Heliophanus dampfi* Schenkel, 1923 and other spiders from Holcroft Moss SSSI.

46 Dalbeattie Road, Dumfries, DG2 7PL; email: merritt321@uwclub.net

Egg sac incubation in the ground crab spider *Xysticus* species

by Tone Killick

On the 25/4/20 I was at the local balancing pond near my home in Gloucester and whilst checking the numerous bulrush seed heads (*Typha* sp.) that littered the ground I came across a huge *Xysticus* species (figs. 1 & 2).



Figures 1 & 2. *Xysticus* species on *Typha* seed head.
Photographs © Tone Killick

This ground crab spider was by far the largest I had seen and I don't exaggerate when I say she was *Misumena vatia* proportions. She was obviously gravid and surprisingly, I had never observed egg incubation in this species so decided to collect the specimen. I gathered some moss and other plant debris then proceeded home. Her new home was a large deli container and I added the plant material that I had collected from the pond. In went the spider and the container was placed on the windowsill and now it would be a matter of waiting. During the month that the observations would last Gloucester had average highs of 64°F and lows of 49°F. It was generally a very nice month. I didn't have to wait long for the magic to happen as two days later on the 27/4/20 the *Xysticus* species produced her egg (fig. 3).

Unfortunately I didn't get to observe the egg sac being produced as I was at my usual spot at the pond. The egg sac is brilliant white and lenticular shaped, somewhat like a comfy cushion albeit of Lilliputians proportions. Once completed the female will guard it vigilantly, seeing off any potential predators as we shall see later.. It was also at this time that I removed the lid of the container as I knew that she would not leave her egg sac and it's precious contents unguarded (fig. 4).



Figure 3. *Xysticus* sp. on freshly produced egg sac.
Photograph © Tone Killick



Figure 4. *Xysticus* species enclosure.
Photograph © Tone Killick

Over the following couple of weeks I checked on the female several times a day, somewhat like an expectant father. During this time I introduced prey items, but these were refused everytime. At one point she had a fly walk across her carapace and she threw her two front legs up and pretty much said "get out of here!". On the 14/5/20, 17 days after she had produced her egg sac I took several more photos but there wasn't any visual change in the egg sac (fig. 5).



Figure 5. *Xysticus* species still guarding egg sac.
Photograph © Tone Killick

It was on the 21/5/20 that things changed! I looked into the container and the egg sac seemed to have a split along the seam. Did I mention earlier that *Xysticus* species were very protective of their egg sacs? Well. I needed to get a

shot of the split in the egg sac but there was moss obscuring the opening. I took a small paintbrush to clean away the moss and immediately the female crab spider made a strike at the offending item. Again I attempt to move the moss but this time she strikes and holds firm. Now I'm wondering, would she do the same to my finger and Yes, she defended her young as any other mother would rightly do (fig. 6). For the record, although it is a strange feeling having a spider hanging off my finger, I felt no pain which isn't surprising as *Xysticus* fangs are tiny.



Figure 6. A not too happy female *Xysticus* species.
Photograph © Tone Killick

After extricating my finger from mother, I got the shot of the split in the egg sac and you know, I'm not sentimental with regards to spiders and please don't mention cute but I'm at a lost for words to describe the little one peeking out of the egg sac (fig. 7).



Figure 7. *Xysticus* spiderling peeking out of the egg sac.
Photograph © Tone Killick

I kept up observations through the day but it seems that the young were quite content inside the egg sac and it wasn't until the following day 22/5/20 that they emerged on mass (figs. 8). On the morning of the 23/5/20 I checked on the enclosure and the female was missing from the egg sac! Lo and behold she was sitting on the rim of the container which was a blessing for me, because I got to capture a photo of the egg sac and spiderlings without her obscuring my shot (fig. 9).

That night I decided to replace the lid of the deli pot considering how active the female and her young were



Figures 8-9. Emerging spiderlings.
Photographs © Tone Killick

and I made the right decision. I woke the following morning 24/5/20 to find that the spiderlings had all left the egg sac and were now hanging from the lid and sides of the container. It was now time to return the female and her spiderlings to the pond. That morning I headed off to the pond and released them into a clump of grass and as is usual with *Xysticus* species had a look of perpetual grumpiness on her face (fig. 10). To clarify, the egg sac incubation period was 25 days and the spiderlings dispersed within three days of emerging from the egg sac.



Figure 10. *Xysticus* species showing the perpetual look of grumpiness. Photograph © Tone Killick

Email: tillick@hotmail.com