

OPILIONES (HARVEST-SPIDER) RECORDING SCHEME

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The Provisional atlas of the harvest-spiders of the British Isles is now published, and a complimentary copy is enclosed with this newsletter.

The coverage map on page 16 of the Atlas shows the distribution of the numbers of species recorded on the 10 km square grid, using the categories of 1-7, 8-14 and 15 or more. The map is clearly representative of the distribution of harvest-spider recorders and where they take their holidays. Nevertheless the greatest number of recorded species is in the squares of south-east England, but even here there are a lot of squares where not more than seven species have been found, and where obviously there must be more. No comment is needed on the blank areas, some of which, like parts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales are totally unrecorded. Please use this map to determine the location of your next holiday!

Another recorder comments on the abundance of Odiellus spinosus (Bosc). Pam Copson from the Warwickshire Museum writes 'very numerous' at Emscote Old Power Station, SP (42) 299655, Warwickshire, on waste ground, 12 September 1987. Perhaps one day a graduate will get a PhD from this continuing saga. Denis Owen's score from Leicester in 1987 was 111 or 94.% of the total number of Opiliones taken in pitfalls from 1 April to 31 October. The total number of his O. spinosus is somewhat down on 1986 (182), but perhaps the poor summer of last year didn't suit it as it didn't me!

The story of the Linnean Society's Synopsis (still no 4) is as long as the legs of a Leiobunum. Paul Hillyard has made a magnificent contribution both in text and figures, but we are informed it may not be published until 1990. I can't think of a suitable Latin tag, but perhaps too many readers can translate Latin anyway! Identification is a central theme of these synopses, so in consultation with Paul Hillyard I intend to look into the possibility of reproducing a modern key with illustrations in a shorter time which would enable recorders to continue their good work. Meanwhile I am still willing to help if you have reasonably-preserved specimens with full data (and stamp for return please if required).

Mitopus also has long legs as well as a long saga; but despite the length of legs, of the male organ and differences of other bits and pieces, M. ericaeus will appear in the new synopsis (unless something dramatic happens before 1990) as a variety of M. morio and not as a distinct species. Amanda Randall (née Jennings) has done some excellent work on this genus, but we felt that there was not sufficient distinction between morio and ericaeus to warrant placing the latter under a distinct species, particularly as we have seen some intermediate forms. According to the rules of the nomenclature game, M. ericaeus could not be placed as a subspecies of M. morio as both occur together. But Paul and I would still like to see more specimens from high mountain areas and from anywhere in Ireland.

I am sure we are all most grateful to Paul Harding and Brian Eversham for the excellent work they have done in the production of the atlas. Let's see if we can show our appreciation by filling in more of the gaps this year.

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