

OPILIONES (HARVEST-SPIDER) RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No.8 - July 1989

The annual test score, i.e. Odiellus spinosus from Denis Owen's garden in Leicester, in round figures, was only 79% of the total pitfall catch in 1988 in contrast to 94% of the previous year. By any standard this is a remarkably high figure for a species apparently near the northern limit of its range. It still remains to be explained.

The Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, Surrey (0306 -883849) has a weekend course on harvestmen, 15 - 17 September (Friday to Sunday) which I have been invited to tutor. And I hope my friend and colleague, Paul Hillyard from the Natural History Museum, will be able to visit us. Identification will feature in this course, but general biology of this group will be included. No previous experience with harvestmen is required and all who are interested will be welcome.

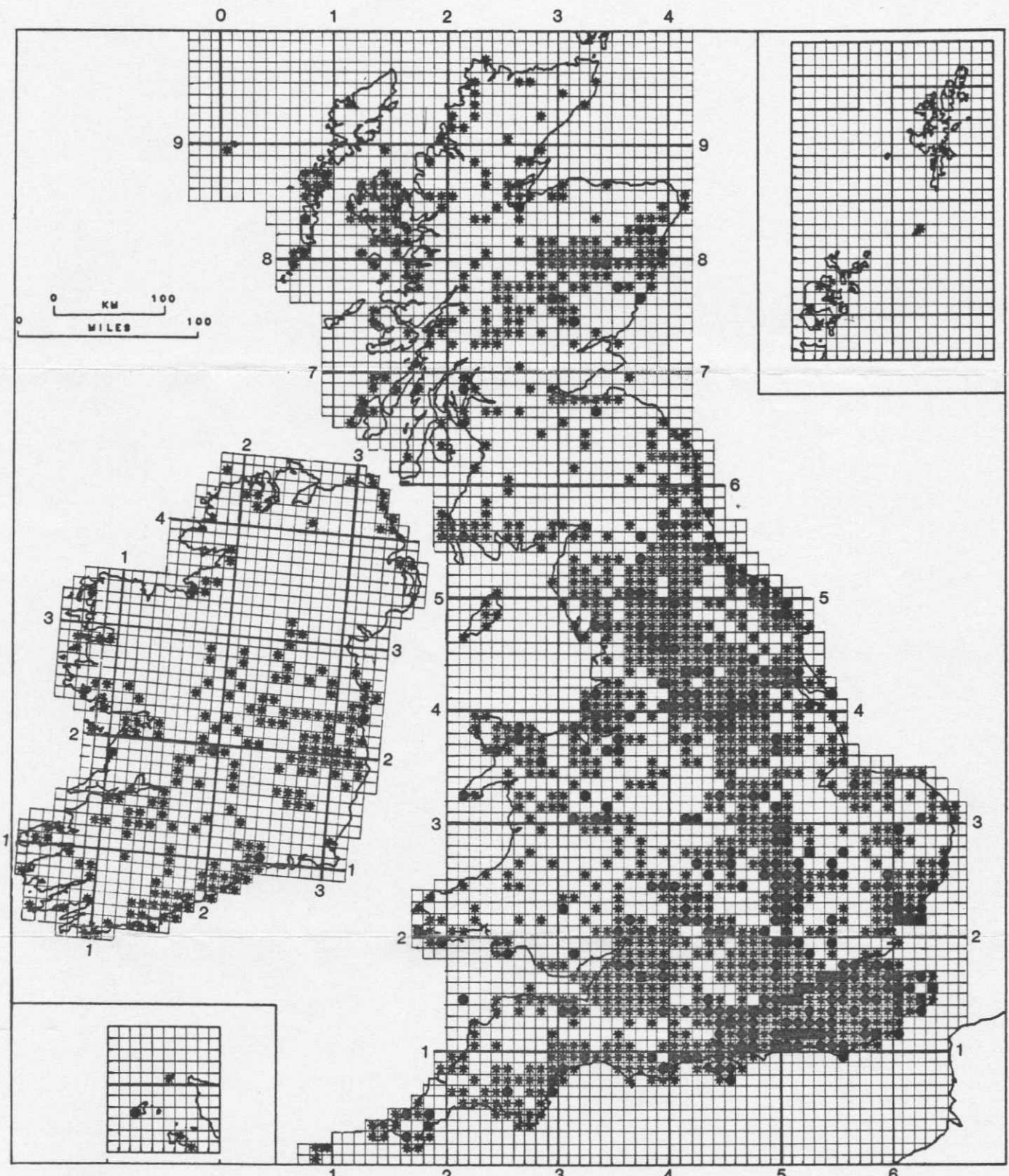
The Linnean Society's Synopsis of the British Fauna No.4 (Opiliones) is due to be published, we are told, by the time of the above mentioned course (Hillyard and Sankey are the authors incase you've forgotten!). We have no other details. Keep your palps crossed!

The accompanying map shows where harvestmen recorders have been at work and where they have not. It is taken from the Provisional atlas of the harvest-spiders of the British Isles (Biological Records Centre, NERC, 1988). To find out from the distribution maps in this atlas whether any particular species has been recorded in a square is often no easy matter, due to the necessary small scale of the maps. To help, Brian Eversham has produced a photocopy of the grid overlay in the Atlas of the British Flora (Botanical Society of the British Isles), which at a 4% reduction fits well enough to be used in the harvest-spider atlas. To obtain a copy send 25p plus a stamped addressed envelope - a good sturdy one - at least 15cm x 15cm (6 in. x 6 in.) to Brian at the Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, PE17 2LS. We are grateful to Brian for this help. To advance the mapping scheme its not a bad idea to make a list of the species not recorded (of course you can do it the other way round if you like) from the ten kilometre square(s) in which you are interested, then go out at the right time of the year and look, beat, sieve and grovel and send me lots of well filled record cards (also obtainable - no charge - from the above address). Don't forget that if you run into identification trouble I am willing to help with good, mature, properly preserved specimens and with adequate data.

Obviously a certain amount of common sense must be used about where to look in any present blank square. For example from the atlas it would appear to be improbable that O.spinousus, which from its present distribution is clearly a warmth-lover, would be worth seeking in the Orkneys! But how much further north of Nottingham does it go? And is Dicranopalpus ramosus essentially very southern and as coastal as its known distribution suggests? If so why? Is a climatic factor or factors involved and can these be put to the test experimentally in the laboratory? One thing leads to another!

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Coverage map

- * : 1-7 species recorded
- : 8-15 species recorded
- : 16 or more species recorded