

# Spider Recording Scheme News

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

CUK: fah



## Editorial

by Richard Gallon

As you'll now be aware my role at the BAS has changed and I've taken on the position of National Scheme Organiser for the SRS. Peter Harvey and Matt Prince have both been extremely helpfully and supportive, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for patiently answering my torrent of queries about running and maintaining the SRS!

I'm pleased to report that the main BAS Newsletter editorship has been passed to the capable hands of Danni Sherwood. I know Danni will do an excellent job here, so I hope you'll continue to supply her with a good range of articles.

I am still the editor for the SRS News, so articles relating to recording spiders in Britain should still be sent to me. Likewise, articles relating to recording British harvestmen should be sent to Meg Skinner.

I'm still trying to get MapMate to function as it should, but I'm hopefully that initial teething problems will be resolved soon. Please ensure you now send your MapMate sync files to me (cuk = fah). The SRS can also take your records in Excel format, but please contact me first so that I can advise you on the correct format.

Remember that we also have a network of vice-county spider recorders (these are listed on the SRS website under 'Area Organisers'). Your vice-county recorder will be able to help with regional identification queries and recording advice. You are also very welcome to contact me directly about identification difficulties. I'll either be able to confirm your identifications of difficult specimens, or advise on who to send them to for a more informed opinion.

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## ***Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* Reaches Leicestershire**

by Alan Cann

In January 2022 I was clearing out my garden pond in Leicester, which had become completely overgrown with Yellow Iris. I removed a plastic planting trough holding Marsh Marigold at the edge of the pond and between the trough and the butyl pond liner found a medium sized brownish spider. At that point, freezing cold, up to my knees in stinking pond water and sliding all over the place, I didn't pay it too much attention. But a spider is a spider, so I took the inevitable collecting tube out of my pocket and potted it for later examination (Fig. 1).

My initial thought was that this was a small *Metellina merianae* as they seem to favour plastic planters in my garden. However, this was not the case, so I then assumed it was probably *Lepthyphantes minutus*. I took a few photographs and the markings on the prosoma led me to *Megalephyphantes*. *Megalephyphantes nebulosus* is



Figure 1. *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* adult female © Alan Cann.

moderately common in VC55 (Leicestershire and Rutland), but the epigyne did not look quite right (Fig. 2). Male *Megalephyphantes* are easier to distinguish from each other than females, but I only had a single female specimen. Richard Gallon was kind enough to confirm the spider as *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* from the specimen.

This record represents a considerable northwards range expansion for this synanthropic spider, although the possibility exists that some earlier records, particularly females, may have been misidentified as *M. nebulosus*. In previous days, I had added the contents of some plastic sacks of topsoil around the margin of the pond, so it is possible that the spider came to me via a large DIY chain. Unless further specimens turn up it is impossible to know if this species is now established in Leicestershire.



Figure 2. *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* epigyne © Alan Cann.

**Reference**

BAS SRS summary for *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus*:  
<https://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Megalephyphantes+sp.+near+collinus>

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## Records of Adult Male *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) in January From the United Kingdom (Araneae: Theridiidae)

by Danniella Sherwood

On 23/01/2022 I observed an adult male *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) on the doorframe of my bedroom in North London (Fig. 1). This spider is common in the London area, but I was unable to recall seeing an adult male at that time of year. A subsequent consultation of Spider Recording Scheme (2022) data revealed only five previous records (Table 1) of adult males in January. I decided to explore potential further records by reviewing all the British *Steatoda* records on the citizen scientist website iNaturalist and determine those which were adult males of *S. nobilis*. Observations where specimens could not be definitively determined as adult males or indeed as *S. nobilis* (i.e. of poor quality, blurry, or photographed from unorthodox angles) were excluded from the analysis. A total of 13 other new records of adult males were thereby verified (Table 2). As a result, inclusive of Spider Recording Scheme (2022), iNaturalist and the author's own observation, a total of 19 records of adult males of *S. nobilis* found in January in the United Kingdom. Most records were from buildings (domestic or commercial), and it is possible that adequately heated (or at least protected from the elements) environments might currently enable adult males to survive for longer over winter following maturity. Nonetheless, several records were from outdoors (albeit on artificial structures) and the likely impact of global warming in the future ought not to



Figure 1. Adult male *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) found in January in North London. © D. Sherwood.

be ignored, especially for populations in the South East. Adult males may be under-recorded in January across the whole United Kingdom, both indoors and outdoors, as

**Table 1.** Records of adult male *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) in January from the Spider Recording Scheme.

Date	Grid Ref.	Location	Recorder
04/01/2004	TQ842857	Leigh-on-Sea, Essex	Nick Chandler
11/01/2006	ST099665	The Knap, South Wales	Gregory H. Jones
12/01/2014	SX917926	Exeter, Devon	M. Prince and N. Bacciu
12/01/2017	SK811524	Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire	Craig Brown
17/01/2017	SO863156	Upton Saint Leonards, Gloucestershire	Tone Killick

**Table 2:** Records of adult male *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) in January, from iNaturalist, verified by the author.

Date	Grid reference	Latitude, Longitude (approx.)	Location	Recorder (username)	Notes
26/01/2019	TQ943876	51.554133, 0.801362	Southend-On-Sea, Essex	Jarvo (jarvo)	
21/01/2020	TL441578	52.199688, 0.107853	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire	(adealy)	
21/01/2020	TL441578	52.199688, 0.107853	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire	(adealy)	<sup>1</sup>
24/01/2020	TL991692	52.285202, 0.918522	Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk	Dan Baxter (dan264)	
12/01/2021	ST626735	51.459686, -2.538566	Bristol, Bristol	(skylark)	
18/01/2021	TQ641149	50.911117, 0.332858	High Weald, East Sussex	Olly Morgan (ollymorgan)	
23/01/2021	TL464576	52.197252, 0.141648	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire	(veroicon)	
31/01/2021	SO864050	51.744259, -2.197847	Stroud, Gloucestershire	(branrop)	
01/01/2022	SD417087	53.572103, -2.880479	Ormskirk, Lancashire	Ryan Parker (rypar22)	
01/01/2022	TL250268	51.926363, -0.183428	Stevenage, Hertfordshire	Nath Trystan (nathtrystan)	
13/01/2022	TF113295	52.851975, -0.347425	Bourne, Lincolnshire	Andy Workman (andyworkman)	
20/01/2022	TL395671	52.285145, 0.043715	Ladywalk, Cambridgeshire	Richard Jenkins (rkbjenkins)	
??/01/2022	N/A	N/A	Kent	Sharon (swiftlet)	<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Appears to show different specimen to that in other observation on same day. <sup>2</sup> Non-precise, obscured, grid reference given and no exact day given. Names given where known, otherwise username is given only.

recording of spiders in general is lower in the winter months. Thus, the current paucity of data may be an artefact, but this is merely speculation.

Spider Recording Scheme (2022) data indicates that August and September are the peak months for maturity of adult male *S. nobilis*. This is also consistent with my own observations of *S. nobilis* in the south of England over a period of more than 10 years. Comparison of the 19 records from January discussed here with broader data from the Spider Recording Scheme (2022) show January recording levels are most similar to March, but relatively low numbers of males are also recorded in February, April, and May. Somewhat curiously, May has the least number of records of adult males.

It will be interesting to see if increased recording, and the progression of global warming, will result in these months of comparative paucity seeing numerous new records of adult males by the end of the current decade.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Luis F. de Armas (San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba) and Peter Harvey (Essex, United Kingdom) for comments on an early draft of the manuscript.

#### Reference

Spider Recording Scheme 2022. *Spider Recording Scheme*, online at: srs.britishspiders.org.uk

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## New Species to Cornwall, VCs 1 & 2, for the Spider Recording Scheme in 2020

by Tylan Berry

*Argenna subnigra* (Fig. 1) – Single specimens were found at maritime grassland locations under stones at Kynance Cove and Kiberick Cove, and amongst heather in the dry maritime heath at Cligga Head. It was also found in good numbers amongst litter at a coastal reedbed near the beach at Holywell Bay.

*Hahnia helveola* – It was initially located by sieving ground moss under mature conifers at the Cardinaham Woods plantation and has since been found via the same method in similar habitats at Laneskin Wood and Idless



Figure 1. *Argenna subnigra*. © Tylan Berry.



Figure 2. Cardinaham Woods – An area of steep south-facing valley side where *Thuidium* moss covers the ground underneath mature spruce trees. Moss and litter in this specific area in the woods has produced *Scotina celans*, *Hahnia helveola*, *Agyneta ramosa*, *Saaristoa firma*, *Gongyliidiellum latebricola*, *Monocephalus castaneipes*, *Sintula corniger*, *Centromerus serratus* and the young spruce had *Hyptiotes paradoxus*. © Tylan Berry.

Woods. Away from the woodland habitat, a single female was also found in damp *Molinia* at a lowland bog at Red Moor nature reserve.

*Agyneta ramosa* – First found amongst ground litter and moss in damp willow carr at the Breney Common nature reserve, it has subsequently been located at similar wet woodland locations at the Goss Moor and Cabilla & Redrice Woods nature reserves, as well as in moss under conifers at Cardinaham Woods (Fig. 2) and on the Lizard Peninsula.

*Agyneta saxatilis sens. str.* – This was found in large numbers at two upland sites on Bodmin Moor: in the Withybrook area, where it occurs in the wet mires and the dryer valley slopes, and in the Roughtor area, where it was found on the high exposed areas of the moor.

*Agyneta simplicatarsis* – This species has only been located on two isolated south-facing headlands, Black Head and Pencarrow Head (Fig. 3), where it occurred in grassy clifftops within 50 m of the sea and was surprisingly abundant. The sites are situated either side of the St. Austell Bay area and further searches have failed to reveal the spider's presence, both at similar grassy headlands inbetween the sites and at apparently suitable habitat further afield.

*Entelecara acuminata* – This was found whilst carrying out a garden survey in St. Austell in spring where it was beaten from small field layer shrubs in a suburban garden. It hasn't been located at any further sites, but its presence persists at the original location.

*Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* – A male was collected from inside a house in St. Austell in 2017, only recently identified, and a female was found in a garden in Porthleven in 2020 (Aidan Botha). No further specimens have been located at either location.

*Saaristoa firma* (Fig. 4) – A single specimen was found amongst ground moss in woodland at the Cabilla & Redrice Woods nature reserve. It has since been located in this type of habitat at a handful of mature conifer plantations in good numbers, including: Cardinaham



Figure 3. Pencarrow Head – The south-facing maritime slope of Pencarrow Head looking to the west. This was the second site for *Agyneta simplicatarsis* after its initial find at Black Head which is hidden from view in the distance. It is surprising that the species has not been found away from these two locations as this warm maritime slope is a habitat that is in abundance in Cornwall. © Tylan Berry.



Figure 4. *Saaristoa firma* adult female. © T. Berry.



Figure 5. *Satilatlas britteni* adult female. © T. Berry.

Woods, Idless Woods and Ladock Wood. It is often collected alongside *Centromerus serratus* by sieving *Thuidium* at this type of woodland.

*Satilatlas britteni* (Fig. 5) – This was initially found as a single female amongst moss under willow carr at the edge of a small bog at the Breney Common nature reserve, but further visits to the site have failed to re-find it there. It has however been located nearby at a more open bog at Lowerton Moor where it was seen frequently amongst very wet *Sphagnum*. More recently it has been collected amongst wet *Sphagnum* in boggy pools at Crowdy and Roughtor Marshes on Bodmin Moor and at Goss Moor.

*Walckenaeria cucullata* – This has only been found at Idless Woods where it occurred amongst dense moss under conifer trees. Despite the similarities of the habitat at Idless Woods to other locations that have been well-surveyed, it has not been recorded at any other seemingly suitable sites in Cornwall.

*Scotina celans* – Another species that has been found at conifer plantations at Idless Woods and Cardinham Woods, where it was abundant amongst damp leaf litter and moss.

*Philodromus praedatus* (Fig. 8) – So far, this species has only been recorded twice by beating oak foliage at the Breney Common nature reserve. It is unlikely that it is restricted to this area, but further searches of oak trees at nearby woodland and parkland areas have failed to locate further specimens.

*Psilochorus simoni* – This was found at ground level in a damp external storage annex in a residential area of St. Austell. Historical records of populations have since come to light from the Redruth area (Laura Fox), and it is likely that it is established elsewhere.

*Parasteatoda lunata* – A female was spotted in a web which was situated between the posts on the sides of a wooden footbridge in Cardinham Woods. It hasn't been relocated since at the site, but has been found by beating oak at Breney Common and the Lanhydrock Estate and found in webs between pillars in outbuildings at Lethytop Gardens.

*Hyptiotes paradoxus* (Fig. 9) – A single immature was found in March 2020 by beating dead bracken at Cardinham Woods. Subsequent follow up searches to the site revealed a mature female in June by beating the lower branches of young spruce trees. It has yet to be located away from this small area of the Cardinham Woods complex.

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## HARVESTMAN RECORDING SCHEME NEWS

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## “Opiliotrays” a Simple Shelter-trap for Finding Harvestmen and Other Invertebrates

by Bryan Dickinson

A chance encounter with an eye-level *Megabunus diadema* in February 2021 sparked my interest in Harvestmen, and after watching Paul Richard's series of YouTube presentations on UK Harvestmen I was hooked. As a newbie I am keen not only to identify different species, but also to learn more about their geographic distribution and how their numbers might change through the seasons. Cue lots of ‘mooching’ around the garden and inspecting of house walls...

I have searched through vegetation and leaf litter and have tried pit-fall traps and Mike Towns' tree-trunk bottle traps (BAS Newsletter No. 151) with some success. However, after a fortnight of rain, going out with a sweep net was hopeless – all I was getting was a lot of soggy

leaves, so an alternative approach was needed. Clearly any sensible harvestman would shelter from the downpours if they could, so perhaps I would be able to find them more easily if suitable shelters could be provided. After a few false starts, what I came up with was what I jokingly called the ‘Opiliotray’. This comprises a standard 30-cell cardboard egg-tray, covered with a rigid plastic sheet to prevent the tray getting too soggy (Fig. 1). The ideal cover is a 30-cell solid plastic egg-tray, but these can be very difficult to source. An alternative is 2 mm plastic sheeting (available from DIY stores as large sheets for floor protection), cut into 30 x 30 cm squares and tied onto the top of the egg-trays with string.

I place the trays directly onto the ground or low vegetation and put a stone or small branch on top to prevent the trays being blown away. Due to the shape of the egg-trays the cells underneath are accessible from all sides, provided they are placed gently and are not weighted down too much. I have been using up to 20 of these trays at a time in various areas of the garden and a local woodland. They have been a reliable means of finding harvestmen and many other types of invertebrates that take the opportunity to use them as a refuge. When checking, carefully turn the trays over, supporting the cardboard with the plastic cover, scan the edges first in case anything is escaping, and then the rest of the cells (Fig. 2). A fine paintbrush can be used to transfer any harvestmen into a collection pot for closer inspection. If the intention is to leave the trays out for more than a week it is useful to set them back in a slightly different position so that the vegetation does not suffer.

#### Advantages:

- Cheap (egg-trays are often available free on some of the online swap/recycle sites, but usually cost a few pence each, especially if bought in bulk). Each tray with its cover comes to 30–40p
- Non-lethal – as they only act as shelters, the harvestmen can freely come and go, so it doesn’t matter how long you leave them between visits.
- Simple to set up – if a standardised protocol is followed, they could be used to compare species presence between different sites or over time. Might be a great school project?
- Useful for sampling other species too – many other arachnids and small invertebrates also use them (similar refuge traps are also used for monitoring slugs and various pest species).
- Can be used all year round – they seem to work in all seasons and may even be more productive when the weather is cold or very wet.

#### Disadvantages:

- Slugs can eat into them, and they do eventually become quite soggy – though I have some which have been left out for several months and are still working well. Possibly treating the trays with a brine solution might reduce slug damage.
- They do not pick up the more arboreal, or very long-legged harvestmen as much as the ground dwelling species.
- They are quite visible, so may get ‘disturbed’ by curious passers-by! Dark coloured plastic covers seem to help.

In the four months between October and January the harvestman species I have encountered from a woodland site in North Wales using these trays are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Harvestmen frequency under trays.**

Species	Frequency
<i>Nemastoma bimaculatum</i>	29%
<i>Rilaena triangularis</i>	26%
<i>Paroligolophus agrestis</i>	23%
<i>Lophopilio palpinalis</i>	9%
<i>Leiobunum blackwalli</i>	5%
<i>Mitostoma chrysomelas</i>	4%
<i>Sabacon viscyanum</i>	2%
<i>Megabunus diadema</i>	1%
<i>Leiobunum rotundum</i>	1%
<i>Dicranopalpus</i> sp.	<1%

There are still lots of questions to be answered – for instance: to characterise a site, how many trays are needed? Over what period? Do they work in all habitats? Could they be used in more urban settings? Do different brands of tray make a difference? Would baiting them be useful? Go ahead and try them out (make sure you have the landowner’s permission and remove the trays at the end of your study) – and let us know how you get on!



Figure 1. Tray in position. © Bryan Dickinson.



Figure 2. *Rilaena triangularis* sheltering under a tray. © Bryan Dickinson.

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