

British Arachnological Society



SPIDER RECORDING SCHEME

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1. EDITORIAL.

1.1. Introduction. Having taken the available space in Newsletters 18 and 19 to deal with administrative and computing matters I am pleased to be able to devote this issue, No. 20, to articles received from members. These cover a variety of topics, ranging from a report on the Orford Ness survey to Polysphinctine parasites, and including others on collecting and recording. I am sure members will find these of interest. I hope to distribute Newsletter No. 21 in March next year, and for that issue would welcome more articles on your recording activities which would be of interest to other members. So please, do take a little time to put pen to paper! Thanks are due to all those members who have written to me in the past months enclosing, for example, county lists, new county records and other items of news. I apologise to them for not being able to include more of such items in this issue.

1.2. Provisional Maps. I have mentioned previously that production of the provisional distribution maps in 1997 will depend, in part, on a demonstration that our recording activities have achieved adequate coverage of the country. However, we still have a number of vice-counties from which less than 50 recording cards have been received since we began in 1987 and, indeed, the counties on the following list have returned less than 20 cards: N. Wilts, Monmouth, Hereford, Radnor, Selkirk, Berwick, Perth West, Kincardine, Banff, Dunbarton, Kintyre, E. Sutherland, Orkney and Shetlands. We urgently need more recording in these VC's and if any members are willing to organise a recording weekend (or even a week!), such as the very enjoyable Orford Ness survey of this year, then do please contact me - I can offer help and advice. Unfortunately we are still without Area Organisers for twelve vice-counties (Sussex E. and S., Surrey, Berks, Cambridge, Hereford, Brecon, Radnor, Montgomery, Merioneth, Caernarvon and Notts) and I am looking urgently for volunteers! Suggestions please. One other criterion for the successful production of the provisional maps is the reliability of the data we are accumulating. So, I again make a plea that if there is any doubt about the identity of a specimen then do seek a second opinion, from your Area Organiser or from me. If I am doubtful then I will, in turn, seek further advice.

1.3. Computer Records. I have omitted one or two vice-counties from the above list because I know that, although the number of cards submitted is very low, there are very large numbers of records for those vice-counties stored on computer media. So that I can gauge the extent of records being stored in this way may I repeat my plea (first made in Newsletter No. 18) that Recorders using a computer for this purpose just let me know the approximate number of records they hold, and the software being used. I do need this information and will be very pleased indeed to receive it.

1.4. Recording Cards. As we approach the end of the year I estimate that the number of RA65 cards submitted in 1994 will be about 1500. This is somewhat lower than the figure for 1993, which was itself a little lower than that for 1992. Maybe this reflects an

increasing use of the computer, and perhaps more time spent in the field in recent months (instead of filling in cards), rather than any dampening of enthusiasm, but the dark winter months are upon us now and I look forward to receiving cards in larger numbers, until serious field work begins again in the spring. One final plea is to ask that all sections of the card are completed so that we derive the full value from the work that has gone into it. All too often I find that important information has been missed.

1.5. News of Members.

a). We welcome the following new Recorder who joined recently.

Mr. Andrew Allott, 43 Ridgebourne Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 9AB.

b). The following members have new addresses:

Dr. C.J. Topping, Land Resources Dept., SAC, Doig Scott Building, Craibstone Estate, Aberdeen, AB2 9TQ.

Mr. Jon Daws, 3 Watermill Cottages, Mill Road, Kettleburgh, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 7JS.

Dr. John Dalingwater, 50 Westgate Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9AZ.

Mr. Rod Allison, Skerry Corner, The Grove, Verwood, Dorset, BH31 6EZ.

Mr. Mark Burgess, 92 Fellows Road, London, NW3 3JG.

c). Resignations:

Mr. S. Wilson, Altrincham, Cheshire.

Dr. Colin Butler has resigned as Area Organiser for Cambridgeshire but remains as a Recorder.

2. THE ORFORD NESS SURVEY, JUNE 1994. - Paul Lee.

155, Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4PR.

Glorious sunshine, good company and some exciting arachnological recording were the hallmarks of a most enjoyable S.R.S. weekend on the newly-acquired National Trust property of Orford Ness on the Suffolk coast. Most of the group assembled in the Crown and Castle Hotel, in Orford, on the Friday evening and were joined by Grant Lohoar, the N.T. Warden and Keith Turner, the N.T. Countryside Manager for the area. Keith gave a talk on the history of the Ness, illustrated with some very early maps, and then described the problems facing the Trust as they prepare to open the site to visitors.

The next morning, Saturday 18th. June, more S.R.S. members arrived, making a total of eleven, and were ferried across to the Ness from Orford Quay by the Warden. The Ness forms part of a long shingle spit which diverts the River Ore southwards for several miles before it finally enters the North Sea. Landwards of the shingle a complex of saltmarshes has developed and the whole site has a historical importance due to the military presence up until the acquisition by the N.T. On a minibus tour around the site Grant Lohoar pointed out the various features of interest including the debris and the huge buildings left by the M.O.D.

Collecting began at the southern end of the site where relatively undisturbed shingle was searched on hands and knees. This was a fruitful, if difficult, search resulting in the capture of number of rare and nationally notable species including Zelotes subterraneus, Pardosa agricola, Trichoncus hackmani and Trichoncus affinis. Refreshed by lunch and a welcome drink the group turned its attention to the saltmarsh to the west of the shingle collecting in a transition zone dominated by sea beet on the way. This latter zone produced specimens of Argenna subnigra and Haplodrassus minor. The saltmarsh itself yielded specimens of Agraecina striata, Enoplognatha mordax and Baryphyma duffeyi. The day's

exercise had whetted appetites and the dinner in the Crown and Castle on that evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

On the Sunday a large area of sea couch grass and dry reed bed was investigated before lunch. A number of species was added to the list but nothing outstanding, but a nearby stretch of saltmarsh on the banks of the river provided more specimens of Enoplognatha mordax and was also home to a good population of Arctosa fulvolineata. After lunch, just before the party returned to the mainland, a short examination of an area of disturbed shingle yielded Euophrys browningi and Gnaphosa lugubris. Three members were able to return to the site on the 12th. July, to investigate large areas of saltmarsh and grassland further north, and several more species were added to the list including Enoplognatha latimana.

The final tally of 111 species included six Red Data Book species (Haplodrassus minor, Euophrys browningi, Arctosa fulvolineta, Baryphyma duffeyi, Trichoncus hackmani and Trichoncus affinis) and seven regarded as Nationally Notable (Argenna patula, Drassylus lutetianus, Gnaphosa lugubris, Agraecina striata, Euophrys herbigrada, Dipoena inornata and Enoplognatha mordax), as well as a number of important rarities from other invertebrate groups, confirming the outstanding national importance of the site for invertebrate species. A report for the National Trust is now being prepared.

On behalf of all those members who attended the meeting I would like to thank David Nellist for his organisation and Grant Lohoar for his tolerance and good humour in ferrying the group around the site.

3. PHLEGRA FASCIATA (HAHN) IN SOUTH WALES - Keith Alexander and Ian Morgan.

The National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Glos., GL7 1QW.

The jumping spider Phlegra fasciata has long been known as a rare speciality of coastal sand dunes and shingle along the southern English coast from Chesil Beach in Dorset to Sandwich Bay in Kent (Merrett, P., in Bratton, J., 1991, *British Red Data Book. 3, Invertebrates other than Insects*, JNCC, Peterborough). We can now add South Wales to the distribution based on two independent discoveries during 1994.

KA took an adult female on the steep rocky limestone seacliff at Pennard East Cliff on Gower on the, 28th. July (SS 557868). The precise spot was very warm and dry with loose rocks and sparse, herb-rich limestone grassland vegetation on skeletal soils. This type of situation is scattered all along the limestone cliffs of Gower. A week later, on the 6th. August, IM took a sub-adult female just east of Horton (SS 480855), noting several specimens on bare and sparsely-vegetated limestone slopes. This does suggest that it is widespread in the area. It is interesting that it occurs here on the limestone seacliffs rather than the sand dunes which are relatively well-studied for spiders. It would be useful if field work could be carried out to ascertain whether this attractive salticid also occurs on the limestone cliffs of south Pembrokeshire.

4. FURTHER RECORDS OF ARGIOPE BRUENNICHI (SCOPOLI) FROM DEVON (1994) - Peter Smithers.

40 Copperfields, Horrabridge, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7UB.

In the autumn of 1992 the discovery of a single female Argiope bruennichi in a Plymouth garden caused great excitement among arachnologists in Devon. This sighting was the first record of this species in the S.W. for nine years and the first ever for the county of Devon. Alert to the possible presence of Argiope in the county many local naturalists took up the

hunt for this striking spider, but no other sightings were made in that or the following year.

Then in August of this year a single female was reported from a woodland clearing in Andrews Wood near Lodiswell. This site is a local nature reserve managed by the Devon Wildlife Trust. Unfortunately news of this sighting did not filter through to me until early October. There is a hint of irony about this situation as during the last week of September I had taken two parties of twenty undergraduate students to the very glade in which Argiope had been sighted. There the students spent several hours collecting invertebrates using a variety of sampling techniques but no specimens of Argiope were collected. Once it was realised that Argiope was present the samples were checked again but no specimens were found in the material from either visit.

In mid-October I received a phone call from a resident of Bovey Tracy, informing me that she had found a very dramatic spider in her field that looked like a female Argiope. I arranged to visit her a couple of days later with Richard Archer of the Devon Wildlife Trust, but unfortunately the spider failed to appear during the time we were there. This was probably because it had rained heavily overnight and the morning was still quite cool. However there were two very obvious Argiope egg cocoons present in the long grass where the spider had been seen. One was pale and looked relatively fresh whilst the other, which was only a few inches away, was almost black and appeared to have been there for several weeks. A search of the field failed to reveal any spiders or further cocoons.

The question arises as to how the spiders have arrived at these sites. The theory has been advanced that egg cocoons may be transported in bales of hay cut from fields in which Argiope is present (Merrett, P., S.R.S. Newsletter No. 15, 1992). While this could explain local movements of the species it does not explain its sudden appearance in Devon, as the two sightings this year were both on areas of uncut grassland. Could the explanation be that young Argiope disperse by ballooning? If this were the case then individuals dispersing from relatively small populations in Dorset would become widely separated and this separation would increase with the distance travelled. This would result in the appearance of isolated individuals spread over large areas. This could then explain the specimens encountered in Devon.

5. NOTES ON NEW SPECIES RECORDED IN STAFFORDSHIRE AND WARWICKSHIRE

- Wayne Rixom.
44, Edward Avenue, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 8AX.

During some quite widespread and intensive collecting that I have undertaken in the last couple of years several Nationally rare species of spider have been found, particularly in Staffordshire (VC 39).

In 1992 Theridiosoma gemmosum was found in wetland vegetation on an estate near Codsall not far from Wolverhampton, whilst at the National Trust heathland site at Kinver in the south-west of the county Trematocephalus cristatus turned up amongst heather. This species is apparently restricted to only a few localities in the south-east, usually being found on bushes and trees so there is a possibility that this record is the result of a chance find, perhaps via imported shrubs etc.

Last year was without doubt my most successful since joining the recording scheme with up to 12 species being added to the county list. The best find of all was Hyptiotes paradoxus taken from a conifer plantation not far from the Worcestershire county boundary in the south-west. Further work at Kinver, mainly involving a pitfall trapping programme, produced specimens of Zelotes petrensis and Zilla diodia. The heathland at this site is very

sandy in places and known to contain species of grass normally associated with the south and east coasts, maybe explaining some of the unusual records.

Loyton Moss is similar to the nearby Chartley Moss NNR in harbouring species that are Nationally scarce. Hypomma fulvum and Gongyliidiellum murcidum were among some interesting finds there last year. Other finds in VC 39 last year included Clubiona norvegica (Peak District), Tetragnatha striata, Entelecara congenera and Porrhomma errans, whilst species considered to be rare in central England included Monocephalus castaneipes, Evansia merens, and Agyneta olivacea.

For some years now I have been surveying the lowland heaths and woodland at Sutton Park. Although this Warwickshire site, VC 38, is only 10km from the centre of Birmingham, 231 species have been recorded. Such a high total is almost certainly the result of the variety of habitat present which ranges through 13 of those given on the RA65 card! The salticid Bianor aurocinctus is the best find here to date, but appears to be restricted to just a small area of wet heathland.

Apart from the spiders some quite uncommon Harvestmen were also recorded in 1993 including Dicranopalpus ramosus (from an old sand pit), Homalenotus quadridentatus and Oligolophus hanseni, all from Staffordshire.

6. SPIDER PARASITES IN LEICESTERSHIRE - Jon Daws.

3, Watermill Cottages, Mill Road, Kettleburgh, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 7JS.

In early 1994, while collecting in Burbage Wood, Hinckley and Aylestone Holt, in Leicestershire, I collected a specimen of Lepthyphantes from each site carrying a parasitic larva on the abdomen. Both were reared through to maturity and then sent to Dr. Mark Shaw at the Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. He promptly replied that both were females of Acrodactyla degener (Haliday) the most common Polysphinctine in Britain, which parasitises, in particular, species of Lepthyphantes and Bathyphantes.

Previously I had only managed to rear through one parasite, which had an immature Tetragnatha species as host. This was collected from Gumley Hall, also in Leicestershire, in mid-1993, and proved to be Acrodactyla quadrisculpta.

7. SOME RECORDS OF PRINERIGONE VAGANS (AUDOUIN) - Chris Felton.

Entomology Section, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside,
William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN.

Prinerigone vagans is a widespread and locally common species in Britain, usually inhabiting wet areas, including man-made situations such as sewage beds. It has also been noted from farmland and salt-marshes. In my experience it is usually found in association with other more common Erigone species, especially E. dentipalpis, and also with various species of Oedothorax.

On the 8th. August 1982, I collected a male on Hilbre Island, Wirral, Merseyside (SJ 18-87-), from disturbed grassland near a pond. On the 14th. September I discovered both sexes, in fair numbers, amongst brick rubble and gravel at Seaforth Docks in Liverpool (SJ 31-96-). Another specimen - a female - was collected on the 22nd. February 1987 beneath pebbles and plant debris on the shore of Crose Mere in Shropshire (SJ 42-30-). I next came across this species at Sqabmoor Reservoir, Bicton Common, Devon (SY 04-84-) on the 25th. June 1989, when I recorded a female from under stones at the edge of the water. I also collected three females at Wretham Heath, Norfolk (TL 909882) on the 25th.

June 1991. They were taken from deep cracks in the exposed mud of a lake. Numerous webs were visible down the cracks and some of these, together with their occupants, were carefully scooped out with my finger.

The Lancashire, Cheshire and Shropshire specimens were new county records at the time and it is possible that both the Devon and Norfolk records may have been also. All the above specimens, which were kindly verified by Dr. Peter Merrett, are deposited in the Entomology Section at the Liverpool Museum.

**8. RECORDING SPIDERS ON EAST ANGLIAN RESERVES - Matthew Shardlow.
RSPB, Stalham House, 65 Thorpe Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 1UD.**

I have been appointed to the newly-created, voluntary position of Regional Invertebrate Records Coordinator for the RSPB. My aims are to increase the knowledge of the distribution of invertebrate species on RSPB reserves and monitor for the presence or absence of certain taxa. Although a spider recorder myself this is too big a task for one individual and I am relying on coordinating the efforts of other volunteers to provide much of the data.

If you have any records from RSPB reserves in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk or Essex then I would be interested in receiving them. If you want to go recording on an RSPB reserve in one of the above counties then I should be able to organise access to areas not usually open to the general public (except where there may be disturbance to breeding rare birds). I also hold information on what habitats exist on different reserves and what recording has been done in the past. Should you visit one of the reserves I would also be interested in receiving information on any microhabitats of conservation importance to invertebrates. These may include features such as sandy banks, or very localised wet areas. The RSPB cannot manage or preserve such features unless aware of their significance. If you are unable to visit a reserve you may be able to help by identifying spiders from pitfall traps.

Please send records to, or contact me for further information at, the RSPB Regional Office at the above address.

**9. SPIDER RECORDING IN THE CLYDE ISLES, VICE-COUNTY 100
- Michael Hogg.
University Marine Biological Station, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae,
Scotland, KA28 OEG. Telephone: 0475.530581.**

I am recording spiders for the S.R.S. on the islands of Arran, Bute and the Cumbraes. At present no formal excursions have been arranged because I am the only S.R.S. member in the area and usually end up working alone. However, if any S.R.S. members would like to accompany me and do some spidering at any time could they please contact me at the above address and I will arrange something to coincide with their visit.

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David R. Nellist, National Organiser.

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