

Spider Recording Scheme News

November 2006, No. 56

Editor: Peter Harvey; srs@britishspiders.org.uk

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 57 will be published in March 2007. Please send contributions by the end of January at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

Editorial

It is with enormous regret and sadness that I have to report that Dr Steve Hopkin was killed in a car accident in the summer. Steve was an outstanding naturalist with an astonishing range of expertise and many remarkable skills, as evidenced by the many excellent publications and articles he produced to help and encourage naturalists to pursue less popular groups. Steve was the Cornwall Area Organiser for the SRS and had set up an excellent website with county maps and species text at www.stevehopkin.co.uk/cornishspiders/. He had also incorporated records provided by the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) and was surely going to revolutionise spider recording in the county. Steve will be sorely missed.

Peter Smithers has agreed to take on a temporary holding role for Cornwall, but we would be very grateful for offers from any arachnologists who feel they could take over as Area Organiser on a more permanent basis.

The 18Mb file with updated distribution maps mentioned in the July SRS News has not caused any problems on individual computers. However after upload and download over the internet a variety of faults have

occurred that have made the downloaded file unusable. This has meant that the download has been removed and replaced by access on the website to separate species maps linked to the checklist on the website. I am very grateful to Craig Slawson for setting this up. Please note that symbols provide the date band of the latest record/s for a square, hence later symbols may overlay earlier ones. I can still make available the original file with Ian Dawson's index on a CDROM if members send me a recordable CD and postage at cost.

I will continue to computerise paper data that could not be done in time for the updated maps. There is also a large amount of Excel data that I still need to get into MapMate without losing any detailed ecological information. An example of the sorts of useful and interesting information we can extract when this has been done is given below, using one of the SRS queries provided in MapMate.

A plan of action has been agreed to move forward on the preparation of a 'spider crib' to help in the identification of difficult species. I will keep you up to date with progress on this and the national status review in the March newsletter.

Example of table generated by SRS habitat query in MapMate

Taxon	01_Shingle	02_Saltmarsh	03_Sand dune	05_Heath/moor, heather	06_Heath/moor, other	07_Gorse (*record as sub-habitat if part of main habitat)	08_Wetland, open water	09_Wetland vegetation, acid	10_Wetland vegetation, other	11_Grassland, calcareous	12_Grassland, other	13_Cultivated land, including gardens	14_Buildings, inboos	15_Rock, scree, cliff or quarry	16_Cave, tunnel, well or culvert	17_Scrub (*record as sub-habitat if part of main habitat)	18_Woodland, deciduous	19_Woodland, conifer	20_Woodland, mixed	21_Woodland, young conifer plantation	23_Other (specify in notes)	24_Wetland, acid bog	25_Wetland, fen	26_Wetland, carr/swamp	27_Wetland, marsh	28_Wetland, reedbed	29_Wetland, edges of lakes, ponds, rivers and streams	30_Grassland, neutral	31_Grassland, acid	32_Grassland, improved	33_Post-industrial, mineral extraction sites/spoil heaps	34_Post-industrial, buildings/industrial infrastructure	35_Arable	36_Gardens, parks	Not Recorded			
<i>Acartauchenius scurriliis</i>																																						
<i>Achaearanea lunata</i>				1	4					1	2						14	2	12		1		3	1		1						1	1		12	1		
<i>Achaearanea riparia</i>									1		2						3	1	4		3						1	1				1		2				
<i>Achaearanea simulans</i>				2							2																											
<i>Achaearanea tepidarium</i>													32																									
<i>Aelurillus v-insignitus</i>				2																																		
<i>Agalenatea redii</i>	1		5	14	4	2		4	4	10	38	1		7		3	5	1	4		3	4			1													
<i>Agelena labyrinthica</i>	1	10	6	56	21	19		1	1	3	44	5		1	1	6	19	5	15	1	4		3			3	12											
<i>Agraeocina striata</i>	6		5	4	3						3															2												
<i>Agroeca brunnea</i>				4	3						1						16	2	9																			
<i>Agroeca cuprea</i>				1																																		
<i>Agroeca inopina</i>		1	26	4						3	2					2	1	1																				
<i>Agroeca lusatica</i>			1																																			
<i>Agroeca proxima</i>			3	25	31	3			2		1			1		1	4	20	4	1			1						3		28		1			2		
<i>Agyneta cauta</i>											1	2					1	1	1																			
<i>Agyneta conigera</i>			3	2	4			1	2	1	2				1	1	11	11	2			4					1	2			1						1	
<i>Agyneta decora</i>			3		13			2	1	9	31	2			2		4	1	1								1	2			1							
<i>Agyneta olivacea</i>				2	1			1			1					1	3	40																				
<i>Agyneta ramosa</i>				1	1					1	2					1	1	18	2				1															
<i>Agyneta subtilis</i>				2				1								1	11	15	2																			
<i>Allomengea scopigera</i>			3	1	11			2		3	11			1		1	2	7	1																			
<i>Allomengea vidua</i>								1	3								1																					
<i>Alopecosa barbipes</i>			2	27						18	8			2		2	1	1																				
<i>Alopecosa cuneata</i>			6	1						1																												
<i>Alopecosa pulverulenta</i>	8	6	34	23	49		6	17		60	114	16	2	14		10	36	66	2		4	38	2		3	1	5	22	39	2	121	19	31	14	40			
<i>Amaurobius fenestralis</i>	1			5	5		1			4	13	3	1	4		2	122	52	44		7	3	2	7			4	11	3	3	3	6	1	6	4			

***Pardosa lugubris* (Walckenaer, 1802) at Grass Wood, North Yorkshire**by Paul Lee* and Richard Price^o

The first report of *Pardosa lugubris sensu stricto* from Britain was based on specimens collected from the RSPB Abernethy reserve in Scotland (Harvey, 2004). As early as 1999 Ian Dawson collected specimens that were only later recognised as *P. lugubris*. Ian also discovered the species at Corrimony. Further specimens were collected by Mike Davidson in 2004 from three sites in Glen Affric and from woodland near Inveran in Sutherland (Peter Harvey, pers. comm.) but until now, these Scottish sites have remained the only British locations known for *P. lugubris s.s.*

On the final day of the 2006 BAS weekend at Malham Tarn one of us (RP) was invited to accompany Ted and Gillian Lovesey on a visit to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve at Grass Wood, north of the village of Grassington in Wharfedale. Grass Wood is an important SSSI, one of the few remaining areas of ancient ash woodland in the Yorkshire Dales. The ground flora is especially rich, and it is the only known site for native Lady's Slipper Orchid in Britain. Unfortunately it was extensively planted with conifers some 60 years ago, but the YWT is working to remove the exotics and replace them with native trees. From an arachnological perspective, Grass Wood is important as one of very few northern sites for the impressive green spider *Micrommata virescens*. It was with the hope of re-finding *Micrommata* that Jennifer Newton had suggested a visit to the site. The section of the woodland visited was on a south-west facing slope where accumulations of loose limestone scree appeared to be suppressing the vegetation and had created a number of small clearings. Ted Lovesey, who now paints rather than records the natural world, offered to help in the hunt for spiders. After a brief five minute search amongst the scree at grid reference SD9829765316, Ted presented a spider to RP describing it as 'a *Pardosa* that might be interesting'. The specimen was a rather sad looking mature male that had proven to be agile despite having only three legs. It was a rainy day and the conditions eventually ended our visit to the wood without discovering further *Pardosa* specimens.

After struggling to identify the specimen at home, RP eventually submitted it to PL as part of an assignment for an MSc course being undertaken with the University of Birmingham. PL determined the specimen as *Pardosa lugubris sensu stricto* before sending it, firstly to Peter Harvey and then to Peter Merrett, for confirmation.

In almost all respects the specimen agrees closely with the diagnostic features noted by Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.* (2000). Peter Merrett considered the dorsal surface of the cymbium to be less convex than it might be but it was this convexity that first alerted PL to the possibility that the specimen was *P. lugubris*. The prominent cymbial claw characteristic of the species is reduced on the left palp and it was only after noting the convexity of the cymbium that the right palp with its typical claw was checked. Both palps have the expected paler brownish tip to the cymbium. The ratio of tip-length to cymbium-length is c.0.32 and falls at the lower end of the range (0.32-0.37) given by Töpfer-Hoffmann *et al.* (2000). The specimen displays the blackish anterior spinners that are also found

in the female and are significantly darker than the same structures in *Pardosa saltans*.

Although the Scottish specimens of *P. lugubris* have all been found within areas of Caledonian pine (Harvey, 2004), elsewhere in Europe the spider occurs in a wide range of forest types, both coniferous and deciduous, and has even been found in hedgerows (Töpfer-Hofmann *et al.*, 2000). Therefore there is no reason to suppose that *P. lugubris* was introduced to Grass Wood during the coniferisation of much of the area during the middle of the last century. It seems likely that *P. lugubris* awaits discovery in more woodlands, at least in northern England and Scotland, and both *P. saltans* and *P. lugubris* may well occur together on some sites. Thus we reiterate Peter Harvey's encouragement to check your specimens of *P. saltans*, wherever they may have been collected, and submit any possible *P. lugubris* to the Verification Panel (see S.R.S. News No. 48 In *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* 99) for checking.

We are very grateful to Ted and Gillian Lovesey for kindly taking RP on the outing to Grass Wood and to Ted for collecting the spider. Thanks also to Jennifer Newton for providing background information on Grass Wood and for arranging permission to collect there in the first place and to Peter Harvey and Peter Merrett for their assistance in verifying the identity of the specimen and providing valuable information on the spider.

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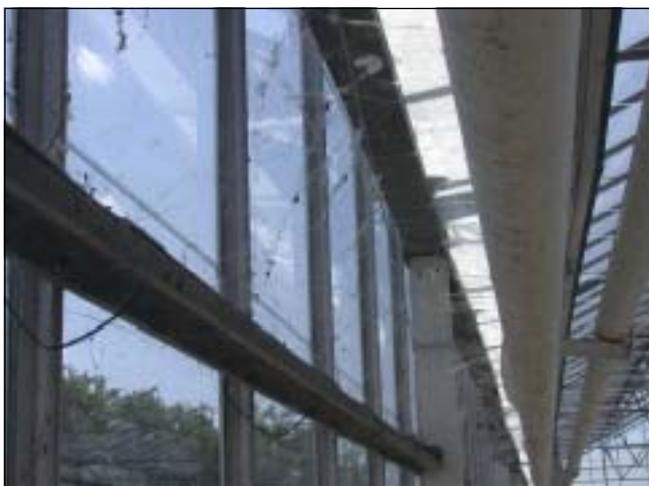
Discovery of *Holocnemus pluchei* colony at Welford, Stratford upon Avon

by Pip Taylor

With the cessation of regularly fumigating our glass houses with pesticides and the introduction of an Integrated Pest Management program (IPM) we at W J Findon & Son have noticed a dramatic increase in beneficial predators at our sites. The first unusual spider to colonise our Stratford branch was *Achaearanea tepidariorum*. Then *Larinioides sclopetarius* turned up followed by *Uloborus plumipes*. As local Environment Coordinator I have instructed staff to report anything unusual to me for investigation. An unusual spider was reported at our Welford nurseries (CV37 8QH) by maintenance man Bill Smillie. They have colonised one side of a glass house and have been positively identified by Peter Harvey as *Holocnemus pluchei*, and this would appear to be the first recorded breeding colony in the UK.



Holocnemus pluchei photograph © Russ Woodcock



Holocnemus pluchei webs on side of glasshouse photograph © Russ Woodcock

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Some Nottinghamshire Spiders

by Howard Williams

In August 2003 Tom Faulds, Trevor Harris and I made two visits of some 8 hours in all to Sherwood Forest Country Park (SFCP), where we beat, swept and grubbed two smallish areas of heathland and one of oak woodland. To these can be added two very brief visits by me in the same year and an even briefer one in 2005. The idea was to see if some of the uncommon species found there in the large-scale BAS survey of 1979 organized by Lawrence Bee were still present. In this we were reasonably successful. The number of spiders identified in the end was by no means as extensive as in the original survey, but that was not the object; we were not as organized or equipped, and no pitfall or other trapping methods were used. In all there were 69 records representing 48 species. Immatures not recorded were noted from the following families: Linyphiidae, Lycosidae, Agelenidae, Dictynidae, Clubionidae, Gnaphosidae.

Some of the more interesting of the 1979 spiders whose continued presence was confirmed were: *Steatoda phalerata*; *Meta bourneti* (Nb) (a 1987 record also exists for this species); *Araneus marmoreus* v. *pyramidatus*; *Cercidia prominens*; *Zora silvestris* (RDB2); *Thanatus striatus*.

Lawrence Bee states that he had observed *Meta bourneti* near ancient oak trunks in the forest. We found it in the more conventional location of a GPO service pit whose manhole cover is walked over daily by hundreds of visitors. When the cover was lifted for us in July 2003, large numbers of impressively sized females and their equally impressive white spherical egg sacs were revealed. The sudden influx of light caused some consternation among the spiders as they moved cumbrously to seek out shadier areas. The Park staff were as impressed by them as I was – I had never seen the species before, though I had seen its redder-coloured cousin, *Meta menardi*, in the caves of Creswell Crags back in 1992. In August 2006 the cover was raised again, and the colony still thrives. This service pit is dry, containing cables running in conduits to various parts of the Visitor Centre, and no doubt the spiders scatter themselves via these. What these large spiders feed upon in total, unbroken darkness is hard to imagine. Interestingly, when the cover of a nearby wet sewage pit was raised, it contained nothing at all.

There are plans for restructuring this part of the Country Park, removing the Visitor Centre across the road in order to relieve pressure on the ancient oaks areas, some being in close proximity. At least the rangers are aware of the presence of this spider at the Centre itself, and hopefully measures will be taken to ensure that this underground site (and possibly others similar to it) are safeguarded rather than obliterated once the need for them has gone.

The rarest spider rediscovered from 1979 is undoubtedly *Zora silvestris* which is abundant on both heathland areas (one site dryer than the other). Among the grasses on the sandy soil here there is heather, and *Zora* lives in and on both. It is a very rare spider, the few other records of it being pre-1979 in a few counties in the south of England. It is good to know it still flourishes here in the heart of England.

Four other species found there seem to be new records for SFCP. The first, *Nesticus cellulanus*, was recorded in 2003, not unsurprisingly, in the same location as *Meta bourneti* (but not in 2006). It also appears to be the only Notts record for this species. Two others are the uncommon *Walckenaeria furcillata* (2003) and *Philodromus collinus* (Nb) (2005), the former on heathland, the latter uncharacteristically walking across a pathway between broad-leaf trees. *Tegenaria agrestis* also appears to be a new site record here.

2003 was a good year, being the year also that *Hyptiotes paradoxus* (RDB3) was discovered in Carlton Wood, N. Notts in yews. (Newsletter 98, Nov.2003). Tom and I found it again in August 2006 in much the same place in the wood (1 female and 3 immatures). It seems to be surviving here at a low population level, which is good news as this is the only site for it in central/northern England east of the Pennines. There must be other pockets of *Hyptiotes* in places like Clumber Park or even much smaller pieces of woodland with yew and broad-leaf trees in close proximity.

At Misson Carr *Synageles venator* was still present (2006) on post-and-rail fencing and even posed for photos this time. Sweeping and beating produced several specimens of *Achaearanea simulans* (Nb) which has thus proved more



Hyptiotes paradoxus at Carlton Wood
photograph © Tom Faulds

numerous here than previously thought. Better still, sweeping the low vegetation and bushes in the car park area produced a male *Achaearanea riparia* (Nb) – it would seem to be the second most northerly record so far for this scarce predominantly southern species, thus forming an intermediate link with a record in South-east Yorkshire (Updated Maps 2006). This year saw two other fairly uncommon records at Misson Carr: *Episinus angulatus* and *Walckenaeria atrotibialis*. Four common species were also new records for the reserve this year: *Maso sundevalli*, *Linyphia hortensis*, *Pardosa saltans* and *Clubiona pallidula*, so bringing the site total to 111 species. For good measure the uncommon harvestman *Lacinius ephippiatus* was also a new record here.

My thanks go as usual to Tom Faulds for his company on some of these jaunts and for his checking and correction of tricky identifications.

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The occurrence of *Apostenus fuscus* Westring (RDB1) at Lydd on Sea, Kent

by Alex Williams

The discovery of a spider in the next 10k square to where it is already well established does not usually warrant special mention, but perhaps the occurrence of *Apostenus fuscus* at Lydd on Sea is an exception. The only British locality for this spider has hitherto been the RSPB Bird Reserve at Dungeness TR0620 where it was found on shingle with a mixture of low plants (Williams & Locket, 1982).

On the 20th April 2006 I took two specimens of this interesting species whilst sieving the detritus at the roots of Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber* (L.) DC. at TR087202 halfway between the road from New Romney to Dungeness and the sea. The shingle on this part of the beach is covered with coarse grass in the form of False Oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* (L.) near the road and broken up into separate tufts towards the sea, together with scattered Red Valerian. Between the Valerian and the shoreline are a few Sea-kale *Crambe maritima* L. The detritus contained little of further interest, consisting mainly of woodlice and centipedes but also a single male *Hahnina pusilla* C.L. Koch which I find to be uncommon in Kent.



Lydd on Sea shingle beach
photograph © Alex Williams

Although *A. fuscus* is only known from shingle banks in this country it is by no means confined to dry stony places in Europe as Heimer & Nentwig (1991) report that it is also a woodland species.

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Proliferation in *Amaurobius similis* (Blackwall, 1861)

by Paul Whitehead

The boundary of my garden at Little Comberton, Worcestershire (VC37 SO94) is delineated by a screen of annually cut Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata* Donn ex D. Don). Using the advantages of hoar frost on 20 November 2005 it was possible to see that the entire south-eastern face of it was uniformly covered by amaurobiid spider webs, subsequently confirmed as being those of *Amaurobius similis* (Blackwall).



Representative density of webs of *Amaurobius similis* (Blackwall) on frosted *Thuya plicata* screen, Little Comberton, Worcestershire, 20 November 2005

The screen is 2.1m high and 141m long. A count of 44 webs in a 1.8m length of its south-eastern face extrapolates to a total of c3450 webs, which are also sited on the north-western face of the screen but in lesser numbers; these were not counted. The mean density of webs is therefore 12 per square metre of screen face, which confirms the remarkable effectiveness of such a screen for invertebrate flight interception and as their resting place. This provides a real estimate of the size of the spider population, for all of the webs were constructed in the seven week time span that elapsed after the screen was cut. Cut *Thuya plicata* is clearly specifically favoured by *A. similis* because where a more open-textured Lawson Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* (A. Murray) Parl.) is planted in the screen webs were virtually non-existent. This provides further telling evidence of the extent of anthropogenic impacts on spider faunas.

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An update on *Megalephyphantes* sp. nov.

by A. Russell-Smith

Since I last wrote about this relatively new addition to our fauna in Newsletter 102 (July 2004), there have been a number of additional records of the species that extend our knowledge of its distribution and habitats. On the 1st of February 2005, I collected a single female from a small rotten elm stump on the edge of my garden in Doddington, Kent (TQ 951580). On the same date another female was taken from a well-rotted fallen trunk of field maple in a hedgerow of a chalk grassland field about 500m from my house but in the neighbouring parish of Newnham (TQ 955578). Both of these localities lie about 6 miles inland from the stretch of the North Kent coast where it has been taken previously. A further female was sorted from a pile of rotting grass on the edge of Sharsted Wood, next to my garden on the 28th August 2005. Finally, I visited Camber Sands, near Rye in Sussex on 22nd October 2005 in the company of Evan Jones and

Richard Price. Here I was surprised to find a male and two females in deep and quite damp pockets in the yellow dune zone dominated by marram grass (TQ 9540918614).

In addition to Kent, this species has now been recorded from East Sussex, confirming the suggestion in my previous note that it was likely to be found in other coastal areas in southern Britain. However, it is now clear that it is certainly not confined to shingle, as was previously thought, and in fact occurs in quite a wide range of habitats. The only feature that these appear to have in common is that they are all relatively damp. While adults of both sexes have been found in autumn in the field layer of coastal grasslands (on both shingle and sand dunes), females have been found in rotten stumps and logs in woodlands and hedgerows later in the winter. It is possible that these females are using such micro-habitats as over-wintering refugia but where they occur in autumn has yet to be determined. Clearly, there is still a great deal to be learned about the biology of this species but this will require active field-work in both autumn and winter in a range of different habitats.

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***Ero aphana* at Horsenden Hill**

by Mick Massie

Rising to the dizzy summit altitude of 85m, Horsenden Hill open space (TQ162844) is a Site of Metropolitan Importance with 143 ha of varied habitats: grassland, hedges and woodlands. It is in Ealing and is the highest point in NW London, with a view of 6 counties, the North Downs, Chilterns and 10 London Boroughs. It is the site of an ancient hill fort and was an anti-aircraft battery in WW II. To the south and east the hill is bounded by the Grand Union Canal (Paddington branch). To the south-west lies Perivale Wood Nature Reserve, run by the Selborne Society.

As for much of Middlesex, the solid geology is Eocene with sand and loam Claygate Beds on the higher ground over London Clay. The same Claygate Beds form the upper slopes of the hills at Harrow, Hampstead, and Highgate. Small remnants of glacial drift Pebble Gravels form the hill cap (London Ecology Handbook 16).

Horsenden Hill is the location for an annual joint meeting of London Natural History Society and Butterfly Conservation which focuses on the White-letter Hairstreak, the larvae of which feed on elm. This is traditionally in late June. As a novice arachnologist, I took along my sweep net. I had only started recording spiders a few weeks earlier and still have a lot to learn, mainly by making public and embarrassing identification goofs. My spider list for the day amounted to a grand total of nine species!

One of the small spiders I swept had two pairs of abdominal tubercles, and I began to suspect I may have an *Ero* species. The anterior pair were much closer together than the posterior, so my field guide indicated *E. tuberculata* as the likely species. I took a microscope

photo and sent it off to the ever helpful Peter Harvey. Imagine my surprise and delight when he suggested and later confirmed *Ero aphana*, a first record for Middlesex ! I now understand that this species has spread elsewhere from its select Dorset heathland base and another record has been made in Middlesex at Hounslow Heath, but it does not diminish the buzz of this find for me.

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Microscope photography on the cheap

by Mick Massie

As a novice recorder of spiders, I find it useful to take microscope photographs of eyes, genitalia, spinnerets, bristles, etc to use as reference. I also send some photos to Peter Harvey when I need identification hints and his accurate advice is always rapid and invaluable. Sending specimens through the post may be needed for final confirmation, but the photo is a useful tool. Peter asked me to describe my microscopy set-up, because it was very cheaply put together and yields usable results.

I have an old stereo microscope, bought cheaply second hand (try Ebay). It gives a 12.5x and 50x magnification with the 10x eyepieces. I use a cheap (£100) compact digital camera that I hold resting against the eyepiece. I use a wide angle setting or telephoto depending on the subject. Experimentation is necessary and costs nothing with digital. My camera allows manual exposure which is best, but aperture priority and exposure compensation would work too. Most of my photos are taken at about 1/20th, f8, 400ASA. I focus the subject in the eyepiece and use the normal autofocus range, not macro. My more expensive 10x zoom SLR style camera does not work well in this setup, the lens is just too big to rest against the eyepiece.

I had to learn a lot of lessons about lighting (I am reluctant to spend £500+ on a halogen cold light just yet). I now use two torches. One is a 'halogen' type with a



Philodromus eyes. Black and beady!
photograph © Mick Massie

focussing beam, bought at LIDL for £4.99, the other is a LED Lenser pen torch with a focusing lens which yields a pinpoint, parallel beam (unlike many LED torches). Each of these is held by a desktop tripod. I'm looking for a pair of retort stands and clamps to make this a bit more 'professional'. I use Picasa (free software) to catalogue and manipulate the photos.

Whilst I would like a trinocular microscope, double gooseneck halogen light and Coopix 4500 with a digiscoping attachment, my equipment does a useful 'cheap and cheerful' job.

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Macaroeris nidicolens (Walckenaer, 1802) in South Essex

by Peter Harvey

This jumping spider was first recorded in Britain in 2002 on pines in Mile End Park in Middlesex (Milner, 2002) and subsequently found in 2004 at Brooklands, Surrey also on pines (Denton, 2004). In Europe the species occurs mainly in southern and central Europe, but is found as far north as Belgium.

On 7th June 2006 I beat one adult male *Macaroeris nidicolens* and several subadults and juveniles from gorse bushes at a brownfield site next to the Thames in Thurrock, South Essex. One subadult male matured in captivity on the 9th June and one subadult female on the 18th June.

Although it was originally thought most likely that the spider had been imported with pines into the Mile End Park site, it now seems more likely that the spider has naturally colonised Britain from Europe and is in the process of spreading into sites that provide hot conditions. Searches elsewhere in the region have so far failed to find the spider in new sites, but my feeling is that it is worth looking for on pines and gorse anywhere in the southeast.

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