

Spider Recording Scheme News

March 2009, No. 63

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My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 64 will be published in July 2009. Please send contributions by the end of May at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: grays@peterharvey.freeserve.co.uk

Editorial

I am enormously grateful to all the contributors to this issue and once again I would like to make a plea to all recorders for contributions to the newsletter – articles are usually from a small band of regular contributors, but there must be many more active arachnologists out there who regularly find interesting spiders or make observations that would be of interest to others.

I have received several large datasets in Excel recently from Jonty Denton, Bob Merritt, Geoff Oxford and Liverpool Museum, as well as MapMate syncs from Annette and Allan Binding, Pip Collyer, Robert Cumming, Mike Davidson, Paul Lee, Doug Marriott, Jennifer Newton, Ray Ruffell, Tony Russell-Smith and Howard Williams. I am very grateful indeed to all these recorders for their hard work in recording and providing these data.

Completion of the national status of spiders review has again been delayed, but we have now incorporated feedback received and the work should be finished soon. The final list will contain significant changes to the consultation list provided in the July 2008 newsletter.

Further guidance is included in this newsletter to help in the identification of difficult species, where reliable identification can be particularly problematic. Those available to date are all available on the BAS website at <http://www.britishspiders.org.uk/html/bas.php?page=difficultsp> and more will be added as these become available.

Polypropylene Tubes

by Annette Binding

Recent information from Peter Harvey regarding tubes for long term storage of specimens in alcohol indicated that polypropylene tubes were much better than glass ones. Glass tubes need the alcohol replenishing on a fairly regular basis and this can be very time consuming so Peter recommended polypropylene tubes which do not need topping up. We researched the suppliers of this type of tubes on the internet and found the Teklab Ltd website. We telephoned them and explained what we wanted to use the tubes for. They were very helpful and sent us some samples of the type of tubes we required together with their catalogue within two days. We chose two sizes of tubes and caps then ordered them by telephone. The order was delivered two days later by TNT Courier. The tubes

we ordered are supplied by the 1000 with the caps to fit them being sold separately also by the 1000. There are many other types of tube in the catalogue which are supplied in varying quantities although not all of them are suitable for storing spiders in alcohol. There is a small surcharge for orders under £50.

Teklab contact details are as follows:-

Teklab (ML) Ltd
9 Dorothy Terrace
Sacriston
Durham
DH7 6LG

Tel No. 0191 3710451; website: www.teklab.co.uk

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Woolly Jumpers in Aberdeen

by Mike Davidson

You'll be pleased to hear this is not an item about Scottish knitwear but is about some old and recent records for the salticid *Pseudeuophrys lanigera*, which frequents roofs and buildings. For those who absolutely have to have a common name - I was going to title this "The False Eyebrowed Woolly Jumper" (loosely based on Parker, 1993) – but I thought better of it! Hopefully the current fad for inventing common names dies out soon.

Shortly after having some roofing work done at our house in September 2008, I found a small jumping spider on the ceiling above my head, beside the Velux window. When I eventually got round to identifying it I found it was a male *P. lanigera*, a species I had not previously seen and I was surprised to find was not the first record for Aberdeen. The Provisional Atlas (Harvey *et al.*, 2002) has only two Scottish locations for this species – Edinburgh and Aberdeen. On checking up on the Aberdeen records I discovered that they had been attributed to the wrong year – 1974 instead of 1984 (pers. comm. Claire Geddes). Claire tells me that several male and female specimens were collected for her in the School of Pharmacy at what is now Robert Gordon University (VC92).

So it was good to confirm that *P. lanigera* is still present in Aberdeen. Its recent appearance in our house no doubt resulting from the disturbance caused by the slaters (the human kind) on the roof.

Having offered to provide some I.D. tuition to a

potential enthusiast over the Christmas holidays, I did a major tidy-up of my spider collection and desk. Amongst the miscellaneous tubes was an unidentified salticid, collected (probably by a colleague) on an inside wall at my place of work, south of the River (Dee) in Aberdeen, in September 2006. Of course this proved to be *P. lanigera* (female) and the first record for VC91 (Kincardineshire). A New Year's Resolution to be tidier might be appropriate but I would miss the excitement of discovery so close to the microscope.

References

- Harvey, P.R., Nellist, D.R. & Telfer, M.G. (Eds) 2002. *The Provisional Atlas of British Spiders (Arachnida, Araneae)*, Huntingdon: Biological Records Centre.
- Parker, J.R. 1993. *British Arachnological Society – Members' Handbook, 2.5 Names of Spiders* (unpublished).

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The arachnids of Dunbennan Cemetery, Aberdeenshire. Part 1: The virtues of a sound beating

by Mike Davidson

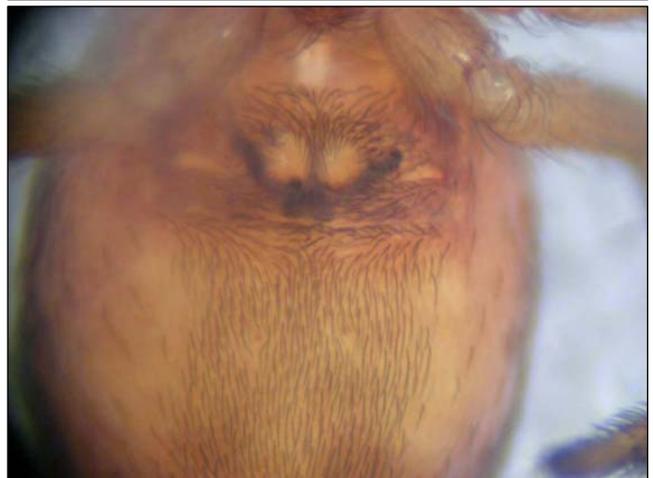
My visit, on 5th July 2008, to Dunbennan cemetery (NJ503408) - near the town of Huntly, in Aberdeenshire - was a return visit to search for more specimens of a harvestman I had collected on 17th June - which had me completely stumped and will be the subject of Part 2. I concluded the visit with a fairly half-hearted beating of some yew trees, watching the debris being blown by a strong wind beyond my carefully placed plastic sheet! The cemetery has been closed to "new customers" for some years but is still maintained (mown and tidied) by the Council. The church has long gone and the cemetery is adjacent to a farm yard and surrounded by a mixture of farmland and commercial woodland, near to the River Deveron.

The debris I did manage to collect was a mixture of needles and the dried orange coloured male flowers of the yew. The only mature spiders I collected from the yew beatings were *Bathyphantes gracilis*, *Textrix denticulata* and *Lepthyphantes tenuis*. As I was about to clear the sheet, part of the orange coloured flower debris wandered off. This proved to be a juvenile dictynid which gave me no clue to its identity and (along with the harvestman) lured me back on 30th July.

This time, in less windy conditions, the beating added a few more species to the list (*Pityohyphantes phrygianus*, *Lepthyphantes minutus* and *Philodromus aureolus*) and again, amongst the yew flower detritus, was an orangey dictynid. Careful searching of the yew foliage, for what I expected to be typical dictynid "nests", produced a total of one sub-adult male and three adult females and egg cases.

Meanwhile back at the lab...much to my surprise they turned out to be *Dictyna pusilla* - a BAP species whose local distribution I had just reviewed for the LBAP group and Local Records Centre. There are a number of known

localities for this spider in N.E. Scotland - mainly around the Cairngorms, along the Spey and Dee valleys. There are lowland sites at Darnaway and Aberdeen; however, the most interesting aspect of this new location is the habitat. The SRS Provisional Atlas¹ says, "*D. pusilla* is found on low, dry or dead vegetation where it spins an irregular retreat resembling that of *D. arundinacea*". So far I have found no mention in the literature of *D. pusilla* having been found on yew or any similar evergreen. I would be interested to hear of similar occurrences.



Dictyna pusilla adult female
Photographs © Mike Davidson

A further visit to Dunbennan was made on 12th September, in the hope of finding a mature male (and still looking for that pesky harvestman). The weather was calm and about 16°C. Beating and searching the yews produced a much longer list of spiders with a further two adult female *D. pusilla* and numerous juveniles of various sizes. Several nests were found with egg cocoons.

Having got my eye in, I visited several other places locally where I knew there would be yew - mostly National Trust for Scotland properties - without any success. The reason I think is that in all cases except Dunbennan, the yew undergoes regular clipping.

Dictyna pusilla appears to be ideally suited to this habitat and I would be surprised if it was not found elsewhere in yew and other conifers. Its coloration is quite variable, but generally seems well camouflaged amongst the dead male flowers. It is probably most easily found by searching the twigs for the nests, as they are not

easily dislodged by beating. Many of the males were almost mature and may over-winter as adults. Hopefully this can be tested over the coming months.



Dictyna pusilla egg cocoons on yew tree.
Photographs © Mike Davidson

Footnote: During October a very brief examination, as darkness fell, of an un-pruned yew in a disused cemetery in the city of Perth (regrettably not Australia) produced a couple of immature *Dictynas*. These look likely to be *D. pusilla* and hopefully this can be confirmed in the spring. The tree also yielded *Scotophaeus blackwalli*, *Anelosimus vittatus*.

References:

Harvey, P.R., Nellist, D.R. & Telfer, M.G. (eds) 2002. *Provisional atlas of British spiders (Arachnida, Araneae), Volume 2*. Huntingdon: Biological Records Centre.

The Arachnids of Dunbennan Cemetery, Aberdeenshire. Part 2: A leiobunid harvestman new to Scotland and the British Isles?

by Mike Davidson

I visited Dunbennan Cemetery (NJ503408), near Huntly in Aberdeenshire on 17th June 2008 to look for isopods and was rather surprised to find a mature female leiobunid harvestman so early in the year, hiding behind a gravestone which was leaning against a wall.

It was far too big to be *L. rotundum* or *L. blackwalli* and completely the wrong colour for those species, and I made a note to return later in the year to search for an adult male. As it turned out I became a regular visitor to the cemetery during 2008 to search for *Dictyna pusilla*.

Several juveniles were found during July and August but eventually adult males were collected during September. Reference was made to Martens (1978) in an attempt to identify it – but with no success. Eventually I contacted Hay Wijnhoven in Holland and Axel Schoenhoffer at the University of Mainz, in Germany for their assistance. Initial suggestions, based on my photographs were that it was either *L. rupestre* or *L. tisciae*.

Meanwhile I found a male, of what appeared to be this species, in the corridor at my place of work in Aberdeen about 30 miles from the original site. A search on the walls outside produced several more (along with *L. rotundum*) and reassurance that I had not inadvertently translocated it. A search at the Cruickshank Botanic Gardens in Aberdeen also produced several specimens showing that the species is well established in the area.

A selection of specimens from these three populations has now been sent to Axel for morphological comparison with related species and DNA analysis and I eagerly await his opinion. Axel's initial view is that it is definitely not *Leiobunum rupestre* but related to either *Leiobunum tisciae* or *Nelima appeninica* which are extremely similar and their status is taxonomically in question.

Leiobunum tisciae was reported to have been found in Derbyshire (Martens, 1978) but the species was rejected from the British list by Hillyard & Sankey (1989) and is not mentioned by Hillyard (2005).

I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who has found similar leiobunids.

References:

- Hillyard, P.D. & Sankey, J.H.P. 1989. Harvestmen. *Synopses of the British Fauna No. 4* (2nd Edition). Published for the Linnean Society of London and the estuarine and Brackish-Water Science Association by E. J. Brill, Leiden.
- Hillyard, P.D. 2005. Harvestmen. *Synopses of the British Fauna No. 4* (3rd Edition). Published for the Linnean Society of London and the estuarine and Brackish-Water Science Association by Field Studies Council, Shrewsbury.
- Martens, J. 1978 Spinnentiere, Arachnida: Webernechte, Opiliones. *Die Tierwelt Deutschlands*, 64: 1-464. G. Fischer Verlag, Jena.

New finds in VC 60, north Lancashire, in 2008

by Jennifer Newton

Pitfall trapping on Heysham Moss, SD4260, a tiny area of relict mossland backing on to a new housing estate in Heysham, produced several new finds for the hectad and site, and a new species for the vice-county, *Robertus arundineti*. Traps set up on the Lancashire Wildlife Trust nature reserve in April, May and October produced 6 specimens, 2 females and 4 males. By far the most numerous species was *Pirata uliginosus*, with *Antistea elegans* a distant second. Surprisingly *Pirata uliginosus* was a new record for the site, in spite of a considerable amount of casual recording carried out over the past few years.

A male *Clubiona subtilis* was collected by Jeremy Steeden on September 7th off sparse marram grass from a remnant inland sand dune area in Fairhaven, south of Blackpool, SD3327. Intriguingly this is a species of wetlands, both inland and coastal, mostly in the south-east with a few records from sand dunes (Harvey *et al.*, 2002). This appears to be the first record between Wales and the Inner Hebrides.

Another find in the Fylde by Jeremy Steeden was a male *Enoplognatha latimana* from sparse grassland flora on cindery ground at Martin Fold, on the south-east side of Blackpool SD3231. There have been a number of records dating back to 1988 from the south Lancashire dunes, Ainsdale, Freshfield, Formby, but this is the first north of the R. Ribble, in VC60, and appears to be the most northerly record in Britain so far. Although north of Stan Dobson's (Dobson, 2008) recent finds from the Rotherham area it is much closer to other known sites than his. The Rotherham sites sound similar to the one near Blackpool, sparse flora on dry nutrient-poor ground.

Just before his untimely death in October 2008 Neil Robinson collected a new pseudoscorpion, *Pselaphochernes scorpioides* from a wood ant nest in Eaves Wood, SD4676, a National Trust site near Lancaster. This is the first record north of the R. Ribble. Although seriously hampered by ill-health, Neil continued to investigate the invertebrate inhabitants of wood ant nests, placing sample contents of the nest on a low table, from where he could extract specimens while seated on a picnic chair. He has done much invertebrate recording in the north-west, from his own and others' collections, and he will be much missed.

References

- Harvey, P.R., Nellist, D.R. & Telfer, M.G. 2002. *Provisional Atlas of British spiders (Arachnida, Araneae)* p.312.
 Dobson, S. 2008. Watch out for *Enoplognatha latimana*. *Newsl. Br arachnol Soc.* **112**: 12

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Spiders of Birkdale Green Beach, Sefton Coast

by Richard Burkmar

During May and June of 2008, Inger Kristiansen – then a student at the University of Edinburgh – undertook some invertebrate sampling on Birkdale Green Beach on the Sefton Coast. Birkdale Green Beach is a relatively new feature which is currently about 4km long and up to 200m wide (Smith 2007). Whilst the dune system along much of the Sefton Coast is subject to erosion, Birkdale Green Beach is a prograding section where a mosaic of embryo dunes, slack, swamp, saltmarsh and wet woodland has been developing since around 1990.

Inger was investigating the development and conservation value of the unique Alder Woodland (*Alnus glutinosa*) which has developed along strand lines on the beach (Kristiansen 2008) and was subsequently awarded a Master of Science degree with distinction. Her invertebrate sampling consisted mainly of pitfall trapping supplemented with a little water trapping and beating.

As part of Inger's work, I determined the spiders she collected (with the assistance of Jennifer Newton where determination proved difficult or confirmation was required). This short note summarises the spider records resulting from this work.

In all 734 adult spiders, of 41 species, were identified (see table 1). A further 73 spiders were not identified with certainty (either because they were immature or badly decomposed). Although, as expected, a number of typical specialists of sandy habitats are represented, e.g. *Xerolycosa miniata* and *Arctosa perita*, there are also species more normally associated with other habitats such as *Pardosa purbeckensis* (estuarine) and *Pirata piraticus* (wet habitats). This reflects the variable character of Birkdale Green Beach and the habitat mosaic found there.

Worthy of special mention is *Arctosa leopardus*, a very local species but the most abundant spider collected (251 of the 734 identified). This species is often associated with seasonally wet habitats (Peter Harvey, pers. comm.) and the dune slack and swamp habitats of the Green Beach may suit it very well. Lycosids, in general, were well represented which reflects both the main sampling method of pitfall trapping - a technique well suited to ground living species – and the sampling period which coincided with the adult season for many of them.

Another significant species is the clubionid *Cheiracanthium virescens*, which is very rare in Lancashire, though it has been previously recorded in low numbers on the Sefton Coast from saltmarsh and dunes (Jennifer Newton, pers. comm.).

Perhaps the most notable records were those for *Argenna subnigra*, which is a species of predominantly southern distribution. These are the northernmost modern records for the species in Britain and the first ever for the Sefton Coast.

| Taxon | Records | Individuals |
|---------------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| <i>Walckenaeria vigilax</i> | 7 | 10 |
| <i>Dicymbium nigrum</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Gnathonarium dentatum</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Gongylidium rufipes</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Hypomma bituberculatum</i> | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Pocadicnemis pumila sens. str.</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Oedothorax gibbosus</i> | 2 | 4 |
| <i>Oedothorax fuscus</i> | 3 | 13 |
| <i>Oedothorax retusus</i> | 11 | 23 |
| <i>Cnephalocotes obscurus</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Troxochrus scabriculus</i> | 1 | 3 |
| <i>Erigone dentipalpis</i> | 3 | 8 |
| <i>Erigone atra</i> | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Leptyphantès tenuis</i> | 4 | 4 |
| <i>Tetragnatha extensa</i> | 2 | 4 |
| <i>Tetragnatha montana</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Pachygnatha clercki</i> | 9 | 12 |
| <i>Pachygnatha degeeri</i> | 10 | 21 |
| <i>Larinioides cornutus</i> | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Araniella opisthographa</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Pardosa purbeckensis</i> | 22 | 84 |
| <i>Pardosa pullata</i> | 16 | 104 |
| <i>Pardosa nigriceps</i> | 9 | 12 |
| <i>Xerolycosa miniata</i> | 7 | 10 |
| <i>Alopecosa pulverulenta</i> | 10 | 33 |
| <i>Trochosa ruricola</i> | 10 | 27 |
| <i>Trochosa terricola</i> | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Arctosa perita</i> | 7 | 10 |
| <i>Arctosa leopardus</i> | 24 | 251 |
| <i>Pirata piraticus</i> | 12 | 26 |
| <i>Hahnia nava</i> | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Argenna subnigra</i> | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Clubiona reclusa</i> | 4 | 4 |
| <i>Clubiona stagnatilis</i> | 9 | 11 |
| <i>Clubiona neglecta sens. str.</i> | 7 | 10 |
| <i>Cheiracanthium virescens</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Drassodes cupreus</i> | 3 | 4 |
| <i>Haplodrassus signifer</i> | 2 | 2 |
| <i>Zelotes latreillei</i> | 2 | 2 |
| <i>Philodromus cespitum</i> | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Xysticus cristatus</i> | 10 | 11 |

References

- Kristiansen, I., 2008. *The Development and Conservation Value of Alder (Alnus glutinosa) Woodland on Birkdale Green Beach*. University of Edinburgh.
- Smith, P.H., 2007. The Birkdale Green Beach—a sand-dune biodiversity hotspot. *British Wildlife*, 19(1), 11.

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News from Lincolnshire

by Annette Binding

One species of spider, *Cicurina cicur*, was added to the Lincolnshire list in 2007. Although collected by Colin Smith in 2005 the specimen was overlooked and was not identified until April 2007. Colin collected the spider at Wickenby Wood on the 16th March 2005. It is the only species in the genus *Cicurina* in Europe and looks very like a clubionid although it differs from those in having a shining glossy carapace, not covered in fine hairs like a clubionid. *Cicurina cicur* favours dark, damp habitats such as cellars and caves and also occurs under stones and in moss in wet woodlands. The species is rare in Britain and most records are from Southern and Eastern England although there are a few records from Yorkshire and Scotland.

As well as *Cicurina cicur*, Colin Smith found a number of spiders with very few other records. They included three species with only one previous record. These were a male *Araneus alsine* which was attracted to a mercury vapour lamp at Willingham Forest on the 13th September 2007. Rare in Britain, the species was previously recorded by L A Carr at Stainton Wood near Langworth in June 1919. It likes damp clearings and ditches in woodland.

The second species with only one previous record was a female *Philodromus histrio* which Colin collected at Crowle Moor NNR on 28th May 2007. The spider, which is distinctively marked, is usually found on heather and the previous Lincolnshire record was from Kirkby Moor in 1995.

The third species found by Colin and having only one previous county record was *Allomengea scopigera*. Colin collected two females and one male at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe – Rimac on 10th August 2007. The species which is widespread in northern and western Britain also has some coastal records from south-east England. It likes wet habitats including salt-marshes. The only previous Lincolnshire record was from Alkborough, one male found on the sea-shore by George Whatmough in September 1976.

Among the other spiders found by Colin Smith in 2007 was the linyphiid, *Walckenaeria cuspidata*. The female spider was collected at Bishopbridge on the 8th March. It was the fifth county record and the first since 1970.

Colin also found two male *Philodromus collinus* (Notable b) at Scotton Common LWT Reserve on 27 June, the 5th county record for this species which is uncommon in Britain.

Both Colin Smith and Stephen Sowden recorded the linyphiid, *Floronía bucculenta*, the single member of the genus *Floronía* in northern Europe. Colin found one female at Willingham Forest on the 31st August and Stephen Sowden found one specimen, also a female, at Graizelound on 3rd October. They were the fifth and sixth county records of this species.

Due in part to family illness and bad weather my own contribution to spider recording in 2007 was mainly in identification of specimens caught by other people. We did, however, make two very early visits to Hardy Gang

Wood in March and noticed the large number of *Cyclosa conica* webs. This distinctively shaped spider makes a web which often has an irregular band of thicker silk across it, known as a stabilimentum. Most of the webs we found on our visits had a stabilimentum. Also at Hardy Gang Wood, we found good numbers of the linyphiid spider, *Drapetisca socialis*. It is the single European species of the genus *Drapetisca* and spins its web on the trunks of trees. The web is extremely fine, making it very difficult to see. Although not uncommon in the county, Hardy Gang Wood was a new site for this species.

Finally a large black spider found at Skellingthorpe by Glenda Peacock was sent to me in October via Phil Porter. It was thought to be a black widow. It was however a large female *Steatoda grossa*, the third county record of this spider. The species which is related to the true black widow, is much commoner in the south of the country. It is, as this one was, usually found in houses and is relatively harmless to man.

I am grateful to all those who have sent records and specimens to me in 2007.

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***Uloborus plumipes*, a new site in Lincolnshire**

by Annette Binding

On 6th November 2008 my husband Allan and I attended an optics show at The Lawn in Lincoln. While we were there we also visited the Sir Joseph Banks Conservatory, a tropical glasshouse, to look at the plants. The conservatory contains plants reminiscent of those collected by Sir Joseph Banks on Captain Cooke's voyage of discovery to the Southern Ocean in the late 18th Century. There are ponds containing Koi Carp as well as running water keeping the humidity up for the plants, some of which are very large including Norfolk Island Pine and banana trees.

We soon noticed a large number of spiders' webs on many of the plants but at first we could see no spiders. Then we realised that some of the pieces of debris in the webs were the spiders. Allan managed to pot a couple of specimens and we brought them home. When I looked at them later under the microscope I was surprised and pleased to see that what I thought might be *Achaearanea tepidariorum* were in fact two female *Uloborus plumipes*, the first I had ever seen. I know of only five previous records of this species in Lincolnshire, four in the north of the county from Scunthorpe and Epworth and one in the south from Gonerby near Grantham.

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***Gongylidiellum latebricola* new to Lincolnshire in 2009**

by Annette Binding

On the 15th January Colin Smith (Lincolnshire County Moth Recorder) gave me a small number of spiders caught this year. Among them were three tubes of spiders collected at Linwood Warren LWT Reserve on New Year's Day. One of the tubes contained spiders collected from moss. A few of them were immature but mature species included *Walckenaeria acuminata*, *Euophrys frontalis*, *Ceratinella brevis* and *Savignia frontata*. There was also a male linyphiid *Gongylidiellum latebricola* which I had not seen before. A search of the Lincolnshire county records showed that the species had not been recorded in the county before.

Linwood Warren is located about one and a half miles east of Market Rasen in Central Lincolnshire. It is mainly acid grassland and wet heathland bordered by mixed woodland and has damp areas rich in mosses and lichens.

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***Enoplognatha latimana* new to Lincolnshire 2008**

by Annette Binding

In 2008 Colin Smith sent me a large number of spiders many of which had been collected at mercury vapour and actinic light traps which had been put out at various locations for moth recording. Colin and his light traps are regular visitors to Willingham Forest, a site which has already produced many interesting species and a tube collected from a mercury vapour lamp on the 30th June 2008 was no exception. There were several different species in the tube, among them were two male *Enoplognatha*. The first one I looked at turned out to be the usual *Enoplognatha ovata* and I expected the second specimen to be the same. However when I looked at the second spider I discovered that it was *Enoplognatha latimana*, a species I had only previously seen on Anglesey, North Wales. I did not think it had been recorded in Lincolnshire and a search of the county records confirmed that *Enoplognatha latimana* was in fact new to the county. The spider was the *lineata* form.

Willingham Forest is a large area of Forestry Plantation woodland, mostly pine, planted on sandy heathland. There are damp areas where the River Rase runs through it and also open areas of sandy heathland offering a wide range of habitat.

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***Segestria florentina* (Rossi, 1790) - A spider new to North Gloucestershire**

by David Haigh

A phone call on August 29th from a resident of Tredworth, Gloucester alerted me to the presence of large wall-dwelling spiders. I visited the property and soon observed the tube webs of *Segestria florentina*. I was shown a moribund specimen which confirmed its identity. There were many webs at the front and rear of the terraced property in old brick walls and behind wooden fascia boards. As far as I am aware this is the first record for North Gloucestershire, Vice-County 33. It has been known for many years in Bristol, at the docks and Clifton.

From this time the local media took up the discovery and it was run in the Weekend Citizen, September 6th, lead story 'Invasion of Green-fanged Spiders', Gloucestershire Echo and Western Daily Press, September 8th, all with accompanying photographs. This publicity generated a number of phone calls from anxious residents in Gloucester and Cheltenham. I was able to confirm further colonies in Cheltenham and Saintbridge, Gloucester. Reactions by residents varied from 'I want them exterminated' to curiosity and interest.

On September 11th ITV Local News/West did a photo shoot and interview with local residents and myself against the back-drop of an old brick wall. I suggested there were probably thousands of this spider in the area judging from the numbers in this 20m brick wall. It was pointed out later that this was probably not a very diplomatic observation. The Sunday Telegraph carried a short article with photograph and in October Times 2, 'Young Times' expanded the spider theme by carrying a cautionary article on exotic spiders which are 'hitching lifts' on imported food and plants. Thanks to climate change and an absence of severe frosts these spiders are able to establish themselves. During the week, October 13th the BBC News Channel took a closer look at alien invaders that are in the UK. The spiders mentioned were 'our' tube-web spider and the 'False Widow', *Steatoda nobilis* (already in Tewkesbury). The ultimate accolade was *Segestria*'s appearance on BBC's 'The One Show' when Mike Dilger in Bristol enticed the spider from its tube using a tuning fork.



***Segestria florentina* showing iridescent green jaws.**
Photograph © Colin Twissell



***Segestria florentina* at entrance of web.**
Photograph © Tim Gobourn

Many references to *Segestria* mention its aggressiveness and ability to inflict a nasty bite. However because of its habitat a person would have to be unlucky or foolhardy to even come into contact with it. Children could be warned not to poke their fingers into holes in walls. It is a large spider, body length up to 22mm and all such spiders should be treated with respect. Certainly males wander the walls at night on courtship but in daytime these spiders are deep inside their tubes.

Segestria has been in this country certainly since the 1930s when it is believed it was imported in shipping from the Mediterranean. It has been established in south coast ports and market towns since that time. It is likely that *Segestria* will make further progress northwards. It is an easy species to locate since the webs are characteristic and walls of docks, churches and older residential properties are favoured habitat. If you are lucky to see the spider note the iridescent green/bronze chelicerae (jaws).

Segestria is found in 3 tetrads in Gloucester, SO81I, SO81J and SO81N and one in Cheltenham SO92G. I would welcome further records of *Segestria florentina*. I am grateful to Colin Twissell for the photographs and 5 more records from Gloucester including the boundary wall of Gloucester Rugby Club.

"Merrivale" 27 St. Lukes Road, CHELTENHAM,
Gloucestershire, GL53 7JF

***Clubiona juvenis* at Catfield Fen, Norfolk**

by Pip Collyer

Last Summer, Helen Smith gathered together a number of volunteers to help with a project to evaluate the possibility of translocating the fen raft spider, *Dolomedes plantarius*. The establishment of additional populations is one of the BAP objectives for this very rare species. Unless new populations are discovered, this is likely to be achieved by translocation to new sites. Potentially suitable sites in Norfolk and Suffolk were to be visited to establish whether *D. plantarius* is present and, if not, to identify habitats suitable for future introduction of the spider.

On 8th August I met up with Helen and another volunteer, Dave Hewitt, at the Butterfly Conservation Site at Catfield Fen just east of Barton Broad. As we set off I noticed that Helen had several metres of stout rope wrapped around her and I remember commenting that I didn't think we would come across too many mountains. Helen explained that she was carrying it as a condition of consent to go on the site. We soon saw the first of several "Danger Keep Out" signs and within half an hour I was to pay for my flippancy as I had sunk up to my waist in a dyke [some water but mostly mud] and was finding it difficult to move let alone get myself out. I had stepped off the end of an insubstantial plank over the dyke onto what I thought was solid ground only to find it was not. In spite of being much smaller and lighter than me, Helen rescued me with the aid of the stout rope, Dave being on the wrong side of the dyke to help.

At this stage I would like to be able to say that on emptying my gumboots I found *Argyroneta aquatica*, but I didn't, although a female with young was found a couple of weeks later when we visited the RSPB Strumpshaw Marshes Reserve.

It was warm and sunny so I decided to ignore my bedraggled state and carry on. I am glad I did because later that day the eagle eyed Dave Hewitt spotted a silk retreat about a metre off the ground as we were working our way through reeds. He managed to persuade the occupant to drop into my pot and I was later able to identify it as a female *Clubiona juvenis*, Nationally Vulnerable (RDB2). The carapace is distinctive being long and almost parallel-side and I would hope to be able to recognise it in the field in future.



Clubiona juvenis showing slim appearance.
Photograph © Peter Harvey



Clubiona juvenis showing anterior median eyes much larger than laterals. Photograph © Peter Harvey

An eventful, informative and enjoyable day was rounded off by being shouted at by an irate adjoining owner whose land we had inadvertently trespassed onto. However, Helen's tact and charm soon calmed him down to the extent that he invited her to survey his land also!

25 Harford Manor Close, Norwich, NR2 2LW

Spider recording at Stanford Battle Training Ground

by Pip Collyer

Early in 2007 I was granted a permit to record at the Stanford Battle Training Ground [Stanta] in the Norfolk Breckland. As part of the process, I was shown a 20 minute video of all the horrible things which could happen to me on the site if I picked up some unexploded piece of ordnance or tripped over an unseen trip wire. Since presumably the idea of a trip wire is to remain unseen it seemed to me that this might be a problem but having got that far, I chose to assume that the MOD was merely covering its backside.

Stanta covers about 21 square miles of beautiful countryside between Thetford and Swaffham and encompasses four villages. The villagers were evacuated during the War and whilst the churches remain, although boarded up, there are now few of the original houses left standing. The area is mainly grassland, grazed by sheep (who are presumably able to avoid the trip wires!) but there are areas of heather, gorse, mixed woodland and conifer plantations.

During the year I visited Stanta five times, and faced with such a huge site, I decided to concentrate my efforts on one or two small defined areas. Whilst I did not find anything new to Norfolk I recorded a total of 80 species. I feel sure that this number would have been greatly increased had I used my two stroke vacuum sampler but, in view of the video, I was reluctant to do so. Noteworthy finds were:-

Centromerus incilium – Nationally Scarce [Notable B]

Araniella inconspicua – Nationally Scarce [Notable B]

Trachyzelotes pedestris – Nationally Scarce [Notable B]

The year was not without incident. One day I was sitting in my car, parked beside a track in an open wooded area, whilst eating my lunch. I was wondering whether the small arms fire I could hear was getting closer when round the corner came two soldiers, blacked out and in full battle gear quartering the ground on each side of the track. My sense of unease increased when one took cover behind the car whilst he read his map. I was relieved when he moved on!

25 Harford Manor Close, Norwich, NR2 2LW

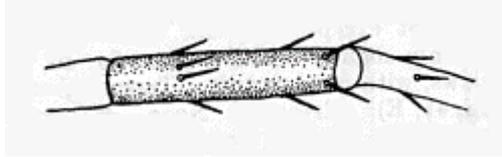
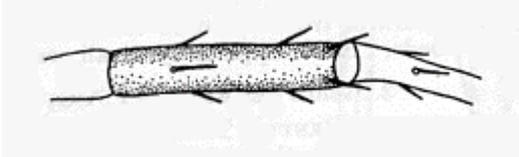
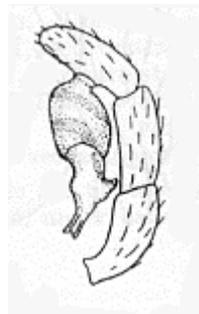
Identification of *Dysdera crocata* and *Dysdera erythrina*

The females of these two species can be very difficult and some may be best left unidentified unless dissected. Adult females have no epigyne, but in *D. crocata* in particular the adnexae are visible through the cuticle in preserved specimens. Juveniles certainly cannot be reliably identified to species level. Particular caution is needed for any *Dysdera* recorded from synanthropic situations, where *D. erythrina* is unlikely to be found.

D. crocata is often found in synanthropic situations in gardens, post-industrial situations and various kinds of wasteground, as well as in shingle or stony habitats. Reliably identified *D. erythrina* suggest that it is a species much more restricted in habitat preferences, and is most likely to occur on heathland, old undisturbed coastal shingle and old grasslands.

The tibial spines are very variable and should not be relied on for identification. The femoral spines are a better guide but again are not totally reliable. If the dorsal femoral spine is present then it is certainly *D. crocata*, but these may be absent in some *D. crocata* leading to confusion with *D. erythrina*.

In living or freshly preserved individuals carapace colour is a guide – typically dark red in *erythrina*, more orange-red in *crocata*. There may be a subtle difference in abdomen colour as well.

| | <i>D. erythrina</i> | <i>D. crocata</i> |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Length | Smaller: male 7-8mm, female 9-10mm | Larger, male 9-10mm, female 11-15mm |
| Femur IV | No dorsal spines | Short spines (usually 2) dorsally, close to basal end  |
| Tibia IV | Usually with 2 ventral spines in basal half (apart from the lateral and apical spines)  | Usually with 1 ventral spine in basal half (apart from the lateral and apical spines)  |
| Female genital markings | | Usually pronounced in preserved specimens |
| Male palp |  |  |

Figures from Locket & Millidge (1951).

References

Locket, G.H. & Millidge, A.F. 1951. *British Spiders* Volume 1. Ray Society, London.

Author: Peter Harvey

Identification of *Porrhomma* species

Female specimens of *Porrhomma* present particular problems of identification not only for the beginner, but in some cases for experienced arachnologists as well and it can certainly be considered a critical genus in our fauna. With the exception of two species (*P. errans* and *P. egeria*), which may be distinguished from other British members of the genus by details of their leg spination, all species require detailed and critical examination of the epigynes. As in many spiders, the external appearance of the epigyne in ventral view can be quite variable, particularly in the appearance of the internal structures seen through the cuticle, and care needs to be taken with isolated females for this reason. While most species can be reliably distinguished by careful examination of the epigyne in ventral view, there are a number of closely similar species pairs for which it is often advisable to dissect out and clear the epigyne so that it can be mounted on a slide and studied in dorsal view. Wherever possible, specimens should be compared with material in a reference collection which has been either identified or confirmed by an experienced arachnologist.

In the account below, the species are divided into five groups on the basis of leg spination. The first three groups present no particular problems of identification but the last two, which contain six out of the eleven species recorded from Britain, include a number of particularly difficult species.

Group I. All metatarsi with a single spine.

Porrhomma errans (Blackwall, 1841)

This species can readily be distinguished by the presence of a spine on each metatarsus which appears to be a reliable character. The external epigyne (Fig. 1) sometimes resembles that of *P. pallidum* but the epigynal opening is normally somewhat larger and the spermathecal ducts, seen through the cuticle are more curved and appear broader than those of *P. pallidum*. The species appears to be relatively scarce in Britain and has been found in a wide range of habitats. Although possibly most often in grassland, it has also been taken in woodland, coastal landslips, gardens and allotments. Harvey (in Harvey *et al.* 2002) suggests that it may have a requirement for some bare ground as part of its micro-habitat.

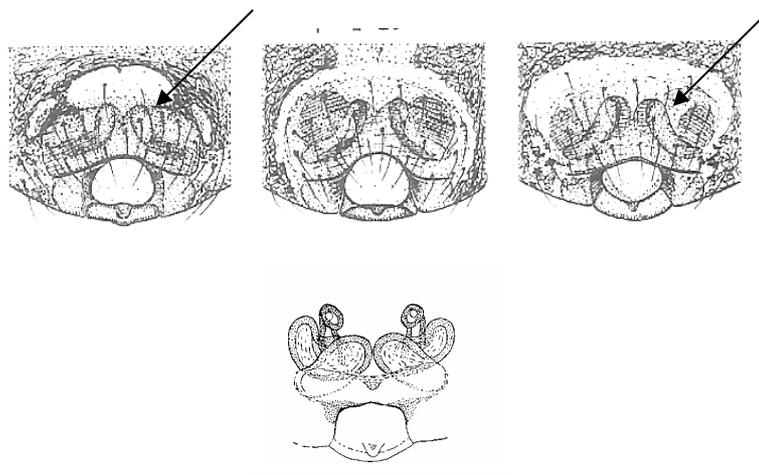


Figure. 1. *Porrhomma errans*. Epigynes in ventral view. Arrows indicate spermathecal ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Group II. All metatarsi spineless, femur I with two prolateral spines in addition to dorsal spines.

Porrhoma egeria Simon, 1884

The presence of two prolateral spines on femur I clearly distinguishes *Porrhoma egeria* from all other British species. The epigyne (Fig. 2) can be somewhat similar to that *P. rosenhaueri* and it has very small eyes, though not as extremely reduced as in *P. rosenhaueri*. The single prolateral spine on metatarsus I immediately distinguishes the latter species from *P. egeria*. This is again a relatively scarce species in Britain, although occurring throughout the country. Its habitat is probably largely subterranean and it has been taken in caves, mines, rock scree and occasionally cellars.

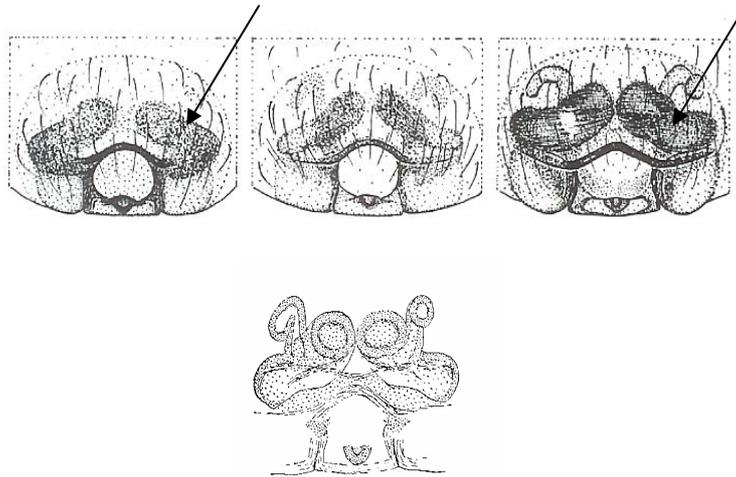


Figure 2. *Porrhomma egeria*. Epigynes in ventral view. Arrows indicate spermathecal ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Group III. Metatarsi spineless, femur I with one prolateral spine and with no dorsal spines, tibia I with prolateral spine.

Porrhomma oblitum (O.P-Cambridge, 1870)

The epigyne of this species is very similar to that of *Porrhomma montanum* but normally the epigynal opening is slightly narrower and the spermathecal ducts, as seen through the cuticle, have more of a comma shape (Fig. 3). The epigyne is also closely similar to that of *P. pygmaeum* (see below) and the two species can only reliably be distinguished by the presence of dorsal spines on femur I in *P. pygmaeum*. *P. oblitum* is usually very dark in colour (like *P. pygmaeum*) while *P. montanum* is usually paler and more orange-brown. This is a very local spider and is usually found in very wet litter in damp woodlands, including fen carr. It has also been swept from the field layer of fens.

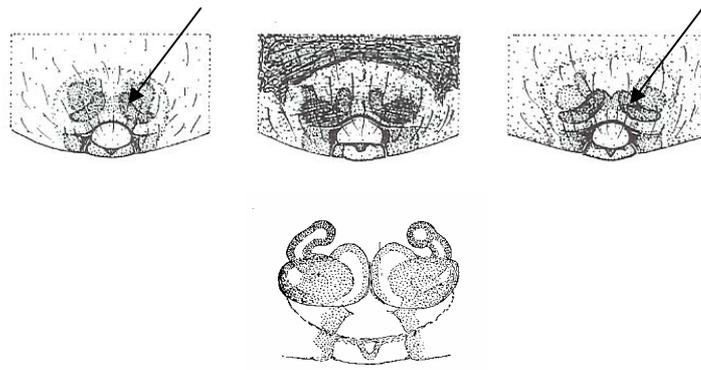


Figure 3. *Porrhomma oblitum*, epigynes in ventral view. Arrows indicate spermathecal ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma montanum Jackson, 1913

The epigyne of *P. montanum* resembles that of *P. oblitum* but the epigynal opening is usually slightly narrower and the spermathecal ducts seen through the cuticle are straighter and less comma shaped (Fig. 4). The cleared epigyne is clearly distinct from that of *P. oblitum*. This species is normally somewhat larger than *P. oblitum*. *P. montanum* is typically an upland species where it occurs beneath rocks on mountains.

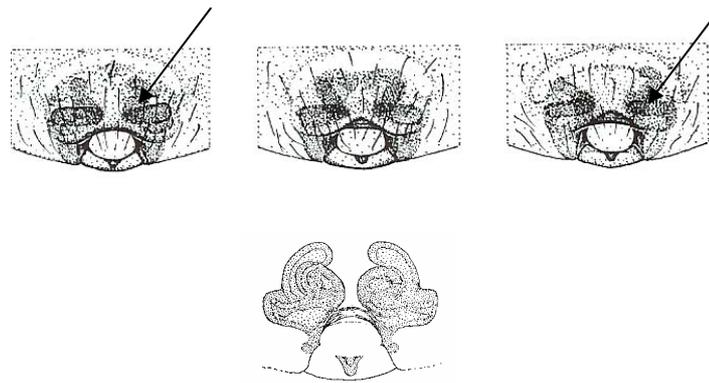


Figure 4. *Porrhomma montanum*, epigynes in ventral view. Arrows indicate copulatory ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Group IV. Metatarsi spineless, femur I with one prolateral spine and with no dorsal spines, tibia I without prolateral spine.

Porrhomma cambridgei Merrett, 1994

This species, only recently re-validated, closely resembles *P. oblitum* but lacks a prolateral spine on tibia I and has much smaller eyes. The legs are relatively longer and more slender than those of *P. oblitum* with the ratio of femur I length to carapace length of 0.82-0.91 as compared with 0.70-0.75 in *P. oblitum* (Merrett, 1994). As in other *Porrhomma* species, the appearance of the epigyne is variable (Fig. 5) and probably not distinguishable with certainty from that of *P. oblitum*. This is apparently a rare species in Britain, recorded from only four 10 km squares. It occurs in grassland and arable fields and the reduced eyes and pale colour suggest it may be a subterranean species, living in soil cracks.



Figure 5. *Porrhomma cambridgei*, epigynes in ventral view. Note close similarity to *P. oblitum* (Fig. 3 above).

Group V. Metatarsi spineless, femur I with one prolateral spine and with one or two dorsal spines.

Among the six species included in this group, two, *P. pygmaeum* and *P. pallidum* have epigynal openings that are markedly smaller than the others. The remaining four species can be distinguished by a combination of the size and shape of the epigynal opening and the form of the internal ducts as seen through the cuticle. A number of the species can, however, have somewhat similar epigynes when viewed externally and it is sometimes helpful to examine the internal structure by dissecting out the epigyne and making a temporary slide mount.

Porrhomma pygmaeum (Blackwall, 1834)

P. pygmaeum has an epigyne with a particularly small opening which is notably narrower than that of *P. pallidum*. The spermathecal ducts, seen through the cuticle, are distinctive and frequently appear as two round spots (Fig. 6). The epigynal opening often appears much more opaque than in the other species of this group. The region anterior to the epigynal opening is often heavily pigmented and in this case it may be helpful to dissect and clear an epigyne to reveal the internal structures. In the cleared epigyne, the spermathecae are directed inwards (Fig. 6) while those of *P. pallidum* are directed forwards (Fig. 7). This is by far the commonest species of the genus in Britain and is normally found in damp marshy habitats. It is also a very common aeronaut and consequently may be found in all habitat strata of grasslands, scrub and woodland.

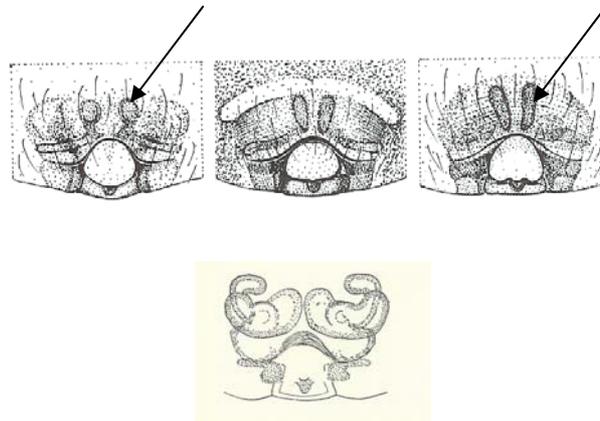


Figure 6. *Porrhomma pygmaeum*, top row, epigynes in ventral view, Arrows indicate spermathecae as seen through the cuticle, often less clearly visible than this. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma pallidum Jackson, 1913

The epigyne of *P. pallidum* viewed ventrally is very similar to that of *P. pygmaeum* but the epigynal opening is relatively much wider. In addition, the spermathecal ducts, seen through the cuticle, appear quite different, resembling two “eyebrows” above the opening (Fig. 7). The ends of the spermathecae nearly always show through the cuticle as two distinct round spots. The spider is also normally much paler in overall colour than *P. pygmaeum* although recently moulted specimens of the latter species may resemble *P. pallidum* in colour. In the cleared epigyne, viewed dorsally, the spermathecae are directed forwards, rather than inwards as is the case in *P. pygmaeum* (Fig. 6). This is a widespread species in Britain, although commoner in the north than the south. It occurs in the ground layer of both woodlands and upland habitats, under stones or in moss.

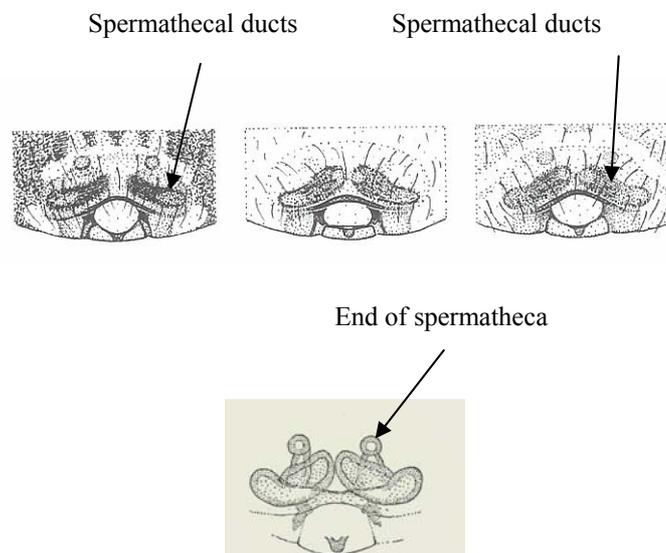


Figure 7. *Porrhomma pallidum*, top row, epigynes in ventral view, Arrows indicate spermathecal ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma microphthalmum (O. P.-Cambridge, 1871)

In the epigyne of *P. microphthalmum* viewed ventrally, the spermathecal ducts seen through the cuticle are broad and appear like a pair of posteriorly diverging tear-drops, even in rather dark specimens (Fig. 8). The epigynal opening is rather square in outline compared with that of *P. convexum* (Fig. 9). The epigyne is similar in shape to that of *P. rosenhaueri* but the latter occurs only in caves and is extremely rare in Britain. The cleared epigyne viewed ventrally differs from that of *P. convexum* in that the spermathecae are directed forward (Fig. 8) whereas those of *P. convexum* are directed inwards (Fig. 9). *P. microphthalmum* is also a widespread species but, unlike *P. pallidum* is much more common in central and south-eastern Britain. It is commonly found in agricultural fields and sparsely vegetated grasslands including mudflats and saline grasslands. It is reputed to be partially subterranean, living in cracks in the soil.

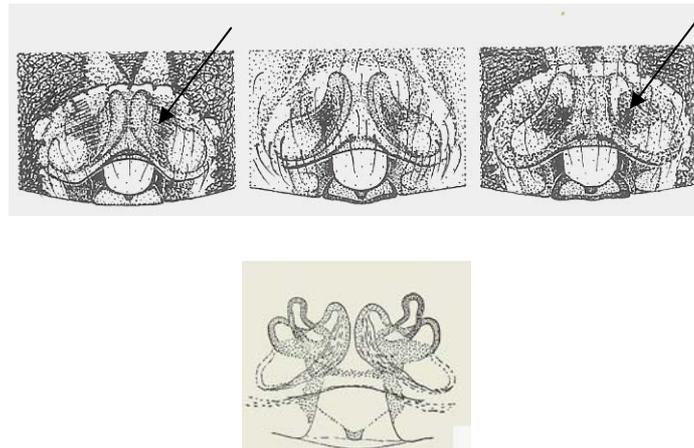


Figure 8. *Porrhomma microphthalmum*, top row, epigynes in ventral view, Arrows indicate spermathecal ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma convexum Westring, 1861

The epigyne of *P. convexum*, viewed ventrally, is somewhat similar to that of *P. microphthalmum* but differs in that the epigynal opening is often slightly narrower and is distinctly more rounded anteriorly (Fig. 9). In this species the spermathecal ducts viewed through the cuticle are narrow and show a right angled bend with the central portion directed forward so that, in some specimens they appear like exclamation marks (Fig. 9). The cleared epigyne, viewed ventrally, is quite different in form from that of *P. microphthalmum* (Fig. 8). *P. convexum* is widespread but uncommon in central and northern England but rare in Scotland and southern England. It is normally found in damp mines and caves but it has also been taken in culverts, cellars, rock piles and thick undergrowth.

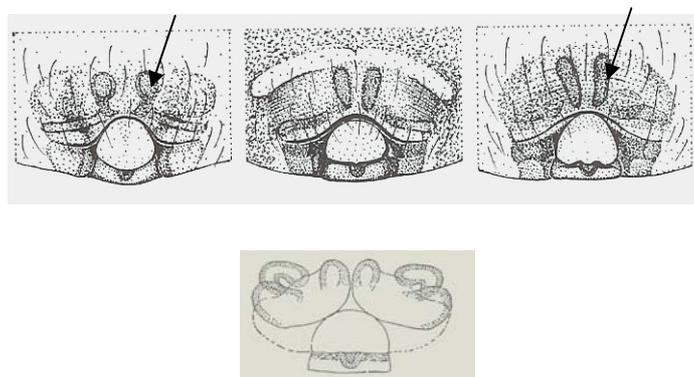


Figure 9. *Porrhomma convexum*, top row, epigynes in ventral view, Arrows indicate spermathecae as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma campbelli F.O. P.-Cambridge, 1894

This species has a very distinctive epigyne with an opening that is more or less pear-shaped (distinctly narrowing posteriorly) and with extremely broad, dark ducts seen through the cuticle lying transversely across the epigynal plate (Fig. 10). In the cleared epigyne, viewed ventrally, the massive epigynal ducts are characteristic and unlikely to be easily confused with that of any other *Porrhomma* species. It is a fairly large species with relatively small eyes but not as small as those in *P. egeria*. This is a widespread but rare species in Britain which has been collected from beneath rocks and in dry litter of reedbeds as well as in mole burrows. Sometimes in heathland and grassland, it has also been recorded ballooning on upland moorland but is never numerous. It has been suggested that it may be an inhabitant of subterranean mammal burrows.

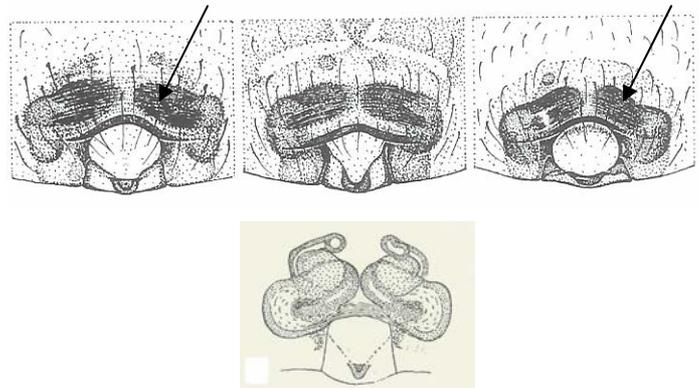


Figure 10. *Porrhomma campbelli*, top row, epigyne in ventral view, Arrows indicate ducts as seen through the cuticle. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Porrhomma rosenhaueri (L. Koch, 1872)

P. rosenhaueri has an epigyne which closely resembles that of *P. microphthalmum*. However, the epigynal opening is slightly narrower and has a small notch in the posterior border of this opening (Fig. 11). It occurs exclusively in caves and is the rarest of all *Porrhomma* species in Britain, having been recorded from only two sites in S. Wales.

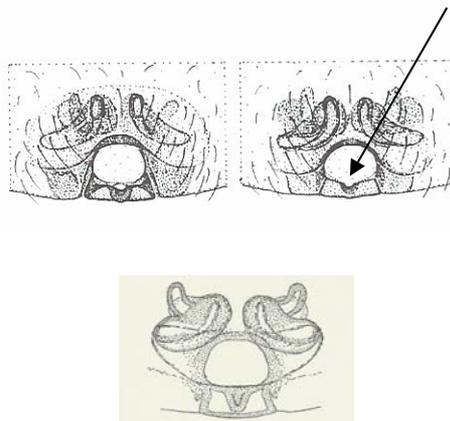


Figure 11. *Porrhomma rosenhaueri*, top row, epigyne in ventral view. Arrow indicates notch in posterior margin of epigynal opening. Bottom, cleared epigyne viewed ventrally.

Figures from Locket & Millidge (1951), Merrett (1994) and Roberts (1987).

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Author: Tony Russell-Smith

Identification of *Alopecosa cuneata* and *A. pulverulenta*

Identification of males should be no problem – as well as the palpal differences the swollen tibiae 1 are obvious, even in the field.

The females of these two species can be very difficult. Reliance only on the epigyne is fraught with danger, since the epigynes can be variable. The light dorsal abdominal band enclosing the lanceolate stripe of *A. cuneata* is very distinctive and unless this is present, you are almost certainly looking at *A. pulverulenta* (and *A. cuneata* should not be recorded without recourse to expert opinion). In northern Scotland some female specimens of *A. pulverulenta* approach *A. cuneata* in bright very clearly marked abdominal markings, but these are whiter than the markings of *A. cuneata*.

| | <i>Alopecosa cuneata</i> | <i>A. pulverulenta</i> |
|-------------------|---|---|
| | Males | |
| |  |  |
| Tibiae 1 | swollen | normal |
| | Females | |
| |  |  |
| Abdominal marking | Dorsal abdominal marking very pronounced, broad and yellowish white | Dorsal markings usually brownish and not usually pronounced in southern specimens, pronounced but white in some Scottish material |
| Epigyne | Epigyne is smaller than <i>A. pulverulenta</i> and narrowest part of central tongue about one third of opening. Variable and not always conclusive. | Epigyne is larger and narrowest part of central tongue over one half of opening. |

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 Roberts, M.J. 1985. *The spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* Volume 1. Harley Books, Colchester.

Author: Peter Harvey

Correction to the article by Simon Warmingham on *Theridion hannoniae* in the July 2008 SRS News: the spider has not been found in the Netherlands.

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