

# Spider Recording Scheme News

## Autumn 2013, No. 77

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

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

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 78 will be published in Spring 2014. Please send contributions by the end of February at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk or grays@peterharvey.freemove.co.uk. The newsletter depends on your contributions!

### Editorial

As always, thank you to the contributors who have provided articles for this issue. Please help future issues by providing articles, short or longer, on interesting discoveries and observations.

Two new records of *Zoropsis spinimana*, one from a house in East Grinstead, Sussex and a second from a house in Kensington brought into the Natural History Museum for identification, continue to indicate this species' establishment in this country.

We now have 952,475 SRS records in total to date in MapMate, 401,747 of which have SRS Phase 2 site-related information on broad habitat and other site-related data. All these data are uploaded and summarised on the SRS website.

We have to date had 129,670 visits, 87,665 unique visitors and 728,012 page views from 162 countries/territories since the Spider and Harvestmen Recording Scheme website went live in July 2010 (see below). This has been boosted by huge peaks of people accessing the Spider and Harvestman Recording Scheme website in October due to the media reports about false widow spiders, by which of course they actually mean *Steatoda nobilis*, the so-called 'noble false widow', conveniently forgetting or not knowing that the completely harmless *Steatoda bipunctata* occurs in probably just about every house, garden or outhouse in the country.

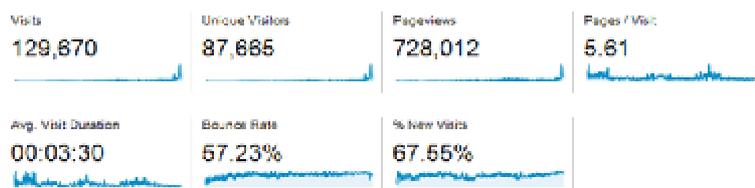
The deluge of email enquiries, fewer than but mirroring those being sent to our Secretary Pip Collyer,

and all requiring follow up emails to obtain pictures and then adequate information to at least allow the information to be recorded into the recording scheme, meant that the BAS website contact email for the SRS has been changed to a link which directs users to the SRS website "Contact us" page. Here I have updated the form to require these details to be submitted with the enquiry. This has meant that we have at least obtained a large number of records, mostly for *Zygiella x-notata*, but also *Steatoda bipunctata*, *Steatoda grossa*, *Araneus diadematus*, *Amaurobius similis* and even *Misumena vatia*, all thought by the enquirer to be possible 'false widow' spiders. Many of these people were really very concerned about their own, their children's and their pets welfare because of the appalling scare-mongering coverage being put out by the media. Only a handful of queries actually involved *Steatoda nobilis*, and all but two were within its existing known range. None extended the range dramatically.

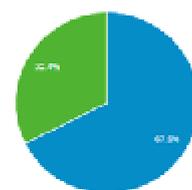
As well as the records resulting from the 'false widow' episodes, we continue to receive records through the website for a number of 'easily recognisable' species, with recent late summer/autumn favourites being, not surprisingly, *Araneus diadematus* and *Argiope bruennichi*. There is currently a total of 107 records submitted, for 7 taxa. These records do not appear on the maps until they are validated.



87,665 people visited this site



New Visitor Returning Visitor



#### Demographics

Language	
Country / Territory	
City	
System	
Browser	
Operating System	

#### Language

Language	Visits	% Visits
1. en-us	71,893	66.44%
2. en-gb	32,579	26.12%
3. fr	3,516	2.71%
4. en	3,174	2.48%
5. de-de	1,850	1.43%
6. pl	1,427	1.10%

## New status review

After the failure of the national status review begun in 2002 to reach fruition, a new status review is in progress, based on records up to 2012. The first stage of work on this was undertaken earlier this year, and now the intention is to complete the review by spring 2014, funded by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).

## Area Organiser changes

Stan Dobson has resigned as Area Organiser for Derbyshire VC57 after his many years of hard work in that role. Stan was also instrumental in collating and organising electronic records for the provisional atlas, and many thanks go to Stan for all the work he has done for this and for the recording scheme over the years.

If anyone can take over the role as AO for Derbyshire, please get into contact.

## RSPB Priority species of spider on RSPB reserves 2013

by Duncan Allen

This year as part of a Heritage Lottery Funded project for the RSPB I have been working with the reserves ecology team based at The Lodge in Sandy to determine the status of priority species of spider as outlined by the RSPB's reserves priority species list on RSPB reserves across the UK. This has been a fantastic project to work on and has yielded some great spider records. Below is a brief summary of records of RSPB priority species as well as other UKBAP notable a's and b's from RSPB reserves in 2013.

### *Arctosa fulvolineata* at Stour Estuary and Havergate Island reserves

*Stour Estuary 25-27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013:* I concentrated my search on the salt marshes between the two hides (bramble creek and deep fleet) that overlook the saltmarsh giving me a stretch of salt marsh approx 600m across to search through. Two male *Arctosa fulvolineata* were found on the reserve, both coming from a pitfall trap set mid way up the saltmarsh just in front of the bramble creek hide (TM212317); the traps had been checked earlier that day (27<sup>th</sup>) and were empty, upon returning later just before high tide the two males were found, presumably moving up the saltmarsh to escape the rising tide.

*Havergate Island 30-31<sup>st</sup> May 2013:* I spent a rather unfruitful day out searching along the salt marshes that fringe Havergate Island on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May and it looked to be a similar case for the 31<sup>st</sup> with my searching only turning up a few spiders mostly lycosids (*Pardosa purbeckensis* & *P. prativaga*) Both a male and female *Sitticus inexpectus* (Salticidae) were found under glasswort on the shingle ridge (TM418475). A single female *Arctosa fulvolineata* was found on exposed

shingle landward side of a small rise on the shingle ridge on the eastern shore of the island during a night search (TM41874756)



**Figure 1.** Female *Arctosa fulvolineata* from Havergate Island. Photograph © Duncan Allen



**Figure 2.** Exposed shingle where female *Arctosa fulvolineata* was found (Havergate Island). Photograph © Duncan Allen

### *Clubiona genevensis* at Ramsey Island reserve

*Ramsey Island 19-21<sup>st</sup> June 2013:* *C. genevensis* was found at three sites across the island. In total 13 individuals were recorded (all female). Six females (five on eggs and one with nest of spiderlings) were found under stones on the scree slope on the northern side of Foal Fawr (SM70532265) with another four with eggs under stones on adjacent scree slope (SM70542264), One female (with eggs) found under loose stones up on the east aspect of Carnysyubor (SM70112454), and two females (with eggs) under stones at rocky outcrop Yr Hen-ffordd (SM70612332). Another species of note found on the exposed scree at Foel Fawr was the jumping spider *Neon robustus*. *Euophrys frontalis* was also recorded from Ramsey, and whilst this is not a priority species spider it is however a new record for Ramsey Island.

### *Pseudeuophrys obsoleta* at Pagham Harbour reserve

*Pagham Harbour 24-25<sup>th</sup> July 2013:* *Pseudeuophrys obsoleta* one female was found out sunning itself on the



**Figure 3.** Scree slope at Foa1 Fawr home to *Clubiona genevensis* (Ramsey Island). Photograph © Duncan Allen



**Figure 4.** Female *Clubiona genevensis* with eggs at Foa1 Fawr (Ramsey Island). Photograph © Duncan Allen

open shingle ridge east from the sleepers (SZ875953). This is a new record for both Pagham Harbour reserve as well as a new vice county record for West Sussex, this record also shifts the distribution of this spider westward by over one hundred km.

*Sitticus inexpectus* was found in good numbers right across the reserve from the harbour spit to the groynes. *Agraecina striata* one female was found in washed up tidal litter on the banks of the lagoon on the landward side (SZ87479537) making this notable b species a nice edition to the reserves list.

5 Rockingham Walk, Beds MK410BX;  
email: duncanallen78@yahoo.co.uk

### ***Zelotes longipes* (L.Koch) in South Wiltshire**

by Jonty Denton

Plaitford Common (SU2718) is a heavily grazed heath at the northern edge of the New Forest. It is famous for its rare lichen assemblage which thrives in the absence of fires (due to the short cropped turf), from where I found an adult female running on the surface in bright sunshine on 20.7.2012. This would appear to be the first record for Wiltshire (Martin Askins pers.comm.).

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX. Email: JontyDenton@aol.com

### ***Ozyptila westringi* (Thorell, 1873) in Britain?**

by Jonty Denton

I found an unfamiliar female spider on the open saltmarsh at Exbury, South Hampshire (SZ433986) on 16.6.2009. Peter Merrett was of the view that it was most likely to be *Ozyptila westringi*, but that a male was required to be sure. I have returned twice to the area and found no more individuals. However given that the epigynes were a good match to available illustrations and the habitat is consistent with that from which it is known in Europe, recorders are encouraged to keep a look out for the species. It is somewhat intermediate in build between a large *Ozyptila* and a small *Xysticus*.

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX. Email: JontyDenton@aol.com

### ***Ozyptila nigrita* (Thorell) & *Hypsosinga albobittata* (Westring) in Middlesex.**

by Jonty Denton

On 16.5.2013, I swept 2 male *O. nigrita* from deer grazed acid grassland in Home Park, Hampton Court (TQ1667) close to the Thames. The same area yielded numerous male and female *H.albobittata* in May and June, which also proved to be more widespread in the park. My previous encounters with *Ozyptila nigrita* have been on chalk downland on the North Downs of Surrey and Kent. It has also been found on dunes, but its occurrence on acid grassland was something of a surprise. Both these species appear to be new for Middlesex.

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX. Email: JontyDenton@aol.com

## A new Nottinghamshire spider

by Howard Williams

On 10<sup>th</sup> August this year I received an e-mail from Trevor Pendleton who had been looking on the walls of Worksop Priory church for the new *Leiobunum* sp. of harvestman he had discovered in Worksop a few years ago. He not only found a number of these, but on looking around the churchyard itself, found many *Nigma walckenaeri*. Though not rare in the south or west of England, it was certainly a surprise to find this small beautiful emerald-green spider in north Nottinghamshire. The furthest north it seems to have been recorded is in the Stamford area of South Lincolnshire, some 70 to 80 miles south of us. On 21<sup>st</sup> August I went along to the churchyard myself and quickly found high numbers of (mostly juvenile?) spiders in dense ivy around the base of an ash tree. A few more were found among the suckers densely growing at the base of a mature lime tree. There are a number of these in the Priory churchyard, but I could find no more *Nigma* in them nor in the ivy on boundary walls or headstones. Trevor had also found some in one lilac bush but not in other lilacs.



**Figure 1.** *Nigma walckenaeri* female at Worksop Priory Churchyard Aug. 2013. Photograph © Trevor Pendleton

Although most of the spiders seem to be in the ash tree ivy, there is no reason why they should not be able to spread to other similar habitats within the churchyard. The ivy is especially dense round this one ash tree, but there are plenty of suckered lime trees, boundary shrubs and bushes as well as ivy-grown walls, headstones and hedges. The ivy (and lilac) habitat noted here corresponds well to Ian Dawson's description of habitat in his article on the spread of *Nigma walckenaeri* in the newsletter of March 2012; and its presence in Worksop seems to confirm the northward movement he has observed. How long it may have been here is another matter, but its concentration mainly around only one or two trees suggests perhaps not very long.

I spoke to one of the churchwardens on visitor duty that morning and he was very interested to see the two spiders I had collected in a tube, making a note of the name and where they were found. Like many churchyards it is regularly 'gardened' by a contracted

company or the council itself, and I suggested that he might have a word in a suitable ear to prevent ivy being pulled off the trees and walls. As he pointed out, that sometimes has to be done in the case of headstones. He seemed amenable to the idea, however, and the spider may get a mention in the parish magazine.



**Figure 2.** *Nigma walckenaeri* immature male in ivy at Worksop Priory Churchyard Aug. 2013. Photograph © Howard Williams

Another interesting spider turned up in the south of the county at the Attenborough NR bioblitz in August. Attenborough lies next to the Trent in Nottingham. The spider, which I had not seen before, was a male *Theridion hemerobium*, swept from bushes or long vegetation along a path near water. Indeed the whole reserve is based around water. This is not a new Nottinghamshire record, as Nick Law has three 2004 records for females he found at points along the Chesterfield Canal in the north of the county; which makes the Attenborough spider a 4<sup>th</sup> county record and the first, as far as I am aware, in south Nottinghamshire. Although on the day I found only one *Theridion hemerobium*, I see no reason why it should not be present on this large reserve in fair numbers. The habitat is entirely suitable.

### References

- Roberts, M.J. 1995. *Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*. Collins Field Guide, HarperCollins.
- Dawson, I. 2012. Dramatic spread of *Nigma walckenaeri*. S.R.S. News. No. 72. In *Newsl. Br. arachnol. Soc.* 123: 25-26.
- SRS Website: Species Index <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/A-Z+Species+Index> and Regional Distribution Maps <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Distribution/> accessed 10 Sept 2013.

131 Windsor Road, Carlton-in-Lindrick, Worksop, Notts. S81 9DH

## *Ero aphana*, new to Lincolnshire

by Annette Binding

I sometimes 'steal' from spiders' webs anything that looks as if it might turn out to be an interesting invertebrate and although many of these items turn out to be just bits of debris some are much more interesting and I have in the past found several rarities in this way. So when I collected an apparently inanimate object from a web on the outside of our electric meter box on the 5<sup>th</sup> August this year I was expecting it to be just another piece of debris. However, when I looked at it through the microscope I discovered that it was a female *Ero aphana*, the same species which I collected at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005. I contacted Peter Harvey and he told me that *Ero aphana* is turning up in all sorts of places including gardens, outhouses and houses. I do not know how it came to be in my garden, although as they are so very small and so well camouflaged they could easily be overlooked. I certainly did not expect to find a RDB2 species which is also new to Lincolnshire in my little garden which measures approximately 5 metres square.

Coincidentally on the 26<sup>th</sup> April this year I found a female *Ero furcata* under a small piece of deadwood in my garden. Although not nearly as rare as *Ero aphana* this is only the 5<sup>th</sup> record of *Ero furcata* for Lincolnshire.

6 Willow Court, Washingborough, Lincoln LN4 1AS E-mail: allan.binding@ntlworld.com

## *Zoropsis spinimana*, a record from West Sussex

by Peter Harvey

In late September 2013, Jemma Black submitted a record on the SRS website for *Zoropsis spinimana*, from East Grinstead, West Sussex, found on the lounge carpet on 26<sup>th</sup> September. On emailing Jemma for a photograph to help confirm the record, I was surprised to receive two photographs (Figs. 1 & 2) which did indeed confirm a *Zoropsis* spider.



**Figure 1.** *Zoropsis spinimana* from East Grinstead. Photograph © Jemma Black



**Figure 2.** *Zoropsis spinimana* from East Grinstead showing adult female. Photograph © Jemma Black

One of these indicated a mature female, so Jemma sent me the spider and I was able to confirm *Zoropsis spinimana*, a very large female (see Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** *Zoropsis spinimana* from East Grinstead showing adult female epigyne. Photograph © Peter Harvey

Together with yet another record from a house in Kensington on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013, brought into the Natural History Museum for identification, these all continue to indicate this spider's establishment in this country.

32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex TM16 2YP

## The influence of slope and aspect on microclimate and spiders in a roadside cutting in North Devon

by Mike Towns

In the late 1990s I regularly travelled back and forth on a new stretch of the A39 road in North Devon which had been opened in July 1989. What caught my eye, and intrigued me, was a relatively deep cutting on this road which ran roughly east/west so that one embankment faced north and the other south (SS 500 290). Over several years I noted that the embankment facing north was often in shade and in winter would hold frost well into the day while the south-facing slope did not. Because this cutting was relatively new, and the substrate and habitat appeared uniform over its length, I thought it would be a good site to investigate spider colonisation. Finally, in 2004, curiosity got the better of me and I decided to do a pitfall trap survey on each embankment of the cutting.

Along with the spider trapping, I also investigated some microclimatic features on each embankment: soil and litter temperature plus ambient air temperature recorded from the small town of Barnstaple about 3 miles distant, as I felt these could be key determinants for the spider assemblage. Surprisingly, at the time of the survey I found very little information on microclimate in relation to spiders or other epigeic invertebrates. Recently, though, there seems to have been renewed interest in micro-ecology and microclimate: Suggit *et al.* (2011) set out specifically to address the dearth of data on micro-scale aspect and topography, and reported that these features have a considerable influence on microclimate and should be considered as potentially key factors in invertebrate distribution, habitat selection and survival strategy; Scherrer and Körner (2010) determined that alpine micro-topography can emulate elevation temperature shifts equivalent to several hundred metres; and Bennie *et al.* (2008) demonstrated slope and aspect as being important in creating microclimatic variation across landscapes and suggested that plant species distribution could be influenced by temperature 'extremes' which were more likely on south-facing slopes.

The bedrock of the trap site is Crackington Formation shales, covered with a thin layer of topsoil, presumably from the original field through which the road was cut, and both embankments had been seeded with a standard Department of Transport GPS14 embankment grass mix (70% Creeping red fescue; 15% Smooth stalked meadow grass; 10% Hard fescue; 5% Brown-top bent (DCC, 2004)). Apart from regular grass-cutting at the roadside edge and the removal of a couple of isolated gorse bushes in 2003, the embankments had been unmanaged since seeding. The south-facing embankment has a slope of approximately 27° and the north-facing embankment approximately 36° (see photographs. 1 & 2).

### Method

The survey was carried out from early May to early July using five pitfall traps filled with a 4% solution of formaldehyde, one metre apart, on the horizontal midline of each slope. Traps were emptied weekly. Temperatures were taken 2 or 3 days apart, at around 2.00 p.m. A thermocouple thermometer with an external probe was used for the litter and, for the soil, a standard penetration thermometer was used (reading depth approximately 4 inches, just above the underlying bedrock). For the litter, three separate temperature readings along the trap line of each embankment were taken on each visit and averaged.

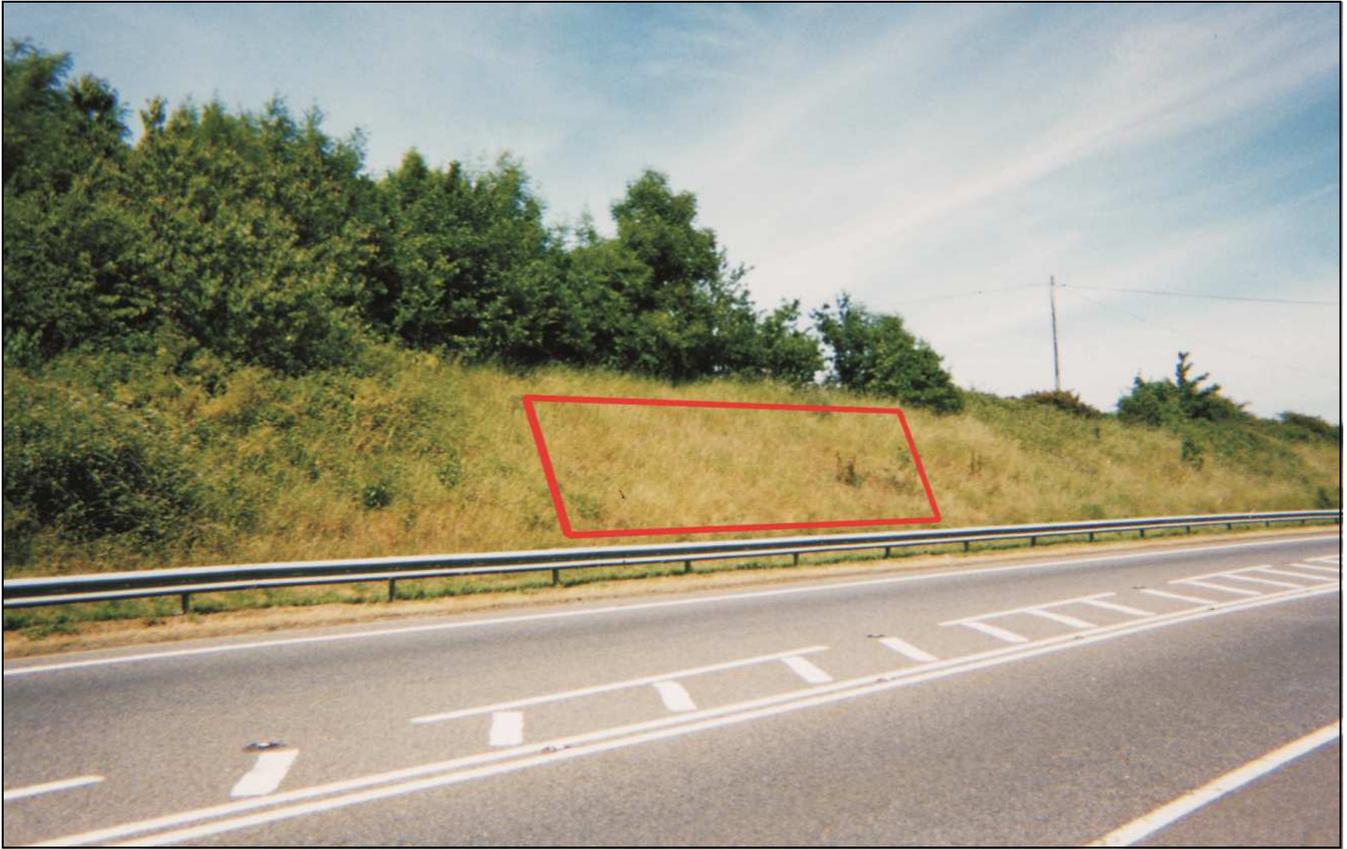
### Results

The immediate discovery was that the grass sward on each embankment was radically different. The south-facing embankment was dominated by tall-growing false oat grass (*Arrhenathum elatius*), had an open sward with hardly any presence of grasses from the original seed mix, and a litter depth of about 3 inches. The north-facing embankment, by contrast, had a thick, mixed sward of shorter, finer, tight-knit grasses with an abundance of the original red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) still present: litter depth here averaged 6 inches, with a deep, dense, spreading moss bed 'understory' across the whole embankment. So, in just 15 years there had been a radical shift in the vegetation on the south-facing embankment from the original seeding, and a rich moss bed had developed on the north-facing slope: would this difference be reflected in the spider populations from the embankments?

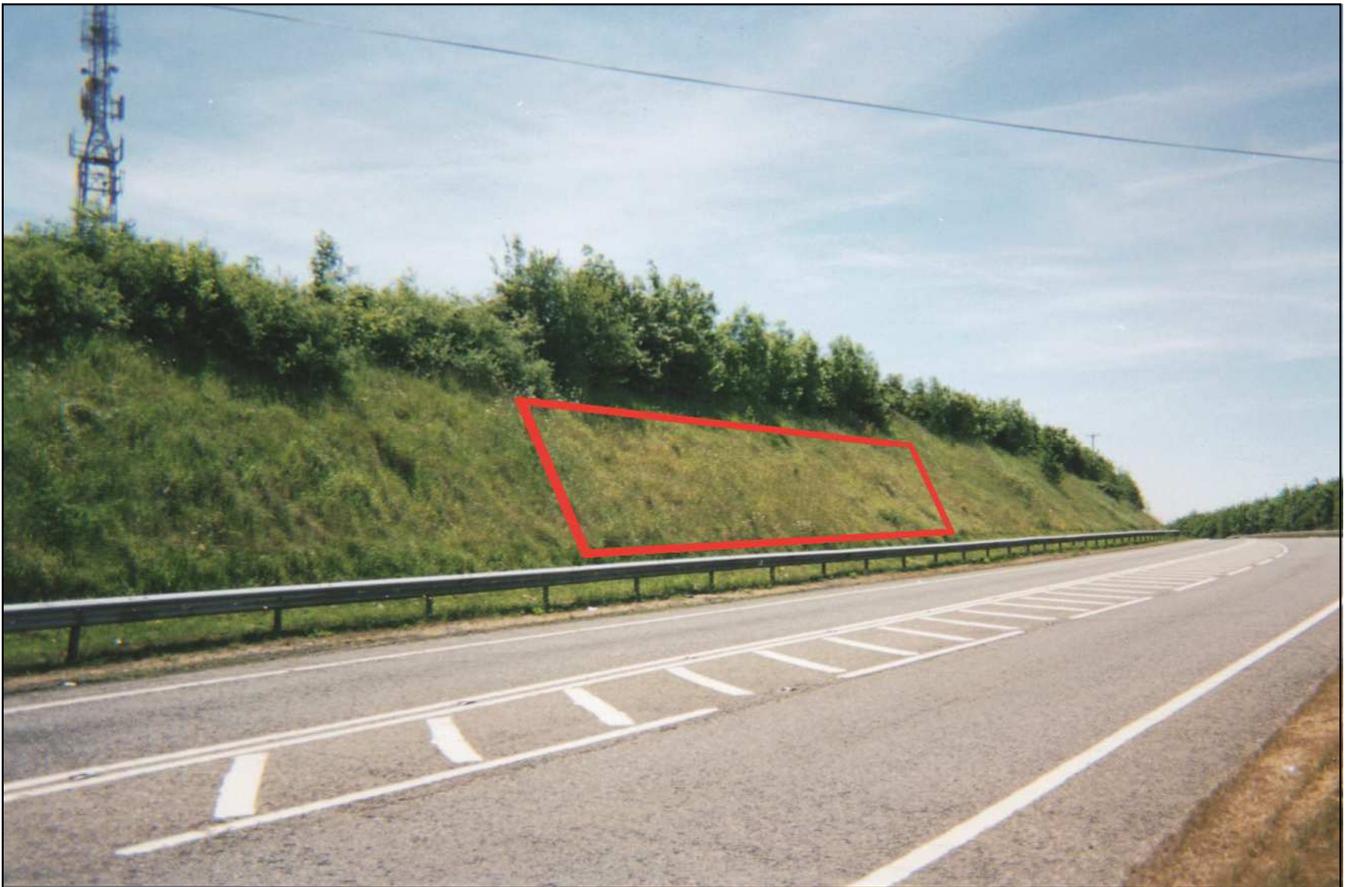
Thirty-four species in total were collected from both embankments (Tables 1 and 4), with more species present on the south-facing embankment than the north-facing one (Table 1). The number of 'unique' species was also greater on the south-facing embankment. Consistently more spiders were trapped on the south-facing embankment compared to the north-facing site, apart from the week ending 25 June when very heavy rain throughout the week flooded all the traps and reduced the catch (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Species numbers and unique species for south-facing and north-facing embankments.

Total no. of species north/south	No. of species south-facing	No. of species north-facing	No. of unique species south-facing	No. of unique species north-facing
34	30	19	14	4



**Photograph 1.** North embankment (south-facing), June 2004. Hedgerow: alder, ash, oak, sycamore, hazel, gorse and very small copse behind. Survey area width 27m metres; slope 27°. Photograph © Mike Towns



**Photograph 2.** South embankment (north-facing), June 2004. Hedgerow: ash, field maple, hazel, willow; set-aside field behind. Survey area width 35 metres; slope 36°. Photograph © Mike Towns

**Table 2.** Species trapped per week for south-facing and north-facing embankments.

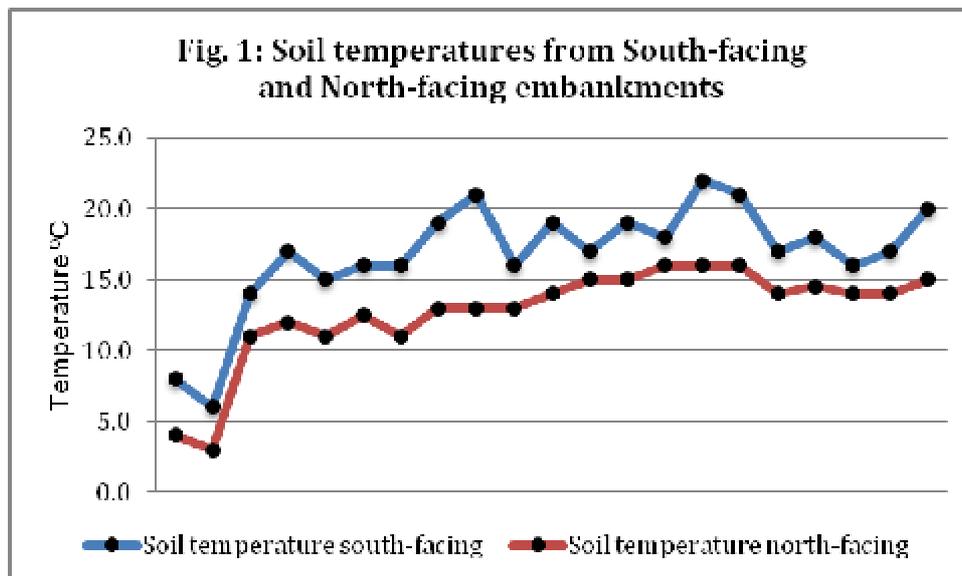
	9 May	16 May	24 May	30 May	6 June	13 June	20 June	25 June	4 July
<b>No. spiders south-facing</b>	13	19	34	50	41	34	37	5	20
<b>No. spiders north-facing</b>	7	8	17	16	21	19	30	7	10

A longer recording period would undoubtedly have turned up more species but, unfortunately, in the second week of July the trunk road maintenance unit cut all the embankments on this stretch of road with a new all-terrain, ride-on grass cutter. Both verges were literally ‘scalped’ down to the topsoil, with a lot of skid damage from the ride-on mower, and most of the pitfall jars were broken. The north-facing embankment was particularly hard hit, with the removal of the entire moss bed along with the grass litter. At that point I abandoned the survey. Shortly after this cut, roadside maintenance was passed to the local council, who ceased cutting. I was thinking that perhaps it was time for another survey, especially as I had observed that over the years since the cut the vegetation had changed but, ironically, just as I was finishing this note, the verge was cut again!

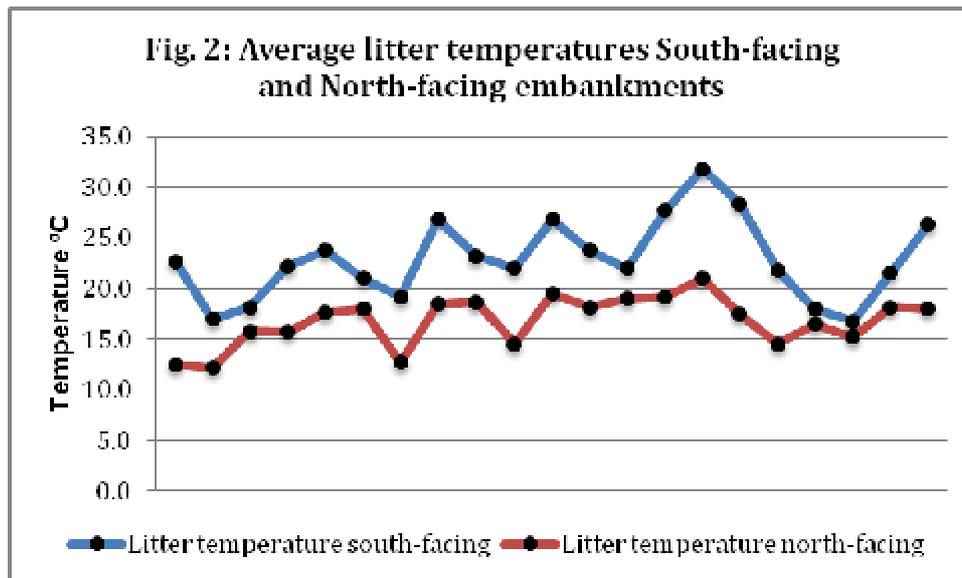
### Microclimate

The microclimate data – twenty-one measurements of soil, litter and local air temperature over nine weeks – was collected over too short a period and is too limited to allow full comparison or speculation about the influence on spider distribution or habitat selection, but it is interesting nevertheless from the point of view of exploring the microclimatic conditions spiders would face in early summer.

**Soil temperature:** The rise in soil temperature as the spring weather warmed was quite marked, and an ‘equilibrium’ temperature range for each embankment was soon established (Figure 1). The temperature on the south-facing embankment was consistently higher than the north-facing and had a range of 16°C compared to 13°C on the north-facing embankment. The south-facing soil temperatures also underwent considerable fluctuation, reaching highs of 22°C compared to a maximum of 16°C on the north-facing embankment (Table 3). On the north-facing embankment, once ‘equilibrium’ was established, soil temperatures remained relatively stable for most of the sample period (Figure 1).



**Litter temperature:** As with soil, temperatures in the litter on the south-facing embankment were consistently higher than on the north-facing embankment: range 15°C compared to 8.8°C, and maximum temperatures of 31.8°C compared to 21°C (Table 3). However, unlike those for soil, the fluctuations in temperatures on both embankments ran in tandem to some extent, albeit with smaller fluctuations on the north-facing embankment (Figure 2).



**Table 3.** Soil and litter temperatures: average, maximum, minimum and range for south-facing and north-facing embankments.

	Soil temperatures		Litter temperatures	
	<i>South-facing</i>	<i>North-facing</i>	<i>South-facing</i>	<i>North-facing</i>
<b>Average</b>	16.8	12.7	22.9	16.8
<b>Maximum</b>	22.0	16.0	31.8	21.0
<b>Minimum</b>	6.0	3.0	16.8	12.2
<b>Range</b>	16.0	13.0	15.0	8.8

Can any conclusions be drawn from the microclimate data? Using a running average on air temperature at Barnstaple, the correlation with soil temperature on the north-facing embankment was 0.96: a very close match (1 is a perfect score). The litter/air temperature correlation on this embankment, however, was only 0.64, so factors other than air temperature were affecting the litter. On the south-facing embankment, soil temperature similarly correlated well with running average air temperature (0.86), but the correlation for air with litter was poor (0.36), suggesting that something other than air temperature was affecting some of the fluctuation in soil temperature, as well as strongly affecting the temperatures recorded for the litter.

During the period of the survey, the north-facing embankment received direct sunlight for a shorter period of the day than the south-facing embankment, and the impact of this sunlight was reduced by the angle of the slope. Conversely, the south-facing embankment received sunlight for much of the day and the angle of the slope increased the sun's impact. It seems reasonable to assume that the amount and strength of sunlight is responsible for the differences between the embankments, first in explaining litter temperature fluctuations and, second, by pushing heat into the soil on the south-facing embankment and causing wider fluctuations in temperature compared to the north-facing embankment. It is also, presumably, determining soil moisture regimes and the resultant patterns in vegetation on the embankments. *Arrenathrum elatius*, for example, is a drought-tolerant species that was obviously doing well on the south-facing embankment, having invaded and outcompeted the species in original seed mix, while on the shadier, moister north-facing embankment moss was abundant: the Bennie *et al.* (2008) survey showed moss to be more abundant on north-facing slopes.

### So, what does it all mean for spiders?

Species that require a 'steady-state', humid, microhabitat without too much variation in conditions would be at home on the north-facing embankment. But on the south-facing embankment the inhabitants would need to be adapted variously to surviving occasional very high temperatures; or mobile enough to escape temporarily unfavourable conditions by retreating to micro-niches or suitable adjoining habitat; or very sedentary but able to find suitable micro-niches within the habitat.

Most of the species on both embankments are fairly catholic in habitat requirement, although four species, *Zelotes latreillei*, *Trachyzelotes pedestris*, *Micaria pulicaria* and *Micrargus subaequalis* on the south-facing embankment probably demonstrate a preference for the warmer, drier and more open litter habitat, and *Pardosa nigriceps* might have favoured the taller vegetation here over the short, dense turf of the north-facing slope.

On the north-facing slope, *Hypomma cornutum* is an interesting record. It is very sparsely recorded in North Devon and the SRS habitat data shows it tends to favour woodland and landscapes with scattered trees, but it does also occur in grassland, verges and hedges: the nearest site record to this one is also in grassland. *Dismodicus bifrons* is similarly sparsely recorded in North Devon, and SRS data shows an affinity for grassland, wetlands and scrub, so the deep grass/moss litter layer here may have suited this species.

While the south-facing slope had more species, the catch was numerically dominated by *Pocadicnemis pumila s.l.* and *Meioneta saxatilis*, which made up 36% and 30% of the total catch, respectively (at the time of the survey I was unaware of the definitive separation of *pumila* and *juncea*). On the north-facing slope, *Pocadicnemis pumila s.l.* and *Meioneta saxatilis* were still dominant species, but made up a smaller proportion of the total catch – 23% and 13% respectively, with *Monocephalus fuscipes* making up a further 12% of the total. The ‘top-heavy’ dominance of just two species on the south-facing embankment might be a reflection of the harsher microclimatic conditions there, yet those same conditions could also favour a greater diversity of species in smaller numbers, each seeking out a particular habitat niche.

### Summary

This short survey revealed that physical aspect can create marked differences in both habitat structure and spider assemblages. It would have been useful to have been able to continue this survey through to the winter, but nevertheless, sufficient data were collected on microclimate to demonstrate that there can be wide variation of temperature in localised small-scale habitats that can have considerable influence on spider populations. When collecting or trapping it might be worth noting aspect or other distinctive micro-scale topographical features of the habitat, because significant small-scale or micro exploitation within habitats is probably an often overlooked but important determinant of spider distribution.

**Table 4: Species list**

	South-facing	North-facing
<i>Neottiura bimaculatum</i>	2	5
<i>Enoplognatha ovata</i>	1	
<i>Robertus lividus</i>	4	1
<i>Walckenaeria acuminata</i>	1	1
<i>Dicymbium tibiale</i>	2	
<i>Dismodicus bifrons</i>		1
<i>Hypomma cornutum</i>		2
<i>Pocadicnemis pumila s.l.</i>	90	32
<i>Oedothorax fuscus</i>	2	
<i>Cnephalocotes obscurus</i>	4	
<i>Monocephalus fuscipes</i>	5	17
<i>Gongylidiellum vivum</i>	1	
<i>Micrargus subaequalis</i>	15	
<i>Meioneta saxatilis</i>	76	18
<i>Saaristoa abnormis</i>	2	2
<i>Diplostyla concolor</i>	3	12
<i>Lepthyphantes tenuis</i>	2	7
<i>Lepthyphantes flavipes</i>	1	
<i>Lepthyphantes ericaeus</i>	7	11
<i>Lepthyphantes pallidus</i>	4	
<i>Neriene clathrata</i>		1
<i>Pardosa palustris</i>	1	2
<i>Pardosa pullata</i>	3	11
<i>Pardosa prativaga</i>	2	4
<i>Pardosa nigriceps</i>	4	
<i>Alopecosa pulverulenta</i>	9	4
<i>Clubiona reclusa</i>	1	2
<i>Zelotes latreillei</i>	2	
<i>Trachyzelotes pedestris</i>	1	
<i>Micaria pulicaria</i>	2	
<i>Zora spinimana</i>		1
<i>Xysticus cristatus</i>	1	
<i>Euophrys frontalis</i>	4	
<i>Pisaura mirabilis</i> (females guarding tents)	x	x

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My thanks to Peter Harvey for reviewing and commenting on the manuscript.

66 Lynhurst Avenue, BARNSTAPLE EX31 2HY

## Harvestmen Recording Scheme update – November 2013

by Peter Nicholson, Harvestmen Scheme Organiser

The peak of the recording season has now past and I hope you all had a good season. I have had plenty of interest from new recorders who I hope at some point may become members of BAS. Please let me have your records in due course.

The Opal funded project to aid in the translation of the Dutch book 'De Nederlandse hooiwagens (Opiliones)' by Hay Wijnhoven, has progressed well. As part of this funding our Dutch colleagues have requested some specimens for illustration purposes of species which do not occur there and are rare here or are very localised in their distribution. They require: *Nelima gothica*, *Paroligolophus meadii*, *Sabacon viscayanum ramblaianum* and *Nemastomella bacillifera*. We have in part supplied the above, but suggestions or offers to me will be happily accepted. It is important that the specimens should be of UK origin and in good condition to enable accurate illustrations to be made. It is necessary we supply these items as soon as possible.

Mike Davidson has been noticing changes on his patch, with *Opilio parietinus* in Inverness outside the Co-op, this being the most northerly record in the recording scheme (see Mike's article overleaf). There was also a rash of *Dicranopalpus ramosus* records over August. Records ranged from the Bird Fair at Rutland Water to Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, up to Glasgow. Can you add to this, please let me have your records.

We have been asked by our Dutch colleagues whether we have any evidence in the UK of an impact of *Opilio canestrinii* on other species - eg on *O. parietinus*? Has it turned out to be a "fierce competitor"?

From a distribution point of view we have far more records for *O. parietinus* and *O. saxatilis* than we have for *O. canestrinii* of which we have very few records. All three are known to be widely distributed with *O.*

*parietinus* and *O. saxatilis* found throughout the UK. *Opilio canestrinii* is recorded from the south of England up to the Newcastle Upon Tyne area but only reflects recorder effort. Surprisingly there is a concentration of records in Essex. So I give you an extract from an email from Peter Harvey in answer to the above question which I feel summarises our knowledge to date.

"I come across *canestrinii* increasingly frequently in Essex, also recently in Surrey, almost always on bushes. I actually don't see that it is likely to compete with the other two species, since *O. saxatilis* is a ground dwelling harvestman found in completely different kinds of habitats, and *O. parietinus* is, in my experience, exclusively synanthropic and actually always very scarce down here in Essex, for as long as I have been doing arachnids, since the late 1970s and early 80s."

So my question is do you know if there has been any further spread of *O. canestrinii* or increase in abundance? If so let me know and let me have your records.

Finally I draw your attention to an excellent report by Rosemary Winnall of the Wyre Forest Study Group on the finding of *Sabacon viscayanum ramblaianum* well beyond its accepted distribution. This record is from the Wyre Forest, but it is sadly not a first for England. The first for England was taken from the Knill Wood, near Presteigne (SO299622) in 1999 and is just in VC36 (Herefordshire) by a few 100 yards. Rosemary's record is of real significance though, as it has moved the possible distribution boundary well beyond the known limit.

Best Wishes to you all for the coming New Year.

Greystone House, Castle Howard Road, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 7AT. Email: [petenich@btinternet.com](mailto:petenich@btinternet.com)

## Recent records of “Scottish” harvestmen

by Mike Davidson

Three new locations for *Platybunus pinetorum* were found by the author around Glasgow during 2013. On 15 May 2013 2 females were found on sycamore trunks in woodland, at the Dams to Darnley Country Park (NS522582). On the same day 1 female was found on the wall of the Burrell Collection at Pollock Country Park (NS555621). The next day (16/5/2013) a further specimen was discovered on the cloister walls of the St. Nicholas Garden, at Provands Lordship near Glasgow Cathedral. These were all opportunistic finds and so *P. pinetorum* seems to be very well established in the area and may well be the source of those recently found by Stephen Foster at the ferry port of Lame (Northern Ireland) (see SRS News No.76).

*Opilio parietinus* made a recent appearance (8/10/2013) outside the Co-op store on the Telford Industrial Estate in Inverness (NH655458). This is its most northerly location so far.

Meanwhile Mike Taylor has gained further evidence of the establishment of *Leiobunum tisciae*. 1 female was found on 23rd September in Roseisle Forest, Moray (NJ10486572) and once again on what appears to be its preferred habitat, the local toilet block. The author also found *Dicranopalpus ramosus* on a whitewashed wall in Findhorn (NJ04056438) on 24<sup>th</sup> October.



**Figure 1.** The harvestman *Platybunus pinetorum*.  
Photograph © Mike Davidson

77 Mile-End Avenue, ABERDEEN AB15 5PS

## A new harvestman in the Wyre Forest *Sabacon viscayanum* subsp. *ramblaianum* Martens, 1983

by Rosemary Winnall, Secretary Wyre Forest Study Group, with Nicki Farmer

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2013 the Wyre Forest Study Group, in conjunction with the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, ran a field meeting at Hawkbatch, one of Wyre's Forestry Commission

woodlands. Although this ancient, semi-natural woodland is located in modern Worcestershire just north of Bewdley, the vice county is actually VC 39 Staffordshire.

The event was titled "Slugs and Land Caddis" and we aimed to increase our knowledge about the distribution within Wyre of the Lemon Slug *Malacolimax tenellus* and the Land Caddis *Enoicyla pusilla*, the male of which is on the wing at this time of the year. 15 participants attended and we had experts with us in mycology, Hymenoptera, Diptera, Coleoptera and Orthoptera as well as molluscs, so we were recording fungi and several different groups of invertebrates as we moved slowly through the trees in this mixed woodland.

I started identifying and recording harvestmen about 3 years ago and one of our participants Nicki Farmer kindly brought me specimens during our walk. Some I could identify with a hand lens and others I collected for a closer look under the microscope. As soon as I saw this individual, I knew it was a special find, but did not realise at the time just how restricted its distribution was. Its body was about 4mm long, but it was the large and unusual pedipalps that were immediately conspicuous. They were longer than the body, swollen, and covered in many spines and hairs. They give the harvestman a rather front-heavy appearance and make the identification unmistakable (see Figs. 1, 4-8).



**Figure 1.** The harvestman *Sabacon viscayanum* subsp. *ramblaianum*. Photograph © Rosemary Winnall

The habitat at GR SO765776 in which this female *Sabacon viscayanum* subsp. *ramblaianum* was discovered is a narrow belt of oak/birch/holly trees along the side of a forestry track on the edge of a conifer plantation of mature Western Hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* and Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (see Figs. 2 & 3). Conifers had been removed from this 20m strip during the winter of 2011/12. As a result there are areas of open ground, mossy conifer stumps and leaf litter. Some plants of disturbed soil such as foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, common hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit* and wood avens *Geum urbanum* have seeded in, and hemlock saplings proliferate in some places. Soft rush *Juncus effusus* indicates the presence of a few damp areas along the extraction route, and on less disturbed ground there are occasional patches of bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, wood melick *Melica uniflora* and creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and bracken



**Figure 2.** *Sabacon* habitat, Hawkbatch, Wyre Forest. Photograph © Rosemary Winnall



**Figure 3.** *Sabacon* habitat, Hawkbatch, Wyre Forest. Photograph © Rosemary Winnall

*Pteridium aquilinum* growing alongside the forest track.

When Nicki found this harvestman it was sitting on some low-growing vegetation, although we could not relocate the exact spot to collect more precise details. Whether we had disturbed it from the leaf litter as we walked through or not, we do not know.



**Figure 4-5.** The harvestman *Sabacon viscayanum* subsp. *ramblaianum*. Photographs © Rosemary Winnall

This species was first found in Great Britain in September 1980 in woodland at Parkmill, Gower, Glamorgan (Abbot, 1981). By 1999 it had been found from 22 sites in South Wales, including one near Presteigne that is actually just across the border into England (Hillyard, 1999). So the Wyre Forest record is not the first English record! There is some discussion about whether this species is native to the UK or an introduction. Although some of the sites are close to industrial workings, it has also been found in old damp woodland, which is its usual habitat elsewhere in its range.

I remember there was some felling work in Hawkbatch a few years ago when the Forestry Commission's warning signs were in both Welsh and English, which provided some comment from the locals at the time. With the movements of forestry vehicles and contractors, could this little harvestman have been introduced in the soil on a forest vehicle? Or has it been here all the time? We must look at more sites across the Wyre Forest and see if we can find it in more remote locations!



**Figure 6-8.** The harvestman *Sabacon viscayanum* subsp. *ramblaianum*. Photographs © Rosemary Winnall

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Willow Bank, Bliss Gate Road, Callow Hill, Nr. Bewdley, Wors. DY14 9XT; email: studygroup@wyreforest.net

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