

# Spider Recording Scheme News

## Summer 2020, No. 97

Editor: Peter Harvey; [grayspeterharvey@gmail.com](mailto:grayspeterharvey@gmail.com)

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

S.R.S. News No. 98 will be published in Autumn 2020. Please send contributions by the end of the end of September 2020 at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: [grayspeterharvey@gmail.com](mailto:grayspeterharvey@gmail.com).

### Editorial

**Please help future issues by providing articles**, short or longer, on interesting discoveries and observations. **The newsletter depends on your contributions!**

Many thanks are also due to those Area Organisers and recorders who have continued to send in their records to the recording scheme. The Area Organiser for Berkshire has lapsed, so is now vacant. Any volunteers to take on the role please contact me.

I have now added a hectad download option to the species pages for logged-on members.

### *Micaria pulicaria* and *M. micans* in Kent

by Tony Russell-Smith

In a recent paper by Muster & Michalik (2019), a combination of morphological and molecular techniques was used to demonstrate that the species we know as *Micaria pulicaria* in fact consists of two sibling species *Micaria pulicaria* (Sundevall, 1831) *sensu stricto* and *Micaria micans* (Blackwall, 1858). Interestingly, early workers had recognised these as distinct species but due to high levels of intraspecific variation in morphological characters, they were synonymised by Menge in 1873 and all subsequent authors followed his suggestion.

Muster & Michalik used specimens of *M. pulicaria* *sensu lato* from all over Europe and N. America in their study, including specimens from Britain provided by BAS members. Among the 39 specimens from the UK, 25 (64%) were assigned to *Micaria micans* and the remaining 14 to *M. pulicaria*.

I decided that it would be worth re-examining a sample of specimens identified as *Micaria pulicaria* collected here in Kent between 2000 and 2011 with the aim of determining how easily the morphological characters used by these authors separate the two species and establishing whether they occupy different habitats. In total, 75 specimens (41 males & 35 females) were examined, collected from 21 sites and eight major habitat types, representing nearly all those in which they have been found in the county.

#### Separating the species

Three different types of morphological character were used by the authors mentioned above to separate the two sibling species:

- Female epigyne. In *M. pulicaria* s.s., the epigyne is slightly longer than wide while in *M. micans* it is wider than long or at least as wide as long.

Additionally, the anterior margin of the epigyne of *M. pulicaria* viewed ventrally is almost straight while in *M. micans* it is bowed in the central region.

- Male palp. In *M. pulicaria*, the tegulum viewed retrolaterally lacks a distinct notch while in *M. micans* this notch is clearly evident. In prolateral view, the distal curve of the sperm duct in *M. pulicaria* is situated distally while in *M. micans* it is in the basal half of the tegulum.
- Femur IV colouration. In *M. micans* the dorsal surface of femur IV has a dark stripe on a paler background while in *M. pulicaria* it may be all pale or all dark but never has a contrasting stripe.

Because time was limited and examining the characters of male palps requires their dissection, identification of males was limited to the presence or absence of a dark stripe on femur IV. However, wherever both males and females occurred together, the assignment of females to either *M. pulicaria* or *M. micans* always corresponded with that for the males. For females of *M. pulicaria*, there was some variation in the appearance and dimensions of the epigyne, with a few specimens having the anterior margin of the epigyne more curved than is shown in the figures of Muster & Michalik and closer to the form in *M. micans*. Overall, the presence or absence of a dark femoral stripe appeared to be a reliable character for distinguishing the two species but in some specimens of *M. micans* the stripe is very narrow or faint and careful examination while rotating the femur is necessary. In this sample, 55 of the 75 specimens were assignable to *M. micans* and the remaining 20 to *M. pulicaria*.

#### Habitats

*M. pulicaria* appears to be almost entirely a woodland species in Kent while *M. micans* occurs in a range of open habitats including grasslands, coastal shingle, sand dunes and post-industrial sites. The only exceptions to this were one specimen of *M. pulicaria* from sparse grassland in a chalk quarry on the edge of chestnut woodland and, more surprisingly, a single specimen on shell shingle at Shellness LNR on the Isle of Sheppey. Conversely, 4 specimens of *M. micans* were collected in litter of first year coppiced chestnut woodland in East Blean Woods LNR. The largest number of specimens of *M. micans* (19) was collected in coastal shingle while this habitat, together with chalk grassland and post-industrial sites accounted for 80% of all specimens.

Muster & Michalik gathered mean annual temperatures for the sites from which the specimens used in their study were collected and noted that the annual temperature for sites with *M. micans* (8.9° C) was significantly higher than those for *M. pulicaria* (4.9° C).

This may help to explain why *M. pulicaria* is almost confined to woodland in Kent while *M. micans* occurs in a much wider range of more open and frequently drier habitats in the county. In this respect the habitat spectrum of these two species seems to mirror that for *Tenuiphantes zimmermani* (mainly woodland) and *T. tenuis* (mainly open habitats) in southern Britain.

Clearly, this report covers just a small sample from one corner of the country and it will be fascinating to see whether the habitat separation for the two species holds true for other regions, particularly in the cooler and wetter North and West where *Micaria pulicaria* may prove to occur in a wider range of habitats.

#### Reference

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1 Bailiffs Cottage, Doddington, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 0JU.  
E-mail: mrussellsmith@btinternet.com

## *Rugathodes sexpunctatus* (Emerton, 1882) (Araneae: Theridiidae) - new records in 2019

by Mike Davidson & Chris Cathrine

The spider *Rugathodes sexpunctatus* was first identified in Scotland in July 2012 (although a 2009 specimen was subsequently discovered), collected from ivy overhanging retaining walls in the historic Glasgow Necropolis (Davidson 2012). Subsequent surveys showed that it was abundant throughout the site, particularly on the ivy-clad rock-faces of the former quarry which forms part of this extensive graveyard. This North American, coniferous forest, spider was fully described by Davidson & Merrett (2014) and in Scotland has been found in large numbers on ivy and conifers (i.e. evergreen vegetation) but also in litter.

Around Glasgow *R. sexpunctatus* was found in the Botanic Gardens, on ivy and conifers, and at various places along the River Kelvin valley. Beyond Glasgow *R. sexpunctatus* was found (down the River Clyde) at Dumbarton Rock, again on ivy-clad rock faces. In November 2019 Mike Davidson found a large population on the ivy growing down the rock-face of the former Levensgrove Quarry, north of the River Leven at Dumbarton (see Figure 1 on facing page). A large number of spiders were extracted from the ivy with just a few shakes. The catch consisted of adult females and juvenile males and females. As would be expected at this time of year none of the females had egg sacs.

During surveys of Hamilton Low Parks Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), two female *R. sexpunctatus* were collected in August 2019 by Niall Currie using a vacuum sampler (Cathrine & Currie, 2020). Specimens were collected in woodland habitat, dominated by yew (*Taxus baccata*). The surveys were targeting other invertebrate taxa, and it is possible that the population is more abundant than these incidental records may suggest. This is a previously unknown site for this species, however it is adjacent to the River Clyde and so

this may represent a link with other known populations. Hamilton Low Parks SSSI also adjacent to Hamilton Mausoleum and Hamilton Low Parks Museum.

Another new site for *R. sexpunctatus* was found on an estate in Clackmannanshire, where single female specimens were collected from two locations during vacuum sampling in July and August 2019, by Niall Currie. These specimens were collected from low vegetation (heath and rough grassland) adjacent to woodland habitats (oak and Scots pine dominated respectively), and it is possible that more substantial populations exist within the woods. This Clackmannanshire estate is the first known site for *R. sexpunctatus* away from the River Clyde and not obviously linked to other populations in Scotland.

The Scottish population of this spider is very variable (see Figure 2 on facing page) with specimens with pale abdomens showing the nominal six black spots through to those with completely black abdomens.

It is possible they arrived in imported goods (e.g. timber) to the Clyde ports or perhaps plant material brought to the Botanic Gardens. An alternative source might have been plants brought in for the Glasgow Garden Festival, which was held on the banks of the Clyde from April to September 1988 and covered an area of 120 acres and had 4.3 million visitors ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow\\_Garden\\_Festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow_Garden_Festival)).

It is most likely spreading by ballooning on the prevailing south-westerly winds and the recent record from Clackmannanshire, to the north-east is consistent with this. Its ability to spread south, against prevailing winds, will depend largely on human transfer, on vehicles and with cargoes.

We welcome further records (from around the core area and elsewhere) and encourage people to search for it by shaking ivy and beating conifers and check any tiny Theridiids. Other under-recorded species use this habitat so put down that eVac and get beating!

#### Acknowledgements

Chris Cathrine would like to thank Gail Foster (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)) and Victoria Bruce-Winkler for their permission to share the records of *R. sexpunctatus* from Hamilton Low Parks SSSI and Clackmannanshire respectively. The surveys at Hamilton Low Parks SSSI were completed by Caledonian Conservation Ltd under contract to SNH, while those in Clackmannanshire were completed under contract to Victoria Bruce-Winkler.

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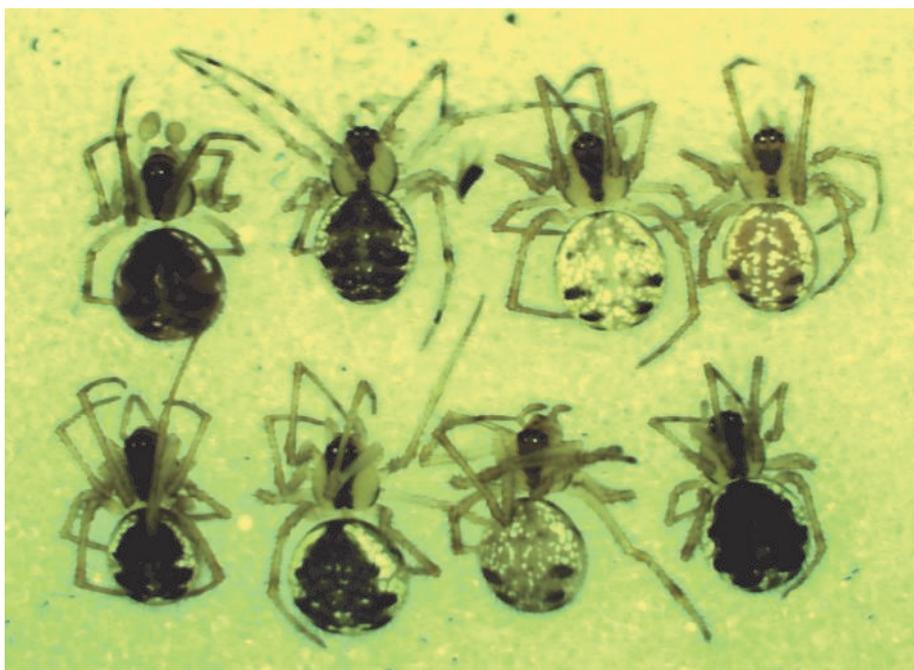
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mike.davidson55@btinternet.com

chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk



**Fig. 1.** Ivy clad cliffs at Levensgrove Quarry, Dumbarton. Photograph © Mike Davidson



**Fig. 2.** Variation in Scottish specimens of *Rugathodes sexpunctatus*.  
Photograph © Mike Davidson

## *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer, 1802) New to Wales

by Richard C. Gallon

Within the last twenty years *Ero aphana* has undergone a significant range expansion in Britain (Figure 1). In 1999 it was largely restricted to a few heathland sites in Dorset and Chobham Common. *Ero aphana* was even listed as Vulnerable in the British Red Data Book (Bratton, 1991). The recent spread of this species has been dramatic, and it is now widely distributed in south-east Britain below a line from St Austell (Cornwall) to York (Yorkshire). This recent range expansion has been well documented in the literature (Askins & Jones, 1998; Binding, 2006, 2013; Daws, 2016; Denton, 2004; Harvey & Hopkins 2003; Killick, 2016; Marriott, 2008; Massie, 2006; McCarthy, 2002; Selden, 2015; Woolly, 2008).

This spider species has not only extended its distribution, but also its ecological habitat preferences, perhaps in response to climate change. Previously considered a dry heathland specialist it is now also associated with brownfield sites, gardens, and a wide range of other habitats. This profound change in fortune will no doubt challenge its current Nationally Scarce status in future status reviews (Harvey *et al.*, 2017).

On the 18th July 2019 I had the opportunity to investigate some abandoned farm buildings at Talacre, Flintshire, with the intension of locating under-recorded synanthropic spiders. The farm's corrugated iron barn (SJ11798407) yielded a single adult female *Ero aphana* at shoulder height on the outside metal wall. The four abdominal tubercles were very obvious, even to the naked eye (Figs. 2–3). This is apparently the first *Ero aphana* record from Wales and represents a significant north-west range extension, suggesting it might be worthwhile investigating suitable locations outside its known British range (Figure 1).

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Fig. 1. The dramatic range expansion of *Ero aphana* in Britain; left 1999, right 2020 (SRS website).



**Fig. 2.** Adult female *Ero aphana* from Talacre, North Wales. Dorsal view. Scale 1 mm. Photograph © Richard Gallon



**Fig. 3.** Adult female *Ero aphana* from Talacre, North Wales. Lateral view. Scale 1 mm. Photograph © Richard Gallon

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23a Roumania Crescent, LLANDUDNO, North Wales, LL30 1UP; e-mail: rgallon47@gmail.com

## ***Lathys humilis* (Blackwall, 1855) New to Caernarvonshire**

by Richard C. Gallon

With Covid-19 travel restrictions in place my spider surveying has focused on areas within walking distance of my home. Fortunately, my daily dog walk takes me onto Nant-y-Gamar, a Carboniferous Limestone hill with a rich and interesting flora and fauna.

On the 8th May 2020 I decided to take a beating tray with me on my daily exercise. A few minutes beating gorse bushes at SH79818068 produced several different spider species: *Peponocranium ludicrum*, *Metellina mendei*, *Pardosa nigriceps*, *Phylloneta sisypchia*, *Platnickina tincta*, *Araniella cucurbitina*, *Xysticus cristatus*, *Philodromus dispar* and *Philodromus aureolus*. Four tiny mottled spiders also presented themselves on the tray, which I almost dismissed as unidentifiable spiderlings. However, they looked interesting, so I retained them.

Down the microscope I was surprised to discover that these small spiders were mature – a male and three females of *Lathys humilis* (Figure 1). Although *Lathys humilis* is a common spider in south and mid England, there are few Welsh records. This is even a new vice county record for Caernarvonshire. It has reminded me

that interesting finds can still be made without having to travel long distances to exotic habitats!



**Fig. 1.** *Lathys humilis* (Blackwall, 1855) adults; male (left), female (right). Scale 1 mm. Photograph © Richard Gallon

23a Roumania Crescent, LLANDUDNO, North Wales, LL30 1UP; e-mail: rgallon47@gmail.com

## ***Synageles venator* (Lucas) (Salticidae) in Kent**

by Jonty Denton

I beat a single female from a fallen poplar branch at Richborough Power Station site in East Kent (TR333618) on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. A second female was swept from a mix of reeds *Phragmites australis* and sea Clubrush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* around shallow pools at TR329623 on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2020, circa 640m to the north-west.

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX

## ***Episinus maculipes* Cavana (Theridiidae) in Berkshire**

by Jonty Denton

I beat a single female from ivy *Hedera helix* growing up an east facing wall at Popes Manor, Binfield (SU8469) on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020. This appears to be the first record for the species in Berkshire, and further evidence of its meteoric spread inland, being 27km north of the nearest Surrey station at Guildford. Remarkably the same site yielded *Robertus arundineti* (O.P.-Cambridge) on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020, a species for which I had reported the first modern Berkshire county record in Newsletter 95, from a location 3.4km to the south!!

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX

## **Some recent spider records from Watsonian Yorkshire (2017 - 2019)**

by Richard Wilson

### **Introduction**

The following article represents the third in an ongoing series providing an update on spider recording in Watsonian Yorkshire (vice-counties 61 to 65), following the last one published in 2017 (Wilson, 2017). In the last three years, a total of 1,470 records of 208 species have been submitted to the Scheme from 36 recorders including myself (608 records). Particular thanks is offered to Jim Pewtress (354 records), Geoff Oxford (218), Matt Prince (164), Andy Godfrey (57) and Richard Burkmar (13) who between them have contributed over 50 % of the records. It is also pleasing to report that as a result of going in to my youngest daughters' Primary School class to talk about mini-beasts, I have received three records from two observant pupils. One is, admittedly, my daughter Caitlin (aged 6 at the time) who found *Coelotes atropos* under a stone on a family trip to Meanwood Valley Nature Reserve in Leeds. But her classmate, Sebastien Miller, noticed the common garden orb-web spider *Araneus diadematus* at two locations near his house and asked his dad to photograph them, and ask me what they were! I mention this, not because of rarity, but simply that all individuals of whatever age, can submit records (via their parents, if necessary).

Although outside the period for which this article covers,

it is also worth thanking Richard Smith (Natural England) who has provided 122 records (identified by Paul Lee) from an EU LIFE project at Thorne and Hatfield Moors SSSI, near Doncaster (VC 63: south-west Yorkshire) between July and October 2015. This study recorded *Alopecosa cuneata* for the first time in VC 63 and represents only the third Yorkshire record; the previous two from the late 1970s at Wharram Quarry Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve (VC 61) between York and Driffild. Further, a 2007 record of the cellar spider *Psilochorus simoni* has come to the attention of the author following some older data submitted to the recording scheme.

### **Noteworthy Records**

When I first completed a review of Watsonian Yorkshire spiders covering the period from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to 2007 (Wilson, 2011), the notorious and much maligned noble false-widow (*Steatoda nobilis*) was very much a southern species (Figure 1), with the exception of an outlier recorded in October 2010 in Burnopfield, south-west of Gateshead (VC 66: Co. Durham) and identified by Geoff Oxford. A decade later and the species has marched (or aeronauted) northwards, and the Yorkshire region currently represents the edge of where it is reasonably frequent. The first record was from a member of the public who submitted a photograph from Canon Hall Country Park, Cawthorne, near Barnsley (VC 63) in August 2016, but which I have only just been made aware. A second record, this time from Whitby (VC 62: north-east Yorkshire) dates to September 2017. However, a spate of records in 2019 from Bradford, Leeds, York and Hull, all from an Oxford University-based academic, Clive Hambler, suggest that the species is now likely to be present in urban areas, particularly the larger conurbations across Yorkshire, though it has yet to be recorded in VC 65 (north-west Yorkshire).

Another species of comb-footed spider (Theridiidae) that has seemingly recently moved northwards is *Enoplognatha latimana*. This is a close relative of the more familiar *Enoplognatha ovata*; indeed it was only formally described as a separate species in 1982. The species was first reported in VC 63 near Rotherham in July 2005 (VC 63) and it was only reported in the region of Yorkshire closest to the tropics until Geoff Oxford (a specialist in this species group) recorded it from York in September 2018. It has now seemingly spread northwards through vice-counties 61, 62 and 64 up the Vale of York (see Figure 3). Geoff, who is based in York, has confirmed this is a consequence of recorder bias (his deliberate searches have only been in the Vale of York) but that he is intending to search for it beyond this geomorphological feature in 2020 (Covid-19 restrictions permitting). So recorders are encouraged to pay closer attention to this species and not simply dismiss it as *E. ovata*. The spider is frequent in woodland edge habitats or similar where low-growing vegetation occurs adjacent to grasslands and similar open habitat biotopes. Whilst both species can and do occur together, *E. latimana* may be associated with warmer and drier habitats (Harvey, Nellist & Telfer, 2002).

Yet another spider which is slowly spreading northwards can probably claim to be the most unusual of the thirteen species recorded as new to one of the Yorkshire VCs. The mesh-web weaver, *Nigma walckenaeri* is an arboreal species, occurring in the foliage of trees and shrubs. It is a distinctive small green spider (male has a chestnut brown carapace) and was not

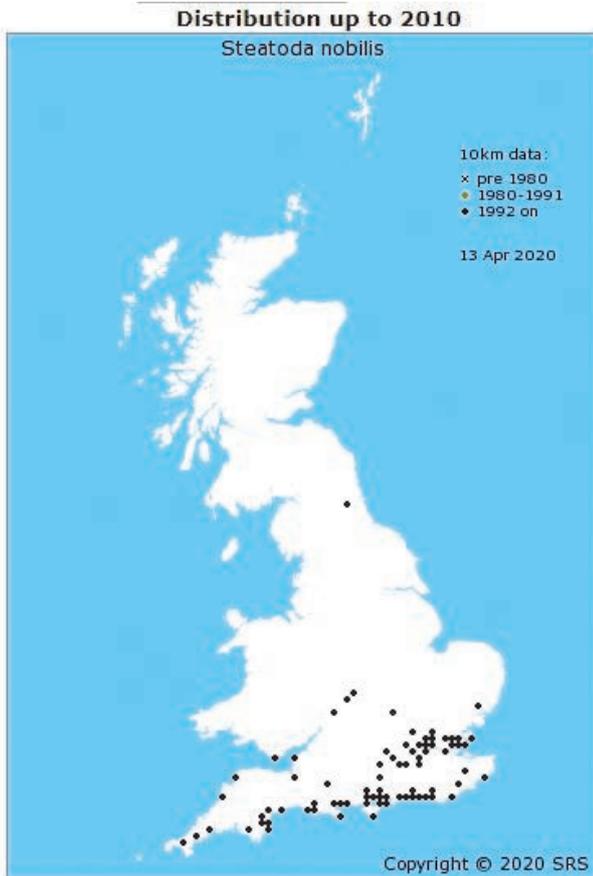


Fig. 1. Distribution of noble false-widow *Steatoda nobilis* in Britain up to 2010 © Spider Recording Scheme

040 *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875)

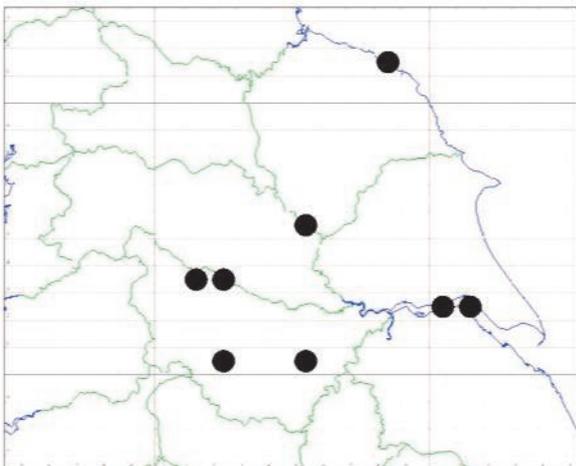


Fig. 2. Distribution of noble false-widow *Steatoda nobilis* in Britain up to 2019 © Spider Recording Scheme

an obvious candidate (yet) to be added to the Yorkshire list. The spider can be frequent, where it occurs in south-east England and the Welsh Borders, becoming sporadic north of a line between the Dee and The Wash estuaries. The first Yorkshire record, from a male photographed by Duncan Allen, was collected from a motorcycle cover and is assumed to have been dispersed by recent (at the time) strong winds from nearby shrubs or trees. Whilst it was recorded in unusual circumstances, the vehicle in question had not travelled far and so it can be dismissed as an inadvertent hitchhiker from elsewhere in Britain.

Six species: the jumping spiders *Hasarius adansoni* and *Marpissa muscosa*; the cellar spider *Holocnemus*

067 *Enoplognatha latimana* Hippa & Oksala, 1982

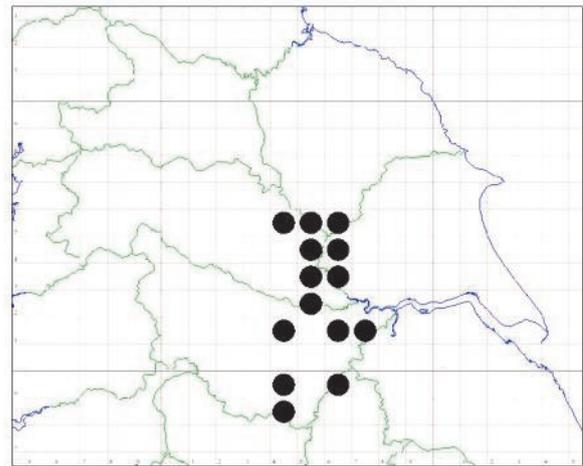


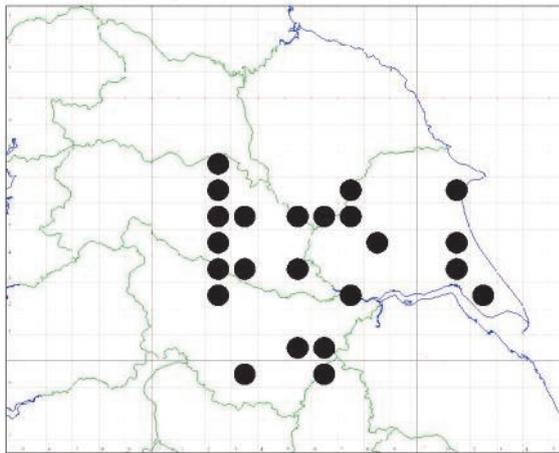
Fig. 3. Distribution of *Enoplognatha latimana* in Watsonian Yorkshire up to 2019 © Spider Recording Scheme



Fig. 4. *Enoplognatha latimana* © Geoff Oxford

*plucheii*; the comb-footed spiders *Theridion hemerobium* and *Enoplognatha caricis* (= *tecta*); and the orb-weaver *Cyrtophora citricola* were all recorded from various garden centres in VC 62. *Hasarius adansoni* and *Holocnemus plucheii* are non-native species that are restricted to artificial biomes and were presumably introduced with plants from mainland European nurseries. However, *Marpissa muscosa* is a native jumping spider, albeit with virtually all records restricted to south-east England. There is an isolated record from a garden centre in Stirling, Scotland (VC 87: West Perthshire) and the July 2019 record from the Vertigrow plant nursery, north-east of York, where the records of *Theridion hemerobium* also originate (July and September 2019). The record of *E. caricis* is potentially exciting. When Geoff Oxford first mentioned its discovery to me, the likelihood seemed to be that it was introduced with the horticultural plants from suppliers in Belgium. However, the suppliers have been very helpful in providing Geoff with information on conditions in their establishment and it actually seems very unlikely

that it was inadvertently introduced here. That the female collected was in attendance with egg-sacs is also suggestive that a male was once present. Thus, there is a tantalising possibility that this very rare native spider lurks somewhere in suitable habitat in Yorkshire, awaiting discovery. The most likely location is Strensall Common which lies around 4 km to the north. It is currently only known from an East Anglian fen in recent times. Finally, Oxford (2017) reported the presence of the distinctive araneid (orb-web weaver) *Cyrtophora citricola* from the same garden centre that has provided a suite of unusual records including the aforementioned *E. caricis*. This is a definite non-native species that is known from the Mediterranean as well as subtropical regions. Readers may be interested to note that in Yorkshire, there are at least 69 records of spiders recorded from garden centres or nurseries, representing 23 species (searching for ‘\*garden centre\*’ or ‘\*nursery\*’ on MapMate), of which the majority are the non-native *Uloborus plumipes* (see Figure 5 for distribution).

022.x *Uloborus plumipes* Lucas, 1846

**Fig. 5.** Distribution of *Uloborus plumipes* in Watsonian Yorkshire up to 2019. Note, not all hectads will represent garden centres or nurseries © Spider Recording Scheme

Two new species have been added to VC 65's tally: the common *Harpactea hombergi* which is a denizen of leaf-litter and the large wolf-spider *Arctosa leopardus*, which was recorded by Andy Godfrey at Nosterfield Nature Reserve, near Masham in July 2018. The former is likely to be an overlooked species as there are only a dozen records in the SRS database for Yorkshire from 2000 onwards. The wolf-spider is a rare species in Yorkshire as it is only known from Crowle Moors, part of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve; so this record is significant at a regional level.

Since the last update, a more thorough audit of the species totals for each of the Yorkshire vice-counties has been completed. In Wilson (2017), Table 1 contained a number of errors owing to the author failing to appreciate that the database included varieties and aggregate species as a separate ‘species’. Thus the total species conveyed in Wilson (2017) were too high. Table 1 in this article is believed to represent a more accurate account.

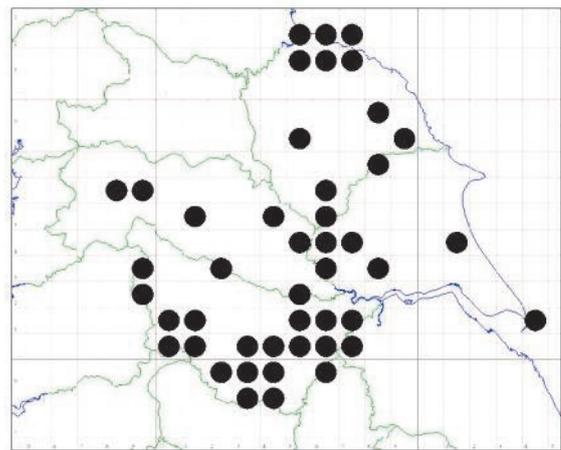
Finally, it should be noted that the widespread (see Figure 6) ground spider, *Micaria pulicaria* has recently been confirmed as two separate species: *Micaria micans* and *Micaria pulicaria* s.s. Historical records in the absence of any specimens are therefore required to be assigned to *M. pulicaria* agg. which is the case so far for all Yorkshire records.

**Table 1:** Number of Species recorded in each vice-county and Yorkshire as a whole

Vice-county	No. of Species (as at 31/12/2019)
(61) south-east Yorkshire	327
(62) north-east Yorkshire	370
(63) south-east Yorkshire	367
(64) mid-west Yorkshire	350
(65) north-west Yorkshire	227
Yorkshire (VCs 61 to 65)	436

### Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all who have submitted records to the

573 *Micaria pulicaria* agg.

**Fig. 6.** Distribution of *Micaria pulicaria* agg. in Watsonian Yorkshire up to 2019 © Spider Recording Scheme

recording scheme including the numerous individuals not mentioned in the main text – every record counts! Particular thanks is offered to Jim Pewtress and Geoff Oxford who's efforts in VC 62 since 2010 have substantially contributed to the additional 21 species new for the vice-county; and to Duncan Allen who provided further detail on the remarkable *Nigma walckenaeri* record. Finally, thanks to Geoff who provided additional information on *Enoplognatha caricis*.

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29 Primley Park Lane, Alwoodley, Leeds, LS17 7JE.  
riwspider@yahoo.co.uk