

Spider Recording Scheme News

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Editorial

by Matt Prince

I will be taking over some of Peter Harvey's role managing the Spider Recording Scheme, so this is a good opportunity to thank Peter for his invaluable contribution to spider recording over the decades since the scheme started. He was an Area Organiser when it first started in 1987 under Clifford Smith, taking over as national organiser in 1999, at a point when many records still came in on RA65 cards and had to be entered by hand, and helped drive the change to a more efficient computerised model as it is today. It is down to his efforts that we have such a high standard of data quality, readily and easily accessible through the S.R.S. website. I hope Peter continues to contribute his knowledge and expertise for many more years to come.

It is quite telling that multiple people are needed to take over his role. In the short term I will be co-ordinating record submission to the scheme, whilst specimens for confirmation and identification should be sent to Richard Gallon.

Please continue to submit records to your Area Organisers as before, and Area Organisers please synchronise your Mapmate records with my CUK "brb". I can also accept Excel files or submissions in other electronic formats, but please no more hand-written records!

Of note John Partridge is stepping down as Area Organiser for Hereford and Worcester, this leaves the following vice-counties vacant, or with a caretaker in place: South (3) and North (4) Devon, Dorset (9), Berkshire (22), Gloucester East (33) and West (34), Hereford (36), Worcester (37), Staffordshire (39), Leicestershire and Rutland (55), Nottinghamshire (56), Derbyshire (57), Channel Islands (113).

Please contact me if you are interested in taking over the Area Organiser role for any of these counties, all rich in interesting spiders, all under recorded, and all would benefit from even the most basic point of contact. Great experience, whilst valued, is not essential, as there is a network of experts that can help with difficult determinations, conservation issues, etc.

Also, please help future issues of the S.R.S. News by sending articles to Richard Gallon. Short or long, on your interesting discoveries and observations. **The newsletter depends on your contributions!**

Recent Records of Spiders from Kent

by Tony Russell-Smith

Although I did very little collecting in 2019 due to personal circumstances, others were more active and provided some interesting records. In West Kent, Jason Steel discovered the little ant mimicking jumper *Synageles venator* at two sites in Erith. A female was photographed at 96 Swanton Road (TQ495773) on 25th May and a male at 11 Plaxtol Road (TQ494775) both in



Figure 1. *Synageles venator*, female and male from Erith, W. Kent. © Jason Steel.

domestic gardens (Fig. 1). Since 1998, this species has been recorded in urban and post-industrial sites along the Thames corridor in Essex between the Olympic Park at Stratford in the West and West Thurrock in the East. These are the first records from the Kent side of the River Thames.

He also recorded a female of *Macaroeris nidicolens* from his own garden at 33 Watling Street (TQ497750) on 19th April 2020 (Fig. 2). Once again, this species has spread along the north side of the River Thames in Essex over the past nine years, but there have been only three previous records in Kent from Littlebrook electricity substation, Dartford in 2012 and Greenwich in 2017 & 2020.

Other interesting records in 2019 came from Dungeness, where Tony Witts (Kent & Medway BRC) has been studying the effects of using brushwood to restore shingle vegetation on the beetle fauna since 2018. He has kindly allowed me to identify the spiders from his pitfall traps. Although there were no new species for this very well-studied area, it was good to see that some of the rarities characteristic of shingle are still present. These included the jumping spiders *Pellenes tripunctatus*, *Phlegra fasciata* and *Attulus* (ex. *Sitticus*) *inexpectus* as well as the linyphiid *Trichoncus affinis*.



Figure 2. *Macaroeris nidicolens*, female from Erith, W. Kent. © Jason Steel.



Figure 3. *Theridion pinastris* male.
© Barbara Knoflach.

Despite the Covid-19 epidemic and lockdown in 2020, I was able to get into the field somewhat more often than in the previous year. Initially, this was confined to my local parishes of Newnham and Doddington on the North Downs. One surprise was the abundance of the little mimetid *Ero aphana*. Hitherto, it had only been recorded in Kent from two hectads, including two sites in Greenwich and one in Canterbury Old Park. During the course of the first week in May I collected it from four sites all within half a mile of my house, including Doddington churchyard on yew (TQ939575), Doddington Place Park on gorse (TQ947575), Sharsted Court on pine (TQ950581) and Bailiffs Cottage (TQ951580). The last was in my own garden where three males and a female were beaten from a large yew bush. A few days later I was sweeping chalk grassland near the George Inn in Newnham and collected a male of *Theridion pinastris* (Fig. 3). A second male was beaten from broom in Canterbury Old Park (TR1758) on the 13th June. This again is an uncommon species in Kent with only six previous records scattered across the county.

During the spring and summer I made several visits to Kiln Wood, a local wildlife site on the Greensand at Lenham (TQ8851). This ancient wood is a mixed deciduous coppice on heavy clay soils. A very interesting find was a male of *Episinus maculipes* (Fig. 4) which was swept from grass and herbs along a ride on the 28th June. This has only been recorded from one other site in Kent, on shrubs at Dungeness. Other species of interest were *Hybocoptus corrugis* (one female, 26th May) and *Diplocephalus graecus* (one male, 11th June).

Another woodland site that I had never previously visited was Park Wood SSSI, Chilham (TR0452). This is an ancient woodland of mainly hazel and hornbeam coppice under oak standards on the chalk downs which contains some magnificent ancient yew trees. Beating the lower branches of these in June produced a further female of *Episinus maculipes* together with a female *Philodromus collinus*. The latter has a scattering of records across Kent, but remains an uncommon species here, although this could be due to under-recording. More surprising was a single female of the money spider *Porrhomma oblitum* swept from Dog's Mercury beneath dense hazel coppice. This is a local species new to Kent which is found in litter of wet woodlands but was hitherto inexplicably absent from Kent and Sussex.

Two linyphiid species continue to expand their range in Kent. The first is *Trematocephalus cristatus* which was collected this year for the first time from Egerton (Foxden Wood, TQ9048) and Wichling (churchyard, TQ916557). This species has also been expanding its range rapidly in recent years in Surrey and Sussex, although it remains rare in Essex. Its recent discovery much further afield in the West Country (Devon and Gloucs.), as well as in Shropshire and Leicestershire, suggests that it is also expanding its range nationally. The second is the recently arrived *Diplocephalus graecus* which was found in new sites in Newnham (chalk grassland), Egerton (Foxden Wood), Lenham (Kiln Wood) & Tunstall (Cromer's Wood). This is the first year I have collected it from woodland rides in Kent, although David Carr had found it in Chantry Wood, Maldon in Essex in 2019. Elsewhere, the species has been recorded from a handful of sites in Essex and from Farnham Heath, Surrey. If its rapid expansion across continental Europe from its original Mediterranean range is any guide, we can confidently expect it to expand its range in southern Britain.

Interesting though these records are, the biggest surprise came later in the year with the discovery in early August of the linyphiid *Neriene emphana* in Denge Wood (TR101504) by John Draper, a specimen of which was subsequently identified by Tylan Berry (SRS Newsletter 98: 3-4). The only previous record for this species in Britain was from the Isle of White in August 2000. Coincidentally, I had been collecting in Ellenden Wood, Blean (TR103504) on 22nd July, but had found so few adult spiders that I had put them to one side for later identification. Imagine my surprise when among these I found a single male of *N. emphana* which had been beaten from the foliage of a coppiced oak tree! My initial failure to notice this specimen left me wondering whether I might have collected the species previously but mistaken it for another member of the genus. Sure enough, on scanning my material for *Neriene* specimens collected later in the year, I discovered a male and female from Eastling Wood, West Langdon (TR303478), beaten from shrubs on the 9th August 2005 and mis-recorded as *N. peltata*. *Neriene emphana* had therefore been present in Kent for at least 15 years prior to the discoveries in 2020. The fact that it had been overlooked for so long is down to my own misidentification, but also to the fact that it matures in July and August, a period when many collectors are not very active in the field as so many spider species are immature at that time of year.

Although one might be forgiven for thinking that the past two years have been a period of rapid change in the Kent spider fauna, the example of *Neriene emphana*



Figure 4. *Episinus maculipes* male. © Pierre Oger.

should make us cautious about such claims. Even with large and supposedly more conspicuous species, it sometimes takes many years after they become initially established before they are detected in new localities. Such was the case with the wasp spider (*Argiope bruennichi*) which was first recorded at Rye Harbour in Sussex in 1922, but was not found again (in Dorset) until 1950. In reality, the number of active spider collectors in Kent is so small that new species could remain undetected for years.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Jason Steel, Barbara Knoflach and Pierre Oger for allowing me to use their excellent photos.

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The Fencepost Jumping Spider *Marpissa muscosa* in North Yorkshire

by Geoff Oxford

On 17th July 2019 I discovered a mature female Fencepost Jumping Spider (*Marpissa muscosa*) in a crack in a fencepost (!) at Vertigrow Plant Centre, on the outskirts of York (SE646567). This was both a surprise and a delight, for Yorkshire has only a small number of Britain's salticid species, many of which have markedly southern distributions. *Marpissa muscosa*'s 'centre of gravity' is very much in the south east of England but with a number of more scattered records further west. In the north, the species was apparently absent except for two 2011 sightings, a month apart, at a garden centre in Stirling (NS766956) by Helen Dawson (SRS, 2020 – recorded by Bob Dawson). The Yorkshire record, at a similar establishment, could be regarded as an accidental import from further south or even abroad. Searches of the site during 2020 did not revealed further specimens.

On 15th June 2020, I visited Browns Nursery in Wiggington (SE581591), on the other side of York to Vertigrow, and noticed on the glass of one of their large, 'staff only' greenhouses an impressive jumping spider. It was another female *Marpissa muscosa*, and this time she wasn't alone. A casual scanning of the accessible end of the greenhouse revealed another ten or so individuals, both on the inside and outside of the glass. I collected four, two of each sex, which all turned out to be in their penultimate instars; they moulted to maturity in captivity.

I returned to Wiggington on 7th August, another very hot day, and was given permission to search within this and another 'staff only' greenhouse. In the original greenhouse, I counted 10 seemingly mature males, 12 apparently mature females and another 26 that were either too high up or too fast for their sex to be determined – a total of 48. In the second 'staff only' greenhouse I saw 13 males, 18 females and seven too far away to sex, a total of 38. Finally, while waiting to tell the owner what I'd found, I spotted a mature female near the till area in yet another, more open, building. The total count was therefore 87. Far from being a one-off import, this nursery clearly has a considerable breeding population of Britain's largest



Figure 1. A mature female *Marpissa muscosa* with prey photographed in a glasshouse at Browns Nursery, Wiggington, York. © Geoff Oxford.

salticid. Presumably a number of individuals, or one gravid female, had been introduced some years ago and found the environment in these greenhouses to their liking.

Since the survey I have kept a male/female pair in captivity in a tank with wooden post-tops and artificial crevices. It is striking that even when their container is placed in a greenhouse on hot, sunny days, they are rarely seen out together, despite the presence of prey. If this reflects their behaviour generally it suggests that the counts detailed above will be a considerable underestimate of the true population size at Browns Nursery.

After finding this population, Helen Smith alerted me to a number of records surfacing on Twitter. Although most were from the south-east of England some have been from further afield including from a greenhouse in County Durham (July 2020), a butterfly house between Congresbury and Yatton in Somerset (May 2013) with the comment 'At least a dozen in the glasshouse that year, they seemed to thrive there' and the Manchester City Football Academy (May 2020). Helen noted that most of the records from the Reading area were also from greenhouses. All were confirmed with photographs. Taken together with the two locations identified in York and the Stirling specimen(s), it suggests that this species is leapfrogging around *via* the horticultural trade – the origin of the Football Academy specimen is a mystery.

So, if arachnologists in Yorkshire want to glimpse a large, beautiful jumping spider, head for Browns Nursery on a very hot day; their wonderful plant selection makes the visit doubly worthwhile.

Acknowledgements

I thank Chris Brown for permission to search his greenhouses, Bob Dawson for details of the Stirling record, and Helen Smith and Rich Burkmar for information on *M. muscosa* sightings reported recently on the B.A.S. Twitter feed and iRecord.

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***Enoplognatha caricis* Population Flourishing at a Gloucester Pond**

by Tone Killick

On the 27th September 2020 I found a spider that I wasn't familiar with at a balancing pond in Gloucester (SO874163) (Fig. 1). Around a couple of millimetres in length and dark in colour, I initially thought it was a linyphiid, but after closer scrutiny I came to the conclusion that it was a theridiid although not one that I had seen before. The specimen was beaten from *Juncus inflexus* in a marshy area of the pond (Fig. 2). I tubed the live specimen and later that day posted a photo of it on the British Spider Identification Group on Facebook. The consensus here was that it was likely to be *Enoplognatha mordax* (Fig. 3). This putative identification was both exciting and intriguing. It was exciting because in the UK *E. mordax* is classed as Nationally Scarce (Spider Recording Scheme 2020), but intriguing because *E. mordax* is a saltmarsh species and never recorded inland.

On the 1st October 2020 the spider moulted (Fig. 4) and I could see that it had very distinct abdominal markings and was quite different to *E. mordax*. I started to check against the UK's other rare *Enoplognatha* spp. using online resources such as Spinnen Forum Wiki, Araneae – Spiders of Europe and Les araignées de Belgique et de France. One species jumped straight out at me, the extremely rare *Enoplognatha caricis*. In the UK *E. caricis* is a wetland species, listed as vulnerable to extinction and this also seems to be the situation in many other European countries where the spider is found. The spider was recorded as present in neighbouring localities in Dorset between 1888 and 1974, but apparently the sites have now changed and the habitat unviable (Harvey *et al.*, 2017). Sadly no specimens have been found at those sites since 1974. In recent times we have just two recorded specimens. One in 2009 at Castle Marshes, Suffolk (Collyer, 2009), and another in 2019 found in a garden centre in York (Oxford, 2019) which could possibly have been imported via plants. It was time to visit the World Spider Catalogue!

Firstly, I painstakingly translated the original description of *E. caricis* (Fickert, 1876) but must confess it was pretty obscure. I went through the same procedure with another German description (Wiehle, 1937), but again this didn't help me too much. It was the paper, *New and rare British spiders* (Merrett & Snazell, 1975) that convinced me that I had found *E. caricis*. The pair of dark antero-lateral abdominal patches, dark posterior patch and cardiac mark surrounded by white guanine deposits extending between the anterior dark patches, together with a pronounced fovea were consistent with *E. caricis* (Fig. 5).

Ventrally, the abdomen of *E. mordax* has two longitudinal lines and *Enoplognatha oelandica* has a large white patch. My specimen had neither of these diagnostic pointers. Merrett & Snazell (1975) wrote that the "female is easily distinguished from all other British *Enoplognatha* species by the colour of the abdomen both dorsally and ventrally". It was starting to look like I had indeed found a rarity. On the 15th October 2020 my specimen moulted again. I waited three days before photographing the spider and disaster struck! I had taken a couple of photos and as I lifted the camera, it caught on silk that the spider had extruded. The spider ended up on the carpet and in my frantic search I inadvertently squashed it! To say I was gutted was a massive understatement.

With a heavy heart I decided to go back to the pond early that morning in the hope that I could find additional



Figure 1. Balancing pond. © Tone Killick.



Figure 2. Location of first *Enoplognatha caricis* specimen. © Tone Killick.



Figure 3. First *Enoplognatha caricis* specimen found. © Tone Killick.

E. caricis. What greeted me that morning was utter devastation! It seems the council had decided that the pond and all surrounding vegetation needed to be chopped back. They had drove their machinery into the pond, in the process crushing the *J. inflexus* and all other vegetation in their path. My expectations of finding *E. caricis* were low, rock bottom if truth be told, but after 30 minutes of searching I found two immature females and a sub adult male. It seems that due to this wanton vandalism the



Figure 4. *Enoplognatha caricis* moulting.
© Tone Killick.



Figure 7. Maturing male moult of *Enoplognatha caricis*. © Tone Killick.

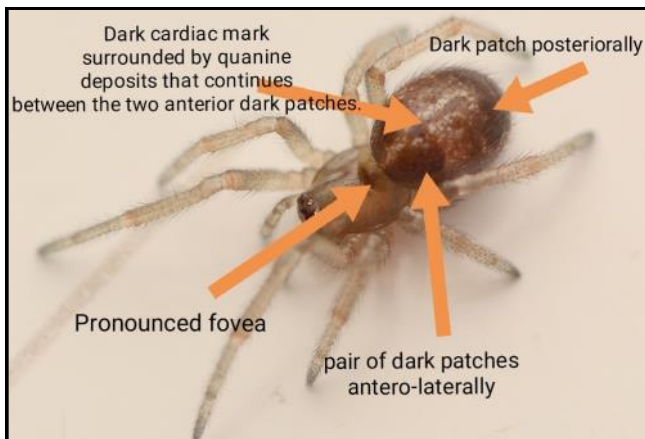


Figure 5. *Enoplognatha caricis* diagnostic features.
© Tone Killick.



Figure 8. Chelicerae and tooth position of male *Enoplognatha caricis*. © Tone Killick.



Figure 6. Crushed *Juncus inflexus*. © Tone Killick.

council had inadvertently helped me find this rare spider. From my experience *E. caricis* inhabits the base of *J. inflexus* and it is not called Hard Rush for nothing! Trying to get a tray amongst this tough grass relative is hard going and hardly produces any results. After the council had done their bodge job, the plants were now laying flat (Fig. 6), and it was a simple case of sliding my tray underneath and *voila!* I returned home with the specimens feeling extremely happy and set them up in their own enclosures. It was then a matter of rearing the specimens to maturity.



Figure 9. *Enoplognatha caricis* specimens found on 11th November. © Tone Killick.

In the meantime, whilst waiting for the spiders to mature I continued to visit the pond. On the 18th October 2020 I concentrated my search on a different area of the pond and within an hour had found 11 *E. caricis*. All were immature and found on *Juncus inflexus* and *Carex riparia*. I kept two males and returned the rest to the pond. I now had three males and two females. If all went to plan, a male, once mature would be sent off for genital determination as I had learnt that this was preferable over a female specimen (Peter Harvey, pers. comm.). The other two males and females would be kept for behavioural observations. On the 8th November 2020 a sub adult male moulted (Fig. 7). I had been eagerly waiting for this day as I could now get the specimen sent off for a definitive identification.

I know that identification by gen. det. is the gold standard and although I was convinced that by habitus alone my specimens were *E. caricis*, there was still that nagging feeling that I could be wrong. After the male had



Figure 10. *Enoplognatha caricis* presumably overwintering. © Tone Killick.



Figure 11. *Enoplognatha caricis* specimen locations. © Tone Killick.



Figure 12. Undeveloped land showing *Juncus inflexus*. © Tone Killick.

moulted, I was immediately drawn to the unusual position of its impressive chelicerae and distinctive teeth (Fig. 8). They were so distinct that I have started to call the spider the “talon toothed marsh spider” – the chelicerae have an uncanny resemblance to the claws of a raptor. I visited Pierre Olger’s website, *Les araignées de Belgique et de France*, and compared the chelicerae images of my specimen to all the other *Enoplognatha* spp. Believe me when I say I was grinning like a Cheshire cat at this stage! I contacted Pierre and sent him the images of my spider and he replied that “the chelicerae and habitus seem to correspond with *E. caricis*”.



Figure 13. Aerodrome masonry. © Tone Killick.



Figure 14. Aerodrome masonry. © Tone Killick.

On the 11th November 2020 I revisited the pond and concentrated my search on a third location. Within 40 minutes I had found nine more specimens (Fig. 9) including the only specimen that I have so far photographed in its natural habitat. It was an immature female and was found under plant debris at the base of *Carex*, presumably overwintering (Fig. 10). All nine specimens were returned to their habitat. This had brought the total count to 24 at three different locations (Fig. 11).

On the 14th November 2020 I sent the mature male specimen to Peter Harvey and within two days Peter had e-mailed me with confirmation that the spider was indeed *E. caricis*.



Figure 15. *Enoplognatha caricis* pair in captivity. © Tone Killick.



Figure 16. *Enoplognatha caricis* mature male in captivity. © Tone Killick.

I suppose we must now ask ourselves how *E. caricis* ended up at the balancing pond? The pond is located on a housing estate and is one of several that are part of the sustainable drainage system (SuDs). The pond is split in half by a raised path which is about a foot wide and covered in vegetation. One half of the pond is deep water all year round and the other half is marsh, although during spring and summer it does dry out leaving small, waterlogged pools. The dominant plants are *Typha*, *Carex*, and *Juncus inflexus*, which is commonly known as Hard rush and the plant that I had collected the majority of *E. caricis* from. Could the spiders have arrived via these pond plants? I have tried extremely hard to get in touch with the developers of the pond to query the origin of the plants, but in these times of Covid my appeals have fallen on deaf ears and e-mails have gone unanswered. After further e-mail communication with Peter Harvey I decided to look into the history of land prior to its development to see whether suitable *E. caricis* habitat had existed there previously.

I discovered the land was previously the site of the old Brockworth Aerodrome, home to the famous Gloster Aircraft Company (RAFA, 2021) that was in operation between 1915 and 1963. When production ceased and the land apparently reverted to a semi-natural state until the early 1990s when construction of the Brockworth Business Estate began. The development of the housing estate commenced in 2007 with the pond being constructed sometime around 2009/10. On the 17th January 2021 whilst searching for suitable habitat I stumbled across a strip of land that was exactly what I was looking for. The land that ran parallel to the Dowty Propellers factory (BBC News, 2019) was wet, covered in moss and contained lots of *Juncus inflexus* (Fig. 12) and old masonry from the original Brockworth Aerodrome (Figs. 13 & 14). Although this stretch of land looked promising, after several hours of searching I failed to find *E. caricis*. It is possible that due to the very cold weather on the day (-1°C), the spiders had hunkered down for the winter; I plan to return when temperatures rise. I suppose for now, the mystery of how *E. caricis* ended up at the pond will continue, but it seems likely that it arrived with the development's planting. What we can say is that the species is certainly thriving at this pond and long may it do so. The species is also flourishing in captivity (Figs. 15 & 16) and I've observed moulting, courtship, mating, egg-sac production and oophagy, but that will be for another article.

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Can *Tibellus maritimus* be Identified in the Field?

by Bill Parker

Two species from the genus *Tibellus* have been recorded in the UK and, as a genus, they are distinctive and easily recognised. *Tibellus oblongus* is the more common of the two species and has been recorded from across the UK, although the majority of records are from eastern England, south of the River Humber. There are many fewer records of *Tibellus maritimus*, but these are more evenly scattered across the UK.

In mid-February I received a live specimen of an adult male *Tibellus* species which had been captured in Buckinghamshire. It was provisionally identified by the recorder, based on its appearance, as *Tibellus maritimus*. However, this would make it the first record for the vice county if correct.

The historical descriptions of the genus, at least in British arachnological literature, are interesting. Only one species, *Tibellus oblongus*, was known from the UK when *A history of the spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* (Blackwall, 1861) and *The spiders of Dorset* (Pickard-Cambridge, 1879) were published. These authors describe the abdomen as occasionally having two or three lines of spots running down each; neither made any reference to spots on the cephalothorax. Both species were described in *British Spiders* (Locket & Millidge, 1951); *T. oblongus* is “similar in colour to *T. maritimus* but is usually devoid of spots, except for two faint ones on the abdomen”. However, it is stated that “the two species can be separated with certainty only by their genitalia.” Jones (1983) describes the carapace of *T. maritimus* as having “large dark spots opposite legs, sometimes absent” and on the abdomen “when present, dark spots are large, with about six on each flank”. Whereas he notes with *T. oblongus* the carapace is “usually without spots, but some specimens resemble *T. maritimus*” and the abdomen is “sometimes with two pairs of spots and less frequently with many (up to thirty) very small spots over whole length of abdomen on each side.” Roberts (1996) makes no reference to the carapace or abdominal spotting other than “abdominal markings, and the number of paired dark spots, are variable” and identification to species requires examination of the genitalia.

Finally, Bee *et al.* (2020) echo some of the earlier comments; *T. maritimus* “often has dark brown spots on



Figure 1. *Tibellus* specimen from Buckinghamshire showing rows of red-brown spots either side of median line on the abdomen and the large dark spots on the edge of the carapace. © Bill Parker.



Figure 2. Ventral view of left palp confirming identity of the species as *Tibellus oblongus*. © Bill Parker.

margins of the carapace” and the abdomen is “similar to *T. oblongus* but, in addition to spots posteriorly, also usually has a line of clear dark spots on either side of the median line.” However, it is stated that microscopic examination is necessary to confirm the species.

The specimen from Buckinghamshire showed all of the arrangements of spots that have been described as typical of *T. maritimus*, so I was keen to get a closer look. However, once a palp had been removed and examined under the microscope, there was no doubt that this was the common species, *Tibellus oblongus*. Fortunately, the palps of the two species are sufficiently different to make separation relatively straight forward and the tibial apophysis and tip of the embolus are clearly shown in the photograph (Fig. 2).

This article is intended to reinforce the point that the identification of *Tibellus* (and many other spiders) to species of can only be established with certainty by microscopic examination of the genitalia, however frustrating that may be at times.

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***Ozyptila simplex* (O. P. -Cambridge, 1862) (Thomisidae) on the Floodplain of the River Avon at Birlingham, Worcestershire, VC37**

by P. F. Whitehead

The floodplain of the River Avon in Worcestershire is composed predominantly of Jurassic soft rocks inwashed during the later prehistoric period. As aquicludes they act as reservoirs for flood water and their invertebrate fauna is very highly adapted to cope with this.

On 31st December 2020 at Birlingham, Worcestershire, my journey across the floodplain coincided directly with the recession of floodwater after the floodplain had been inundated for a few days. There the floodplain is composed largely of wet pasture with some plantations of poplar and a series of artificial pools with attendant reed swamp, lush tall herbs and reed beds centred at SO9442.

Slightly downstream of this feature I turned a piece of rafted timber that had been intercepted by out-grown field hedges and encountered a female *Ozyptila* sp. under it (Fig. 1). Female *Ozyptila* spp. are not uncommonly found

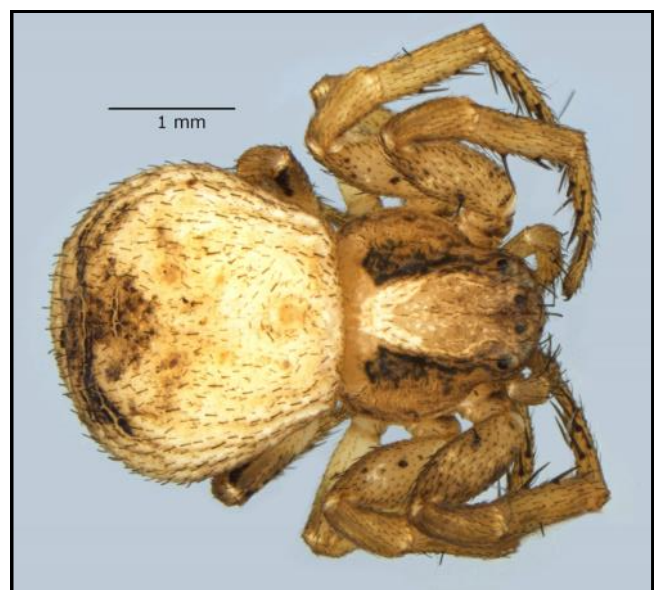


Figure 1. *Ozyptila simplex* female habitus dorsal, Birlingham, Worcestershire, 31st December 2020. © P. F. Whitehead.

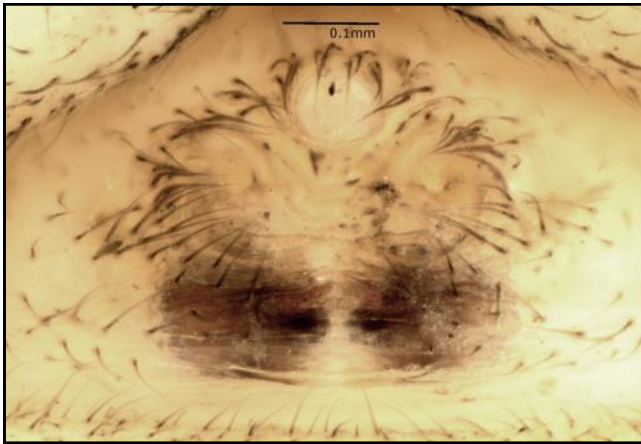


Figure 2. *Ozyptila simplex* female epigyne, Birlingham, Worcestershire, 31st December 2020. © P. F. Whitehead.

in the area during winter, for example in retreats under loosened tree bark, and are usually widespread species. The Birlingham specimen was retained on account of its apparent distinctiveness and was readily determined from the details of its epigyne (Fig. 2) as *Ozyptila simplex* (O. P. -Cambridge, 1862). This observation is therefore of interest on account of its geographical and habitat indications.

Without providing detailed references here a scan of European literature suggests that on a whole-range basis *O. simplex* may be curiously eurytopic with an affinity for dry minerogenic sediments, but also on occasion for reed beds and other wetland habitats; this example was exactly 46 m from the nearest reed bed *Phragmites australis* L. Although this euytopism is demonstrated in the charts on the S.R.S. website. Peter Harvey has suggested (*in litt.*, 18th January 2021) that in Essex at least *O. simplex* is largely a wetland species. Due to the limited amount of data in the Severn Valley, where the author has examined many millions of invertebrates, it is uncertain whether *O. simplex* is truly a wetland element in that fauna or is even a new arrival.

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Identification of Egg-sacs Produced by *Ero* species (Mimetidae, Pirate Spiders)

by Tone Killick

The genus *Ero* is arguably my favourite group of spiders and I have spent many hundreds of hours observing them in natural and captive habitats over several years. Below I present a few notes to help identify *Ero* egg-sacs:

Ero furcata/cambridgei

Pear-shaped, thin hanging thread, copper colouration. The egg-sacs of *E. furcata* and *E. cambridgei* are identical and cannot be identified to species in the field.

Ero aphana

Pear-shaped, thin hanging thread, gold colouration including lattice threads. Colouration alone allows for *E. aphana* egg-sacs to be easily identified from those of *E. furcata/cambridgei*.



Ero tuberculata

Pear-shaped, thick hanging thread, substantial attachment at the apex of the egg-sac, usually by several thick threads. White in colour with yellow/gold lattice threads.

In *Britain's Spiders* (Bee *et al.*, 2020), *E. tuberculata*'s egg-sac is described as cigar-shaped, a description I believe that originates from W. S. Bristowe's *World of Spiders* and Arthur Smith's line drawing of a distinctly cigar-shaped egg-sac (Bristowe, 1958), a depiction I believe is incorrect. I have seen numerous *E. tuberculata* egg-sacs and none have remotely resembled a cigar.

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Uloborus walckenaerius Latreille, 1805 in Dorset (VC9)

by Scotty Dodd

Uloborus walckenaerius is recorded from Dorset (VC9) from a land parcel adjacent to Holt & West Moors Heaths SSSI at SU0803 on the 20th May 2019. This is a significant record at a county level, having not been recorded in Dorset (VC9) for over 100 years (Peter Harvey, Spider Recording Scheme, pers. comm. 2019). Numerous prospecting males were either swept or suction sampled from the north-east quadrant of the site; a former arable field on sand that has been allowed to naturally regenerate into an early successional heathland/acid grassland mosaic. No females were noted. This record suggests that the species is present and well-established on the adjacent heathland SSSI.

Of the 60 species of spider recorded during the survey 10 Nationally Scarce species and one Nationally Rare/Near Threatened species were recorded. These are summarised in Table 1. It seems plausible that all of these species occur on the adjacent SSSI.

| Table 1. Spiders with conservation statuses recorded at the site during May, July & August 2019 | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Family | Species | Status |
| Araneidae | <i>Araneus angulatus</i> | NS |
| Dictynidae | <i>Nigma puella</i> | NS |
| Gnaphosidae | <i>Drassyllus praeficus</i> | NS |
| Lycosidae | <i>Pardosa proxima</i> | NS |
| Lycosidae | <i>Xerolycosa nemoralis</i> | NS |
| Mimetidae | <i>Ero aphana</i> | NS |
| Pisauridae | <i>Dolomedes fimbriatus</i> | NS |
| Salticidae | <i>Evarcha arcuata</i> | NS |
| Theridiidae | <i>Lasaeola (Dipoena) tristis</i> | NS |
| Thomisidae | <i>Thomisus onustus</i> | NS |
| Uloboridae | <i>Uloborus walckenaerius</i> | NR; NT |

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***Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* – Palps and Epigyne**

by Bill Parker

Since its discovery in Britain in 1999 (Harvey, 2001), the taxon currently referred to as “*Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus*” has been recorded across southern England. Recent records have come from as far west as Somerset and Cornwall (Farr-Cox, 2019; Berry, 2020) and north-east as Norfolk (the Spider Recording Scheme), together with multiple reports from London and surrounding counties. Photographs of individual *Megalephyphantes* sp. are being posted to our @britishspiders Twitter account. Although it is not possible to identify these photos to species, it seems likely that many relate to “near *collinus*”, rather than *M. nebulosus*. The latter occurs only indoors, whereas the former is also commonly found outdoors, both in semi natural and synanthropic habitats (Peter Harvey pers. comm.).

In November 2020 one of our Twitter followers posted good photographs of a spider that looked very much like a male *Megalephyphantes*. As the photograph had been taken in Buckinghamshire I was keen to identify the spider to species. I asked if the specimen could be sent to me as S.R.S. Area Organiser. Subsequently (Fig. 1), I received a second specimen, this time of a female found in a garden shed in north Hertfordshire.

Online resources such as *Spiders of Europe* (araneae.nmbe.ch) and *Les araignées de Belgique et de France* (arachno.piwigo.com) cover both

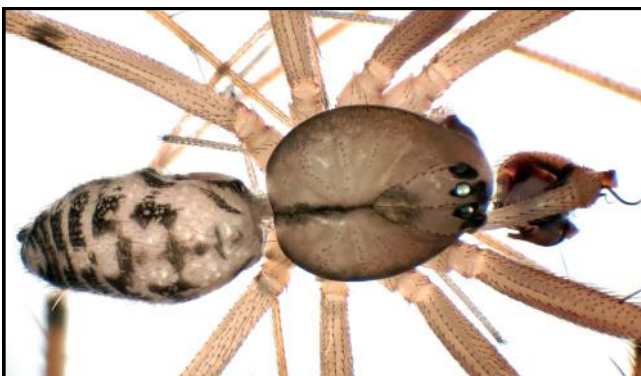


Figure 1. Male *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus*, dorsal view. © Bill Parker.



Figure 2. *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* palp, retrolateral view. Lamella arrowed. © Bill Parker.

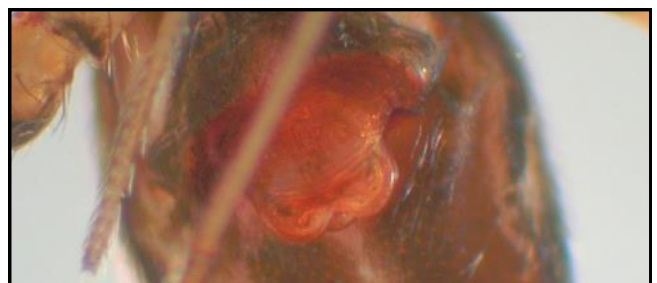


Figure 3. *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* epigyne, ventral view. © Bill Parker.

Megalephyphantes collinus and *M. nebulosus*, but there are no readily available illustrations or photographs of the genitalia of the taxon described as “near *collinus*” from the UK.

Whilst determining the identity of my specimens, I sent focus-stacked images of the male’s palps to fellow B.A.S. member Matt Prince (Fig. 2). He encouraged me to publish my photographs as they clearly show the sickle-shaped lamella (which separates *collinus* / near *collinus* from *nebulosus*) and may also be helpful to other arachnologists struggling to identify their own specimens to species*.

The differences between the epigynes of both species are more subtle and so are not easy to separate based on photographs, but my images (Figs. 3–4) match well with drawings made by Peter Merrett of near *collinus* (Peter Harvey pers. comm.).

* the actual status of *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus* is still to be determined, but in Harvey (2001) it is noted that it is closely related to, but distinct from, typical *M. collinus* (L. Koch, 1872). The British male resembles the type material of *occidentalis* in having a truncated tibial apophysis, but shows some differences, and may represent another subspecies (Merrett & Murphy, 2000). However, our national expert Peter Merrett believes it may be sufficiently different from *M. collinus* to be considered a new undescribed species. Ongoing DNA work in Europe on the *collinus* group, which includes examples from the UK, may shed some light on the matter (Peter Harvey pers. comm.).

I would like to thank Matt Prince for his help and encouragement to publish this article and to Peter Harvey



Figure 4. *Megalephyphantes* sp. near *collinus*, epigyne, lateral view. © Bill Parker.

for his comments, helpful advice and comments on the final draft.

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Observations on *Steatoda triangulosa* Egg-sacs

by Gentiana Popovici

I am very new to the spider world and although they have always fascinated me, I've only developed a true passion for them after I joined the *British Spiders Identification* page on Facebook.

On the 14th October 2020 I was looking for spiders for the Arachtober competition on the group. Amongst other more common species I found my very first *Steatoda triangulosa*, which was identified by group member Simeon Indzhov. Over the following three weeks I found four more specimens; two juveniles (which turned out to be male and female) and one adult male between the 27th–28th October. The last specimen found was an adult female which I collected on 6th November (Fig. 1). All spiders were found at the same location, a garden centre in Middlesex, and in close proximity to each other.

On the 29th November 2020, after returning from work, I noticed an egg-sac in the female's container. It was a white spherical structure in the middle of her web and the eggs inside were perfectly visible (Fig. 2). This find might be exciting for most but for me it was a bit scary. At that time I had no idea what I was supposed to do, so I sought help from B.A.S. member Esmond Brown who was always happy to answer my many questions.

Unfortunately, the egg-sac didn't make it. I thought that would be it, but to my surprise she produced a second one on the 14th December, a third on the 21st December,

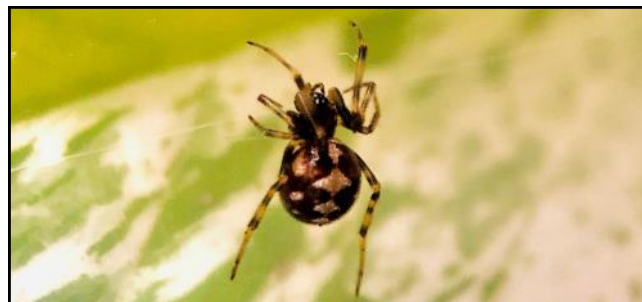


Figure 1. *Steatoda triangulosa*. © Gentiana Popovici.



Figures 2–3. *Steatoda triangulosa* egg-sacs. © Gentiana Popovici.



Figure 4. *Steatoda triangulosa* egg-sac with young within. © Gentiana Popovici.

fourth on the 30th December (Fig. 3), and kept going (nine egg-sacs so far).

Twenty days after she produced the second egg-sac, I noticed that the eggs were no longer visible (Fig. 4), so I contacted Esmond. From photographs he noticed development within the egg-sac and advised me to contact Tone Killick who confirmed Esmond's observation, and advised me on what to look for to recognise the development of the eggs. Thirteen days after it was confirmed that the eggs had hatched, 34 spiderlings emerged from the sac (Fig. 5).

To date five egg-sacs proved to be fertile and hatched successfully 20 days after being produced and the spiderlings emerged after 13 days without fail. So far the second egg-sac proved to have the most eggs, the rest (3rd to 6th) having approximately 15–20 spiderlings per egg-sac.

Acknowledgements

A massive thank you to Esmond Brown for always taking the time to answer my questions, and for reviewing this text. My thanks also to Tone Killick for all the advice and Simeon Indzhov for identifying the spider and advising me to keep the specimens.

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Figure 5. *Steatoda triangulosa* spiderlings.
© Gentiana Popovici.

***Diplocephalus protuberans* (O. P. - Cambridge, 1875) New to Denbighshire, North Wales**

by Richard C. Gallon

The first British record of the Nationally Rare, Vulnerable money spider *Diplocephalus protuberans* (O. P. - Cambridge, 1875) was made by Richard Bagnall in December 1906 when he found a single male amongst moss near Gibside, Durham (Jackson, 1907). Falconer (1911) found both sexes on the 10th May 1911 in South-west Yorkshire “at the roots of grass on the left bank of Ainley Place beck, in Clough House Wood, Slaithwaite” and additional females there a few days later.

The first Welsh record of *D. protuberans* was made in November 1974 by Michael Roberts at Y Ddol Uchaf, a North Wales Wildlife Trust reserve in Flintshire. A B.A.S. survey team recorded it from Coed Aberedw on the bank of the River Edw, Radnorshire on the 22nd June 1995 (Nellist, 1995a, 1995b, 1996). I had the third Welsh record at Cwm Cynfal in Merionethshire on the 15th June 1999, where a single female was found under rocks at the side of a lightly-wooded stream (Gallon, 2001). *Diplocephalus protuberans* is rarely recorded and the S.R.S. contains about 40 records, with the last British record in 2001.

On the 29th December 2020 I gave my father a lift to the Abergele Hospital for an eye appointment. His appointment would last an hour, so rather than sitting around waiting for him, I decided to explore the hospital grounds for spiders. I descended into Nant y Bryniau (SH94717513), a deep wooded (Sycamore, Ash and Larch) gorge, to vacuum moss-covered bedrock at the side of the stream (Fig. 1). Several spider species were recovered from this microhabitat, including a female



Figure 1. Nant y Bryniau wooded gorge showing the moss *Thamnobryum alopecurum* on stream bedrock. Habitat of *Diplocephalus protuberans*. © R. Gallon.



Figure 2. *Diplocephalus protuberans* female, dorsal view. Scale 1 mm. © Richard Gallon.



Figure 3. *Diplocephalus protuberans* female, ventral view. Scale 1 mm. © Richard Gallon.

Hilaira excisa and a male *Metellina merianae* var. *celata*. However, the best find here was a single female *Diplocephalus protuberans* (Figs. 2–3), representing only the fourth Welsh locality and a new vice-county record for Denbighshire.

Published British records of *D. protuberans* indicate that this species is strongly associated with wooded stream-side habitats amongst moss, grass and leaf litter (Denton, 1999, Phillips 1999). All four Welsh records of this species are also from wooded stream sites, so targeted investigation of this under-worked microhabitat may yield further records of this under-recorded spider.

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