

Spider Recording Scheme News

Autumn 2014, No. 80

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

My thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. S.R.S. News No. 81 will be published in Spring 2015. Please send contributions by the end of January 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.

We continue to receive records for a number of 'easily recognisable' species, but the vast majority of records now result from the SRS "contact us" link which replaced the BAS website SRS link last year during the major 'false widow' media scare. A very large number of emails from the public, often 6-8 a day, are generated by this contact us link, generally seeking identification help. Needless to say the vast majority of these are from people worried about dangerous spiders and the ludicrous idea which has been embedded very successfully in their minds by the media that Britain has dangerous spiders. Also needless to say, almost all of these are garden spiders, house spiders or other entirely harmless spiders. Although we often get useful records from these queries, a constant fear of dangerous spiders is hardly a beneficial way of raising awareness of spiders.

Spider records

We now have 970,922 spider records in total in MapMate. About 411,767 have at least some site-based phase 2 habitat information. All these data are uploaded and summarised on the Spider and Harvestman Recording Scheme website. As soon as time allows an updated taxon database for spiders will be provided to MapMate Ltd to bring the MapMate taxon library in line with the published 2014 checklist.

Website visitors

Since the Spider Recording Scheme website went live in August 2010 until the website moved to a new server in early April 2014 we had 156,746 visits from 104,781 users, with 868,879 page views from 169 countries/territories. In the 7 months since the move to a new server, we have had to date 58,569 visits from 44,447 users, with 251,648 page views from 148 countries/territories.

Species pdf report generation

The website Summary page for spider species now provides a link which will generate a species report as a pdf. This is date-stamped for the date created and provides the national distribution map, species text, adult season chart, summary charts of recorded broad and sub-habitats, structural habitat, habitat detail and method, management, substrate and hydrology, all derived from the data held in the SRS database. Clearly this updates in line with the data available in the database, which is

continually updated as records are uploaded after submission to the recording scheme.

Area Organiser changes

Richard Wilson has taken over as Area Organiser for the two previously vacant VCs 67 & 68 (Northumberland South and Northumberland North). His details are: 61 Burley Wood Crescent, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS4 2QJP; email riwspider@yahoo.co.uk

Chris Cathrine has moved and his new address is 61 Main Street, Doune, Perth & Kinross, FK16 6BW. He stays covering the same VCs 72-81, 83, 84, 86 & 98-102 and his email remains the same as chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk

All Area Organiser details are available to logged-on members on the Spider and Harvestman Recording Scheme website

Philodromus rufus sens. str. confirmed in Britain

by Peter Harvey

Philodromus rufus sens. str. is confirmed in South Essex VC18 from several female individuals collected by the author on a number of occasions during summer 2014 from a small south-facing ancient wood remnant in Thurrock above the Thames on sand above chalk, where it occurred together with *P. albidus*, a frequent spider in the region. The *P. rufus* has been seen by Peter Merrett, who agrees with the identification.

As with specimens collected by the author many years ago in Brittany, during a 1992 BAS trip organised by John and the late Frances Murphy, these were noticeable at the time by their pronounced reddish coloration, which seems to be retained at least for a time in alcohol. *P. albidus* individuals can also have some reddish coloration, but this is generally confined to the edges of the carapace and abdomen. Confirmation requires excision and removal of the epigyne so that it can be examined dorsally to look at the characters given in Dondale (1972) and Segers (1989). Females are distinguished by the form of the spermathecal organ which is elongated and projects laterally in *P. rufus* and is curled over in *P. albidus* (Segers, 1989).

What has become clear by examining a range of material available is that the external epigyne differences given in Roberts (1995) for distinguishing the two species are not reliable and cannot be used for separating the two species. Males are likely to be difficult and require reliable reference material for separation.

It is interesting that the *P. rufus* specimens were collected at a later date than the *P. albidus* present in the same wood, possibly the result of this being a more southern European spider requiring more warmth and a slightly longer season in this country to reach maturity. In Brittany in 1992 *P. albidus* was collected by the author inside a shaded woodland, whereas the *P. rufus* was always taken in open scrub habitats, possibly an indication that *P. rufus* is a spider of warmer habitats.

It is perhaps not surprising that *P. rufus* should turn up in Britain on the south-facing side of the east Thames corridor, which has a unique climate in Britain, more continental than the rest of the country. South-east Essex is the driest part of the country, with frequent soil water deficit in the months of May through to August (Jermyn, 1974). In summer the corridor is one of the warmest parts of the country with high sunshine levels. In winter the influence of the Thames ensures mild temperatures, which although not as warm as Cornwall, result in a greater range of temperature. The climate is a key factor in the importance of the region. The very low rainfall, especially in south Essex, and the frequent summer drought curtails the development of extensive scrub on poor substrates and maintains over long periods the open areas favoured by warmth loving invertebrates. The Thames corridor here may also act as a conduit for species newly colonising the country. However, Dondale (1972) states that Pickard-Cambridge (1895) described and figured a male from Britain that matched the real *P. rufus*, so there is every possibility that it could also turn up in warm locations near the south coast and may have been present in especially favourable locations all the time.

P. albidus used to be a scarce spider in most counties in southern England where it occurred, often only found in a few locations. The Essex Spider Group has always found it to be relatively widespread in Essex since we started recording spiders in the county in 1986-87, but more recent years have clearly seen a massive increase in the extent of its occurrence and frequency. Presumably this is also climate-related, so we could now perhaps start to see *P. rufus* beginning to follow *P. albidus*, as yet another sign of our changing climate. Please do not record *P. rufus* though without getting confirmation of a voucher by dissection of females and from the BAS Verification Panel or myself.

References

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- Segers, H. 1989. A redescription of *Philodromus albidus* Kulczynski, 1911 (Araneae, Philodromidae). *Bull. Br. arachnol. Soc.* 8 (2): 38-40.

Micaria subopaca, new to Hertfordshire

by David Carr

On the 26th April 2014, I was on a shopping trip at Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. My route between the John Lewis and Waitrose shops in the town centre took me past a large oak on the side of the pavement, one side of which was exposed to direct sunlight. I could not resist stopping to see if any spiders were present (a legacy of the many years spent recording with the Essex Spider Group).

My attention was immediately drawn towards several *Micaria* sp. actively running on the bark. After observing for a few minutes, it was apparent that there were approximately ten individuals present with numbers of both sexes being about equal. I presumed these to be *Micaria subopaca*, but unfortunately I did not have a pooter and tube with me to collect a specimen. I returned on 5th May 2014 and collected a specimen which I later confirmed as a male *Micaria subopaca*.



Figure 1. *Micaria subopaca* on tree trunk.
Photograph © Peter Harvey

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