

Observations on the habitat of *Hyptiotes paradoxus* at two sites in Devon and Hampshire

by Keith N.A. Alexander

The habitat of *Hyptiotes paradoxus* is said to be evergreen trees and shrubs but experience with the species during 2019 suggests that this may no longer be the case. A sub-adult male was knocked from aerial deadwood on old hazels in Ausewell Wood SX735705, south Devon, on 4th July 2019, while searching for saproxylic and epiphytic invertebrates. The area is mixed woodland of oak, ash, sycamore and hazel with some holly, but the precise spot was a stand of old hazel. Immature spiders were later beaten from old heather bushes in a large heathy glade about 1km to the north-west near Raven Rock SX730715, 2nd August. This section of the wood is largely conifer plantation. Further subadults were found by beating old hazels at another site, this time south-east of Totton, Southampton in south Hampshire SU39 10th July and 21st August. The woodland here is of an oak-hazel composition with some holly.

Although holly is present at the two hazel sites, the spiders were actually associated with the aerial deadwood networks in the tops of the old hazels which form a sub-canopy beneath the main canopy-forming broad-leaved trees. The association of the immature spiders with old heather is also a departure from the conventional habitat associations.

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Oecobius navus – a self-sustaining population in York?

by Geoff Oxford

Oecobius navus (Blackwall 1859) was first described from Madeira but is now reported worldwide (Nedvěd *et al.* 2011; World Spider Catalog 2019), presumably as a result of human transport. There are several records from Britain but only one plotted on the SRS map for the species.

In 2015, I reported a mature female *O. navus* from my office at the University of York (SE619505), its identity confirmed by Peter Harvey (Oxford 2015). It was found running on my arm and was not associated with any obvious means of importation e.g. recent parcels from abroad. I put down sticky traps on the floor for several weeks afterwards but failed to find other specimens. Almost four years later, on 11th December 2019, I noticed a tiny spider running at extremely high speed on a wall of the same office. It turned out to be a mature male. The office is no longer shared and so recent importation can almost certainly be eliminated as an explanation for the spider's presence. Finding two specimens of a non-native species in the same office four years apart without obvious means of independent introduction might suggest

that a population might have established in the Department of Biology at the University of York. However, this conclusion, based on just a couple of specimens, may be premature! Certainly close attention will be paid to office walls in future. A self-sustaining population of the spider, then called *O. annulipes*, was discovered in the Natural History Museum, London, in the 1970s (Richie 1978) but apparently disappeared after the entomology building was redeveloped (Oxford 2015).

References

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Stars of the South West

by Tylan Berry

In 2019 I found myself with more spare time on my hands than I have ever had in the last fifteen years, and I decided to invest that time by indulging in some proper spider hunting; something that in the past I have only been able to afford one or two days a month to. Spurred on by the encouraging discoveries of *Cryptachaea blattae* further afield (and also Matt Prince and Graeme Lyons' challenges with the year listing!), I endeavored to try and find as many spiders as I could and get an understanding of the fauna of the multitude of different habitats that Cornwall is home to. It was an incredible year with so many stand out moments; from locating new species to the county, to seeing some very rare spiders, to just spending more time outside searching. For the first time ever, I had the opportunity to carry out recording through the cold and wet winter months, which proved amazingly productive with surprises being found until the closing hours of New Year's Eve.

One of the highlights of the year was certainly discovering the populations of *Gnaphosa occidentalis* at Penhale Point and Kynance Cove in the summer with Matt Prince and others.

This is an incredible looking spider that seems to require scattered stones lying on top of well drained clifftop grassland. The spiders are found underneath the stones, especially where they lie on the friable soil near the roots of Thrift and Heather (Roberts, 1985). This is