

Spider Recording Scheme News Summer 2017, No. 88

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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. 89 will be published in Autumn 2017. Please send contributions by the end of September at the latest to Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, GRAYS, Essex, RM16 2YP; e-mail: srs@britishspiders.org.uk or grayspeterharvey@gmail.com. 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 are very grateful to Helen Smith for providing an account for 'easily recognised spider' *Misumena vatia* to add to the ones available for any user to submit records to the recording scheme.

Area Organiser changes

Bill Parker has taken over as Area Organiser for Bucks. VC24. His contact details are: 13 Greenfields, Adstock, BUCKINGHAM, Bucks MK18 2JA; email: billjoparker@btinternet.com.

Helen Read used to be AO for Bucks. and many thanks go to her for all her work in the role in the past.

The tropical tent-web spider *Cyrtophora citricola* (Araneidae) in North Yorkshire: A touch of the Mediterranean

by Geoff Oxford

Vertigro plant nursery, on the outskirts of York, has yielded some surprising arachnological records over the past few years: *Neoscona adianta*, *Synema globosum* (Oxford, 2011) and, more recently, the first North Yorkshire record of a breeding population of *Agelena labyrinthica*. On 1st July, while drifting round re-checking on the *Agelena*, I noticed an extremely large web of a construction I had never seen before.

The web was built in the large conical cavity (90 cm deep by 60 cm maximum diameter) formed among the stiff leaves of a Japanese Sago Palm *Cycas revoluta*, situated just within the entrance of an unheated poly-tunnel. The volume of the cavity was entirely filled with extremely strong, randomly criss-crossed threads which extended to the sides of the poly-tunnel above the plant. Near the top of the webbing were several horizontal sheets that each resembled the shallow, conical roof of a circular tent. These sheets were constructed of a very regular mesh with square/rectangular holes between the silk strands. Sitting above each horizontal web was a spider, of a size that reflected the diameter of the sheet beneath. The largest spider seen was a mature female of about 10-11 mm in length, black but with white patterning. Next to this particular palm were four others, each of which housed a number of spiders. Because of

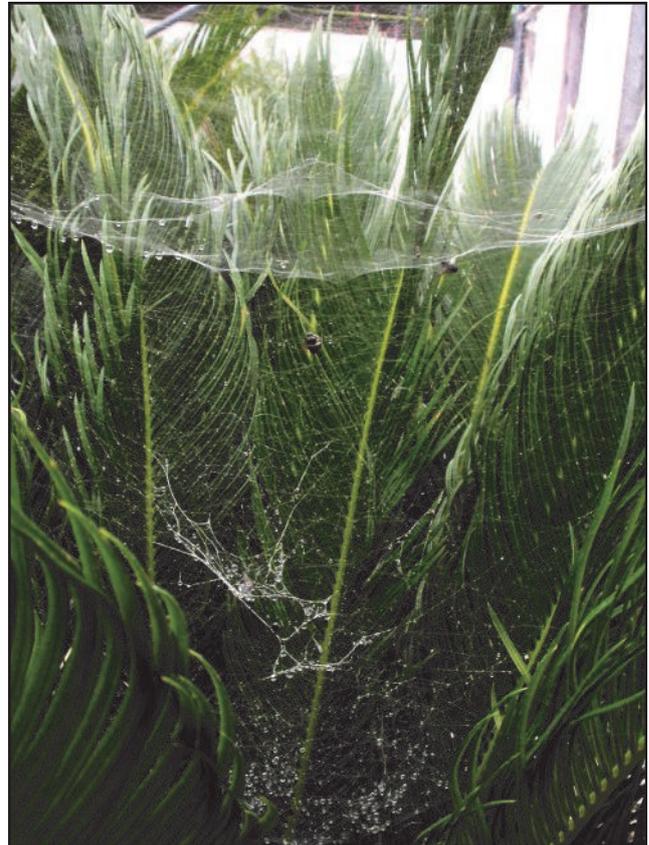


Figure 1. Web of *Cyrtophora citricola* among the leaves of a Japanese Sago Palm. Photograph © Geoff Oxford

the way the plants were arranged it was difficult to access then all, but I estimate there were at least 10 to 12 spiders in total, ranging in size from 2-3 mm to the mature female mentioned above.



Figure 2. Spider with detail of the horizontal silk mesh. Photograph © Geoff Oxford

A mature female was captured and identified as a Tropical Tent-web Spider *Cyrtophora citricola* (Forskål 1775) (Araneidae), a species well known for living in loose, social groups. The specimen was later returned.



Figure 3. Ventral view of female showing the epigyne. Photograph © Geoff Oxford



Figure 4. Mature female *Cyrtophora citricola* (not photographed in situ). Note the pair of 'paddles' at the rear of the abdomen. Photograph © Geoff Oxford

This species shows a marked sexual dimorphism for size, with males only about 3 mm in length, and great variability in coloration. Both sexes can change the background colour of the abdomen from very pale to very dark (Blanke 1972), and indeed can undergo instantaneous colour change under some circumstances (Blanke, 1975). The specimens seen at Vertigro all seemed to be black with white spotting. When disturbed in the web, the spider rapidly vibrates, like *Araneus*

diadematus. For more information on the biology of *C. citricola* see: http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/SPIDERS/Cyrtophora_citricola.htm

The species is widespread in parts of subtropical and tropical Asia, Africa and Australia, and in the warm coastal Mediterranean areas of Europe (Blanke 1972; Leborgne *et al.* 1998; https://araneae.unibe.ch/data/3879/Cyrtophora_citricola). It has more recently been recorded in Costa Rica, Hispaniola, Columbia, Cuba and North America (Florida).

The Japanese Sago Palms at Vertigro were imported in March 2017, directly from Italy; presumably the origin of the spiders. The presence of individual *C. citricola* of varying sizes seems to preclude the population originating from a single egg-sac. The poly-tunnels are closed and heated during the winter and so it remains to be seen whether the species will survive into next year. Blanke (1972) found that *Cyrtophora citricola* could not survive temperatures below -1 °C.

References

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A record of *Synema globosum* imported to the UK in fresh produce

by Duncan Allen & Paul Taylor

On Wednesday 5th of July Paul Taylor discovered a female specimen of the fantastic looking thomisid *Synema globosum*, also sometimes known as the "Napoleon spider" due to the markings looking like a silhouette of the infamous military and political leader on its abdomen. The spider had been found that morning in a punnet of *Vaccinium* from Italy that Paul had purchased.

After consulting the SRS website we saw there were only 4 records thus far, and that it was not yet known if: "the specimens captured in Britain represent casual introductions or whether the species is or will become established in this country" (<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal/p/Summary/s/Synema+globosum> 2017). While this record does not shed any light on whether the species may become established or not, it does highlight a possible introduction pathway for this species into the UK via commodities such as *Vaccinium* from the continent.