New Records from Buckinghamshire

During the past few years Mr. P. J. Alderman of Newton Longville, Milton Keynes, Bucks, and Mr. M. J. Towns of Westward Ho! in Devon have been very active recording spiders in North Buckinghamshire at Linford Wood, Howe Park Wood, Brickhill ridge, the Newton Longville brickfields and roadside verges in Milton Keynes. At all the sites the spiders were taken in pitfall traps and they acknowledge the help of Dr. Peter Merrett with the identifications. They state that the County total now stands at 308 species after they had added 50 new records to the list. Space does not permit a detailed species list in the Newsletter, but some of the records are interesting additions to the county lists which are being maintained by Dr. Merrett and will eventually be published to provide additional information to that provided by his distribution maps in British Spiders Vol. III (1974).

Henry Baker, 230 years ago, gives some cautionary Advice on the Examination of specimens through the Microscope.

(A Reminder which I have pinned above my work bench! J. R. Parker)

"Beware of determining and declaring your Opinion suddenly on any Object; for Imagination often gets the Start of Judgement, and makes People believe they see Things, which better Observations will convince them could not possibly be seen: Therefore assert nothing till after repeated Experiments and Examinations in all Lights and in all Positions. When you employ the Microscope, shake off all Prejudice, nor harbour any favourite Opinions; for, if you do, 'tis not unlikely Fancy will betray you into Error, and make you think you see what you would wish to see. Remember that Truth alone is the Matter you are in search after; and if you have been mistaken, let not Vanity seduce you to persist in your mistake. Pass no judgement upon Things over-extended by Force, or contracted into dryness, or in any Manner out of their natural State, without making suitable Allowances. There is no Advantage in examining any Object with a greater Magnifier than what shows the same distinctly; and therefore, if you can see it well with the third or fourth Glass, never use the first or second; for the less a Glass magnifies, the better Light you'll have, the easier you can manage the Object, and the clearer it will appear."


**QUESTION BOX**

**QUESTIONS:**

Mr. George O’Neill of 34 Newmarket Road, Crawley, Sussex RH10 6NA asks:

Is intraspecific commensalism common in orb-web spiders?

On a visit to Amberley Wild Brooks this August, Dick Jones and I examined a fine colony of Araneus sclerotarius that Dick had previously discovered on the ironwork of Greatham Bridge. We noticed that all the webs were of mature males or females, there were no smaller webs made by immatures. Closer examination showed that nearly every web had one or two immature spiders, no more than 2.5 mm long, either on the edges of the web or on the ironwork close by. Two of those on the webs were eating midges that were obviously far too small for the host.

The occurrence of small theridiids feeding from the unwanted prey of the tropical Nephila maculata has been well documented (Robinson and Robinson, 1973) and of course the feeding of offspring by British theridiids particularly Theridion sisyphum is well known but is intraspecific commensalism a common occurrence in orb-web spiders?

It is of course possible that the young spiders were where we saw them by chance. If the quantity of eggs hatched was large enough some of the young would be blown in the vicinity of the webs while others would be scattered. Even so — why did they not make webs? We saw clusters of egg sacs that had been laid in the inner facing rightangles of the ironwork. It would seem that the young hatch throughout the Summer and live for two seasons.

Mr. James C. Cockendolpher, Department of Biological Sciences, Texas Tech University, LUBBOCK, Texas 79409, U.S.A. asks:

Can anyone add to his observations on the viability and hatching periods of the eggs of arachnids?

During the fall of 1980, my wife and I began studies on the life histories of two species of Texas harvestmen (Phalangidae: Eumesosoma roeweri and Leiobunum townsendi). Out of approximately 400 eggs of E. roeweri collected in the laboratory, 28 ceased development and went into a diapause. The average number of days before hatching is normally about 40 days, whereas one egg that is still viable (September 1981) is 293 days old. Nine eggs lived over 150 days. The single remaining egg has developed near the point of hatching. Two eggs, out of about 500, of L. townsendi are likewise still alive. Although we have not calculated the average number of days to hatch, it is similar to E. roeweri. The two remaining eggs are both 331 days old. One is well developed and near hatching, whereas the second egg is still in blastoderm.

For about the first five months the eggs were maintained at about 18°C. After that the eggs were placed in a closet at our home, where the temperatures changed drastically depending on the season and time of day (16-31°C). Attempts to break the diapause by freezing (−2°C) were unsuccessful.

We would like to hear from anyone who has had similar results with other harvestmen. How about other temperate arachnids?

**REPLIES**

Dr. Valerie Davies, Curator of Arachnids, The Queensland Museum, Gregory Terrace, FORTITUDE VALLEY, Queensland 4006, Australia, replies to the question of Dr. Vince Roth, of PORTAL, Arizona 85632, U.S.A. autotomy in spiders: (Newsletter 30 March 1981)

"After preservation the legs of the Australian linyphiids frequently break at the patellar-tibial joint. The Australian filistatids also commonly fracture at this joint though occasionally at the tibial-metatarsal junction. I do not know whether these are natural places for autotomy."