

The invasion of Worcestershire by *Nigma walckenaeri* (Roewer, 1951).

Harry Green

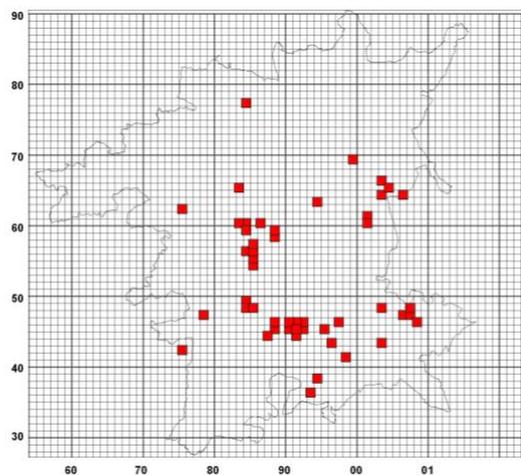
The small mainly green spider *Nigma walckenaeri* (01) was first recorded in Worcestershire in 2001 following earlier reports from Gloucestershire. Further reports followed as the years passed (Partridge 2001, 2003, 2009) and in the last few years it has been more widely recorded in the county (Bingham 2014). In 2015 Jean Young studied the spider at an extensive colony living on an ivy-clad wall at Besford and her paper appeared in *Worcestershire Record* 39:44-49. Unfortunately two pictures were omitted when preparing her article for publication so the complete version is now printed in this edition of *Worcestershire Record* April 2016 issue 40.



01. *Nigma walckenaeri* female. Harry Green.

Nigma walckenaeri was first recorded in Britain at Box Hill and Kew (Surrey) in 1880 and 1898, first found only in a small area it gradually invaded a wider zone around London. Eventually it crossed over to the south part of the Severn Valley with the first Gloucestershire records in 1993. A good account of the species and a summary of its national spread can be found at the national Spider and Harvestman Recording Scheme website <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Nigma+walc+kenaeri>.

From September 2015 there were many more reports from new sites in Worcestershire (and over the north border in Stourbridge) and a call for records via email and through the naturalists' grapevine brought in further records. All the records in the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) database at March 2016 are shown in 02, mapped at 1 × 1 km square scale. The spider now appears to be fairly widespread in the county and the main purpose of this note is to encourage readers to look for *Nigma walckenaeri* in 2016 and make records so the continuing invasion can be documented. Even though it is only about 4 mm long the spider is fairly easy to find and identify (see pictures in the accounts by John Bingham and Jean Young) because it spins small web refuges and silken nets on the upper surface of suitable leaves. Most of the records are from Ivy *Hedera helix* and other evergreen leaves, often of garden shrubs. The webs appear in late summer as ivy comes into flower and it seems likely that the spider benefits from the abundance of small insects attracted to ivy flowers and settling on nearby leaves. The weather in the autumn and for most of the winter 2015 was mild and the spiders were found until New Year's Day and into January 2016. A search on New Year's Day in South-east Worcestershire found them on ivy leaves in several churchyards (03).



02. *Nigma walckenaeri* map of records March 2016. WBRC.

Searches for *Nigma walckenaeri* on ivy leaves can be combined with searches for the Ivy Bee, another new invader, on ivy flowers (see article in this issue of *Worcestershire Record*). These two insects follow on from the invasion of Worcestershire by Harlequin Ladybirds *Harmonia axyridis*, Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* and Long-winged Coneheads *Conocephalus discolor* all since 2000.



03. *Nigma walckenaeri* 01 January 2016. John Hodson

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who sent in records (please send more in 2016) and to the WBRC for preparing the distribution map.

References

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- Young, Jean 2015. Observations on *Nigma walckenaeri*, Worcestershire 2015. *Worcestershire Record* 40

Images

01. *Nigma walckenaeri* female. Harry Green.

02. *Nigma walckenaeri* map of records March 2016. WBRC.

03. *Nigma walckenaeri* 01 January 2016. John Hodson