

Recently recorded spiders of note.

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For many years now I have been searching for and photographing insects in their natural habitats, inevitably, I also chance upon various spider species. It is always so frustrating to take a reasonably good photograph of an unfamiliar spider only to discover that correct identification is almost impossible. However, my recent acquisition of two books has encouraged me to at least ‘have a go’ at recording some spider species. The books are ‘*Collins Field Guide to Spiders of Britain & Northern Europe*’ first published in 1996, and ‘*Britain’s Spiders, a Field Guide*’ first published in 2017. The former provides illustrated keys, but I have found some of these to be difficult to follow, the latter is a new guide with excellent photographs, species descriptions, detailed habitat requirements and national distribution maps. This book provides a very useful indication of the family and genus of spider collected, and with the additional help of the Collins guide I have found it possible to correctly identify some spiders to species level. The following selected examples are the most interesting records I have found locally.

***Arctosa perita* (Araneae; Lycosidae).**

One was found running across an area of bare sand at the Devil’s Spittleful on 05.05.2018 during warm sunny weather. With great difficulty, I was eventually able to photograph the spider when it remained stationary out in the open for long enough! The cryptic markings are very efficient in life when the spider enters a zone containing ground lichens and general leaf litter. This is a scarce species in the midlands as it is entirely associated with sandy soils on heathland and coastal dunes (Bee *et al*, 2017).



01. *Arctosa perita* at the Devil’s Spittleful on 05.05.2018.
 © K.McGee.

***Alopecosa barbipes* (Araneae; Lycosidae) .**

A female was collected from sandy ground at the Devil’s Spittleful on 21.07.2018. This is also a locally scarce species as it too is associated with either sandy ground or chalk grassland (Bee *et al*, 2017).



02. *Alopecosa barbipes* (female) at the Devil’s Spittleful on 21.07.2018. © K.McGee.

***Xysticus kochi* (Araneae; Thomisidae).**

I have found the illustrated keys of the *Xysticus* genus fairly simple to follow using the Collins guide; particularly for males. I collected a male *X. kochi* from the Devil’s Spittleful on 15.05.2018, and a female from the same location on 30.06.2018. This is another scarce species in our region as it too prefers open sparsely vegetated sandy or chalky ground, and sand dunes (Bee *et al*, 2017).



03. *Xysticus kochi* (male) at the Devil’s Spittleful on 15.05.2018.
 © K.McGee.



04. *Xysticus kochi* (female) at the Devil’s Spittleful on 30.06.2018.
 © K.McGee.

***Drassyllus pusillus* (Araneae; Gnaphosidae).**

One on a south-facing stone wall at St. Peters Church in Martley on 16.04.2018. Note the red/brown metatarsi and tarsi. This locally uncommon species is associated with open, dry habitats, with most records coming from southern England (Bee *et al*, 2017).



05. *Drassyllus pusillus* at St. Peters Church, Martley on 16.04.2018. © K.McGee

***Larinioides cornutus* (Araneae; Araneidae).**

Although this is apparently a fairly common species I have included it nonetheless as a fine example of a good photograph combined with being able to identify the species with confidence and certainty with the help of my new guides. This female was creating a web amongst flag iris on 20.05.2018 alongside a pool on the Shakenhurst Estate near Bayton.



06. *Larinioides cornutus* (female) at Shakenhurst on 20.05.2018. © K.McGee.

***Euophrys frontalis* (Araneae; Salticidae).**

All 'jumping spider' species can sometimes provide excellent photographic opportunities; particularly during warm sunny weather when they like to stalk prey items from open vantage points such as old stone walls. I was not aware of the number, variety (and rarity of some UK species) in the Salticidae until I acquired the new field guide (Bee *et al*, 2017). I was pleased to find my first specimen of a tiny *Euophrys frontalis* (male) on the southern wall of St. Peters Church in Martley during hot sunny weather on 11.06.2018.



07. *Euophrys frontalis* (male) at St. Peters Church, Martley, on 11.06.2018. © K.McGee.

***Pseudeuophrys lanigera* (Araneae; Salticidae).**

I photographed one on a south facing stone wall at St. Peters Church, Martley on the unusual date of 10.01.2018. The weather at the time was mild and sunny. Apparently, this species was first recorded in Britain in 1930 but has since spread. It is strongly associated with human habitation and buildings (Bee *et al*, 2017).



08. *Pseudeuophrys lanigera* at St. Peters Church, Martley on 10.01.2018. © K.McGee

***Sitticus pubescens* (Araneae; Salticidae).**

This small jumping spider has become a firm favourite of mine. Its small size and cryptic markings are very effective on old walls until they choose to move. I now find it difficult to walk past an old wall in sunny conditions without looking for *S. pubescens*, and any aculeate hymenoptera of course! I now have several records from St. Peters Church in Martley, and from an old south facing brick wall in our garden on the Shakenhurst Estate near Bayton.



09. *Sitticus pubescens* on a stone wall at St. Peters Church, Martley. 09.05.2018. © K.McGee.

***Micrommata virescens* (Araneae; Sparassidae).**

This uncommon species is well known from Wyre Forest but I have never seen it elsewhere. Nationally, it is most often found in damp sheltered woodland (Bee *et al*, 2017). This male was photographed amongst sedges and rushes in marshy ground alongside Dowles Brook, Wyre Forest, on 05.06.2016.



10. *Micrommata virescens* (male) at Wyre Forest on 05.06.2016. © K.McGee.

***Misumena vatia* (Araneae; Thomisidae).**

Although fairly widespread throughout southern Britain I have included this spectacular crab spider species as it is one of the few that can safely be identified from a photograph (Bee *et al*, 2017). It is also attractive and photogenic, and therefore a good example to use when enthusing others to appreciate spiders and consider recording them whenever possible.



11. *Misumena vatia* (female) on Heath Spotted Orchid at Wyre Forest on 03.06.2017. © K.McGee.

***Nigma walckenaeri* (Araneae; Dictynidae).**

One male was found on Ivy foliage at St. Peters Church in Martley on 22.10.2018. This uncommon species is strongly associated with garden shrubs such as holly and ivy during late summer and into the autumn (Bee *et al*, 2017).



12. *Nigma walckenaeri* (male) at St. Peters Church, Martley, on 22.10.2018. © K.McGee.

References

Bee, L., Oxford, G. and Smith, H. 2017. *Britain's Spiders, a Field Guide*. Princeton University Press, Woodstock.

Roberts, M. J. 1996. *Field Guide to the Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, London.

Images

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