

An encounter with European cave spiders *Meta* sp. and their egg sacs, Worcestershire November 2023

Roger Plant



03. Cave spider with egg sack at Hawkbatch, Wyre Forest, November 2023. Roger Plant.



02. Fallow Deer in Wyre at dusk, a forest tableau unchanged for thousands of years.11.11.23. Roger Plant.

During late afternoon on the 1st November 2023, I was entranced to see a cave spider (01) for the very first time, in Worcestershire; a brief encounter with a cave spider in its subterranean habitat. This occurred during a Wyre Forest Study Group fungus foray at Hawkbatch, led by John Bingham. I determined later that my photo was technically satisfactory, but I decided to return to the location after sundown to capture a contextual, cave-like composition, with a dark background.



01. Cave spider at Hawkbatch, Wyre Forest November 2023. Roger Plant.

I entered the forest at dusk on the 11th November 2023 to enjoy the forest alone, in seclusion with its wildlife. I set off on a pathway to my destination, nearly a mile into the forest. Around the halfway stage the path I was following petered out, so I set off in the approximate direction of travel, soon entering a recent clear fell area, where the brash was thigh high and impassable.

Before me was a forest tableau that has barely changed in thousands of years. At the distant edge of the clearing was a group of Fallow Deer (02) including one that was white, appearing to be one of the leucistic deer of Wyre. Skirting around the clear fell I then made good progress and arrived at the cave spider's location before darkness fell. Good fortune had followed me there too, when I was surprised and delighted to discover that since my first visit egg sacs had been woven (03). This second encounter, photographing a cave spider and an egg sac was beyond my expectations.

Acknowledgments

Carol Taylor for drawing the editor's (HG) attention to my Worcestershire cave spiders photographic records. Also thanks to Brett Westwood for pointers on the difficulties of identifying the two European cave spider species, *Meta menardi* and *M. bournetii* from photographs.

Images

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