

**Diminutive examples of *Nemastoma bimaculatum* (Fabricius, 1775) (Opiliones, Nemastomatidae) at Eckington, Worcestershire**

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**Introduction**

Notably small examples of an opilione *Nemastoma* sp. were found under timber on a road verge at Eckington, Worcestershire on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023. A male was collected and the genitalia examined.

**Discussion**

A small example of a male *Nemastoma* sp. (01) collected from a road verge at Eckington, Worcestershire (52o07'N 02o09'W SO9341 26 m a.s.l.) on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 had an overall body length of 1.8mm, which is below the minimum length (2.0 - 2.5 mm) cited by Hillyard & Sankey (1989) for male *N. bimaculatum*. The site is essentially the top of the valley-side of the River Avon.

The specimen was preserved in alcohol; the genitalia were isolated to ensure that it did not represent *Nemastoma lugubre* (Müller, 1776). Although there are differences in the shape of the chelicerae of the two species, examination of the male reproductive organ provides a definitive means of identification. In *N. bimaculatum* this is symmetrical, attenuate and pointed and notably bisinuate in lateral aspect (01). In *N. lugubre* it is asymmetrical with the glans or apex strongly recurved and swollen below; this is well illustrated by Moreau (2019). It is clear from the lateral aspect of the male genitalia that the examples from Eckington represent diminutive *N. bimaculatum*.



01. Diminutive male *Nemastoma bimaculatum*, Eckington, Worcestershire, 7th March 2023, the male genitalia in lateral aspect isolated below (arrowed). P. F. Whitehead.

*N. lugubre* is a widespread European species reaching the Netherlands (Spoeck, 1963) and northern France (Moreau, 2019)

where it has traditionally been regarded as an eastern somewhat hygrophilous species. It is tending to extend northwards in Europe and is a likely candidate for inclusion in the British fauna.

**Acknowledgments**

Dr Axel Schönhofer (Mainz, Germany) kindly provided supporting information on *N. lugubre*.

**References**

Hillyard, P. D. & Sankey, J. H. P. 1989. Harvestmen. Synopses of the British Fauna (New Series) 4. Brill.  
 Moreau, M. 2019. Première mention de *Nemastoma lugubre* (Müller, 1776) de Normandie (Opiliones, Nemastomatidae). Invertebrés Armorica 20:91-92.  
 Spoeck, G. L. 1963. The Opilionida (Arachnida) of the Netherlands. Zoologische Verhandelingen 63(1):1- 70.

**Images**

01. Diminutive male *Nemastoma bimaculatum*, Eckington, Worcestershire, 7th March 2023, the male genitalia in lateral aspect isolated below. P. F. Whitehead.

**Editor’s Footnote** (GF): There has been confusion in the past regarding *N. lugubre* in Britain, as this name was (incorrectly) used instead of *N. bimaculatum* by J.H.P. Sankey when describing *N. lugubre* as “one of the commonest of our ground living harvest spiders”.

**Footnote reference**

Sankey, J.H.P. 1953 — *Nemastoma lugubre* (O. F. Müller) (Arachnida, Opiliones): First record of var. Unicolor Roewer in Britain. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, 6:61, 27-29. Available on-line at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00222935308654392>