

Two Scarce Spiders recorded in the Wyre Forest

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Araneus alsine (Walckenaer, 1802) (Araneae) The Strawberry Spider

The common name of *Araneus alsine* is the Strawberry Spider due to the distinctive coloured pattern of pale spots on its abdomen that provides the resemblance to a strawberry, although it is not as red, more a bright orange strawberry.

It is a very local species occurring in 15 recent 10km squares records most from Inverness-shire and Perthshire in central Scotland and a scattering of records in the south of England. It is classed a Near Threatened and Nationally Scarce, (Nb) species (British Spiders web site).

The typical habitat in Wyre Forest is damp scrubby grassland or sheltered damp deciduous woodland with scattered *Betula* spp. birch trees, often associated with wet flushes and *Molinia caerulea* Purple Moor-grass. We have recorded it three times in different area of the forest to date. The spider spins a web low down in the herbage and makes a retreat to hide in consisting of silk and several curled dry leaves (Bristowe 1958). Females are 7-13mm. in length and adult from June to October, mature males 5-6mm. in length are found in June and July.

Hyptiotes paradoxus (C.L.Koch, 1834) (Araneae) The Triangle Spider

This small brown hairy spider is only 2 to 4 mm. long, and is named after the triangular web it spins in trees. It is very scarce and listed a Red Data Book 3 in Britain, with a wide scattering of records over England. Our closest other sites for the spider is the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and in the Wye Valley and at Queen's Wood (British Spiders web site).

H. paradoxus is found in broadleaf woodland but on isolated evergreen trees and shrubs. *Taxus baccata* Yew trees appears to be used in Wyre Forest, but we have so few records perhaps other isolated conifers might also be used.

Unlike most spiders it has no venom glands and has to rely on the web to capture small flies and moths. The spider makes a triangular snare holding one of the threads with its own body and part of the link (British Spiders web site). The photograph shows the spider and the silk strand held by the legs. The spider positions itself outstretched along the silk strand of the web holding back any slack with its legs. As an insect flies into the web the spider releases the slack to entangle the insect. It then uses its jaw mechanism to break apart the insect's body and secretes digestive enzymes to break down the internal organs. Spiders are mature in late summer but mating does not occur until the following spring. (Roberts 1995), (Bristowe 1958).



Araneus alsine

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Reference and Reading

- Bristowe, W.S. (1958). The World of Spiders. London: Collins New Naturalist
- Roberts, M.J. (1995). Spiders of Britain & Northern Europe. London: Harper Collins.
- Jones, D. (1989). A Guide to Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe. London: Hamlyn.
- British Spiders web site;
<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Araneus+alsine>
<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/summary/s/Hyptiotes%20paradoxus>



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