

Wyre Forest Study Group

New Sites in Wyre for Strawberry Spider *Araneus alsine*

JANE SCOTT

2014 has proved to be a very good year for *Araneus alsine*, Strawberry Spider with four individuals found, three of them on new sites in and around the forest. As mentioned in the 2013 Review, this spider is a very local species, with the majority of records from Scotland and only a scattering of records in the southern half of England, so finding four individuals was far more than we might have hoped for.

Two were found by Denise Bingham following a thorough search of the areas concerned, one at Wimperhill on 4th August 2014 and the other at Longdon on 9th September 2014. Both were found in their dried, folded oak leaf hideaways in areas of Purple Moor Grass, *Molinia caerulea*, a habitat which the spider seems to favour.

A further individual was found by Susan Limbrey on 6th September 2014 whilst searching a neglected orchard near her home at The Newalls. Again the spider was tucked well into its folded oak leaf tent, this time amongst tall False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. An unidentified egg sac was noted in the apex of the tent but it was unclear whether this had any connection to the Strawberry Spider.

The fourth spider was found by Jane Scott on 3rd September 2014 during a Wyre Forest Study Group field trip to the eastern end of Postensplain. This came as a complete surprise as she was gently sweeping for invertebrates over very low (50-75 cms) birch re-growth along one of the mown paths on the site. There was no *Molinia* immediately in the area swept, although there were patches further along what is a fairly damp path.

This last spider occurred in what is in fact Staffordshire vice-county 39 and details were passed to the county recorder. This caused some excitement as it turned out to be the first record in Staffordshire for over a century! A photograph was requested and this subsequently appeared on Twitter.

Wyre would seem to be an important area for this Near Threatened and Nationally Scarce (Nb) species and it may yet be found in other suitable areas within the forest. As with many Wyre 'specialities' further investigations of its status will have to wait until the 2015 season.

References

Bingham J. Two Scarce Spiders recorded in the Wyre Forest. Wyre Forest Study Group Review 2013 page 36



Strawberry Spider released, Postensplain

Jane Scott

Wyre Forest Study Group



From left, Roy Finch, Frances Finch, John Cox, Jane Scott, Dave Scott with Strawberry Spider in net, 3 September 2014 Rosemary Winnall



Strawberry Spider in the net, Postensplain

Rosemary Winnall