

Distribution records of some uncommonly recorded spiders in Ireland including a new Irish record: *Meioneta mollis* (O.P. – Cambridge, 1871) (Araneae: Linyphiidae)

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The BIOFOREST Project aimed to assess the effect of afforestation on Irish biodiversity and one of its central goals was to determine the biodiversity value of sites which are typically used for afforestation in Ireland. Spiders were sampled in several of the major Irish habitats - improved grassland, wet grassland and peatland - which were selected to reflect current afforestation trends. A total of 24 sites were surveyed (eight within each habitat type) which were located in 14 different counties across the country. The spiders were sampled using pitfall traps, which were active between May and July in 2002 and 2004. Within each habitat type six sampling plots of five pitfall traps were established. The plots were located in areas of homogenous vegetation cover which was typical of the site as a whole, but also in features such as wet flushes, riparian areas and hedgerows, which may also contribute to the biodiversity of a site.

All adult specimens were identified to species and nomenclature follows Roberts (1993). Voucher specimens have been deposited in the Museum in the Department of Zoology Ecology and Plant Science, University College Cork. Identification of *M. mollis* was confirmed by Robert Johnston. New county records were determined by the distribution records of van Helsdingen (1996a) and McFerran (1997), the records of Cawley (2001) and references therein, as well as subsequent additions made to the Irish species list (Johnston and Cameron 2002a, b; Nolan 2002a, b; Fahy and Gormally 2003; Cawley 2004; Nelson 2005, McCormack 2006). Information on spider body size was obtained from Roberts (1993) whereas British distribution records and habitat preferences were derived from Harvey *et al* (2002).

New species to Ireland

Linyphiidae

Meioneta mollis (O.P. –Cambridge, 1871) New to Ireland - Kerry

Nineteen male specimens of this small spider (1.2-2mm) were captured in a lowland blanket bog in West Kerry (V783725) between May and July 2004. The specimens were captured on drier ground, at the edge of flushes, which were dominated by purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), although some rushes (*Juncus effusus*, *Juncus acutiflorus*), greater tussock sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and bog bean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) were also present. This species has a local but scarce distribution in Britain, being found only in central and southern areas although it is widespread across north-western and central Europe. Across Europe the spider is

associated with wet grassland and woodland, although in Britain most records are from grassland rather than woodland.

Other new county records

Dictynidae

***Nigma puella* (Simon, 1870) 1 new County record - Kerry**

One male specimen was captured in the same lowland blanket bog in West Kerry as *M. mollis*, in May 2004. This small spider (2.5-3mm) spins a small web on the leaves of trees and bushes. The predominant vegetation cover was purple moor-grass with some *Sphagnum* mosses and black bog rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). This species has previously been recorded in Co.s Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford (1st Irish rec. by Cawley 2001) and is considered Nationally Scarce in Britain (Notable A) being restricted to the south of England. As most spider sampling is carried out using pitfall traps its preferred position in the vegetation stratum may partially account for the under-recording of this species.

Gnaphosidae

***Zelotes lutetianus* (L. Koch, 1866) 1 new County record - Kerry**

One male specimen was captured in May 2004 in the same West Kerry lowland blanket bog as *N. puella*. This spider is a nocturnal active hunter which ranges from 5-7.5mm in size. Vegetation account follows that of the *N. puella* record. This species has only previously been recorded in Co.s Roscommon and Westmeath. It is considered Nationally Scarce in Britain (Notable B), where it is known mostly from coastal marshes and sand dunes in southerly locations, although there are a few records from marshy sites situated inland.

Linyphiidae

***Satilatlas britenni* (Jackson, 1913) 3 new County records - Mayo, Donegal, Kerry**

There were 79 specimens (37 male and 42 female) collected in three different blanket bog sites in May and June 2004: 74 specimens in West Mayo (F838507); two in Donegal (H124883); and three in West Kerry (V782725). This spider ranges from 1.5-2.2mm in size. The vegetation in the West Mayo site was predominately *Sphagnum* mosses, *Molinia* and the sedge *Carex panicea*, whereas the vegetation in the Donegal site was dominated by *Molinia* and black bog rush. The vegetation account for the West Kerry site follows that of the *M. mollis* record. One specimen found in the West Mayo site was from a riparian area. This species has only previously been recorded in Co.s Waterford, Fermanagh and Tyrone so the new record of this species in West Kerry is the first in the Republic of Ireland. In Britain *S. britenni* is considered Nationally Scarce (Notable B) where it has a local and scattered westerly distribution, though it is absent from the South West. It is found in habitats with wet conditions such as *Sphagnum* bogs and salt marshes.

***Maro sublestus* (Falconer, 1915) 1 new County record - Mayo**

Two male specimens captured in a blanket bog in West Mayo (F838507) in June 2004. They were sampled in the same riparian area as the *S. britenni* record. This species has only previously been recorded in Co.s Leitrim and Offaly (1st Irish

rec. by van Helsdingen 1996b). In Britain it is considered Nationally Scarce (Notable A) and is often found in wet habitats under or near trees. However it is possible that the small size of this spider (1-1.5mm) may partly account for its under-recording.

***Saloca diceros* (O.P.-Cambridge, 1871) 2 new County records - Limerick, Tipperary**

Six males of this species were sampled in two different wet grassland sites in Co.s Limerick and Tipperary (R719485 and R720648) in May 2002 and between May-July 2004. In both sites the specimens were sampled in hedgerows. Although this species has previously been recorded in Ireland there is no information available on its county distribution (see van Helsdingen (1996) for further information). *S. diceros* is considered nationally scarce in Britain (Notable B) with a fairly widespread distribution across central England. It is found in wet litter under broadleaved woodlands. The small size of this spider (1-1.3mm) may also contribute to its under-recording.

***Baryphyma gowerense* (Locket, 1965) 2 new County records - Clare, Galway**

This spider is a medium sized Linyphiid with a body size ranging from 2.6-3.3mm. Five specimens (4 males and 1 female) were sampled in two sites: a wet grassland in Co. Clare (R226820) sampled in June 2004, and an acid fen in Co. Galway (R577996) sampled in May 2002. In the acid fen the vegetation was dominated by rushes (*Juncus bulbosus* and *Juncus acutiflorus*) and the sedge *Carex panicea*. In the wet grassland the vegetation was predominately purple moor-grass, rushes (*Juncus acutiflorus*) and other grasses including Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). *B. gowerense* has been found in four Irish counties (Fermanagh, Kildare, Offaly and Kerry). This species is listed in the British Red Data Books (Bratton 1991) as Insufficiently Known. It is known mostly from a few coastal locations in Wales and East Anglia inhabiting salt marshes, although several records exist from an inland marshy fen.

***Milleriana inerrans* (O.P.-Cambridge, 1885) 1 new County record - Limerick**

One male specimen of this spider was sampled in a wet grassland site in Co. Limerick (R148466) in June 2004. The vegetation in the site was dominated by creeping bent grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Yorkshire fog and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). This species has only previously been recorded in Co. Cork (1st Irish rec by Nolan 2002b), however as it frequently utilises aerial dispersal it may be more widely distributed than current records indicate. In Britain this species is uncommon but widespread and is found in a variety of habitats but often in newly disturbed areas. This spider ranges from 1.4-2.5mm in size.

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