

ants to entice *Segestria* spp. from their retreats—but first find your ants!

The best place to look for *Tegenaria* webs is around the outside of old churches and on most occasions we can be pretty sure of catching one or two within a few minutes. Stone walls covered with ivy are also worth investigating as are gnarled trees, e.g. yews, again in churchyards. In our experience, *T. saeva* and *T. gigantea* live away from houses throughout much of England and Wales, not just in the warmer south (Roberts, 1995). Certainly this is a common phenomenon here in Yorkshire.

This method of 'fishing' for *Tegenaria* circumvents both of the problems mentioned above—spiders can be reliably caught and access to private houses is not required. We hope B.A.S. members, and especially S.R.S. recorders, will be encouraged to go forth and 'fish' and begin to fill the huge gaps in our knowledge of the distribution of these two fascinating species. We would be most grateful to receive any distributional information on *T. saeva* and *T. gigantea*, especially in the band of counties from Hampshire and Dorset northwards to Cheshire and Derbyshire.

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***Bathypantes eumenis* (L. Koch, 1879) First Record in Belgium**

by Theo Blick* and Roland Molenda†

First, a brief taxonomic note: the differences and/or synonymies between *Bathypantes eumenis* (L. Koch, 1879), *B. simillimus* (L. Koch, 1879) and *B. eumenoides* Holm, 1967 are not clear. Wozny & Czajka (1985) regarded all three as one species, *eumenis*, and Platnick accepted this nomenclature in his 1989 and 1993 catalogues. Eskov (1988) rejected all synonymies, but Marusik *et al.* (1993) regarded two species as valid: *eumenis* and *simillimus* (= *eumenoides*). Subsequently, Růžička (1994) has used *simillimus* for the central European records. Here we use the name selected by the first revisers (Wozny & Czajka, 1985)—*Bathypantes eumenis*—following Platnick and the first German and French records (Blick, 1991).

Bathypantes eumenis (2 males, 11 females) is here reported for the first time from Belgium. Specimens were collected in a special type of pitfall trap (see Růžička, 1988) set amongst rock debris in the valley of the River Warche, northeast of Malmedy in eastern Belgium. The biotope, north facing and 310 m AMSL, belongs to an azonal insular ecosystem described as 'cold-air-producing rock debris' by Molenda (1996). Special microclimatic conditions have allowed the rare *Betulo carpaticae*-*Sorbetum aucupariae* plant community to flourish (Matzke, 1990). The pitfall traps were in place from April 1991 to July 1992 and were checked every three months. All the specimens of *B. eumenis* were captured in one particular trap at the lowest part of the debris: 5 females—March–July 1991; 1 male—

December 1991–March 1992; 1 male, 6 females—April–July 1992.

This record expands the known range of this species in Europe. After the record of Wozny & Czajka (1985) from southern Poland, Růžička (1994) reported its presence at numerous rock debris localities in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Blick (1991) recorded it for the first time in Germany (Schwarzwald/Black Forest) and France (Vosges) and there have been subsequent records from other parts of Germany. In Central Europe, *B. eumenis* is restricted to rock debris localities and is believed to be a relict of periglacial or early postglacial times. It has yet to be found in the Alps. The extension of the known range in recent years almost certainly indicates an increase in research rather than a spreading of the species. *B. eumenis* might also be present in Britain.

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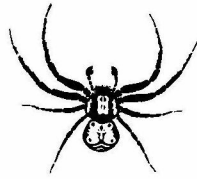
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16th European Colloquium of Arachnology W.S.R.P., Siedlce, Poland 8th–13th July 1996

by Jason Dunlop

The 16th European Colloquium of Arachnology, organised by Marek Żabka, was held at the Wyższa Szkoła Rolniczo-Pedagogiczna (W.S.R.P.) in Siedlce, Poland. About a hundred arachnologists and their companions, from over twenty countries, were present and enjoyed a splendid conference with great Polish hospitality. Siedlce is a small, provincial, university town with a population of about 70,000, some 90 km east of Warsaw. It is a lively spot, with a market-place and historic buildings, and retains much of the character derived from its sixteenth century origins and its eighteenth century development as the main cultural and economic centre of the region. Siedlce is dominated by its towering cathedral, illuminated in a spectacularly gothic way during a Monday thunderstorm (our weather was regarded by the locals as unseasonably changeable

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The Arachnophobic British

by Mike Denton

The 'Venom' exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum, York ran for over 18 months (April 1995–October 1996) and gave me, as Exhibition Demonstrator, an ideal opportunity to communicate with many tens of thousands of people of different nationalities about their knowledge of/attitude towards venomous creatures. Generally speaking, people's attitudes fell into two distinct groups: those born in countries with very few venomous creatures, i.e. in Europe, tended to be somewhat fearful of them and had a negative attitude; and those from countries which have venomous creatures, e.g. Australia and parts of North America, had a more positive attitude towards them and appreciated their pest-controlling abilities.

The results of a national survey by Desmond Morris in the 1960s (Morris, 1977) revealed that British children between the ages of four and fourteen years were more afraid of snakes (27 per cent) than of spiders (just under 10 per cent). On a much broader scale, I found that a large proportion of British people (of all age groups and both sexes) were arachnophobic, but few showed a similar fear of snakes. However, these findings may be strongly biased: it is possible that many people who dislike snakes were discouraged from visiting the exhibition as a result of the Museum using a snake in its advertising. On being questioned about their fear of spiders, most British people gave totally irrational reasons, e.g. 'they are hairy', 'they have eight legs', 'they move too fast', etc. Only a very small percentage indicated that they were afraid because they knew that a few foreign species can kill humans. This illogical attitude and fearfulness towards what are virtually harmless and greatly beneficial creatures poses the question: 'Why should this be so?'

As mentioned above, it was found that people who live with venomous species, the Australians with the redback spider, *Latrodectus hasselti*, and the North Americans with various species of widow spider of the same genus, *Latrodectus* (all highly venomous but very unlikely to kill), were not afraid of these species because they had been brought up from an early age to understand and respect them. On the other hand, the British, who live with totally innocuous species, are not in this position and tend therefore to grow up ignorant. It would appear that there are several major reasons why this should be the case:

1. From an early age children are told nursery rhymes which instil fear, e.g. *Little Miss Muffet*.
2. Parents/grandparents will emulate the movement of a spider by making hand-movements towards a child saying 'a big spider is coming to get you'.
3. If parents/grandparents/friends show a fear of spiders, the child reacts accordingly, thinking this is the way to respond.



Chilean rose spider at the Yorkshire Museum.

4. Films, e.g. *Doctor No* and *Arachnophobia*, depict spiders as 'baddies', using them in a very unrealistic manner.
5. The press, television and radio, similarly give a very jaundiced outlook of these creatures and reinforce conventional stereotypes.

Conclusions. The long, misguided introduction to such creatures, coupled with the lack of potentially dangerous spiders in Britain, add up to produce ignorance and fear. When not living with venomous species there is no need to know the truth, and the reasons mentioned above can become the basis of our knowledge. In the past the maligning of a variety of species in films and by the media, e.g. gorillas, wolves, sharks etc., has naturally given the species concerned a bad reputation; some people are still inclined to believe that these creatures exist simply to kill humans!

From talking to Australians and North Americans who live with widow spiders (the species are not distributed across the whole of North America) it became apparent that from the above list the nursery rhymes and, obviously, the films are present in their cultures. However, because small children are told the potential hazards and benefits of these species, they tend not to grow up arachnophobic. The only people I met from these countries who were arachnophobic were those who had had an unfortunate experience, e.g. an Australian woman who had turned over on a sunbed and had been bitten by a trapped redback. It is worthy of note that people from the large conurbations, who do not live with these species, did tend to show some concern.

Being a rather insecure species, we tend to become very anxious about anything we don't understand or feel