New spider species records for the Isle of Mull, UK (Araneae)

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Abstract: Thirty-eight spider species were collected in pitfall traps from the Isle of Mull, UK. The following 24 species are new records for Mull: Clubiona compta (Clubionidae); Drassodes cupreus (Gnaphosidae); Pardosa nigriceps, Pirata hygrophilus (Lycosidae); Xysticus erraticus (Thomisidae); Agyneta ramosa, Cerdinella brevipes, C. brevis, Dicymbium nigrum, D. tibiale, Evansia merens, Gongylidiellum vivum, Hypselistes jacksoni, Micargus herbigradus, Monocephalus fuscipes, Palliduphantes ericaeus, Peponocnemis unicornis, Pocadiacnemis pumila, Tenuiphantes alacris, T. cristatus, Walckenaeria cuspidata, W. nudipalpis, W. unicornis (Linyphiidae); Zora spinimana (Zoridae). Thirteen genera and two families (Gnaphosidae and Zoridae) are new records. More than 60% of the species collected were new records making a new total of 72, an increase of 50%. Such a large number of new records from a small sample size demonstrates the island’s araneofauna is poorly known and warrants further investigation.

Key words: Clubionidae, Gnaphosidae, Linyphiidae, Lycosidae, Thomisidae, Zoridae

Introduction

Coddington, Levi (1991) considered the spider fauna of Western Europe (especially England) the most completely known when compared to other regions of the world. The British spider fauna consists of in excess of 620 species in 33 families (Harvey et al. 2002). Although spider distributions in Great Britain are relatively well known, some remote regions remain understudied. This is particularly true of some off-shore islands, such as the Isle of Mull off the west coast of Scotland (Fig. 1). At the south-western tip of the island is an area of conservation interest called the Tireragan estate, which comprises hazel and birch woodland. The area has been deer-fenced for the last ten years to encourage natural regeneration and the consequences of this management practice for the existing arthropod communities is not known. Moreover, there is relatively little known about the baseline communities of spiders prior to the implementation of this conservation method. Therefore, it is important to inventory the species present in order to anticipate and assess future changes in the araneofauna, which may come about as a result of changes in management strategy.

Methods

Sampling consisted of 64 pitfall traps set in hazel and birch woodlands of the Tireragan estate for a period of four days during May 2004. Each trap consisted of a plastic cup 6.5 cm diameter × 9.5 cm deep containing 50 ml of 70% ethanol. Spiders were identified under ethanol using a Wild M8 zoom stereo-microscope and Roberts (1993); taxonomy follows Platnick (2006).

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