

Theridion pinastri L. Koch, newly found in Britain

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Introduction

On 30 June 1977, during one of our periodic visits to Chobham Common, Surrey, we collected a male *Theridion* which, even in the field could be seen to belong to that group whose males possess greatly swollen epigastric regions. With the publication of *British Spiders* Vol. 3 we have attempted in our spider survey of Chobham Common (see Murphy & Murphy, 1973) to bring up to date certain identifications where, previously, there had been confusion. In the above group, a case in point concerns the two species *Theridion melanurum* Hahn and *T. mystaceum* L. Koch which in Britain had both been regarded as *T. denticulatum* (Walck.). It was for this reason that the spider was collected, we fully expecting it to turn out to be *T. mystaceum*. However upon closer investigation, the specimen proved to be *T. pinastri* L. Koch, a well known European species not previously recorded in Britain.

Description of male

General appearance is that of a light coloured Group IV *Theridion*, as specified in Locket & Millidge (1953). *Total length*: 2.7 mm. *Cephalothorax* (Fig. 4): length 1.1 mm. Colour uniform greyish yellow with darker striations. No fovea is visible but there is a shallow indentation in this region. Clypeus wide and projects forwards. *Sternum*: colour deeper than cephalothorax, with dark margins. *Abdomen* (Figs. 4-6): dorsally shows dark brown shoulders and a central, longitudinal, wavy band with white patches. There are also white patches laterally and ventrally, and a dark brown area near the spinners. The swollen epigastric region is dark brown. *Legs*: yellow with brown annulations at all joints except those of the femora and coxae. *Male palp* (Figs. 1-3): the slender hook-shaped median apophysis is distinct from that

of other species of this group. One curious feature is a small, clear, circular mark on the cymbium, located distally near the retrolateral edge. It does not appear to be the base for a spine, bristle or trichobothrium. However, it seems to be a useful diagnostic character since we have not seen it referred to in descriptions, nor have we seen such a mark on specimens in our collection, of other male *Theridion* species in this group.

Occurrence

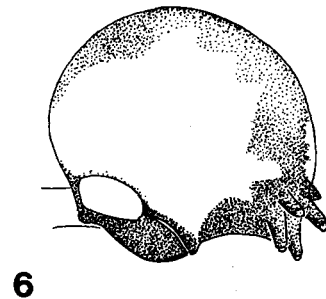
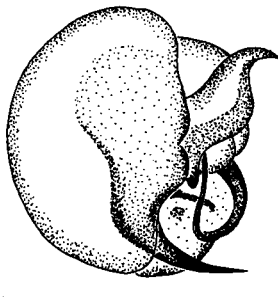
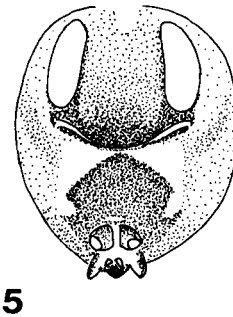
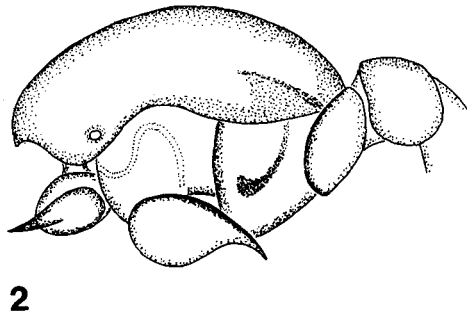
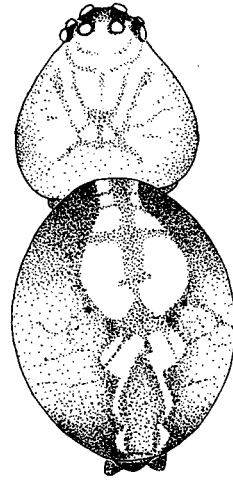
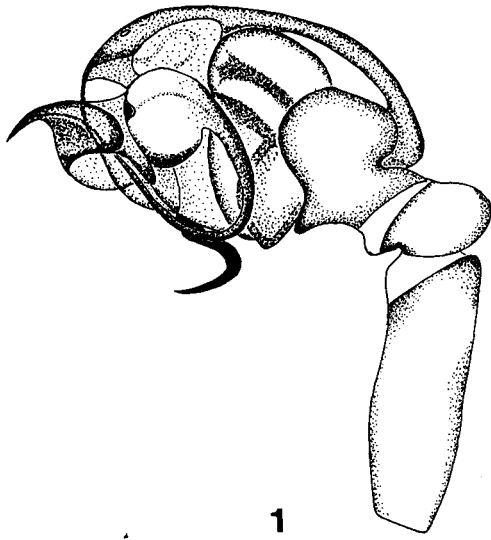
Chobham Common, Surrey (Grid Ref. SU 96), 30 June 1977. The spider was found on the ground in a small open patch fringed with grass among tall heather. Since we were grubbing in this area it is likely that the spider had been disturbed from its web or resting place. Subsequent visits to the same general region a week or so later produced no additional specimens.

Distribution

According to Wiehle (1937) *T. pinastri* has been found in Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Russia and Japan. There are also records from Belgium (Kekenbosch, Bosmans & Baert, 1977), Czechoslovakia (Miller, 1971) and Poland (Prószyński & Starega, 1971). In the light of this distribution it is perhaps surprising that *T. pinastri* has not been recorded in Britain earlier.

References

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Figs. 1-6: *Theridion pinastri* L. Koch, male. 1 Left palp, ventro-lateral view; 2 Left palp, lateral view, showing circular mark; 3 Left palp, apical view; 4 Cephalothorax and abdomen, dorsal view; 5 Abdomen, ventral view; 6 Abdomen, lateral view.