

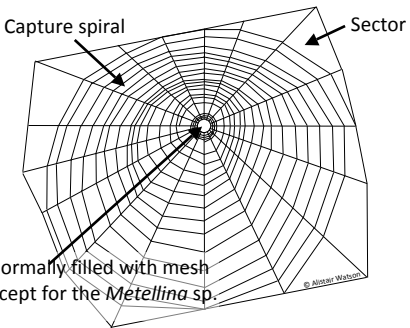


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Orbweavers of the Highlands, Cairngorms and North East Scotland

Thirty-five of the spider species recorded in Scotland spin orb webs for prey capture. This leaflet introduces seven of the commonly seen orbweavers which can be identified with relative ease to genus or species.

Whilst orb webs are only one of the many arrangements of silk used by web-building spiders, they capture our imagination in a unique way. For many of us the mention of "spider" often conjures an image of a spider sat in the middle of an orb web spiral.



1 Garden spider/Garden cross spider (*Araneus diadematus*)

A ubiquitous species, found in a wide variety of habitats, often sitting in the centre of its orb web. Distinctive white “cross” near to the top of abdomen, but note that the strength of markings can vary. A wide variety of colours exist depending on habitat.

When to look: Mature late summer and autumn.

2 Walnut orbweaver (*Nuctenea umbratica*)

This nocturnal spider conceals itself under bark and in fissures in posts and fences during the daytime, the body is flattened to assist this. The conspicuous orb web is usually empty during the day but the spider can be found hidden away nearby. Colour less variable than other species, usually very dark and always with a “leaf-like” central dark area on abdomen with “dimples” on the surface.

When to look: Adults of both sexes are found mainly between late spring and autumn.

3 Four spot orbweaver (*Araneus quadratus*)

The heaviest spider in Britain, found on vegetation which has sufficient height and strength to support the large orb web: rank grassland, heather and gorse, often including damp habitat. The web is usually found stretched across the gap between plants, with a large tent-like retreat at one side, where the spider can be found if not in the centre of the web. Abdomen very distinctive, spherical in mature females and always with four large white spots. Ground colour of abdomen variable.

When to look: Mature late summer and autumn.

4 Missing sector orbweaver (*Zygiella x-notata*)

Conceals itself within a silk-tube retreat above an orb web with its distinctive “missing sector” and silvery banding on sides of abdomen. Typically found on buildings and street furniture (including cash machines!) And often in the outside corners of windows. Specimens have also been discovered on cliffs and on bushes, especially near habitation. Egg-sacs, covered loosely with yellow silk, are produced in autumn and winter and are affixed to solid surfaces. **Similar species:** *Z. atrica* constructs a similar web but is found away from human habitation and has a pink flush to the abdomen which is absent in *Z. x-notata*.

When to look: Late summer and autumn best but can be found all year round.

5 Furrow orbweaver (*Larinioides cornutus*)

This spider can be found on reeds, grasses, and other waterside vegetation and in tall herbage and rough grassland, usually in damp places. Females can often be found spun up in a tough silk retreat in the seed heads of plants but they are also found on bridges and posts etc., where their orb webs are very prominent.

When to look: Adults are found from early summer through to late summer/autumn.

6 Summer orbweaver (*Metellina mendei*) and Autumn orbweaver (*Metellina segmentata*)

These two similar species are extremely variable in their markings and colour, but as members of the Tetragnathidae family, both spiders spin orb webs with a distinctive hole in the middle of the hub. Both species are extremely common and abundant and attach their webs to trees, bushes, other plants and buildings. **Similar webs:** Other member of this family recorded across this area also spin with a hole in the hub but are very distinctly different in body shape or habitat preferences so would not be mistaken.

When to look: In general, peak maturity time for *M. mendei* is spring to early summer whilst for *M. segmentata* it is late summer to late autumn however this is not completely reliable, therefore they should not be recorded without a closer inspection to confirm the species.

7 Cucumber spiders (*Araniella cucurbitina* and *Araniella opisthographa*)

Two species of spiders with light yellow to light green abdomens which spin small webs (sometimes as small as across a single leaf), frequently in irregular patterns unlike normal orb webs particularly when spun in confined spaces. Usually found in trees and bushes. *A. cucurbitina* and *A. opisthographa* are both found across the area covered in this leaflet but cannot be identified to species level without careful microscopic examination of adults.

When to look: Adults are found from mid-spring to early autumn.



Map of Scotland, showing NESBReC area

How to make a record:

- What you saw
- Where you saw it (a 6 figure grid reference or a good description of the location)
- The habitat (woodland, grassland, house etc)
- When you saw it (day, month, year)
- Who saw it – the name of the person making the record
- Submit your record to your local spider group (see below for contact details)
- In addition to submitting a record to the local spider group, it is also good to submit the record to NESBReC using their website or to the Highland Biological Recording Group



Highland Spider Group

Highland Spider Group coordinates surveys and run workshops in support of the British Arachnological Society across the Scottish Highlands.

Find us on www.facebook.com/highlandspidergroup



Grampian Spider Group

Grampian Spider Group undertakes surveys and hosts field skills and identification training events in support of the British Arachnological Society across the North East of Scotland.

Find us on www.facebook.com/groups/GrampianSpiderGroup



The British Arachnological Society

The BAS is Britain's only charity devoted exclusively to spiders and their relatives. We use science and education to advance the wider understanding and appreciation of arachnids, and to promote their conservation.

Find us at www.britishspiders.org.uk, www.facebook.com/BritishSpiders or on Twitter @BritishSpiders

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