



**BACK
FROM THE
BRINK**

Heathland Spiders

A BACK FROM THE BRINK PROJECT

Common and Rare spiders in the UK.

The first two pages depict common, widespread species you are likely to encounter on a heathland walk, although they also occur in other habitats. Spiders on pages three and four are largely restricted to heathland habitats where, although uncommon nationally, they can be locally abundant.

Sizes stated exclude the leg span and

Active refers to the adults period only.

Orb Web Spiders

GARDEN SPIDER

Araneus diadematus



Large, up to 18 mm. Found in a variety of habitats with enough space and structure to accommodate its characteristic web, which can be up to 40 cm in diameter. The legs are pale with dark stripes (annulations). Although the abdomen can range in background colour from yellow to dark brown it almost always has a characteristic pattern of white spots which look like a cross.

Active from July-October.

FOUR-SPOTTED ORBWEB SPIDER

Araneus quadratus



Large, up to 20 mm. Has a very distinctive abdominal pattern comprising four white spots; the background colour can be extremely variable. The legs are pale with dark annulations. It spins a large orb web in undisturbed vegetation on sturdy shrubs, rush, heather and gorse.

Active from June-October.

WASP SPIDER

Argiope bruennichi



Large, up to 15 mm. Has unmistakable black, yellow and white stripes on the abdomen. The low-slung web usually has a characteristic zigzag of silk running down it. It can be found in grassland and unmanaged habitats like wasteland and road verges. Females create large, distinctively flask-shaped egg sacs that persist long after the adult has gone.

Active from June-September.

MISSING-SECTOR ORBWEB SPIDER

Zygiella atrica



Small, up to 6.5 mm. The orb-web usually has a section missing, like a slice removed from a pie, and is constructed on bushes such as gorse, heathland pine tree trunks and heather. Its legs are a pale brown colour with faint, darker annulations. The oval abdomen has a dark, oak-leaf-shaped pattern on a noticeably silver background.

Active from August-October.

Nurseryweb Spiders

NURSERYWEB SPIDER

Pisaura mirabilis



Large, up to 15 mm. Constructs a domed web on vegetation as a nursery to house its young. Occurs in a range of open habitats and the nursery webs can frequently be spotted along path edges. Webs are not spun to catch prey. Before building the nurseryweb, the female can often be seen carrying a large, white egg sac in her jaws (chelicerae). The legs are a uniform brown, and the abdomen is long and tapers towards the rear. Both carapace and abdomen vary greatly in co-ordinated colours and patterns but nearly always with a pale band down the middle of the head.

Active from May-September.

Funnel Web Spiders

HOUSE SPIDERS

Eratigena spp.



Large, up to 16 mm. Some are familiar in our homes but may also be found in the countryside. They have very long, unbanded legs and are generally dark brown in colour with the abdomen marked with a lighter chevron pattern. There are nine related species in the UK, some difficult to tell apart. Found in tree crevices and unused rabbit burrows. Active from March-October.

LABYRINTH SPIDER

Agelena labyrinthica



Large, up to 12 mm. Spins an extensive and conspicuous web with a funnel at one end, low down, often in heather or gorse. The spider generally lurks in the tunnel but when it does emerge, the head has distinctive pale and brown bands down the entire length and the abdomen has conspicuous, white chevrons. Active from May-September.

Money Spiders

COMMON HAMMOCKWEB SPIDER

Linyphia triangularis



Small, up to 6.6 mm. Belongs to the largest spider family in Britain - the money spiders. Found in a variety of habitats and usually seen underneath its densely woven horizontal hammock web constructed on vegetation up to 6 m above the ground. The legs are yellow brown with obvious spines. The head is a pale brown colour with a central marking that looks like a tuning fork and the abdomen is white with a central brown, indented pattern. Active from August-October.

Wolf Spiders

SAND BEAR SPIDER

Arctosa perita



Medium-sized, up to 9 mm. Wolf spiders do not spin webs but catch prey using vision and brute strength. Found in dry sandy heathland and coastal habitats. The legs are pale with dark annulations although their general colouring is variable. The head ranges in colour from brown to black with patches of white hairs at the sides of the back pair of eyes. Active from April-September.

PIN-STRIPE WOLF SPIDERS

Pardosa monticola/Pardosa palustris



Small, up to 6 mm. These species are possibly the most common wolf spiders on heathland and in dry, open habitats. Legs are pale in colour with brown/black mottling and streaks. The head area has a distinctive pale central band down its length hence the common name of 'pin-stripe'; the abdomen is oval. As with all other wolf spiders, the female can often be spotted carrying an egg sac attached to the rear of her abdomen. Active from April-September.

Crab Spiders

A CRAB SPIDER

Xysticus audax



Small, up to 8mm. Found on gorse, heather and occasionally grassland. The chevron pattern on the male's abdomen is distinctive. Legs I and II are longer than the rear two legs and bent forward like a crab's. All legs with extensive black markings. There are twelve species of *Xysticus* in the UK, some difficult to tell apart. Active from April-September.

The following species are designated as either Nationally Scarce or Nationally Rare. However, some of them can be locally common and are included as they are relatively easy to identify and may be encountered.

Velvet Spiders

LADYBIRD SPIDER

Eresus sandaliatus



Large spider, up to 16 mm. It lives in an underground burrow on dry sandy heathland with lichen and moss cover. Classed as Vulnerable to Extinction, this spider is protected by law under the Wildlife & Countryside Act. Conservation efforts since its rediscovery in 1979 have

resulted in the establishment of 18 new populations, all located in Dorset. However, until population sizes become more robust, you are very unlikely to encounter this species in the wild!

There are no other spiders in the UK that are so black and velvety. Both immature male and female spiders have a black abdomen with some white hairs and four obvious indentations. The characteristic red abdomen of the male only occurs at maturity, when he emerges from the burrow to seek a mate. Their legs are black with some scattered white hair and each joint is marked with dense white hair that suggest the spider is wearing black and white striped tights! The head area is black with some scattered white hairs.

Active in May-June.

Purseweb Spiders

PURSEWEB SPIDER

Atypus affinis



Large, up to 15 mm. It lives in a tubular, soil-covered web, extending both above and below ground, and usually located on south facing slopes. The only spider in Britain where the characteristically powerful jaws act like parallel daggers, rather than converging pincers. These are as long as the rest of the head, and the area where the eyes are located is raised. The legs, head and abdomen are rather shiny in appearance and dark brown.

Active from April-November.

Ground Spiders

BLACK GROUND SPIDER

Zelotes spp.



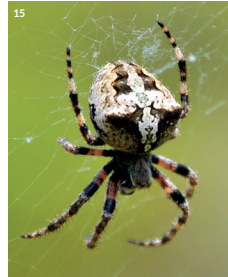
Medium sized spiders (6 species) that use vision for capturing prey and do not spin a web. These spiders favour dry habitats and can be spotted running rapidly in sunshine. In general, their heads and abdomens are black although their leg colour can vary and help to distinguish the different species. To be certain which species is present, microscopical examination is essential.

Active from April-September.

Orbweb Spiders

ANGULAR ORBWEB SPIDER

Araneus angulatus



Large, up to 19 mm. Has obvious 'humps' (tubercles) at the front of the abdomen. Restricted to southern coastal counties, the species favours deciduous woodland and spins an orb web high up in the tree canopy. On heathland, it can be found on pines. The legs are pale brown in colour and the head is brown with long white hairs.

Active from May-August.

CARMINE ORBWEB SPIDER

Cercidia prominens



Small, up to 5 mm. Spins, close to the ground, an orb-web with a hole in the middle where it sits and waits for prey. Males are more likely to be spotted as their abdomen and legs are a rusty orange/red with a darker head area and large, dark 'boxing glove' palps.

Active from April-October.

Nurseryweb Spiders

RAFT SPIDER

Dolomedes fimbriatus



One of our largest spiders, up to 22 mm. Associated with wet acidic habitats, their feeding strategy is to sit with their legs touching the surface of the water, using sensory hairs to detect the vibrations of struggling prey. The females construct nursery webs higher up in heather or bog myrtle bushes and these may well be spotted first. The spider is dark brown with a yellowy stripe along the sides of the body.

Active from March-October.

Jumping Spiders

A JUMPING SPIDER

Evarcha arcuata



Medium, 5-8 mm. Jumping spiders use the large, forward-facing eyes to accurately locate prey. Found on damper areas of heathland. The first two pairs of legs are chunkier than the others. The head is brown with a metallic sheen and with an obvious line of white hairs below the eyes. In males, the abdomen also has a metallic-black sheen.

Active from April-September.

A JUMPING SPIDER

Aelurillus v-insignitis



Small/medium, up to 7 mm. The head and abdomen are almost the same size making it relatively easy to identify. The species is found in open, dry, sunny heathland around the coast. The legs are yellow/brown, thickly covered in hairs and with dark markings. Both sexes have distinctive, but different, markings.

Active in sunshine from April-August.

Running Crab Spiders

A RUNNING CRAB SPIDER

Thanatus striatus



Small, up to 5 mm. Possibly one of the smallest running crab spiders in Europe. Found in both wet and dry habitats, it operates as a fast hunter on the ground surface. Its legs are yellow/brown and hairy with the rear pair longer than the others. The head has a central stripe with darker bands both sides and the abdomen is pale brown in colour with dark central bands that taper towards the rear.

Active from April-July.

Running Foliage Spiders

A RUNNING FOLIAGE SPIDER

Agroeca proxima



Medium, up to 8 mm. The biggest of this group in Britain. These spiders hunt at night and do not spin webs to catch prey. They construct a highly distinctive upturned wine-glass-shaped egg sac, usually covered in soil/sand, attached to a plant stem. This is a common spider of heathland and found in dry, low vegetation, moss and leaf litter.

Active from February-November.

Wolf Spiders

A WOLF SPIDER

Alopecosa barbipes



Large robust spider up to 12 mm that does not spin a web, using instead its well-developed eyesight to find prey. There are four *Alopecosa* species in Britain that are similar in appearance. This species however, favours chalk grassland as well as heathland. The head has an obvious light central band and the abdomen has distinct darker lines down the middle.

Active from March-October.

What the project is doing.

The Ladybird Spider is one of the UK's most spectacular spiders, but also one of our most endangered. Thought to be extinct in Britain for over 70 years, it was rediscovered in 1979 at a single site in Dorset.

Since then, this population has been a donor for subsequent introductions, with 18 more colonies successfully established through the Ladybird Spider Species Recovery Programme and Back from the Brink.

To safeguard this spider for the future we need to continue the conservation programme. This means monitoring the existing populations to ensure that they are healthy and self-sustaining, and maintaining targeted habitat management work. This will ensure that the introduction sites are in the right condition to enable the Ladybird Spider to establish strong populations.

There is still a lot of work to do.



Ladybird Spider sculptures at RSPB Arne.

How to get involved in spider recording.

Ladybird Spider populations are rare and restricted, and their monitoring is conducted by trained and licensed individuals. Because of the spider's extreme vulnerability to trampling of its burrows and ground-surface webs, it is fully protected from disturbance under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act; its locations remain confidential.

However, recording of other spider species is vital to assess their status, distribution, and ecology in the UK. Some of our more frequently encountered 'macro' spiders can be identified by eye. A good field guide, habitat details and the time of year can aid a positive

identification. Smaller species, for example most of the money spiders, are not as easy and other techniques are required to identify them.

Spiders can be found in almost every habitat and can also be active throughout the year, and so recording them can be a full-time pursuit. Getting out there to do some spider recording is one of the many outside adventures suitable for all ages and abilities.

RECORDING

Find out more about spiders and other invertebrates at:

britishspiders.org.uk

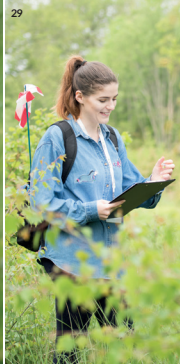
buglife.org.uk

Or consider buying a copy of 'Britain's Spiders: A field guide'



BACK FROM THE BRINK

About Back from the Brink.



Back from the Brink. One of the most ambitious conservation initiatives ever undertaken.

This is the first time ever that so many conservation organisations have come together with one focus – to bring some of England’s most threatened animals, plants and fungi back from the brink of extinction.

Natural England is working in partnership with Rethink Nature, and the entire project is made possible thanks to funding from the National Lottery.

Find out about our other projects at:
naturebftb.co.uk
[@naturebftb](https://twitter.com/naturebftb)



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