Linyphiidae, 57 species compared with 32 at Whiteford, demonstrating the increasing importance of the family at higher latitudes.

Table 2. The number of species and total spiders (in brackets) recorded in each of the seven dune habitats at Whiteford & Tentsmuir. D.L.= drift line, F.D.= foredune, Y.D.= yellow dune, M.T.= marram transition, D.H.= dune heath, D.S.=dune slack, D.M.= dune meadow.

	D.L.	F.D.	Y.D.	M.T.	D.H.	D.S.	D.M.
Whiteford	22 (42)	37 (197)	69 (358)	54 (237)	38 (172)	73 (108)	72 (311)
Tentsmuir	21 (186)	27 (686)	35 (495)	46 (267)	32 (159)	68 (265)	94 (300)

The spider totals have all been adjusted to 19 hours collection.

This comparative study, though imperfect, shows that much more information can be obtained when techniques of timed data collection are combined with a habitat classification. This method can be applied to any terrestrial ecosystem, though some may be much more complex than coastal dunes. The discipline of choosing habitat categories increases one's awareness of the range of niches selected by different species. Several attempts have been made to devise a habitat classification applicable to all ecosystems, terrestrial, aquatic and marine, but inevitably they become so complicated that they are difficult, or even impossible, to use. It is probably easier to confine the classification to whatever is appropriate to the land area being studied providing the categories are fully described so that someone else could easily identify and use them in a similar area elsewhere.

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A Post-Colloquium Arachnological Trip to Ciscaucasia, Russia

by Dmitri V. Logunov* and David Penney

Following the 21st Colloquium of Arachnology, in St Petersburg, Russia in August 2003 (see Newsletter **98**), we undertook a two-week trip to Stavropol', where the relatives of one of us (D.V.L.) currently reside. Stavropol' is a small town, with approximately 300,000 inhabitants. It is situated in Ciscaucasia, less than 100 km north of the Caucasus Major. Its name derives from Greek and means 'Town-of-Cross' ('stavros', cross; 'polis', town). It refers to the legend that a big stone cross belonging to the first Christians, who lived here in the fifteenth century, was found at the place where the town's fort was based.

One of the town's main attractions is the Stavropol' Museum of Local Lore, Nature and History, an amazing local museum housing some 250,000 exhibits, including unique archaeological specimens of Scythic culture from the sixth and seventh centuries B.C., a collection of side- and fire-arms from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, and a unique set of Japanese porcelain. The natural history collections include a spectacular, and only known complete skeleton of the 'Hairy' rhino (*Elasmotherium sibiricum*, Middle Pleistocene), the largest rhino that ever existed, and also a magnificent skeleton of the extinct southern elephant (*Archidiskodon meridionalis*; Lower Eopleistocene); the latter is one of the fourth largest and most complete skeletons of this species in the world (the three others are housed in Paris, St Petersburg and Tbilisi).

Stavropol' lies in the uplands at about 800 m above sea level and is surrounded by oak–hornbeam forests and forb–vermuth steppes, the two main landscape types of Stavropol' Territory. Although Stavropol' Territory lies in between the Ciscaucasian regions, for which some faunistic data on spiders are available, e.g. Krasnodar Territory (Spassky, 1937), Chechnya (Minoranski *et al.*, 1984) and Kalmykia (the works of A.V. Ponomarev), it remains practically unstudied, and is somewhat of a 'blank area' from an arachnological perspective. There are no works specifically devoted to the spiders of Stavropol' Territory, but some list records for particular species, e.g. Moritz (1922), Titova & Egorova (1978) and Ovtsharenko (1982). Therefore, it is not surprising that the small spider collection listed below, which was opportunistically/casually collected by the authors in the vicinities of Beshpagir Village, approximately 35 km NNE of Stavropol' 12th–21st August 2003, contained 28 species previously unrecorded from this area. In addition, two of these were new records for the N-Caucasus: i.e. *Styloctetor romanus* (this Palaearctic species has been recorded from Azerbaijan and Armenia, but not in the N-Caucasus; Mikhailov, pers. comm.) and *Euryopis saukea* (this is the first record of this Holarctic species for the entire Caucasus, the closest known records are from Orenburg Region and SE Ukraine; Mikhailov, pers. comm.).

List of species collected

The small spider collection listed below (in total, 39 spider species in 11 families) is currently kept in the collection of the Manchester Museum (curator D. V. Logunov). The following different habitats were explored: [1] sandy steppe-like plant communities within a pine plantation (sweeping); [2] pine plantation with sparse oaks (sweeping on glades and in litter); [3] forb-vermuth steppe, slightly overgrazed (sweeping, under stones and pitfall traps); [4] rush (*Juncus* sp.) near water; [5] kitchen-garden; and [6] household buildings. The species marked with an asterisk are new records for Stavropol' Territory, those marked with two asterisks are new records for the N-Caucasus.

Family AGELENIDAE
**Tegenaria agrestis* (Walckenaer, 1802): 1♂1♀ [5].
Family ARANEIDAE
Argiope bruennichi (Scopoli, 1772): 1♂ [2]; 1♂1♀ [3]; 2♂3♀ [4]; 1♂1♀ [5].
**Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772): 1♂ [3].
**Mangora acalypha* (Walckenaer, 1802): 2♀ [2].
**Neoscona adianta* (Walckenaer, 1802): 1♀ [3].
Family GNAPHOSIDAE
**Berlandina cinerea* (Menge, 1868): 3♀ [3].
**Gnaphosa mongolica* Simon, 1895: 1♀ [3].
Drassodes lapidosus (Walckenaer, 1802): 1♀ [1].
**Nomisia aussereri* (L. Koch, 1872): 14♂1♀ [3].
**Zelotes electus* (C. L. Koch, 1839): 1♂ [1].
Family LINYPHIIDAE
**Linyphia triangularis* (Clerck, 1757): 3♂1♀ [2].
**Lepthyphantes leprosus* (Ohlert, 1865): 1♂1♀ [5].
Meioneta sp.: 1♀ [3]; 1♀ [2].
Oedothorax sp.: 1♀ [3].
***Styloctetor romanus* (O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1872): 1♂ [3].
**Tenuiphantes tenuis* (Blackwall, 1852): 1♀ [5]; 1♀ [2].
Walckenaeria sp.: 1♀ [2].
Family LIOCRANIDAE
**Phrurolithus festivus* (C. L. Koch, 1835): 1♀ [1].
Family LYCOSIDAE
Alopecosa sp.: 2♂7♀ [3].
**Xerolycosa miniata* (C. L. Koch, 1834): 1♀ [3].
Family OXYOPIDAE
**Oxyopes heterophthalmus* (Latreille, 1804): 1♀ [1].
**Oxyopes lineatus* Latreille, 1806: 9♀ [1]; 1♀ [2].
Family PHOLCIDAE
**Pholcus ponticus* Thorell, 1875: 7♂4♀ [6].
Family PISAURIDAE
Pisaura mirabilis (Clerck, 1757): 1♀ [1].
Family SALTICIDAE
**Evarcha arcuata* (Clerck, 1757): 1♂ [2].
**Heliophanus auratus* C. L. Koch, 1835: 1♀ [4].
**Heliophanus cupreus* (Walckenaer, 1802): 2♀ [2].
Family THERIDIIDAE
**Achaearanea tepidariorum* (C. L. Koch, 1841): 1♀ [6].
**Enoplognatha ovata* (Clerck, 1757): 1♀ [2]; 1♀ [5].
**Episinus truncatus* Latreille, 1809: 1♂ [2].
***Euryopis saukea* Levi, 1951: 3♂1♀ [3].
**Steatoda castanea* (Clerck, 1757): 1♀ [6].
**Steatoda triangulosa* (Walckenaer, 1802): 1♀ [6].
**Theridion impressum* L. Koch, 1881: 1♀ [3].
Family THOMISIDAE
**Misumena vatia* (Clerck, 1757): 1♀ [2].
**Ozyptila praticola* (C. L. Koch, 1837): 2♀ [2].
Ozyptila sp.: 1♀ [2].
**Synema globosum* (Fabricius, 1775): 2♀ [5].
**Thomisus onustus* Walckenaer, 1805: 1♂3♀ [1].

Taxonomic comments

Gnaphosa mongolica is better known in Europe as *G. spinosa* Kulczynski in Chyzer et Kulczynski, 1897. The identification of *Drassodes lapidosus* follows Grimm (1985) and is considered provisional; additional material, especially males, are required to confirm or reject it. *Alopecosa* sp. seems to be a new species, related to *A. edax* (Thorell, 1875) and *A. sulzeri* (Pavesi, 1873). *Ozyptila* sp. seems to be a new species related to *O. sanctuaria* (O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1871). The three undetermined linyphiid species are represented by single females; males are required for a proper identification. That such a small collection yielded so many new records is evidence that the spider fauna of this interesting region warrants further investigation.

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A Rather Unusual Spider Book

by David Penney

An arachnophile, I am also a bibliophile, particularly when it comes to books on spiders and I am certain the majority of people reading this are of a similar ilk. It is for this reason that I thought the following book, written by Harun Yahya (translated by Carl Rossini) and published in 2001, should be brought to the attention of the arachnological community: *The Miracle in the Spider*, Goodword Books, New Delhi, India, 147 pp. ISBN: 81-87570-98-9.

I hasten to add at this point, that this short note is not intended to be a full critical review of the above book, because I do not wish to enter into the creationist versus evolutionist debate here. The author of this book has written more than forty books, all of which aim to convey the message of the Qur'an to people and to encourage them to think about faith-related issues, such as the existence of God. To this end, this book seeks to undermine the theory of evolution in favour of that of creation, using the behaviour and morphology of spiders to argue the point.

Both the front and back covers suggest the author is not an arachnologist. On the former is a photograph of an araneid superimposed on an orb-web in a totally unnatural position, and on the latter, spiders are referred to as insects. In addition, the first line of the introduction reads 'there are hundreds of species of spiders in the world'. According to Platnick's world spider catalogue there are currently 38,432 recognised