Where the hand-lens symbol is used, it would be useful to have an explicit indication of what should be looked for with the lens. I suspect that it may currently often be used to indicate that more caution and circumspection is required when looking at all the morphological features described, but this should be made clear.

The book keeps on giving! After the species accounts come additional useful sections on working in the field, recording spiders & the S.R.S., legislation & conservation, further reading and the B.A.S. There is a large table listing all British species (including the small money spiders – linyphiids – which aren’t included in the species accounts), with full details on common and scientific name (including the authority and synonyms), the identification difficulty symbol, conservation status, relevant legislation and the percentage of 10 km squares in Britain where the species has been recorded. There is also a page reference to the species account where applicable. It’s handy to have this information together in a single reference table.

The book will be a useful resource to anyone interested in spider identification at any level, but will particularly benefit the growing number of naturalists in the UK who favour field identification over collecting and preserving specimens. There is a legitimate concern that this trend represents a threat to the quality of spider recording in the UK and is therefore worth examining in a little more detail. The trend is likely driven by many things including:

- Huge advances in the quality and accessibility of digital macro photography equipment.
- Popularity of social media platforms that have helped leverage the power of digital photography as an identification tool (e.g. the facebook British Spider Identification Group).
- Increasing recognition amongst the established natural history and recording community that quality macro photography is opening-up some taxa to reliable field identification, where previously microscopic examination of preserved specimens was the norm.
- Growing trend to record across several taxonomic groups in the field.
- Cultural shift resulting in fewer new naturalists being willing to collect specimens for identification.

Some worry that this change may represent a threat to the ongoing development of a vital pool of people with skills in microscopic identification and the collection and curation of spiders. I don’t see it that way; I believe that in the past many people were alienated from spider recording and identification because even introductory courses started at the level of collection, curation and microscopic identification. With a more structured development path and opportunities to make a valuable contribution to spider recording at different levels, including field identification only, we stand to retain more of that early interest. Some of those who start with the intention of only recording spiders in the field may become sufficiently absorbed to move on to collection, curation and microscopic identification. Those who don’t can continue to make a valuable contribution with field identification alone; potentially, thanks to this book, a bigger contribution than was formerly the case.

The WILDGuide, Britain’s Spiders – a field guide, is a masterful example of a modern field guide for an invertebrate group. Like any identification resource, it is not a magic bullet and it is incumbent on all those involved in teaching spider identification, particularly field identification, to teach people how to use the book responsibly and not to exceed the boundaries of what can be reliably identified in the field. When used diligently this book will equip spider recorders to learn both the possibilities and the limitations of identifying British spiders in the field. It stands to enrich the way we learn about spider identification and provide a useful staging point for those that want to move on to the identification of preserved specimens. I commend this book to all those interested in identifying and recording British spiders.

Richard Burkmar

Record of Phoneutria (Araneae: Ctenidae) from Inverbervie, Aberdeenshire

by Chris Cathrine* & Stuart Longhorn

A spider specimen found in a banana shipment in Inverbervie, Aberdeenshire in June 2016 was sent to Chris Cathrine for identification by Andy Evans at Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC). Unfortunately the specimen was not preserved in alcohol, and so was damaged in the post (Fig. 1). However, many key features were still present which allowed further identification, although desiccation caused the specimen to become brittle and challenging to work with.

The banana shipment reportedly originated in Colombia, South America, and the spider was identified by Chris Cathrine as female and belonging to the family Ctenidae, and so not native to Scotland or the UK (Ubick et al., 2005; Jocqué & Dippenaar-Schoeman, 2006; Murphy & Roberts, 2015). Figure 2 shows the eye arrangement of the specimen, which is characteristic of Ctenidae. SRUC requested that the specimen be returned after family level identification. Before returning the specimen, photographs were taken to allow a more precise identification if possible (Figs. 2–5). Further identification assistance was provided by Stuart Longhorn, who is more familiar with South American Ctenidae.

The specimen was identified as belonging to the genus Phoneutria, with a plausible identity being P. boliviensis based on several features: epigyne, ventral abdomen pattern, central dorsal stripe on carapace, black stripe on front of pedipalps, and white based spines on femurs (Pickard-Cambridge 1897; Schiapelli & Gerschman de Pikelin, 1973; Valerio 1983; Simó & Brescovit, 2001; Martins & Bertani, 2007; Jäger & Blick, 2009; Azevedo 2012). Photographs of some of these features are shown in Figures 1–5, and a diagram of the epigyne is shown in

Figure 1. Ctenidae specimen from Inverbervie, identified as Phoneutria cf. boliviensis. © Chris Cathrine.
Figure 6. As currently known, *P. boliviensis* also appears to be the most widely distributed member of the *Phoneutria* genus, which ranges across much of Colombia (Hazzi *et al.*, 2013) and beyond. However, there is a great deal of variation (epigyne, markings and other features) in published accounts of *P. boliviensis* and close relatives, potentially suggesting the existence of cryptic species. Therefore, without finer-scale taxonomic revision it is only possible to identify this spider as *Phoneutria cf. boliviensis* with confidence.

Media increasingly report instances of ‘Brazilian wandering spiders’ or ‘painful erection death spiders’ (*Phoneutria* spp.) being imported to the UK in fruit shipments, and often sensationalise the risks to human health. Chris Cathrine has been contacted by media and other organisations several times in 2016 with claims that these tropical spiders had been found, but no specimens were ever provided to confirm identity. However, a handful of valid encounters appear to have occurred in the UK, but most are not properly recorded or remain unverified (but see e.g. Binding & Binding, 2014). There are several reliable historical records of *Phoneutria* spp. being imported into Germany with bananas and other such cargo (after Schmidt, 1954, 1956), as well as recently to both Germany (Jäger & Blick, 2009) and the USA (Vetter & Hillebrecht, 2008; Vetter *et al*., 2014), although encounters are rare, and often animals are initially misidentified.

*Phoneutria* venom can be harmful to humans, but the severity of these effects varies depending on species, are often insignificant and rarely result in fatality (Lucas 1988; Foelix 1996; Vetter & Hillebrecht, 2008). *Phoneutria cf. boliviensis* is the more common of any *Phoneutria* found in cargo shipments, but rarely bites and, although painful, these do not seem to have the more serious effects sometimes associated with closely related *P. nigriventer* and *P. keyserlingi* (Vetter & Hillebrecht, 2008). Due to the conditions of transport and pest control, tropical ctenids imported to the UK in cargo shipments are often likely to be dead on arrival, and would not survive in Scotland’s climate. However, given the varying medical importance of Ctenidae species, particularly *Phoneutria* spp., identification and recording of other specimens found in the UK is advisable in future. It is hoped that publishing this record will help inform a more robust understanding of the occurrence of *Phoneutria* spp. as
ship-assisted vagrants in the UK, as a more reliable reference than mainstream media reports.

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References


B.A.S. Field Weekend at Kingcombe Field Centre, Devon, 17th–19th June 2016

by Richard C. Gallon

Members of the B.A.S. (Fig. 1) arrived on Friday 17th June 2016 for a weekend packed with fieldwork, lectures, socialising and, of course, to attend the 47th A.G.M. that evening. The venue being Dorset Wildlife Trust’s well-appointed Kingcombe Centre.

The following day many joined the road convoy to Powerstock Common SSSI to record spiders (Fig. 2), finding 89 species in total (Table 1). Geoff Oxford gave a fascinating lecture on spider polymorphism that evening, after running an identification course for much of the day.

Fieldwork on Sunday was challenging, but some hearty folks braved the wet weather to record around the Field Centre and adjacent Kingcombe Meadows Nature Reserve (Table 1). All too soon it was time to say our farewells to old and new friends alike, safe in the knowledge that we would probably meet-up at a future A.G.M. Weekend.

Species lists provided by Iain Arter, Richard Gallon, Alastair Lavery, Geoff Oxford, Jim Pettwes and Tony Russell-Smith.

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