## The Effects of a Tarantula Bite

**by Peter Merrett**

The bites of large American mygalomorphs are generally considered to be relatively harmless to man, but there are few reports of the effects of bites. While handling an adult female of *Psalmopoeus cambridgei* Pocock (total body length 53mm), I was bitten on the end of a finger. Although it felt a firm bite, it was probably only superficial, as it did not draw blood. The end of my finger immediately started throbbing, and within a minute or two a white spot about 3mm across appeared at the site of the bite. After about 15 minutes this spot slowly disappeared and was replaced by a larger reddish patch, about 12mm in diameter, but there was no swelling. At the same time the throbbing slowly began to subside in intensity, but spread to the rest of the finger, and I cound still feel it after about an hour. By about 2 hours after the bite, all effects, including the redness, had virtually disappeared.

Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Furzebrook Research Station, WAREHAM, Dorset, BH20 5AS

---

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

**Dr Edward Lovesey (Aldershot)** has discovered a new habitat in Surrey for *Uloborus walckenaerius* Latreille: two females were found on heather on Ash Ranges (Nat. Grid Ref. SU 904538) on 24.6.1987 and 7.8.1987.

***Dr Paul Selden (Manchester)*** *writes: Like Dick Jones* (Newsletter **51:** 5) I have only rarely encountered that tiny spider *Oonops pulcher* Templeton — that is until I visited Little Budworth N.N.R., Cheshire (Nat. Grid Ref. SJ 5865) in mid-October 1987. Every sandy bank investigated yielded tens or even hundreds of adults and young. *According to* **Mike Fulton,** *O. pulcher can be found in* good numbers at this site at almost any time of the year.

**Mr J. E. D. Milner (London)** adds this note to his recent Newsletter article (**51:** 6): One of the females of *Erigone psychrophila* Thorell pitfall-trapped near the summit of Liathach was found to be infected with a large mermithid nematode. These parasites mature after leaving their spider hosts and cannot at present be identified to species according to Poinar (1987 **in** Nentwig, W. (ed.) *Ecophysiology of Spiders*. Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg). Poinar lists records of mermithid infections on spiders: there are very few from linyphiids and this seems to be the first record of such an infection on an *Erigone* species.

**Dr David Moore (Manchester)** kindly drew our attention to an interesting paper on 'Fungal pathogens in spiders' by H. C. Evans & R. A. Samson in *The Mycologist,* **21:** 152-159. It covers the history, taxonomy and ecology of fungi which are proven or purported pathogens of spiders. Many of the mycologists mentioned in the article have apparently been guilty of confusing spiders with insects in their publications and all have paid little attention to determining the spider hosts attacked by these fungi. In part, this has been due to a lack of liaison and collaboration between mycologists and arachnologists.

***The Daily Telegraph*** continues to feature spiders in its pages on a regular basis. An interesting correspondence on the use of spiders' silken threads in optical instruments ended with a claim (Letters 9.11.1987) that the very best webs for this purpose were to be found in Yorkshire (but of course!). The very first 'Way of the World' column (30.9.1937), *reproduced in an edition fifty years later,* included an interesting piece on man and the spider which ended: 'Man is a curious beast. Had the gods taught Arachne to make speeches instead of to spin, we should think the world of her. We do not thank her for teaching the world one of its civilising arts'. On 23.1.1988 Maurice Burton, in his regular Saturday nature column repeated the myth about spiders in bath-tubs arriving there by climbing up drain-pipes. Finally, on 28.1.1988 the paper reported the story of the young sales manager who blamed a spider for causing the accident which led to his court appearance, charged with careless driving. As he flapped his arms at the spider, which dropped slowly down from the roof-lining, he lost control of his car and hit an oncoming Audi. Although his phobia about spiders was taken into account, the accused was still fined £60, with £10 costs.

---

## *Oedothorax gibbosus* (Blackwall) and *Oedothorax tuberosus* (Blackwall): One Species

**by R. de Keer* and J.-P. Maelfait†**

In a taxonomic note, Roberts (1987, p. 57) argues for the conspecificity of *Oedothorax gibbosus* and *O. tuberosus.* He observes that they are equally common and almost always found together; that there are no consistent differences between the females (genitalia and general appearance) nor between the palpal organs of the males; and that some males have a carapace form which seems to be intermediate between that of the two species.

Although quite convincing, this evidence is still insufficient. Recently, we have discovered much more convincing proof. A few females caught in 'De Zwarte Beek' nature reserve (Limburg, Belgium) were brought into the laboratory on 27th October 1987 and placed in petri-dishes at 20°C and L:D (16:8). Two of them produced egg-sacs, on 12th and 14th December respectively. After 12 days, juveniles emerged from the egg-sacs (20 from the first, 28 from the second). All these juveniles were placed separately in petri-dishes and fed with a surplus of collembolans. The survivors of these clutches reached adulthood after an average of 27 days (min. 22, max. 33). The group from the first egg-sac comprised 4 female and 5 male *O. gibbosus;* from the second egg-sac 4 male *O. gibbosus,* and 3 male and 13 female *O. tuberosus.*

*We therefore conclude that O. gibbosus and O. tuberosus* are two forms of one species, which should be called *Oedothorax gibbosus* (Blackwall, 1841), this name (just!) having priority. We now hope to find out how the different morphs are inherited and then to assess the ecological and evolutionary reasons for the polymorphisms that occur in quite a number of linyphiid spiders.

### Reference

Roberts, M. J. (1987) *The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* **2.** Harley Books, Colchester.

* Laboratorium voor Ecologie, Zoögeografie en Natuurbehoud, Rijksuniversiteit, Ledeganckstraat 35, B-9000 GENT, Belgium

† Instituut voor Natuurbehoud. Kiewitdreef 3, B-3500 HASSELT, Belgium