

The Island. Steep Holm is an island in the Bristol Channel, five miles west of Weston-super-Mare. It is approximately half a mile long, 300 yards wide and 250 feet high. With its sister island, Flat Holm, they are a continuation of the Mendip folds being formed of limestone of the lower carboniferous age.

Steep Holm is well known among botanists for its unique flora which includes the Wild Peony (Paeonia mascula), the Wild Leek (Allium ampeloprasum) and the Golden Samphire (Inula crithmoides). The present flora is estimated at 225 species; the dominant plants being Alexanders (Smyrnium olustrum), which covers the whole of the central plateau, Elder, Privet and Sycamore. Nettles are found all over the island. There are very few areas of grass and these patches, which are kept very short by the rabbit population, appear to be receding. On all sides of the island there are rock screes below the steep cliffs. The island has been fortified at various times in the past, and one cannot go far without coming upon ruined buildings, gun emplacements and other evidence of human occupation. Still standing, the old barrack house has been converted and it is here that the Gull Research Station has its laboratory and where visitors to the island stay. The only parts of Steep Holm Island to remain undisturbed are the cliffs.

The Spiders. A visit was made to Steep Holm to collect spiders at the end of August 1968. Previous records of spiders taken on the island in 1938, and identified by A.R.Jackson, are taken from the paper by J.E.Hamilton dealing with the terrestrial invertebrates of Steep Holm and are indicated in the following lists by an asterisk.

The most common spiders found on the island were Textrix denticulata, Harpactea hombergi, Segestria senoculata, Dysdera erythrina and Meta segmentata. There were large, local colonies of Salticus scenicus and many egg sacs were found with young just emerging.

Oxyptila blackwalli and Segestria bavarica were the two most interesting spiders taken. A single male of O.blackwalli was found under a stone on the west side of the island and is a new county record for Somerset. S.bavarica was found to be locally abundant in certain areas, being most numerous in crevices along the limestone cliffs on the south side of the island above the splash zone. It was seldom found on cliffs that did not face south. This feature has also been noted at Sand Point and Brean Down, which are peninsulars on either side of Weston Bay, and where at the former S.bavarica was first recorded for Somerset in 1967. It is not unusual to find S.bavarica and S.senoculata webs close to one another; this and the fact that immatures of both species look alike, might well have contributed to S.bavarica being overlooked. The pale areas in the rounded lobes on the dorsal surface of the abdomen and a ventral broad black band are features that serve to identify the spider in the field. In the specimens taken on the island, the ventral black band was usually distinct. S.bavarica has been found in several localities in Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset and Berkshire. The authenticity of the old Berkshire record is suspect; even so, this spider can no longer be regarded as very rare on the mainland but seems to be restricted to limestone areas in the south of England.

Species List

DICTYNIDAE		LYCOSIDAE	
<u>Ciniflo ferox</u> (Walck.) ♀♀		<u>Trochosa ruricola</u> (Degeer)	♂
OONOPIIDAE		AGELENIDAE	
<u>Oonops pulcher</u> Temp. ♀♀		<u>Textrix denticulata</u> (Oliv.)	♀♀
DYSDERIDAE		* <u>Tegenaria domesticus</u> (Cl.)	♀ & imms
* <u>Dysdera erythrina</u> (Walck.) ♀♀		THERIDIIDAE	
<u>Harpactea hombergi</u> (Scop.) ♀♀		<u>Steatoda bipunctata</u> (L.)	♀
* <u>Segestria senoculata</u> (L.) ♀♀		NESTICIDAE	
<u>Segestria bavarica</u> C.L.K. ♀♀		<u>Nesticus cellulanus</u> (Cl.)	♀
GNAPHOSIDAE		ARGIOPIIDAE	
* <u>Drassodes lapidosus</u> (Walck.) ♀♀		<u>Meta segmentata</u> (Cl.)	♀♀ ♂♂
CLUBIONIDAE		* <u>Meta menardi</u> (Latr.)	♀♀ ♂
<u>Clubiona stagnatilis</u> Kulcz. ♀		<u>Araneus diadematus</u> Cl.	♀♀ ♂
<u>Clubiona terrestris</u> Westr. ♂		<u>Araneus cornutus</u> Cl.	♀
THOMISIDAE		<u>Araneus cucurbitinus</u> Cl.	♀
* <u>Xysticus cristatus</u> (Cl.) ♀ & imms		<u>Zygiella x-notata</u> (Cl.)	♀♀
<u>Oxyptila blackwalli</u> Simon ♂		<u>Zygiella atrica</u> (C.L.K.)	♀♀
SALTICIDAE		LINYPHIIDAE	
* <u>Salticus scenicus</u> (Cl.) ♀♀		<u>Gonatium rubens</u> (Blk.)	♂
<u>Heliophanus</u> sp. juv.		<u>Stemonyphantes lineatus</u> (L.)	juv.
		<u>Lepthyphantes tenuis</u> (Blk.)	♀

Species collected in 1938, not taken in 1968.

* <u>Phrurolithus festivus</u> (C.L.K.)	* <u>Euophrys frontalis</u> (Walck.)
* <u>Heliophanus cupreus</u> (Walck.)	* <u>Lycosa tarsalis</u> Thor.
* <u>Neon reticulatus</u> (Blk.)	* <u>Episinus truncatus</u> Latr.

Acknowledgements. I wish to thank the following for their help in connection with the above work: P.J.Chadwick of the Steep Holm Gull Research Station; D.W.Mackie for help in identification of specimens; W.S.Bristowe for unpublished information on S.bavarica; The Steep Holm Trust and the Bristol Naturalists' Society.

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