

***Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 (Araneae; Theridiidae), an element new to the Belgian arachnofauna**

Henrard Arnaud

Rue de Namur, 37b/403, 1435 Mont-Saint-Guibert – arnaud.henrard@gmail.com

Résumé

Episinus maculipes Cavanna, 1876 est signalée comme espèce nouvelle pour la faune Belge

Samenvating

De soort *Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 wordt nieuw gemeld voor de Belgische fauna

Summary

The species *Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 is reported new to the Belgian fauna

Description

Episinus maculipes Cavanna, 1876 is considered as a rare and poorly known European spider of the family Theridiidae despite its widespread distribution (Roberts 1985, Knoflach et al., 2009). This note presents the first record for Belgium of *E. maculipes* and illustrates that our knowledge of the Belgian arachnofauna presents still some gaps. However, serious efforts are made to fill these gaps and two dozen species of spiders have been reported as new for the Belgian fauna since 2001 (see Bosmans, 2009).

A pair of *E. maculipes* was found in July (10/07/2010) at dusk¹ (around 22h). It was in the undergrowth of broad-leaved wood at the top of the cliffs of “Rochers de Freyr” (Hastière), near the access to the north face of the sector called “le Mérinos”. The female was sitting on a wooden notice board at about 1.50 m above the ground, hanging on silk threads. The male was found running along a wooden beam, close to the female. According to Roberts (1995), *E. maculipes* occurs in shrubs and trees, and the web is built between leaves and branches.

The identification of this species occurred by coincidence almost two months later. Some pictures of a male from this species were recently posted on a forum that focuses on French terrestrial arthropods (<http://www.insecte.org/>). These images reminded me that I had also collected similar individuals in early July. So, naturally, I posted an image of the female on the same forum. It was Pierre Oger, who, having recognized *E. maculipes*, had the brilliant reflex to look at the list of spiders found in Belgium, available on ARABEL website, and therefore noted that the species was new to Belgium.

Although new to the Belgian fauna and qualified as rare by some authors, *E. maculipes* is found from the Mediterranean to as far north as southern England. This species is known throughout France and was notably observed in its northern part at Fontainebleau and Verrières by Didier Petot, an amateur nature photographer.

¹ Specimens were placed on grass twigs for photos (fig. 1 and 2) and were then stored in 70% ethanol.

Globally, *E. maculatus* differs from the other species (in Belgium: *E. truncatus* Latreille, 1809 and *E. angulatus* Blackwall, 1836) by conspicuously speckled and ringed legs, and its brown sternum provided with a longitudinal median dark band. The male and the female genitalia are distinctive and can be seen in Figures 3, 4 and 5 (for thorough description see: Brignoli 1967, Locket et al. 1974, Hillyard 1983, Roberts 1995, Agnarsson 2004, Knoflach et al. 2009).



Figure 1. Belgian female of *Episinus maculipes*

ARABEL Image Bank/©Arnaud Henrard



Figure 2. Belgian male of *Episinus maculipes*

ARABEL Image Bank/©Arnaud Henrard

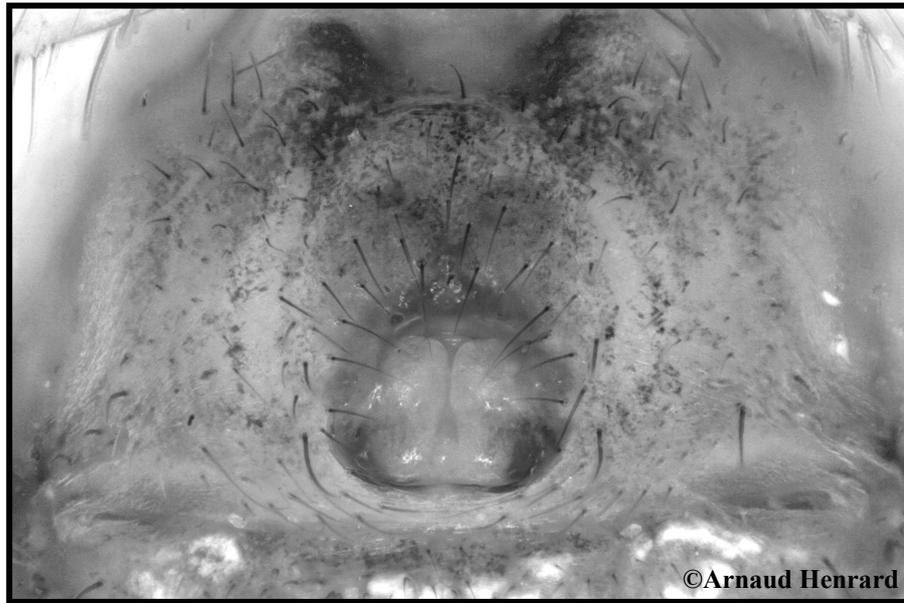


Figure 3. Female pygyne of *Episinus maculipes*, ventral view



Figure 4. Male copulatory organ of *Episinus maculipes*, left, retrolateral view

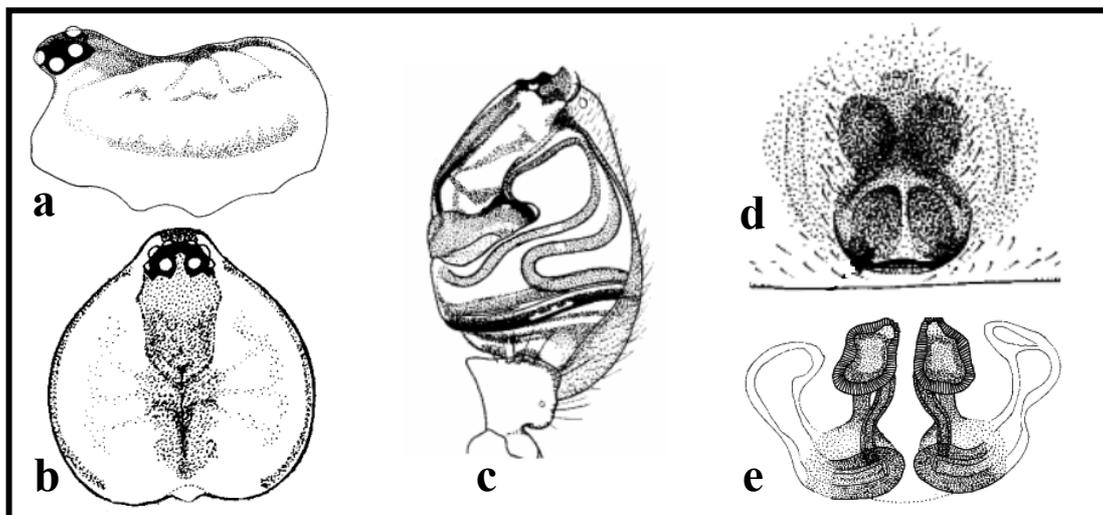


Figure 5 a-e. After Hillyard (1983). Copulatory organ and some somatic features of *Episinus maculipes*. a-b: cephalothorax, lateral & dorsal; c, left palp of male, retrolateral; d, epigyne, ventral; e: Vulva, dorsal.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Pierre Oger for informing me that *E. maculipes* was not on the check list of ARABEL and allowed to discover a new Belgian species. I'd also thank Oksana Kouznetsova and Rudy Jocqué for reviewing and his suggestions about the English translation. Finally, special thanks are due to Arnaud Hennebicq for his precious comments and suggestions about the illustrations.

References

- Agnarsson I., 2004. Morphological phylogeny of cobweb spiders and their relatives (Araneae, Araneoidea, Theridiidae). *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 141: 447-626.
- Bosmans R., 2009. Een herziene soortenlijst van de Belgische spinnen (Araneae). *Nieuwsbrief van de Belgische Arachnologische Vereniging*, 24(1-3): 33-58.
- Brignoli P. M., 1967. Notizie sui Theridiidae del Lazio (Araneae). *Fragmenta entomologica*, 4: 177-197, Tav. III.
- Hillyard P. D., 1983. *Episinus maculipes* Cavanna (Araneae, Theridiidae). *Bulletin of the British arachnological Society*, 6: 88-92
- Knoflach B., Rollard C. & Thaler K., 2009. Notes on Mediterranean Theridiidae (Araneae) – II. In: Stoev P., Dunlop J. & Lazarov S (Eds). A life caught in a spider's web. Papers in arachnology in honour of Christo Deltchev. *ZooKeys* 16: 227-264. doi: 10.3897/zookeys.16.237
- Locket G. H., Millidge A. F. & Merrett P., 1974. *British spiders 3*. 1-314. Ray Society (London), 149: 1-314.
- Roberts M. J., 1995. *Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe*. Collins Field Guide. HarperCollins Publishers, Bath, 383 pp.