

REFERENCES

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An important new site for Tapinoma erraticum (Latreille) (Hym., Formicidae) in Britain. — On 12.v.1994 Dave Boyce (DCB) found a small colony of *Tapinoma erraticum* near Minehead, South Somerset (VC5). He kept a voucher specimen, which is now in Tony Prince's (AJP) collection. AJP visited this site, at Alcombe Common (SS978436) three times in 1996, with no success in finding the ant. On the third occasion, on 30.viii.1996, DCB accompanied him and showed him the exact spot. The habitat was lowland heath referable to the H4 western gorse *Ulex gallii*—bristle bent *Agrostis curtisii* National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community. The area had been burnt a few years previously, but had now regenerated, resulting in the loss of the patches of bare ground required by *Tapinoma* (Falk, S., 1991, *A review of the scarce and threatened bees, wasps & ants of Great Britain*, Research and survey in Nature Conservation, no. 35, NCC, Peterborough). There were more recently burnt areas of heath, which still looked suitable for the ant, but no *Tapinoma* could be found here.

On 26.v.1999 and 23.vii.1999 AJP revisited Alcombe Common and was again unable to find *Tapinoma*. Given the very small area of suitable habitat, it seems likely that it may now be extinguished at this site. AJP decided to widen his search to a second block of lowland heath, at North Hill (SS958466), some 4km north of the original site. Several *Tapinoma* nests were found here, in a small patch of recently burnt H4 heathland, in which bell heather *Erica cinerea*, ling *Calluna vulgaris*, western gorse and bristle bent were the dominant plants. Areas of bare ground were still present between the regenerating dwarf shrubs.

On 22.iii.2000 we revisited North Hill where, in addition to the site described above, two further sub-populations were located. The first was a solitary nest at SS955468, on a small path amongst mature H4 heathland. The second was at SS957466, where a few foraging workers were seen in an area where bracken has recently been cleared, resulting in the creation of regenerating heathland with abundant bare ground.

Tapinoma erraticum is defined as a nationally scarce Notable B species (Falk, S., 1991, op. cit.; Hoy, S. & Roberts, S.M., 1999, Species profile of *Tapinoma erraticum* (Latreille, 1798) (Formicidae: Dolichoderinae), *BWARS Newsletter*, Autumn 1999: 19–20; 22). It has records from 42 ten-km squares of the National Grid (Hoy & Roberts, *idem.*). Almost all sites are on lowland heathland in southern England, from Cornwall to Kent. This is the first occasion on which *Tapinoma erraticum* has been recorded in Somerset, and is one of the most northerly records of the species in England. It appears to be very isolated from other colonies, with the nearest being in the Bovey valley, South Devon, some 69km to the south. — A.J. PRINCE, 6 Northgate, Wiveliscombe, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 2LE & D.C. BOYCE, 1 Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9DP: November 11th, 2000.