

Pholcus phalangioides in Finland (Araneae, Pholcidae)

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The geographical range of the synanthropic spider *Pholcus phalangioides* is increasing. During the 15 years since its first documented occurrence in Finland, observations have accumulated substantially. Notably, a public inquiry in 2014 almost doubled the amount. Presently the total number of observations is 62, most of them from the southwestern parts of the country, the northernmost being from Pietarsaari (63°40' N).

The daddy-long-legs spider *Pholcus phalangioides* (Fuesslin, 1775) (Fig. 1) is widely distributed in subtropical and temperate regions throughout the world (Huber 2011), in temperate climate strongly associated with buildings, hence the parallel vernacular name 'cellar spider'. Expansion of its geographical range is presumably the result of passive long-distance dispersal through human activity (Schäfer et al. 2001).

The species was reported for the first time in Finland by Terhivuo (2002). During the years 2000–2001, observations of the species were made in four localities in Finland, all of them in or near Helsinki. Two of these were residential buildings and two were heated warehouses (Terhivuo 2002). However, the first record in Finland seems to be from 1999, in the Botanical Garden, University of Turku (Timo Kämäräinen, pers. comm.).

In the 2013 edition of the Atlas of Finnish spiders, 18 observations were recorded within nine 10 × 10 km squares for *P. phalangioides*.

Most observations were from the southwestern part of Finland, the northernmost from Seinäjoki, 62°42' N (Koponen et al. 2013). Up to spring 2014, ten additional observations and seven new squares mounted up to a total of 28 records in 16 squares.

Pholcus phalangioides was selected "the Finnish spider of the year 2014" by the Finnish Expert Group on Araneae. The objective of designating a spider of the year is communication with the public, through conveying information on spiders and their kin as well as encouraging people to contribute to the monitoring of domestic species in a more targeted way than, for instance, by way of internet portals which are still used by a minority of people. A short popular science text (with informative figures) was published on the Expert Group web site (<http://finaraneae.org/vuoden-hamahakki/vuoden-hamahakki-2014>) and distributed to more than 30 newspapers and journals. The communiqué included an inquiry for observations on *Pholcus* in Finland. We asked for



Fig. 1. An adult female of *Pholcus phalangioides* hanging upside down on the web. Photo: N.R. Fritzén.

photographic documentation, alternatively specimens, to be sent along with the observation data to the zoological museums of Helsinki or Turku. We obtained 25 observations, of which 23 were dealing with *Pholcus* and two with harvestmen (Opiliones). The proportion of observations actually concerning the correct species was surprisingly high (92 %), especially when compared to our previous inquiry on the wasp spider (*Argiope bruennichi*), in which only 10 % of the observations were correct and most of the submitted photographs depicted *Araneus diadematus* (Koponen *et al.* 2014).

To our present knowledge, based on the inquiry and other records of *P. phalangioides* in Finland, there are more than ten localities with permanent, well-established populations. These buildings have been inhabited by the species for several years, some of them for more than ten years. Two populations are known to have existed in the same localities (buildings) in Espoo, near Helsinki (Jan Eklund and Juhani Kairamo, pers. comm.) for at least 15 years. In addition, a few

observers mentioned that the species, according to their recollections, was seen even before the first documented record (in 1999), i.e. in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

The known range of *P. phalangioides* in Finland (Fig. 2) is still mainly southwestern, although a few records from the (south)eastern part of the country were received. More than a half of the observations are from either the capital (Helsinki–Espoo) area (20) or around Turku (18). The northernmost observation of live specimens is from Vaasa (63°04'N). In addition, one of the present authors (NRF) found an empty skin in Pietarsaari 2012. This is the northernmost known locality in Finland (63°40'N) and one of the northernmost ones in Europe. The total number of observations is now 62 from 27 squares (10 × 10 km).

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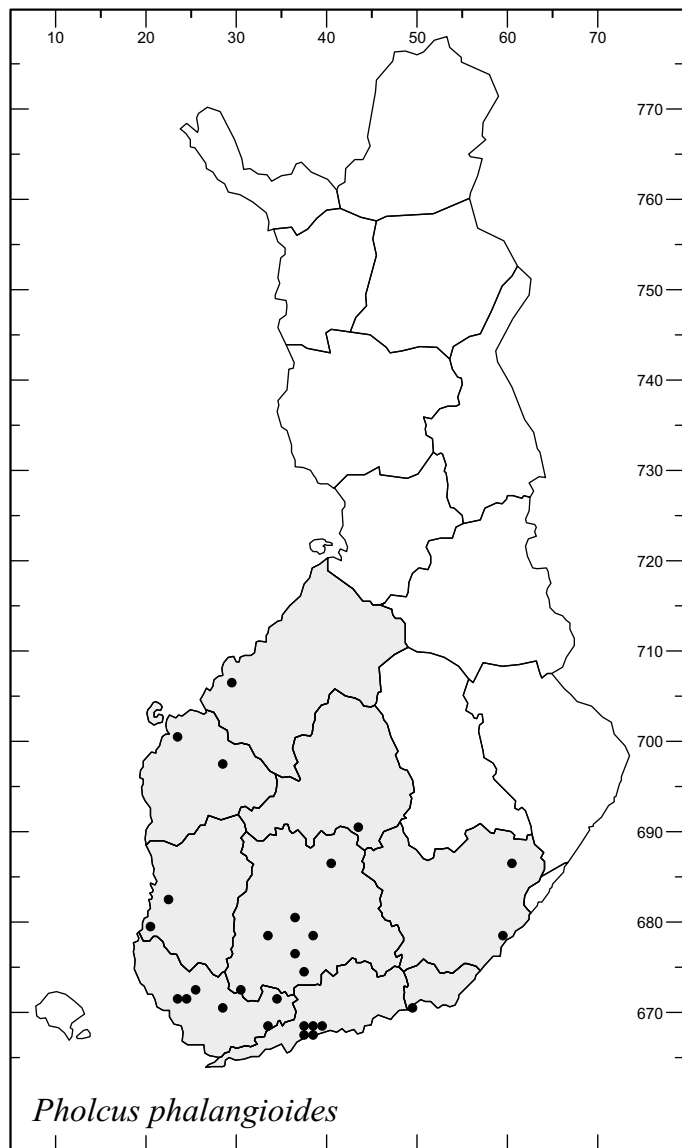


Fig. 2. Observations of *Pholcus phalangioides* in Finland. Each dot represents a 10 x 10 km square.

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