

A call for collection data on Belgian spiders (Arachnida: Araneae)

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Spiders represent a highly diverse group of arthropods that occur in almost every terrestrial environment on our planet, where they often play a key role as predators regulating populations of other arthropods. Because of their sensitivity to environmental changes and close association with habitat conditions, spiders are also valuable indicators of ecosystem quality and ecological turnover. However, despite their importance, knowledge of their distribution, population trends and conservation status remains incomplete in many regions, largely due to uneven sampling efforts and large amounts of unpublished data.

The first Red List assessment for Flanders evaluated the status of 604 spider species and provided an important baseline for assessing the extinction risk of spiders (MAELFAIT et al. 1998). However, this assessment was largely based on expert knowledge rather than formal analyses and is now severely outdated. The most recent Belgian spider checklist documented 718 species (BOSMANS & VAN KEER 2017), and since its publication, at least 40 additional species have been recorded in Belgium. This increase reflects both the continued increase in knowledge of the Belgian fauna and ongoing changes in species distributions due to factors such as climate change or human-induced introductions. Moreover, the distribution and conservation status of many species have changed since the original Red List assessment, warranting a new, validated Red List that incorporates recent data (DE SMEDT et al. 2024).

While a substantial amount of spider distribution data is already available through the centralized ARABEL database (ARADAT) and/or citizen science platforms such as Observations.be/Waarnemingen.be, many valuable records remain scattered across personal collections and unpublished datasets. To support the preparation of an updated Red List assessment, we aim to centralize these currently unavailable spider occurrence data. **We therefore invite anyone in possession of Belgian spider data that have not yet been digitized and/or shared through larger databases to contribute their records.** Although we strongly encourage the publishing of such data through ARADAT or Waarnemingen.be, this is not a requirement, and assistance with digitization can be provided when needed.

All contributions, whether large datasets or individual records, can provide valuable information for assessing species' Red List statuses. Data contributions can be made by contacting Garben Logghe (garbenlogghe@hotmail.com). Of course, contributors will be acknowledged for their valuable input to this national data compilation effort.

The ultimate goal is to assemble the most comprehensive overview of Belgian spider diversity and distribution to date, providing a robust scientific basis for the next Red List assessment and future initiatives such as a new ecological atlas of the Belgian spiders.

References: BOSMANS R. & VAN KEER, K. (2017). Een herziene soortenlijst van de Belgische spinnen (Araneae). *Nieuwsbrief van de Belgische Arachnologische Vereniging* **32**: 39-69. || DE SMEDT, P., HENRARD, A., LOGGHE, G., VANTHOURNOUT, B., & VAN KEER, K. (2024). Towards an updated and validated Red List of the spiders of Flanders. *Journal of the Belgian Arachnological Society*, **39**(1): 1-5. || MAELFAIT, J. P., BAERT, L., JANSSENS, M. & ALDERWEIRELDT, M. (1998). A Red list for the spiders of Flanders. *Bulletin van het Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen, Entomologie* **68**: 131-142.