

The Spider Club News



Editor: Astri Leroy

August 2008 - Vol.24 #2

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Who are we?

The Spider Club of Southern Africa is a non-profit-making organization. Our aim is to encourage an interest in arachnids – especially spiders and scorpions and to promote this interest and the study of these animals by all suitable means.

Membership is open to anyone – people interested in joining the club may apply to any committee member for information.

Field outings, day visits, arachnid surveys and demonstrations, workshops and exhibits are arranged from time to time. A diary of events and outings is published at the end of this newsletter.

Mission Statement

***“The Spider Club provides a fun, responsible, social learning-experience, centered on spiders
their relatives and in nature in general.”***

Our Contact Details

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	But it is still www.spiderclub.co.za	

The chairman says: Check the diary! Check your e-mail! Check the googlegroup! We are going to try to remind you about events as they are about to happen and encourage you to **join in** but YOU need to keep in touch too. Have a look at Alistair's story about the ladybirds - it was a great day! If you haven't already joined spiderclub@googlegroups.com - it's the best way to keep in touch. Ian Engelbrecht at Ian.Engelbrecht@gauteng.gov.za can organize it.

PLEASE NOTE!!! The previous newsletter was sent out on the googlegroup but subsequent newsletters won't be. You will need to tell us the best way to get it to you, best is always via e-mail, so we need your e-mail address, and PLEASE TELL Miemie, she is in charge of the membership. Mushrooms grow in the dark and if you keep us in the dark we will become mushrooms, so will you and you will never know what you are missing.

CHARGES FOR FIELD TRIPS: You will see from the diary that adults attending certain events will be charged, we want to build up our bank account little by little so that we can offer more and better things to our members and at the same time encourage people to join the club (or discourage them from coming to events without paying!) In other cases it is because the venue charges entrance fees.

SPIDERLINGS Carol and Shirley ran Spiderlings most successfully for the younger members and they have both said that they can carry on with this on an ad hoc basis when asked to do so. So you can contact them to ask if they can run children's events that come up. Carol is on cell phone 083-374-6116 or e-mail fristaidpriority@absamail.co.za and Shirley is on 083-637-0690 armalley@lantic.net

FOR SALE We have quite a lot of arachnobia such as 5 litre sweetie jars with blue lids to use as terraria, t-shirts, caps, bandanas, etc. We will give prices in the next newsletter and bring them to events for you to buy.

E-pos oor spinnekopbyte is 'snert'

AliceStine October

KAAPSTAD. – Die Wes-Kaapse departement van omgewing, beplanning en ekonomiese ontwikkeling het hom gister gedistansieer van 'n e-pos waarin mense in die provinsie teen vioolspinnepkoppe gewaarsku word.

Die departement en spinnekopkenners het dit as 'n vals alarm afgemaak.

Die e-pos, wat glo deur 'n werknemer van die departement uitgestuur is, waarsku mense dat dié spinnekoppe glo nou in huise inkom, met 'n langbeenspinnekop verwar word en glo teen die spoed van lig aantel. Die spinnekop word glo ook in al hoe meer huise hier gesien.

By die e-pos is ook foto's van 'n "spinnekopbyt" aan 'n man se hand en hoe die wond ná tien dae sou lyk.

Me. Astri Leroy, van die Spinne-

kopklub van Suider-Afrika, het dié e-pos as snert afgemaak.

"Vioolspinnepkoppe is baie seldsaam," het Leroy gesê.

Mnr. Nils Flaatten, woordvoerder vir die Wes-Kaapse minister van omgewing, beplanning en ekonomiese ontwikkeling, me. Tasneem Essop, het gesê dit is nie die eerste keer dat dié e-pos die ronde doen nie. Die e-pos steek elke paar maande weer kopuit. Daar is nie rede vir kommer nie," het hy gesê.

Mnr. Norman Larsen, 'n spinnekopkenner, het gesê spinnekoppe, net soos die grootwithaai (ook bekend as die witdoodshaai), kry gewoonlik negatiewe mediadekking.

"Vioolspinnepkoppe én hul byt is uiters seldsaam in die Wes-Kaap. Dit is ook wetenskaplik bewys so wat 80% van nekrotiese letsels wat in Suid-Afrika, die VSA, Australië en Europa aangemeld is, is nie spinnekopbyte nie," het Larsen gesê.

YAY!!!! At long last some SENSE! Thanks for giving Alcestine at "Die Burger" the real stuff Norman Can you imagine that this nonsense came from the Western Cape Department of the Environment, Planning and Economic Development which I presume is the official name for Cape Nature? By the way Nils Flaaten in John Leroy's Godson – what wheels within wheels!

SOME MORE SENSE ON SPIDER VENOM

The following is the Abstract from an article published in The Journal of Arachnology by Richard S. Vetter of the Department of Entomology, University of California at Riverside. His e-mail is rick.vetter@ucr.edu.

"*Loxosceles* spiders are of concern outside of the arachnological world because their bites can cause occasional necrotic skin lesions and/or systemic complications; these manifestations are known as loxoscelism. Once these spiders became well associated as medical entities, much notoriety was attained through the publication of medical case histories as well as tales of horrific wounds in the general literature. Although most *Loxosceles* spider bites are unremarkable, require only general supportive care and often result in an excellent outcome, they are an occasional source of severe dermonecrotic injury with long healing times and significant scarring. In rare cases of systemic loxoscelism, serious intravascular, nephrological and/or multi-organ damage can occur, sometimes resulting in death. (That's America for you, MUCH more dangerous than Africa! Ed.) However, also of concern is that loxoscelism is diagnosed by medical personnel or presumed by the general public in highly improbable scenarios preventing or delaying proper remedy, which can lead to deleterious outcome. Herein, *Loxosceles* biology and medical aspects are reviewed. In particular, an extensive discussion of the distribution of the brown recluse spider, *L. reclusa* Gertsch & Mulaik 1940, is presented along with life history characteristics, which relate to the medical aspects of the genus. Also presented are manifestations and epidemiology of loxoscelism, misdiagnoses of bites by the medical community, alternative diagnoses confused with recluse spider bites and a discussion of the psychological basis for the proliferation of the myth of loxoscelism by both the general public and the medical community. North and South American species are reviewed because this is where the genus predominates and is the region where the most pertinent research has originated."

Ref: Vetter, R.S. 2008. Spiders of the genus *Loxosceles* (Araneae, Sicariidae): a review of biological, medical and psychological aspects regarding envenomations. The Journal of Arachnology 36:150-163. For the complete paper please contact Rick Vetter on his e-mail.

We have 7 named species of Loxosceles in our region. It's quite likely that the effects of their venom on humans varies from species to species. Ed.

STOP PRESS: There has been a proven bite from a six eyed sand spider (6 eyed crab spider) *Sicarius testaceus* to a small boy. The spider was identified and the child kept under observation but no serious symptoms occurred. So another "deadly spider" myth bites the dust! But just don't stick your fingers in a *Sicarius*' mouth just yet, it may be an individual that has not read the newsletter. Ed.

BOOK REVIEW: GNAPHOSID GENERA OF THE WORLD, a two volume magnum opus by John Murphy with illustrations by Michael Roberts, published by the British Arachnological Society. It is purely taxonomic with line drawings of all the known genera and leaves one with no excuse such as "Oh it's just another gnaphosid". I have, in the past, generally shunned this family because I couldn't identify them with any certainty and thought they were kind of dull. It's true, they don't catch the popular imagination, their venom is of no consequence to people and they are mostly dull-coloured, nocturnal and live their lives hidden from our eyes at ground level, under stones, debris and leaf litter. However, as Paul Selden says in the Foreword that anyone starting the study of spiders quickly begins to recognize them and realise their importance in the general scheme of things. There are nearly 2000 described species of gnaphosids in over 100 genera which makes them the third most diverse spider family out of 108 in the world.

There are very few books on a single spider family; there have been books on jumping spiders (Salticidae) and scientific monographs such as Rudy Jocque's on the zodariids. This book with its excellent illustrations is a complete review of the present knowledge of a large and important spider family and its genera and will help enormously when identifications are needed.

And guess what? John Murphy is an amateur arachnologist. It puts the word "amateur" into a completely new light for me. Two more books will be reviewed in following newsletters, one is about Dominican spiders in Amber by Dave Penney and the other is on the biology of Opiliones (harvestmen) by Ricardo Pinto-da-Rocha, Glauco Machado and Gonzalo Giribet.

SPIDERS IN A GARDEN: Those of you who have attended the AFRAS Colloquia over the years will be familiar with Meg Cummings' and Wanda Wesolowska's work on jumping spiders and particularly those that live in Meg's Garden in Harare, Zimbabwe. They have now published a paper on the 9 years of observation entitled "Taxonomy and Natural History of a species-rich assemblage of jumping spiders (Araneae:Salticidae); a long-term study of a suburban site in Zimbabwe" published in *Annales Zoologici* (Warsawa), 2008, 58(1): 167-230. They recorded 47 different species of salticids in the garden and amongst other things they described 12 new ones, synonymized 4, and recorded 8 new records for Zimbabwe! The natural history of each species is presented where available. Amazing stuff and in just one garden.

LADYBIRDING AT RHENOSTERSPRUIT By Alistair Mathie. One of the perks of being a spiderer is that you get to see so much more than just spiders! On 12 July a group of SCSA members and friends were privileged to observe the mass hibernation of "potato" ladybirds *Epilachna dregi* within the Rhenosterspruit Conservancy just north-west of Johannesburg. Unlike their useful, predatory cousins, these ladybirds are harmful to crops – their larvae feed on the underside of leaves of potatoes, tomatoes and sometimes squashes, while adults feed on the upper side of the leaves to the extent that they look like skeleton leaves. Our gracious host Helen Duigan from the farm Waaigras guided us to an unusual jumble of stone ruins atop a koppie. In the walls of the cool, south section of the ruins, sheltered from the elements, the ladybirds were crammed in their thousands into the gaps between the stones, clinging to the mortar. This extraordinary phenomenon is an annual occurrence.

Although our focus was on the ladybirds, with "spider season" still some months away, we took time to enjoy the spectacular view and a casual reccie uncovered a hapless wolf spider (family Lycosidae) which had fallen prey to a parasitoid wasp. The larvae, which hatches from a single egg laid on the spider was almost fully grown and the spider was about finished. This kind of wasp does not paralyze its host and the spider carries on its life whilst the wasp grub is small and is only surviving on the spider's haemolymph (blood). It is only just before the larvae pupates that it finally consumes the spider's vital organs and finishes it off. A nesting pair of South Africa's smallest mice, *Mus (leggada) minutoides* was also observed.

The Rhenosterspruit Conservancy is a beautiful piece of our natural heritage that deserves unreserved public support but is sadly under threat by greedy developers. The SCSA extends warm thanks to Helen and the staff of the Conservancy for their hospitality and we look forward to returning to experience more of the area's "small miracles" in summer.

(John and I returned the next weekend so that he could photograph the ladybirds whilst I looked around for other creatures and I found numerous webs of the big web-building nursery web spiders, in the genus *Euprosthenoops*, an immature button spider *Latrodectus* sp, probably *L. renivulvatus*, several juvenile crab spiders (family Thomisidae), numerous small theridiids (comb-footed spiders) with conical abdomens. They had been catching – you got it – ladybirds although the latter are much larger than the spiders themselves. They had small 3 dimensional webs with retreats of curled leaves and bits of grass. Also seen was the web and retreat – but no spider -of the araneid (orb web weaver) *Araneus apricus*. In addition there were several

different species of gnaphosids (I DIDN'T try to identify them!) and a surly-looking female ground crab spider family Thomisidae and genus *Xysticus*. – Ed.)

An SCSA outing to Rhenosterspruit Conservancy has been arranged for Sunday 8 February 2009 – see Club Diary.

Mus minutoides



Epilachna dregi



Lycosid and wasp grub.



SAMMY MARKS CRAFT MARKET.

Guess what? The Spider Club stand at the craft market at the Sammy Marks Museum last Sunday 10th August was the most popular stand around. We had crowds of people talking to us, asking questions, telling us tall stories and getting really involved all day and our team presented spiders and scorpions with verve and enthusiasm. It was a great day out and I think we caught the popular imagination yet again. Thanks all of you it was a huge success. We made a bit of money, recruited some new members and best of all educated people about spiders and scorpions and I am absolutely certain that we have saved many spiders from future death! The police band was good, some of the food stands excellent and most of our animals behaved like little stars, except for one big bad rain spider that bit your chairman on the thumb! Both survived. Ed.



Here are Bertus and Danie doing their educating thing in their own ways. Then we see Alistair (well Alistair's hand, easily recognizable by the bracelets and rings) showing fascinated boys how special and gentle big scorpions can be.

DIARY 2008/2009

27 – 30 SEPTEMBER, 2008. YEBO GOGGA is to be earlier this year and only 4 days, Saturday through to Tuesday. This means that setting up will have to be done before 27th as I see it. Because it will be during the government-schools' holidays, it will be run as a holiday programme. Please keep these dates in mind! It will, as before, be in the Oppenheimer Life Sciences Building at the University of the Witwatersrand and is open daily from 10 a.m. – 4:30 pm. Entrance is free and you can even get to EAT BUGS!

25th OCTOBER, 2008. 8:30 a.m. for 9. Beginners' Identification Course, which is aimed at people who know nothing about spiders. R60 for Spider Club members, R120 non members. Regret, no children under 12. This will be at the Sandton Field and Study Centre, Louise Avenue, Parkmore, Sandton. Booking essential. Contact Astri on info@spiders.co.za or (011) 958-0695. 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Directions, turn off William Nicol Drive, at robots at Mattie Road, take any of the roads left till you come to Louise Avenue, turn right and you will find the big gates to the Sandton Field and Study Centre on your left.

8th NOVEMBER, 2008: 10 .am. – 5 p.m. Day outing, Farm adjacent to MARIEVALE BIRD SANCTUARY, MEET AT THE BIRD SANCRUARY. Leader Steve Langton e-mail stevelangton@polka.co.za, cell: 082-896-9741, landline (011) 818-1402. 10 am – 5 pm bring and braai (bring your own charcoal too) bird watching and spider seeking. R20 per adult. Marievale is situated on the east Rand to the south-east of Johannesburg. Access is easiest from Johannesburg via the N3 towards Heidelberg. Take the R550 (Glenroy/Kliprivier) offramp and turn left. Follow this road for approximately 20 km to a T-junction and turn right towards Nigel. Follow this road through Nigel until you see a sign on the left indicating the sanctuary. The sanctuary is approximately 3 km further on after passing the SANDF (defence force) base.

13TH NOVEMBER, 2008: 6 pm for 6:30. Nedbank Green Affinity/Africa Geographic Reader Evenings. **13th November**, Nedbank, 90 Ordnance Road, Kingsmead, Durban. Entrance is free but booking essential, on line at www.africageographic.com click on Reader Events or call Marlene Paul on (011) 262-9465 or e-mail marlene@africageographic.com.

15th NOVEMBER, 2008: A field trip Krantzkloof Nature Reserve in Kloof, Kwa/Zulu Natal. There will be an entrance fee to the reserve and a donation to the Spider Club would be appreciated. Time, entrance fee and directions closer to the time.

20th NOVEMBER, SANDTON, 6 pm for 6:30. Nedbank Auditorium, Ground Floor, 135 Rivonia Road, Sandton. (for Parking entrance 2). Entrance is free but booking essential. (No heckling from Spider Club members please!). Book on line at www.africageographic.com click on Reader Events or call Marlene Paul on (011) 262-9465 or e-mail marlene@africageographic.com.

22nd NOVEMBER Spider walk NELSPRUIT at the Lowveld National Botanical Garden, off White River Road (Value Mart Intersection), Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. Everyone welcome. Book with Lounita Leroux on telephone (013) 752-5531 or e-mail lerouxL@sanbi.org

27th NOVEMBER. 6 pm for 6:30. CAPE TOWN. Nedbank BoE Clocktower Auditorium, Ground Floor, Clocktower Precinct, V & A Waterfront, Cape Town. (secure parking available). Astri will be presenting spiders to a wider audience and if you are around please come and support her. Entrance is free but booking essential, on line at www.africageographic.com click on Reader Events or call Marlene Paul on (011) 262-9465 or e-mail marlene@africageographic.com.

29th NOVEMBER, 2008. CAPE TOWN: A field trip inside Kenilworth Race Track, with Norman Larsen and Astri Leroy. 8:30 for 9 am. Contact Norman Larsen for directions on 083-698-1943 or e-mail at spiderboy@telkomsa.net or meet at the main entrance in Rosmead Avenue, Kenilworth.

2009:24th JANUARY, 2009. 8:30 for 9. Rand Water Head Office Nature reserve in the Klipriviersberg their entrance gate is at 522 Impala Road, Glenvista. From the M1 take the Kliprivier Drive (M7) off ramp, cross Rifle Range Road and the N12 and turn right up the hill into Impala Road in (Kibler Park). From the N12 (southern Bypass) take the Kliprivier Drive offramp (M7), through one robot at Columbine/Vorster Drives, then through another robot at Van Beek Avenue and at next robot turn right into Impala Road. Rand Water's imposing entrance gate is on your left. Sign in please! Please bring a picnic lunch, something to drink and a hat. Contact Astri on info@spiders.co.za R20 per adult.

2009: 8TH FEBRUARY, 2009: 8:30 for 9. Day outing to Waaigras farm Rhenosterspruit Conservancy. 25°53.532 South 27°58.337 East, day outing in wonderful Highveld with wetlands, dams, koppies and grasslands. Details of how to get there and who to contact will be given later. R60 per adult R15 per child to be paid on the day - money to go to the Conservancy and the Spider Club.

APRIL 10 – 13 EASTER WEEKEND 2009.

Lapalala Wilderness School, in the best part of the Waterberg, Limpopo Province. R70 per person per night. Booking essential and will only be confirmed on receipt of payment, in full on or before 13th March, 2009. This will be self-catering in dormitory type accommodation. Lapalala Wilderness is absolutely wonderful and our hosts will be the educators at the L.W.S. Perhaps we can get them more involved in arachnids and we could undertake to give them a revised arachnid list after our visit.. Contact Astri on info@spiders.co.za or 073-168-7187.

Directions, take the N1 north towards Polokwane/Pietersburg and at the Kranzkop Toll Plaza take the off ramp to Modimolle/Nylstroom on the R33. Go straight through the town and proceed to Vaalwater/Mabatlane (+ - 65 ks). In Vaalwater opposite the garage at the robot turn right into Sandrift Road onto the R518 to Melkrivier. Drive approximately 45 kms till you get to the Melkrivier School, take the left fork signposted to Melkrivier School and Lapalala. Travel 12 ks on sand road to the main gate, sign in and ask for directions to the Wilderness School. Gates close 6 p.m.

It takes about 3 1/2 – 4 hours on a normal day but plan for MUCH longer over Easter Weekend!

PLEASE NOTE: It's Easter weekend when several million people take the N1 to the Zionist Church of Africa at Moria City. An alternative route to Modimolle/Nylstroom is the R511 (extension of William Nicol going north from Fourways), through Brits towards Thabazimbi, pass Beestekraal, pass the turnoff to Assen Police Station and opposite the turnoff to Koedoeskop turn right onto the R516 to Warmbaths/Bela Bela and from there the old R101 to Modimolle/Nylstroom. It's longer but may be quicker and less stressful! This may take 4 – 5 hours.