The Spider Club News

Edited by Rudolph Steenkamp

June 2020 – VOLUME 36, No.2

"The Spider Club provides a fun, responsible, social learning experience, centred on spiders, their relatives, and on nature in general."

WINTER EDITION

Photo credit: Jonathan P. Jessup

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About the Spider Club

The Spider Club of Southern Africa is a non-profit organisation. 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.

Contact us

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Your committee; always available and ready to help

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Acknowledgements:

Our sincere gratitude goes to the following people for this edition of the newsletter:

- All the photographers of the photos used in this edition. Without you, these pages would be very dull.
- Norman Larsen, for helping me fill the pages.
- Astri Leroy, of course, for all her contributions, and informing me of any new content.
- Jessica Myburgh, for the design of the Snippets spider logo.
- Everyone on SCSA and its sister groups for all the interesting content.
- All the readers of this newsletter, and all the positive feedback we receive. Of course, keep the negative feedback coming, so that we can improve on this newsletter.

Sjoe, so okay! *Quo Vadis*, or where to from here? Everything changed for all of us since 12 midnight Thursday 27 March 2020.

Events such the ever popular "spider walks" or field events, identification workshops, and Annual General Meeting (AGM) have been postponed until further notice and will only be reinstated cautiously when we are permitted to "unlock". The AGM would have been a party of note as June 2020 is our 45th anniversary as a club. The cities of Tshwane and Cape Town seem to have "unlocked" their municipal nature reserves but Joburg City Parks and Zoo has not and it seems that those of us in the "big smoke" will have to wait until Level 1 to visit natural areas. But fear not, we have plans. It's all very well allowing visits to provincial and other game and nature reserves by car but that's not spider friendly! So check your garden/farm/suburb and take pictures to send to Rudi. Like many, I am pretty convinced that nothing will be "back to normal" for a year or two, if ever.

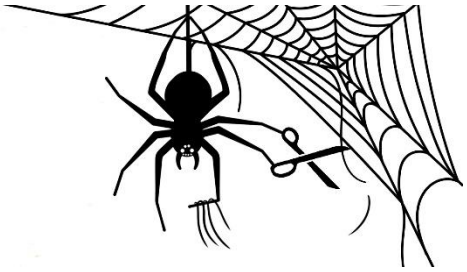
It has not only been the world-changing disaster caused by the virus Covid-19 but I am sure you have noticed that the structure of the club itself changed. We no longer really have a committee but we DO have committed club members, notably Rudi Steenkamp (aka Hrodulf Steinkampf) who has volunteered to edit The Spider Club News. Thank you, Rudi. You will see he has put his stamp on it in this edition and I know it will just get more and more interesting. This volume has news of a new spider society opening in Zimbabwe; there are wonderful photos that just didn't make Spider of the Month over the last few months, a little male button spider's interesting behaviour, and a spider game rather like "beetles", all the way from Serbia. Caren Neal is our membership (and social?) secretary. Dawie Broekman has also been added as an admin on the Facebook page, and he has been doing a great job so far in engaging members and answering their questions. I guess I continue as reluctant chairman, but I am really happy to hand most of the running of The Spider Club to younger people. Thank goodness for technology and particularly social media! At least we can all keep in touch and our various platforms of communication are very much alive and well. I have a distinct feeling that those of us who come out the other side of this crisis will be different, will find the world different, and may find we have different priorities.

Like millions and millions of people around the world, I am scared, but as others have said, maybe humanity will learn from this crisis. It is so obvious now that we are all connected, we are all the same, we are all able to contract this scary disease, and any of us could be carriers, but humanity is resilient, and as a species I very much doubt that *Homo sapiens* will disappear in the immediately future. We can live in hope; this might be what the world has been looking for, something to curb the exponential growth in the numbers of our species, but I don't think this is IT. Perhaps us oldies will be taken out of the equation to make way for our descendants; perhaps that's a good thing (but not for me personally!). AIDS hasn't done it, nor has Ebola, or even the "Spanish" flu, but maybe the combination of some of these ills and the breakdown of society that will undoubtedly be the aftermath of the pandemic WILL. We shall just have to wait and see... Perhaps, just perhaps, it will be a wake-up call for more of us to cherish the natural world and all that's in it. Will arachnids inherit the earth?

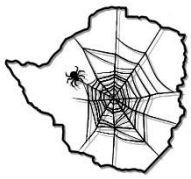
Keep looking at the small creatures around your home and garden, tell us about them, and take photos of them **AND SEND THE STORIES TO RUDI at rudolphsteinkampf@gmail.com**

Post Scriptus:
HAPPY 40TH BIRTHDAY, RUDI, on 4 April; you left your youth behind and officially joined the ranks of adults. Eish, but the club is older than you!

Snippets



Zimbabwe spider club



Moira Fitzpatrick at the National Museum in Bulawayo is busy creating The Spider Club of Zimbabwe. They are currently in the process of forming a committee to kickstart it, and the club is planned to launch at the end of June. Anyone interested in serving on the committee or simply joining, can contact her on moirajane.fitz@gmail.com.

ISA and AAS speak out about racism

Both the American Arachnological Society (AAS) and International Society of Arachnology (ISA) have spoken out about racism after the recent developments in the USA and the BlackLivesMatter movement. Greta Binford, president of the AAS, requested that people of colour share with the AAS any examples of ways in which pervasive racism has affected their path in arachnology, and also invited members to share ideas on how the AAS can ensure inclusivity in the AAS as much as possible. Wayne Madison, president of the ISA, stated that all that matters is not the colour of people's skin, but that people want to contribute to our understanding of arachnids. He also asked that people who struggle with racial barriers should speak out and be heard, and also offered his attention if people want to contact him privately, whether to talk about racial barriers, or to suggest ideas for how the IAS can promote diverse participation.

Pain control without addiction

Researchers[1] at the University of Queensland have designed a mini-protein from tarantula venom that could serve as an alternative to opioid pain killers. According to Dr Schroeder, one of the co-authors, "[a]lthough opioids are effective in producing pain relief, they come with unwanted side-effects like nausea, constipation and the risk of addiction, placing a huge burden on society ... By using a three-pronged approach in our drug design that incorporates the mini-protein, its receptor and the surrounding membrane from the spider venom, we've altered this mini-protein resulting in greater potency and specificity for specific pain receptors ... This ensures that just the right amount of the mini-protein attaches itself to the receptor and the cell membrane surrounding the pain receptors".

Aquatic spiders more common than previously thought

A recent study[2] found that nearly 20% of all spider families are associated with saltwater and freshwater aquatic habitats. The researchers conducted DNA analysis on 120 spider families to determine when a species evolved an association with water. They found that 21 families showed an affinity for water. Some of these spiders were found to have unique adaptations to survive harsh aquatic habitats, while others didn't. Crews *et al*. were especially interested in the Dictynidae. Esposito states: "What's puzzling is the evolutionary steps that Dictynidae spiders took to arrive back at their aquatic lifestyle ... They didn't follow the

[1] Agwa, J.A., Tran, P., Mueller, A., Tran, H.N.T., Deuis, J.R., Israel, M.R., McMahon, K.L., Craik, D.J., Vetter, I. & Schroeder, C.I. 2020. Manipulation of a spider peptide toxin alters its affinity for lipid bilayers and potency and selectivity for voltage-gated sodium channel subtype 1.7. *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, 295:5067-5080.

[2] Crews, S.C., Garcia, E.L., Spagna, J.C., Van Dam, M.H. & Esposito, L.A. 2019. The life aquatic with spiders (Araneae): Repeated evolution of aquatic habitat association in Dictynidae and allied taxa. *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 2019:1-59.

evolutionary steps we expected them to. Every time we identified a saltwater spider species, its closest relative was living on land, rather than around freshwater. This tells us that perhaps spiders are pre-adapted to live in various types of water habitat, and don't need to take evolutionary baby steps from land to freshwater to saltwater."

New huntsman genus named after Greta Thunberg

In a recent article[3], Peter Jäger described a new genus of Sparassidae from Madagascar, and named it *Thunberga*, after the young Swedish environmental activist, Greta Thunberg. Four species were transferred to this genus, namely *T. hildebrandti* (synonymous with *T. nossibeensis*) from *Rhitymna*, and T. malagassa, *T. nossibeensis*, and *T. septifer* from *Olios*. Another newly described species, *T. greta*, was also added. This genus differs from other Heteropodinae genera by its different cheliceral dentition and eye arrangement, as well as its uniquely dotted prosoma. Jäger decided on *Thunberga*, stating on his Facebook post that he's "honouring Greta Thunberg for initiating the Fridays For Future movement. I guess it is still absolutely of capital importance that we save our planet for future generations! Thanks Greta and all of the FFF protesters for being so persistent!" Jäger is currently revising the *Olios* species.

Patches of natural vegetation can maintain spider diversity

A study[4] found that remnant vegetation in agricultural landscapes can play an important role in supporting farmland biodiversity, especially arthropods that are beneficial to farmers, such as spiders. The researchers sampled spiders from 12 remnant natural fynbos patches in a fragmented agricultural landscape in the Greater Cape Floristic Region and found a vast range of spiders, including rare and range-restricted ones. They found that "spider diversity is maintained by remnants of good quality natural vegetation, but also influenced by the complexity of the landscape". This also emphasises the significance of natural vegetation and the removal of invasive tree species in order to sustain a healthy diversity of agriculturally important arthropods.

Genetic basis of social spiders unravelled

A recent study[5] compared the genomes of seven spider species: two social species in the genus *Stegodyphus* (which evolved sociality independently), and five solitary species in the genera *Parasteatoda, Acanthoscurria, Nephila, Loxosceles*, and *Latrodectus*. They found that the genes in the two social species evolved rapidly not only regarding their behaviour, but also their immunity, which is understandable since pathogens can spread much easier among social spiders. The genes that evolved faster in the solitary species were enriched for energy metabolism. This is in contrast to social insects such as ants and bees, where metabolic genes evolve faster. Tong *et al*. also found that the genomes of the two social spider species evolved faster than those of solitary species, which they possibly attribute to the fact that social spider species have more female offspring than males, and high levels of inbreeding. The researchers also identified a set of rapidly evolving genes that showed brain-specific expression These genes were enriched for social behavioural processes,

[3] Jäger, P. 2020. *Thunberga* gen. nov., a new genus of huntsman spiders from Madagascar (Araneae: Sparassidae: Heteropodinae). *Zootaxa*, 4790(2):245-600.

[4] Theron, K.J., Gaigher, R., Pryke, J.S. & Samways, M.J. 2020. High quality remnant patches in a complex agricultural landscape sustain high spider diversity. *Biological Conservation*, 243:108480.

[5] Tong, C., Najm, G.M., Pinter-Wollman, N., Pruitt, J.N. & Linksvayer, T.A. 2020. Comparative genomics identifies putative signatures of sociality in spiders. *Genome Biology and Evolution*, 12(3):122-133.

and have possibly been involved in the evolution of spider sociality.

Male spider found to possess female silk glands

A species of pirate spider (*Australomimetus maculosus*, family Mimetidae) found in Australia and Tasmania was recently found by researchers[6] to possess cylindrical silk gland (CY) spigots or nubbins on the posterior median spinnerets (PMS) of male spiders. To date, no other male spider has been found to possess these spigots; they normally occur only in female spiders, who use these spigots to construct egg sacs. The CY spigots were found in late juvenile males, while CY spigots or non-functional CY nubbins were found on adult males. This suggests that these glands are not used for egg sac construction. The exact function of the CY spigots in the male spiders of this species is not fully understood yet.

GoFundMe for Norman Platnick Award

After the unfortunate passing of world-renowned arachnologist Norman Platnick on 8 April this year, his son, Will Platnick, on behalf of Cara Shillington, created a GoFundMe campaign to raise money to create the Norman Platnick Award for Arachnid Biodiversity Research. Will Platnick states that "[t]he Norman Platnick Award for Arachnid Biodiversity Research is given for outstanding student oral or poster presentations of research that progresses understanding of arachnid biodiversity through work in systematics, taxonomy, biogeography, or other biodiversity assessments". At the time of publishing, the fund has raised $8300 from 97 donors. Anyone wishing to donate can visit https://www.gofundme.com/f/norman-i-platnick-memorial-fund

ADU SpiderMap update

The Animal Demography Unit (ADU) Virtual Museum recently updated the content on the SpiderMap. The content was reviewed by a team of experts for any taxonomic changes and spelling errors. The ADU includes a "menagerie of projects to choose from, providing citizen scientists (or volunteers) the opportunity to get outdoors and collect valuable data for science and conservation". You can upload your photo, as well as additional information such as coordinates and any interesting observations, thus contributing to our knowledge of South African animals, plants, and fungi. The ADU is currently in the process of expanding its Panel of Experts for the SpiderMap section with the aim of improving the identification process.

Restructuring of some Mygalomorphae

A recent study[7] that proposed certain changes to the Mygalomorphae infraorder, using genomic scale data, was accepted. The affected families, based on past molecular studies using Sanger-sequencing approaches, are the Hexathelidae, Ctenizidae, Cyrtaucheniidae, Dipluridae, and Nemesiidae. This includes three new mygalomorph families (Stasimopidae, Hermachidae, and Microhexuridae). The changes that affect the mygalomorphs in South Africa include:

- *Allothele* moved from Dipluridae to Euagridae
- *Homostola* from Nemesiidae to Bemmeridae
- *Stasimopus* from Ctenizidae to Stasimopidae
- *Hermacha* from Cyrtaucheniidae to Hermachidae

That means we no longer have Ctenizidae in South Africa, and the Dipluridae and Cyrtaucheniidae in SA are now monotypic families containing only one genus.

[6] Townley, M.A. & Harms, D. 2020. Hers and his: Silk glands used in egg construction by female spiders potentially repurposed by a 'modern' male spider. *Scientific Reports*, 10:663.

[7] Opatova, V., Hamilton, C.A., Hedin, M., Montes de Oca, L., Král, J. & Bond, J.E. 2020. Phylogenetic systematics and evolution of the spider infraorder Mygalomorphae using genomic scale data. *Systematic Biology*, 69(4):671-707.

Follow-up on male *Latrodectus*

In the previous newsletter, we reported on Sentenská, Uhl and Lubin's (2020:53-59) paper, titled "Alternative mating tactics in a cannibalistic widow spider: Do males prefer the safer option?". Among other things, the paper discussed the mating ritual of some male *Latrodectus* spp. where they remove parts of the female's pheromone-laced web and replace it with their own in order to deter future male suitors from mating with the female.

Shortly after the newsletter was published, Dawie Broekman posted this photo on the Spider Club's Facebook page of a male Latrodectus geometricus with a rolled-up ball of the female's web that the male had removed. Dawie reported on it as follows:

> "So I noticed this tiny Brown Button male (*Latrodectus geometricus*) making single strands of silk to move along and between some objects standing outside in the yard. (He travelled about 2 metres from where I first spotted him.) He eventually abseiled down into what looked like a typical female's web at the base of an old wheelbarrow standing upright. What he did next was the interesting part, where he started to bite off strands of the web and proceeded to roll them into a little ball. He just sat there afterwards as far as I could tell. Unfortunately I had to go inside at the time, and when I returned, him and the ball of silk was gone."

Latrodectus egg sac construction and colour change

by Norman Larsen and Sam Jacobsz

Ray Smithers wrote an extensive paper on *Latrodectus indistinctus* in the Western Cape. He recorded that this species constructs up to eight egg sacs in the veld but kept one captive that produced a ninth egg sac. The first four egg sacs were produced at an interval of 39-44 days. The last five were produced at intervals of 188-212 days. The spiderlings that hatched varied from 125-205 per egg sac. The colour changes were noted after each moult and appeared to be fairly constant, with the red stripes on the abdomen and receding with each moult and being replaced by white speckling. When adult, the spider will be totally black or may have a red spot above the spinnerets.

Smithers wrote that *"L. geometricus,* unlike certain Thomisids, cannot alter the ground colouration of its body, once it has reached maturity. It was found that all ground colouration changes took place with each moult. Certain specimens would eventually have a jet black colouration after the final moult while others would be pale yellow".

Heeres observed *L. geometricus* through several generations under varying laboratory conditions. She recorded that females moulted seven times and matured between 10 and 28 weeks. Once adult, there was no change in colour and this was confirmed with photographic images.

L. renivulvatus with prey.

Jacobsz collected *L. renivulvatus* on 17 January 2020. The first egg sac was constructed on 3 February, with spiderlings hatching 27 days later. Five egg sacs were produced at intervals of 4-8 days.

The first female *L. geometricus* was collected by Jacobsz on 29 October 2019, and she constructed her first egg sac on 4 November and a further seven egg sacs at an interval of 7-8 days, with the shortest gap being two days and the longest gap being 14 days. Spiderlings hatched on 5 January after 61 days.

A second female *L. geometricus* was collected on 5 March 2020 and constructed her first egg sac on 11 March, with a further eight egg sacs at an interval of 4-6 days, with the longest gap being 11 days. Spiderlings hatched from two of the egg sacs after 30 and 31 days.

In South Africa, the female false mud dauber, *Chalybion spinolae* (Lepeletier de Saint Fargeau 1845), exclusively provisions her nest with *Latrodectus* and *Steotoda* species, cramming her nest with up to 24 spiders, and lays her egg on the largest one. The eggs are parasitised by the banded-antennae mantidfly (*Afromantispa tenella*) (Erichson, 1839).

Female *L. geometricus* range in colour from cream, various shades of grey, or brown to black, and even green, always with an orange-red or sometimes yellow hourglass ventrally. Dorsally there are the typical geometric markings; the first author prefers the common name geometric button spider. The legs are lighter in colour between the darker joints.

Jacobsz observed and photographed *L. geometricus* from Limpopo. The adult females without moulting started out as a light yellow-

brown, and progressively darkened, and when constructing her last egg sac, had morphed into a black spider. No moulting was noticed and no exuvia was found in the tank.

Jacobsz kept *L. renivulvatus* and *L. geometricus* from Polokwane, Limpopo, and recorded the following observations with an extended number of images. All spiders were fed and consumed prey ranging from Diptera (flies), Hemiptera (stink bugs), Lepidoptera (moths), to Coleoptera (beetles) almost daily. The observations by Smithers and Heeres were all at the coast.

L. geometricus lays down the base of the egg sac with a cushion of downy silk threads.

L. geometricus starts filling the base with eggs.

L. geometricus starts sealing the eggs in soft silk.

L. geometricus with nearly completed eggs sac.

L. geometricus adding spikes to the egg sac.

L. geometricus originally light coloured.

L. geometricus later almost black without moulting.

Sources:

Heeres, A. 1991. Natural history observations of the brown widow spider *Latrodectus geometricus* (Araneae, Theridiidae). *The Naturalist*, 35:31-34.

Heeres, A. & Clark, T.E. 1997. Changes in growth rate, weight and longevity in relation to prey availability in *Latrodectus geometricus* Koch 1841 (Araneae: Theridiidae). *Durban Museum Novitates*, 22:57-59. .

Heeres, A. 1993. Life history of the busy brown widow. *Afr. Wlld, J.* 47:14-16.

Smithers, R.H.N. 1944. Contribution to our knowledge of the genus *Latrodectus* in South Africa. *Annals of the South African Museum*, 36:263-312.

Paraplectana spp.

Not such a rarity lately

We don't often see people posting photos of lady beetle orb weavers (*Paraplectana* spp.) on SCSA, mostly because they're rather rare and difficult to find. In April, SCSA members voted for one of these spiders as the spider of the month. This photo was taken by Leonie Kellerman in a garden in Pietersburg. Her photo was soon followed by an unexpected influx of photos of *Paraplectana* spp., in many different colours and patterns. Here are a few of them (photo credits and locations included on each photo; the last photo, taken by Kobie du Preez, is of an egg sac).

Rain spiders

Nature's recyclers

There are 21 recorded *Palystes* spp. in the world, 14 of which occur in South Africa (where we call them rain spiders). Therefore, if we ever were to have a national spider, the rain spider would be an obvious contender. They're very well known, and due to their placid nature, are a favourite among arachnophiles in South Africa. For this reason, they're also considered SCSA's ambassador or "mascot", and will often accompany the club at our exhibitions for people to look at and handle.

A common rain spider (*Palystes superciliosus*). Photo by Rudolph Steenkamp.

The most common of the species is *P. superciliosus*, which can be found almost all over South Africa. Another common species is *P. castaneus*, but their distribution is mainly limited to the Cape coastal regions. Of our 14 species, these two species are apparently the only ones who build the "bag of leaves" egg sacs.

According to Norman Larsen, "[t]he female spider, having mated, will start construction of the nest by producing a silk base, supported by strands of silk. The eggs are extruded, suspended in a liquid, from the epigynum, onto the silk base ... The spider then proceeds to enclose this with silk, protecting the eggs. She goes to the ground and collects leaves, which are attached to the egg sacs, and finally covers this bag in tough papery silk. The construction takes about 5 hours".

The spider's maternal duties don't stop here. In most cases, the spider will guard the egg sac by sitting on top of it, or somewhere close by. In many cases, when the egg sac is somehow damaged, the mother-to-be will make the necessary repairs. Also, if it is somehow dislodged, the spider will carry it to a suitable spot and reattach it. While rain spiders are generally placid spiders, the mother-to-be will become aggressive/defensive during this stage in an attempt to protect her brood.

This is what a "normal" *P. castaneus* egg sac looks like once finished, with the spider on top, guarding the egg sac:

Palystes castaneus spider guarding her egg sac. Photo by Norman Larsen.

In the absence of leaves, these spiders will resort to using twigs, bark, etc. In the absence of these, they will build the egg sac with silk alone. According to Larsen, "[s]ome spiders appear to be better builders than others and when leaves are unavailable, twigs or even paper will be used to create a nursery for the spiderlings when they hatch. The nest is normally suspended by strong strands of silk about 500 mm to 1.5 metres above ground level in veld vegetation or in garden hedges".

However, when other materials are available, they won't hesitate to use these. During the past few years, a few people have posted photos on the SCSA Facebook group, showing these spiders using all sorts of materials. For example, a rain spider next to the beach was found using seashells, while another one in a person's garage borrowed some nuts and bolts for her nest. Another one even used small pebbles. Unfortunately, these photos were lost somehow, but we did manage to find a few other interesting ones that illustrate how much trouble some of these spiders will go through to protect their brood. Unfortunately, we have never received a video of a mother-to-be rain spider dragging something like a bolt all the way up to the ceiling and carefully placing it in her egg sac. Here are a few photos posted by members:

Belinda Jacobs found this recently hatched egg sac on the ceiling of her study. It contains ribbons, as well as something that looks like a sponge.

Conrad Breitenbach photographed this rain spider nest that contains a bird's skull.

Left: Willemien du Plessis found this rain spider guarding her egg sac in an outhouse. The spider used toilet paper and a few leaves.

Right: Judy Miller Grant found this egg sac containing a toothpick and some plastic.

Left: Tanya Strydom photographed this egg sac with what seems to be an Allen key bolt. **Middle:** Maggie Grey found this egg sac on the inside of a car's window inside a panel beating shop. The spider picked up the panel pins from the car's floor. **Right:** Stoned Olive found this rain spider and her egg sac in her dustbin, where the spider picked up rubber bands to line her egg sac.

From Russia with love

On the morning of 18 of January 2020, I left Cape Town International on my way to meet my Russian friends, Drs Galina Azarkina, Yuri Marusik, and Yuri's wife, Irina, at OR Tambo Airport on the way to the 13th AFRAS Colloquium at Klein Kariba, Bela-Bela, in the Limpopo province. Up to this stage, everything proceeded without incident. At OR Tambo we tried to rent a car without success as our bank cards had to be credit cards and were not. We finally found one that would accept a debit card but would not accept Yuri's card as it was not local, and the person paying had to be the person driving.

We were due to have a braai at one of Galina's friends in the evening so she ended up sending out a rescue call to Alexei Oskolski. Alexei is a plant biologist at the University of Johannesburg. After a long wait (one does not realise how big Johannesburg is), he arrived an hour or two later. Now, this is where the fun started as he arrived in a small Suzuki hatchback. It took six attempts and some Russian ingenuity to fit three large cases and all our hand luggage into the small boot and on our laps. We also had to squeeze five adults into the little four-seater. Sadly, my camera was not at hand to photograph this scene and I forgot to use my cell phone. We drove to where we were to sleep, had some coffee, and had to make new arrangements. We contacted Astri Leroy, who was travelling with Jacky Collier, to come pick up Yuri and Irina. We then phoned Arina du Plessis, from the Tygerberg Poison Unit, who was flying up the next day to Lanseria Airport, and Galina and I would travel with her.

Ira, Yura, Lisa, Irina, Alexei, and Galina.


Yura, Ira, Galina, Alexei, and Norman.

Late afternoon, Alexei collected us and took us to his place where we had a wonderful Russian barbeque and feast with ample liquid refreshments. Thank you to Alexei, his lovely wife Ira, and daughter Lisa for treating us. Later, after we were all satiated, Alexei drove us back to our sleeping quarters. The next morning, Astri arrived to collect Yuri and Irina. Galina and I took an Uber taxi to Lanseria, where we met up with Arina.

The trip up to Klein Karib was rather uneventful except that the GPS directed us to who knows where but we followed the road signs instead. At the Klein Karib reception, the car, a Toyota, refused to start and this delayed us for 20 minutes before it started. We drove to the Colloquium meeting area and afterward the car again did not start. A second car was sent that was able to start, which allowed us to continue and enjoy a wonderful organised event. Arina dropped me off at the Gautrain in Pretoria to ORT and back to Cape Town.


They call this Suzuki the little big car.

I would like to thank Yuri for his kind sponsorship in making it possible for Galina and myself to attend the Colloquium and to Burton Maasdorp, from the University of the Free State, for doing my bookings.

Spider of the Month

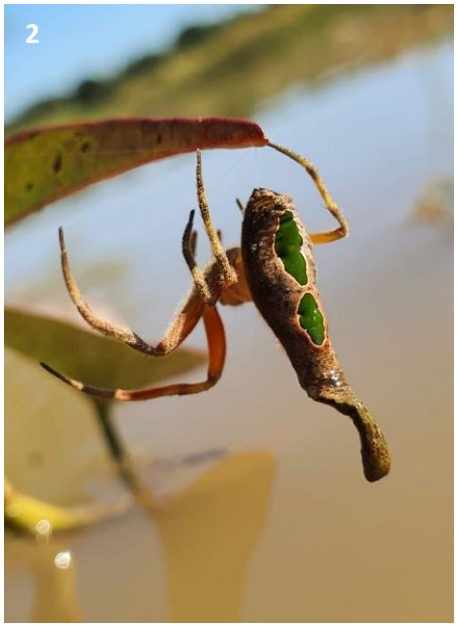
Every month we have a poll on the SCSA Facebook group to determine the spider of the month. Members can nominate photos, and the admins also choose some candidates based on certain criteria. Sometimes it's a rare spider, sometimes a common one with interesting information, and sometimes it's just a good photo. The one with the most votes is uploaded as the group's cover photo, as well as on the SCSA website. Here are the winners for May and June, as well as the runner-ups.

MAY

(1) Tree velvet spider (*Gandanameno* sp., Eresidae), by Hannes Claassens. **(2)** Mirror spider (*Thwaitesia* sp., Theridiidae), by Esmé Tenner. **(3)** Horned bark spider (*Caerostris sexcuspidata*, Araneidae), by Bruce Blake. **(4)** Granulated crab spider (*Thomisus granulatus*, Thomisidae), by Andrea Sander.

(5) Biscuit box kite spider (*Isoxya tabulata*, Araneidae), by Jonathan Whitaker. **(6)** Long-jawed water orb weaver (*Tetragnatha* sp., Tetragnathidae), by Bruce Blake. **(7)** Crab spider (*Borboropactus* sp., Thomisidae), by Bruce Blake.

JUNE



(1) Mushroom theridiid (*Phoroncidia* sp., Theridiidae), by Bruce Blake. **(2)** Tree trunk orb weaver (*Poltys furcifer*, Araneidae), by Tegan Panos. **(3)** Kite spider (*Gasteracantha* sp., Araneidae), by Michael Green. **(4)** Scorpion-tailed spider (*Arachnura scorpionoides*, Araneidae), by Desiré Pelser. **(5)** Silver marsh spider (*Leucuage* sp., Tetragnathidae) by Brian Ashby. **(6)** Black button spider (*Latrodectus* sp., Theridiidae) by Paulo Rodrigues. **(7)** Garbage-line spider (*Cyclosa* sp., Araneidae) by Andrea Sander.

Testimonials

As a new feature, we want to include at least one testimonial in the newsletter that shows how SCSA and our sister groups on Facebook, such as South African Spiders, have helped people to overcome their fear of spiders. To get things started, here is a testimonial by Zurica Trixi Claassens:

Just have to share my proud moment of the day:

I used to be very scared of spiders, so I challenged myself to face my fears by first learning. I joined two spiders group and remember especially Henning Boshoff patiently answering my questions for months...

Eventually I started to take spiders our without burning the house down, and then photographed them, and after many months started to pick some up to inspect them and then letting them go.

Naturally, me being a mom, my fears were transferred to my daughters. My youngest was the one who first relaxed around spiders... and today my oldest daughter sent me images of a spider, after I told her he is harmless and only showing his "teeth" because he is scared... She sat until the spider was comfortable with her presence and then sent me the image attached to this post.

Knowledge is truly power... and knowledge and respect for nature which is transferred from parents to children might just help them to save planet earth.

Well done, Chante Claassens, I am extremely proud of you.

Xxx

Spider game

For those who are bored with their board games during this lockdown, here is something else. Gordona Grbic, a Serbian member of the American Arachnological Society, recently circulated this email:

Hello everyone

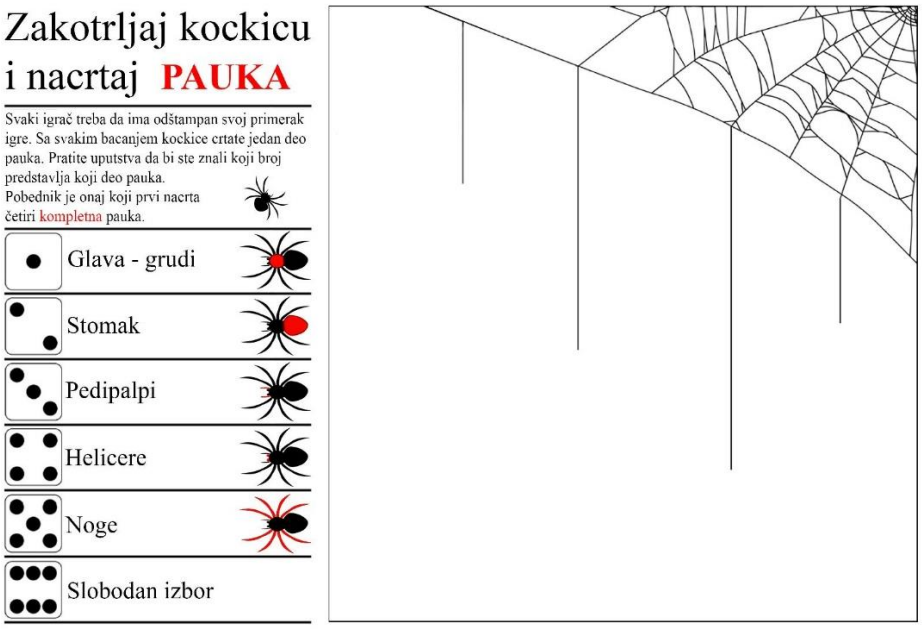
I hope you are OK, and negative on this virus... and I hope you will stay that way... :)

We made a little spider game video (roll and draw a spider), that I would like to share with our community. I think it would bring some fun in our houses. This game is best to play with 3, but it could be more or less participants. Every participant has to have its own table. With every roll of dice, you can draw one body part. You roll the dice one by one. The goal of the game is to draw 4 complete spiders faster than others. See the video.

The table is in the Serbian language, but that is not a problem, since you all know the body parts of the spider. However, here is a translation:

1. glava-grudi = cephalothorax
2. stomak = abdomen
3. pedipalpi = pedipalps
4. helicere = chelicerae
5. noge = legs
6. slobodan izbor = free choice

You can find the table on the website of Spiders of Serbia at this link:
http://www.paukovisrbije.com/index.php/download/igre-za-decu



If you think that this email will help, please share it with other members of AAS, and of course, correct my English before sharing :)

Link to a video about the game: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=692905371450199

All the best
Gordana

Why all those candles?

The Spider Club of Southern Africa is 45 years old this month of June 2020

But we can't celebrate now

We were planning to have a party to celebrate this momentous event at our Annual General Meeting, which is usually held on the last or second last Sunday of June every year. Well, you-know-what got in the way, so we plan to have a bigger and better party once we are permitted to get together. The AGM might as well be postponed until next year; things are working smoothly enough without any "cabinet reshuffle", thanks to some amazing club members like Caren, Rudi, Jacky, J-P, Miemmie, Henning, Garry, Dawie, Nicolette, oh and LOTS more; I can't list all of you. Then there are those amazing photographers, Michael Green, Desiré Pelser, Bruce, Jackie, and Rudi again, and, and, and everyone. Keep in touch, keep looking at our Facebook page, and keep telling us about your spider adventures; you make it all worthwhile!

Now watch this space for parties, field trips, ID workshops, etc., either much later this year or early next year. In the meantime, we are planning our first SPIDER WALK of the new season at Moreletakloof Nature Reserve in Pretoria on **Sunday 20 September** or **Heritage Day 24 September**. We just have to confirm with Jeannie du Plessis a bit nearer the time.

We will also reinstate the night walk at Meyersdal Eco Estate. Again, we may have to wait and see how things pan out, but I will contact Odette Campbell and see if we can go there one Friday evening in October.

Astri