

The Spider Club NEWS

December 2023



Vol. 39, No. 4

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



SUMMER EDITION

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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 all arachnids 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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at "The Spider Club of Southern Africa"

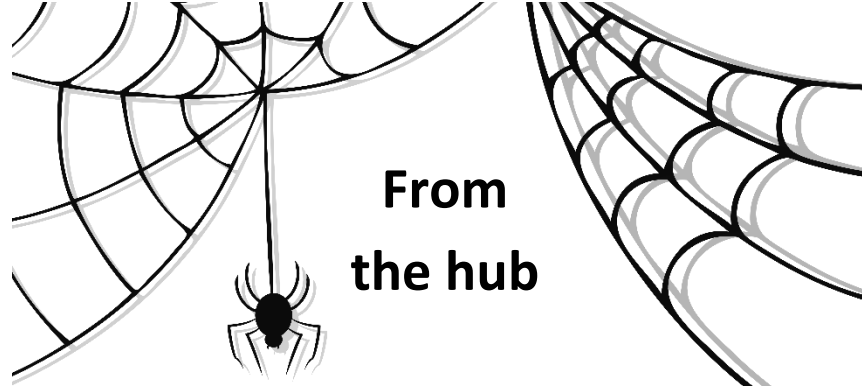
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- All the photographers of the photos used in this edition. Without you, these pages would be very dull.
- Astri Leroy, of course, for all her contributions, and informing me of any new content, as well as the entire SCSA Committee (Roulla, Jarrod, Henning, Desiré, Ruan, Joanie, Caren, and Jèan-Pierre) for their contributions.
- Jeanne van Aswegen, my colleague at Grammar Guardians and superior half, for proofreading the newsletter.
- Everyone on the SCSA 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. 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.



Hi spider people!

Another year done and dusted... Unfortunately, we lost one of our great arachnologists, Stefan Foord, at the end of the year. We were all shocked by his unexpected passing, and will miss him at the next AFRAS Colloquium. See a short obituary and tribute on pages 7-8.

Usually, by this time, we can report on our Annual General Meeting, but we decided to postpone it until a day before the AFRAS Colloquium on 27 January and hold it nearby. Travel wise, it just made more sense. Any major decisions made during the meeting will only be reported on in the March newsletter. We do expect to have new committee members and perhaps a few roles will be reassigned. Something we've also been slacking on lately is merchandise, which is something we'll discuss. One suggestion that has been made a few times is to create a calendar containing each Spider of the Month (SOTM), with the previous year's Spider of the Year (SOTY) on the cover. We'll see if this is feasible, since not every SOTM is of a quality high enough for large printing; sometimes people vote for a cute or interesting spider without photo quality playing a role. On that note, see this year's SOTY and two runners-up on page 42. As in previous years, the top three winners received a cash prize, paid for by the Spider Club with some of the money made during the year's spider events, like workshops and spider walks. The spider walks were a little scarce this season, and we have only two to report on (see pages 15-23).

The R1800 we spend on the SOTY winners is not all we do with the money collected from events. We also pay the registration fee of at least one Spider Club member for the AFRAS Colloquium, which this year is R2500. The recipient only has to deliver a short presentation on an arachnid-related topic. The recipient of the subsidy this time is Wessel Pretorius, and he will talk about the role of social media and citizen science in arachnology. In this day and age, citizen science and social media both play a huge role in new discoveries and recording biodiversity. For example, ordinary people who discover a weird spider or notice unusual behaviour mostly go directly to social media or websites like iNaturalist to report their find. During initiatives like the City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz (GSB), which encourage amateur naturalists to upload as many forms of life as they can to iNaturalist, new or undescribed species, and sometimes even species thought to be on the brink of extinction. For example, of almost 102 000 observations this year, 535 observations were of threatened species (see other GSB results on pages 5-6). Thanks to people like these, despite not having a degree, we have learned a lot about the natural world, such as population trends, the spread of species, the conservation status of threatened species, etc. It would therefore be foolish for scientists to completely ignore the contribution that ordinary people can make to natural science, and also to arachnology.

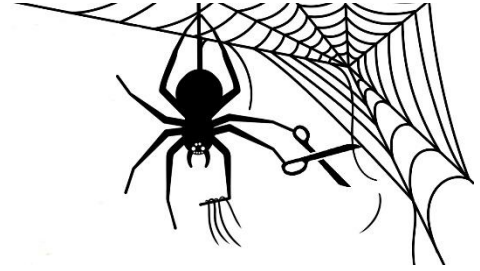
This edition will be the last one to feature Anka Eichhoff's "Anka's Goggastories", since we have used basically everything spider-related on her site. We're still very happy to receive her observations all the way from Namibia, which we usually feature in the Observations section. From the next edition, we will feature informative pieces posted by Benjamin Carbuccia during "Arachtober", where the whole month

of October was dedicated to spiders and other arachnids. Each letter of the alphabet was used to decide on a topic, from “Ants” to “Zoogeography”. We will try to include two letters of the alphabet in each edition, which will then run for approximately three years. Benjamin has been a faithful contributor to the newsletter for a few editions now, and when I’m running short on stories to post, I can always go check on his Nopeland Discovery Blog, which always has something interesting. While Benjamin is from France, he has an excellent grasp of Southern African spiders and many other topics related to nature. Anyway, we’re honoured to include at least one of his pieces in each edition for the foreseeable future. For this edition, you can check Part 1 of his piece on “Venomous, medically significant, and dangerous”, and the difference between the three (see pages 30-36). Also see his article on the occurrence of the introduced Mediterranean recluse (*Loxosceles rufescens*) in the Western Cape on pages 24-29.

Besides the regular contributors, I’d also like to thank everyone who contributed, even in the smallest way, such as by uploading or sending us interesting photos or observations.

From the Spider Club, we wish all our members the best for 2024! We hope to see many of our members during next year’s spider walks. We are looking forward to learning more with all of you.

Snippets



Stefan Foord passes away



It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Stefan Foord, one of South Africa's most prolific arachnologists. He passed away on 21 December. He was only 52 years old.

Stefan was a professor of zoology at the University of Venda. He recently published the latest checklist on the spiders of South Africa. His main focus was conservation biology and biodiversity monitoring, such as changes in environments and how animals respond to these changes.

The Spider Club of Southern Africa offers our sincere condolences to his family during this very difficult time. He will be sorely missed, and the upcoming AFRAS Colloquium in January just won't be the same without him...

See pages 7-8 for more on Stefan Foord.

Spider Club subsidy for AFRAS Colloquium

For years, the Spider Club of Southern Africa has offered a subsidy for members to attend the AFRAS Colloquium. This subsidy only includes the registration fee (R2500), and the recipient must present a poster or deliver a short presentation. For the 2024 Colloquium, we chose Wessel Pretorius, who will talk about the role of social media and citizen science in arachnology.

Checklist of South African spiders

The latest checklist¹ for South African spiders contains 2 265 species from 495 genera and 71 families. The checklist also contains conservation status according to IUCN Criteria. This checklist is the most comprehensive and updated list available, but only covers species and changes up to December 2022, and therefore doesn't show recent changes, like the Nephilidae being moved back to their own families.

Great Southern Bioblitz 2023



South Africa did really well in this year's Great Southern Bioblitz, hosted by iNaturalist.

¹ Dippenaar-Schoeman, A.S., Haddad, C.R., Lotz, L.N., Booysen, R., Steenkamp, R.C. & Foord, S.H. 2023. Checklist of the spiders (Araneae) of South Africa. *African Invertebrates*, 64(3):221-289. Available at: <https://africaninvertebrates.pensoft.net/article/111047/>

In terms of number of observations, South Africa made the top 4 spots, with Overstrand (14 808) in first place, followed by Cape Town (13 112), eThekweni (12 036), and Pondoland region (8 498). In terms of number of species (only those that could be identified to species level), Cape Town (2 080) came in first place, with Overstrand (1 973) in second place. eThekweni (1 912) and Overberg (1 546) came in fourth and fifth place respectively, with Australia's Coffs Harbour Region in third place. In terms of number of observers (people who uploaded photos), Australia dominated, with Greater Sydney boasting 410 observers; Cape Town came in second, with 330 observers.

From all the countries that participated, plants were the most recorded taxon, with 12 500 (48.67%) species, followed by insects, with 6 541 (25.47%) recorded. Arachnids only constituted 2.94% (756 species) of the total observations.

Most prolific arachnologists of 2022

The Asian Society of Arachnology recently published a list² of the most prolific arachnologists of 2022, in terms of new genera/species described. Only those who published 10 or more taxa were included. The only South African on the list is Charles Haddad, in 40th place, with two genera and 14 species described. Worldwide, a total of 1 177 taxa were described, including 86 new genera and 1 096 new species. Most of the new species were from China, comprising 362 species, which is one-third (33.0%) of the global count.

² Yang, R., Yan, M., Zhang, L., Liu, H., Koh, J.K.H., He, Q. & Yao, Z. 2023. New taxa of spiders (Araneae) from the world in 2022. *Biodiversity Science*, 31(10):23175. Available at: https://www.biodiversity-science.net/EN/10.17520/biods.2023175?fbclid=IwAR3UfyKGFplLrOoJf81_WpPJqueelRe6Cap3cDja5SihVgEzPbmJ3dBNlQ

Taxonomy

Here are just a few publications from the last few months:

- Nine new *Stasimopus* spp. (Stasimopidae) from South Africa³.
- Three new *Otacilla* spp. (Phrurolithidae) from China⁴.
- Two new *Testudinaria* spp. (Araneidae) from Ecuador with new eye pattern⁵.
- New intertidal trapdoor spider (*Idiactis parilarilao*; Barychelidae) from Taiwan⁶.
- Five new *Oecobius* spp. from Iran and Azerbaijan⁷.
- First new species (*Australoechemus vickyae*; Gnaphosidae) described from Ascension Island in 50 years⁸.
- Three new species in new genus (*Baiyuerius*; Agelenidae) from China and Vietnam⁹.

³ Brandt, S., Sole, C. & Lyle, R. 2023. An integrative taxonomy of the genus *Stasimopus* Simon 1892 (Araneae: Mygalomorphae) of the Karoo with the description of nine new species and a *Stasimopus maraisi* Hewitt 1914 male. *Zootaxa*, 5341(1):1-60.

⁴ Liu, M., Jiang, Z., Xiao, Y., Liu, K. & Xu, X. 2023. Three new species of *Otacilla* Thorell, 1897 (Araneae, Phrurolithidae) from South China. *ZooKeys*, 1180:129-144.

⁵ Dupérré, N. & Tapia, E. 2023. Discovery of a new eye pattern in Araneoid spiders, with the description of two new species of *Testudinaria* from the Ecuadorian Amazon (Araneae: Araneidae). *International Journal of Entomology*, 59(5):337-362.

⁶ Yu, K.P., Lo, Y.Y., Cheng, R.C., Raven, R.J. & Kuntner, M. 2023. Discovery of a new intertidal trapdoor spider of the genus *Idiactis* (Araneae: Barychelidae), with a generic range extension to Taiwan. *The Journal of Arachnology*, 51(2):238-248.

⁷ Zamani, A. & Marusik, Y.M. 2023. New species and records of *Oecobius* Lucas, 1846 (Araneae: Oecobiidae) from Iran and Azerbaijan. *Journal of Natural History*, 57(37-40):1693-1709.

⁸ Sherwood, D., Marusik, Y.M., Sharp, A. & Ashmole, P. (2023). A survey of Gnaphosidae (Arachnida, Araneae) from Ascension Island with description of a new species of *Australoechemus* Schmidt & Piepho, 1994. *African Invertebrates*, 96(3):291-302.

⁹ Luo, B., Lu, F., Zhang, Z.S. & Wang, L.Y. 2023. A further study on the spider genus *Baiyuerius* Zhao, Li & Li, 2023, from China (Agelenidae, Coelotinae). *ZooKeys*, 1184:91-102.

Stefan Foord obituary and tribute

by Petro Marais and Astri Leroy

Petro Marais from the Agricultural Research Council sent this obituary for Stefan Foord via email:

Obituary

Dear arachnological colleagues

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the sudden passing of South African arachnologist Stefan Foord on Thursday 21 December 2023, aged 52. At the time of his passing, he was the NRF-SARChI Chair in Biodiversity Value and Change at the University of Venda in South Africa, and was the sitting Chairperson of the African Arachnological Society (AFRAS). He was a prolific ecologist and did a lot of pioneering work on the biodiversity and ecology of spiders in South Africa, particularly. During his career, he published more than 100 journal articles, one book chapter, and two books. He was instrumental in the preparation of the First Atlas of South African Spiders, the Red List of South African spiders, and the recently published national spider checklist. He also made a significant contribution to the systematics of Afrotropical spiders, revising the Hersiliidae as his Ph.D study, and described or co-authored the description of 29 spider species during his career.

Stefan was an excellent networker, philosopher, collaborator and mentor, and was always willing to listen to creative ideas and contribute to innovative studies. He was supervisor to a broad array of postgraduate students and, more recently, postdoctoral fellows, and made a massive contribution to the development of arachnology in Africa. His outgoing personality, approachability, drive, friendship and leadership will be sorely missed by all that had the pleasure of meeting and knowing him.

A legend of African arachnology, gone too soon.



Stefan Foord at the 12th Colloquium of the African Arachnological Society in 2017, where he was appointed as chairperson of the society (photo: Norman Larsen).



Stefan enjoying a beer with Astri in London, waiting to catch a bus to the European Congress in Nottingham.

In memoriam

By now you will all know that on 21st December 2023 Stefan Foord passed away at the far too young age of 52. His passing has left a huge hole in the lives of friends and colleagues but most of all his family.

About a quarter of a century ago we first met Stefan at Lajuma in the Soutpansberg. As a polite young Afrikaans man he was shy to meet up with “old” English-speaking people and it is extraordinary to remember that when we were introduced, he said that **he** was honoured to meet **us**! Now of course it’s the other way round, we are honoured to have known him, count him as a friend and been able to follow his many achievements in the world of arachnology and ecology.

We really did not see him often but every time we did, it was a memorable occasion. The last time was in 2019, also at Lajuma in the Soutpansberg when I helped with the organisation of the field trip after the 13th AFRAS Colloquium.

Other, less formal, memories of him include that the very young Stefan, with a conservative appetite, was persuaded to eat foraged mushrooms with *lang tandes*; that he tried to climb the inside of a lapa and broke all the electric cables at the 2014 Colloquium in the Free State; that he and I missed buses and trains in England because we talked too much and didn't read the timetables; pub-crawled around Nottingham into the wee small hours; and that at the formal dinner at Waltham near Windsor (the Oppenheims’ gorgeous English home) he watched my table etiquette like a hawk so that he used the correct cutlery.

We will miss him immensely and future arachnological meetings will not be the same without him. For us it is full circle and the Soutpansberg, which he knew so well, will always remind us of him.

Astri & John Leroy

26.12.2023

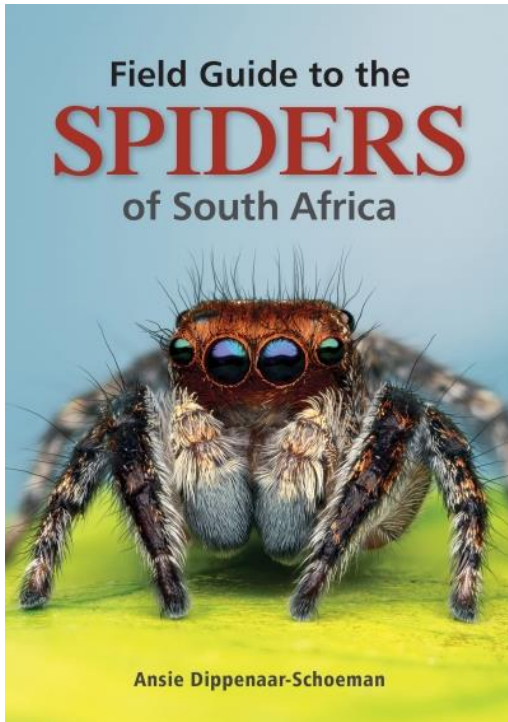


Left: Stefan (right) with Charles Haddad and Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman at the 9th AFRAS Colloquium at Lajuma in Limpopo. **Right:** Stefan at far right, with Rudy Jocqué, Heide Pretorius, Petro Marais, Peter Webb, and Robin Lyle, from left to right, at the 11th AFRAS Colloquium at Amanzi Game Lodge in the Free State.

Book review

Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa – Ansie Dippenaar Schoeman

by Desiré Pelser



Author: Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman

Publisher: Struik Nature

Format: Paperback and ebook

Price: ± R480

Pages: 400

ISBN: 9781775847977

Published: August 2023

In August, a loud cheer was heard from novice spider enthusiasts and seasoned arachnologists alike when the long-awaited, thoroughly revised and updated *Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa* was finally out and available in book stores!

Professor Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman is a renowned expert in arachnology, and a foremost expert on African spiders, especially crab spiders (Thomisidae). Her extensive knowledge and passion for spiders come to life in this comprehensive and meticulously crafted field guide, which is a must-have for anyone fascinated by the wonderful and intricate world of spiders, particularly within the diverse ecosystems of South Africa.

This field guide introduces all 72 South African spider families, and features 780 of the more common species. Considering that there are nearly 2 300 species recorded in South Africa, I imagine just selecting whom to include and whom to leave out was a mammoth task on its own.

The spiders in the field guide are divided according to web dwellers (spiders that use silk threads to catch their prey), and wanderers (free-living plant and ground dwellers that mostly use force to overpower their prey). The inclusion of clear and concise descriptions, accompanied by vibrant photographs, enhances the reader's ability to identify the many spider species found in South Africa.

The field guide provides valuable insights into the behaviour, ecology, and distribution of various spider species, making it is not just a tool for identification but also a source of fascinating knowledge about the lives of these remarkable creatures.

The book starts with an introduction to South Africa's rich spider fauna and takes a look at basic spider morphology. Sections on silk and the life cycles of spiders follow, including a discussion of mating and egg laying, dispersal, and moulting. Interesting information on spiders as predators is also included, along with an informative discussion on spider venom.

Prof. Ansie's dedication to inclusivity sets this field guide apart. She caters to a broad audience by presenting scientific information in a manner that is engaging and easily digestible. Whether you're a professional arachnologist or a curious nature enthusiast, the *Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa* ensures an enriching and enjoyable learning experience.

And then, of course, there are the photographs! I feel much of the success of a field guide rests in its visuals, particularly in the quality of the photographs. There are more than 2 000 outstanding colour photographs in this field guide, many of which were taken by Spider Club of Southern Africa members and Spider Club of Southern Africa Facebook page contributors, including (to name just a few) Rudi Steenkamp, Andrea Sander, Vida van der Walt, Bruce Blake, Ruan Booysen, Jarrod Michael Todd, Cecile Roux, Norman Larsen, John Roff, Tinus Odendaal, Lynette Knott Rudman, Jonathan Leeming and others. Personally, I am deeply humbled that so many of my own photos were selected, including the photo of a *Camaricus nigrotesselatus* used on the lead page of the Introduction section.



Overwhelmingly, there is much to like, and even love, about the new and updated *Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa*. There are, however, a few things that niggle: there is (understandably) only limited coverage of some families, especially Salticidae; some photos are very small, making identification difficult; and spider sizes are only included (and only in very broad strokes) in the family and genus descriptions, not for individual species – using “medium” to describe all spiders between 7–15 mm, for example, is not particularly helpful for accurate identification. Also, there is no indication of sexual size dimorphism (the size difference between males and females of the same species), information that I found very helpful in the old field guide.

Even so, these small niggles do nothing to detract from this field guide’s depth and importance as the most comprehensive, detailed and engaging guide to the spiders of South Africa published to date.

Observations

“White widow” most likely local species

A few of these white button spiders (*Latrodectus* sp.) were photographed in the Western Cape at different locations. These immature specimens were identified from photos as *Latrodectus pallidus* in the SANSA Newsletter¹⁰. *L. pallidus* occurs from Cape Verde Islands to Libya, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Central Asia. South Africa was also recently added due to one specimen found in Irene, Gauteng, as well as from these photos from the Western Cape. However, one of these spiders was raised and it turned out to almost certainly be *Latrodectus indistinctus*, a local species that occurs in the Western Cape. Further observations will be made in the future to determine if *L. pallidus* occurs in the Western Cape, or if they're not merely immature *L. indistinctus*.



These photos were taken of the same spider on 7 October (1), 15 October (2), 23 October (3), 11 November (4 & 5), 13 November (6 & 7), and 1 December 2023 (8).

¹⁰ Dippenaar-Schoeman, A.S., Lotz, L.N., Roux, C. & Webb, P. 2022. First records of the white widow spider *Latrodectus pallidus* O.P.-Cambridge, 1872 from South Africa (Araneae: Theridiidae). *SANSA Newsletter*, 43:21-22.



Fish-eating spider with frog

This photo of a fish-eating nursery-web spider (*Nilus* sp.; Pisauridae) feeding on a frog was posted by “NatureisMetal”, who photographed it in KwaZulu-Natal.

These spiders are mostly found on or near water bodies, where they hunt small fish, tadpoles, frogs, dragonflies, and other aquatic animals. They will often sit on the edge of the water body, with their front legs on the surface, feeling for any disturbances or ripples caused by prey. They can also run on top of the water surface, and dive down to catch prey.

Rain spiders using snail shells

In the June 2020 edition of The Spider Club News¹¹, we included a few examples of odd materials that rain spiders (specifically *Palystes superciliosus* and *P. castaneus*) use to protect their nests, which included a sponge, ribbons, bird skull, toilet paper, toothpicks, plastic, Allen key bolts, panel pins, and rubber bands. Here are two photos where a rain spider used the empty shells of snails.



Photos by Alma Phillips (left) and Pieter Jordaan (right).



Red velvet mite's big meal

Anka Eichhoff from Namibia photographed this red velvet mite (*Dinothrombium tinctorium*; Trombidiidae) feeding on a termite. She said that after some 30 mm of rain, these mites were everywhere. This is why they're also called rain bugs. Some members of this family, especially in Africa, are the largest mites in the world, with some exceeding 12 mm in length. They are predatory, but aren't often seen catching prey larger than they are.

¹¹ Steenkamp, R.C. 2020. Rain spiders: Nature's recyclers. *The Spider Club News*, 36(2):11-13. Available at: <https://www.spiderclub.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Vol-36.2-2020-06.pdf>

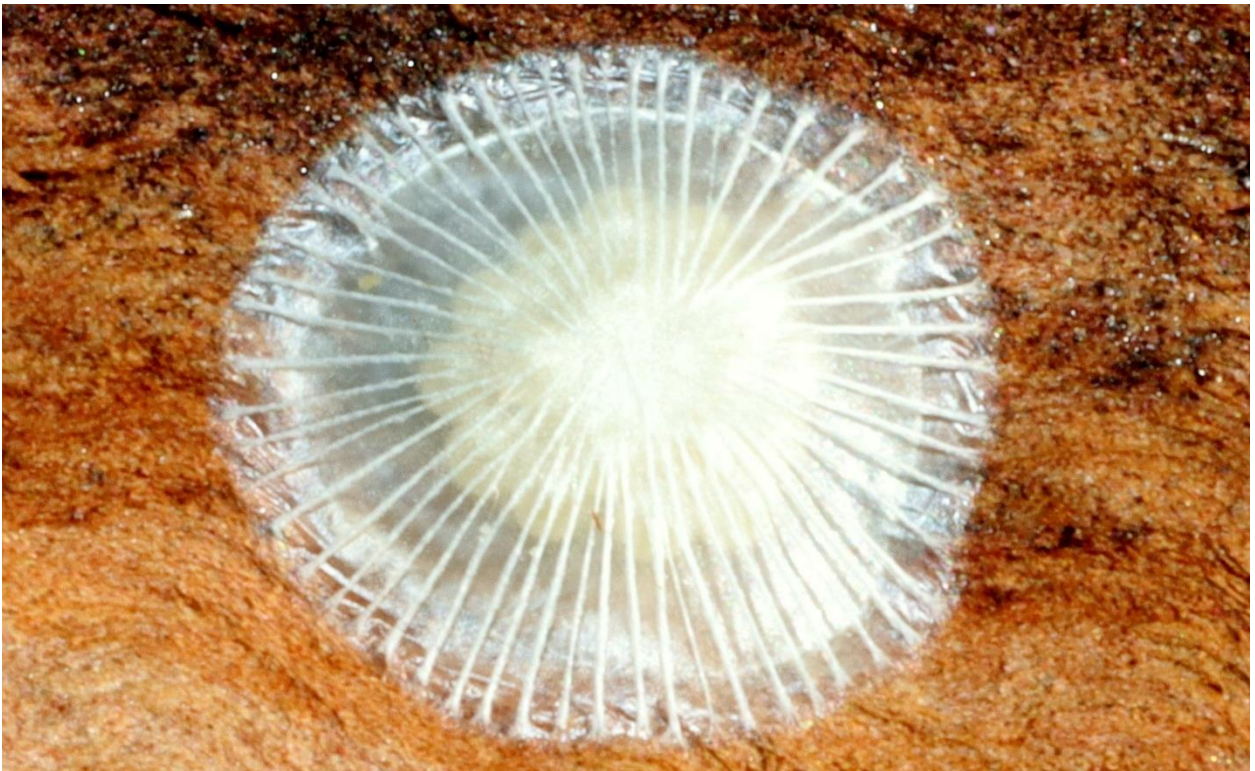
Spider with fungus



Lindelani Gama Mbulawa uploaded this photo, taken in Nkondwana, KZN, on iNaturalist. It appears to be a theridiid of sorts (probably *Steatoda* sp.) with an entomopathogenic fungus on the abdomen. The spider was still alive, and the rest of its body appeared to be unaffected at this stage. The spores of these fungi attach to the body of insects and spiders, and when the spores germinate, they bore through the cuticle and the spider or insect usually dies from fungal toxins.

Beautiful egg sac

Cecile Roux photographed this spider egg sac in Clanwilliam in the Western Cape. She found it behind the bark of a tree. Not sure who it belongs to (possibly *Selenopidae*?), and it might be freshly spun.



Ant-mimic jumping spider's association with *Lepisiota* ants



While some ant mimics associate with a specific ant species, others appear to be more generalist mimics, and are sometimes found around different species of

ants. Rudi Steenkamp found this natta ant-mimic jumping spider (*Natta* sp.; Salticidae) around some *Lepisiota* sp. ants, who are shown in the right photo with the wrapped prey of a feather-legged lace weaver (*Uloborus plumipes*). The spider is slightly bigger than the ants, but seemed quite at home among them.

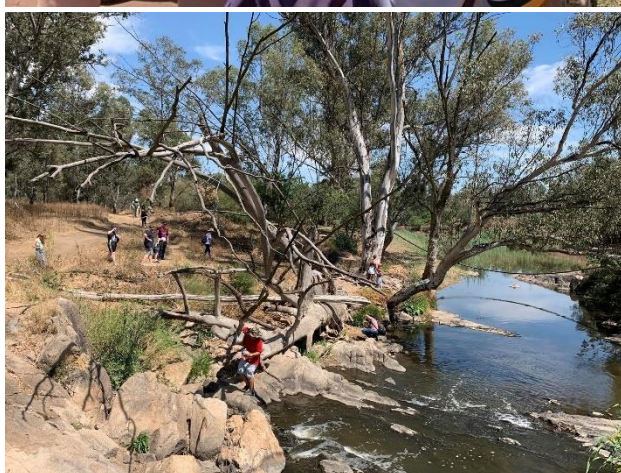
EVENTS

Spider Walk

Modderfontein Reserve, Gauteng – 22 October 2023

by Kira Bower

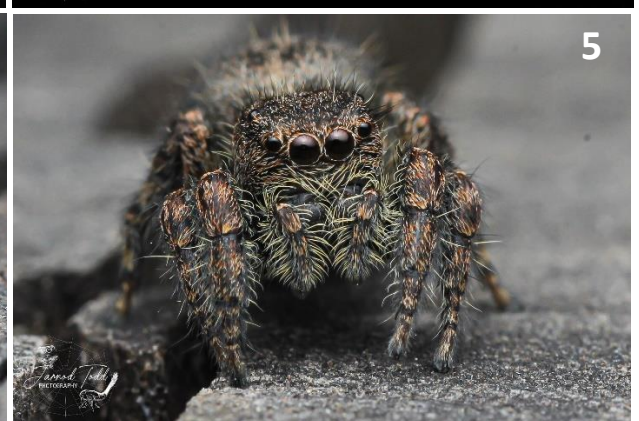
Unfortunately, no text was provided for this spider walk. Here are a few photos of the day.



Photos by Garrie Wright.



Photos by Garrie Wright.



1. Wolf spider (Lycosidae) and babies. 2 & 3. Tailed crab spider (*Monaeses* sp.; Thomisidae). 4 & 5. Jumping spider (*Nigorella hirsuta*; Salticidae). Photos by Jarrod Todd.



6 & 7. Grass lynx spider (*Oxyopes* sp.; Oxyopidae). 8. Jackson's grass lynx spider (*Oxyopes jacksoni*; Oxyopidae). 9. Crowned nursery-web spider (*Rothus* sp.; Pisauridae). 10 & 11. Long-jawed water orb-web spider (*Tetragnatha* sp.; Tetragnathidae). 12 & 13. Long-bodied thylene jumping spider (*Thyene thienioides*; Salticidae). Photos by Jarrod Todd.

Spider Walk

Kasteelberg, Western Cape – 22 October 2023

by Patricia Groenewald and Janet Pretorius



Attendees at the Kasteelberg Spider Walk were treated with good weather for a change. Photo: Janet Pretorius.

There was some fear that the Sunday morning would dawn with drizzle, but the early hours held only sunshine and bird song. We met at Eight Feet Village near Riebeeck Kasteel, an appropriate name for a meeting point for 16 spider enthusiasts.

This was my first spider walk, and I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Would I look silly if I didn't know an obvious spider name? Which spider names are considered obvious? What qualifies a spider as "cool to see" vs "oh, it's just a..."? As it turns out, Wessel and Cecile are very knowledgeable leaders, and there was a range of knowledge amongst the other attendees, so I didn't feel out of place or overwhelmed.

We drove to the nearby vineyard, grabbed a plastic container and were instructed on how to shake the bushes to get the spiders out. Almost immediately we were introduced to a scorpion from under a rock, a caterpillar, and a small, black tunnel spider. I quickly learned that small spiders were the order of the day. I rather wished I'd packed my bug-viewer that was comfortably ensconced in a box at home. Next time it'll be the first thing into my bag.

My cell phone camera was definitely no match for the macro lenses around me, but I was pleased that I could capture something of the spiders that fell into my container or were pointed out by others. I did have a few "oh, that's just a..." spiders, but I was pleased to find a mushroom theridiid and a chrysso comb-footed spider.

We had a good laugh learning that the lynx spiders are the drama queens of the spider world, and it was funny to find a *Diphya* on my lunchbox when I picked it up to have a snack – it must have clambered on when I wasn't looking. I was also happy to see two spiders on my bucket-list – the palp-footed spider and an ant-mimic spider.

I joined the Spider Club in 2020 to identify the spiders I found around the house, as I think many members did, but this was the first opportunity I've had to do a walk with people who knew what they were looking for. Thanks to Wessel, Janet, and Cecile for organising the day; I look forward to doing another one!

- Patricia Groenewald –



Photos by Wessel and Janet Pretorius.

I am not yet a spider enthusiast, like my husband, Wessel. The only spiders that I have ever allowed to walk on me were flower crab spiders, so usually with a spider walk I will help with the admin or a bit of organising. I usually go on the walks but when it is close to home I won't stay long, but with this walk it was different. This time I realised I am there for the emotional support of my husband and to talk to the people who are looking for a conversation.

During the walk I met a lady who is totally into spiders but her partner is not, but he is also fond of crab spiders. It made me laugh as I remembered what Cecile said: "You should start a spider spouse support group." What I do enjoy, is to take photos where they all gather together to see what spiders have been found. It is amazing when you stand in the middle of the field and you hear: "Come and look what I found."

You always meet amazing people on these walks. Every time there is someone new who is becoming interested in spiders. And man, it is amazing to hear their stories and how they became interested in spiders.

To more walks in the Western Cape!

- Janet Pretorius -

Photos



1. Pirate spider (cf. *Ero* sp.; Mimetidae). 2. Ground sac spider (*Thysanina* sp.; Trachelidae). 3. Hairy crab spider (*Heriaeus* sp.; Thomisidae). 4. Grass lynx spider (*Oxyopes* sp.; Oxyopidae). 5. Running spider (*Philodromus* sp.; Philodromidae). Photos by Cecile Roux.



6. Butterfly comb-footed spider (*Episinus* or *Moneta* sp.; Theridiidae). 7. False button spider (*Steatoda* cf. *capensis*; Theridiidae). 8. Ground sac spider (*Afrocyba* sp.; Trachelidae). 9-11. Simon's water orb-web spider (*Diplocephalus simoni*; Tetragnathidae).

Species list

Family	Genus	Species
Ammoxenidae	<i>Ammoxenus</i>	sp.
Araneidae	<i>Cyrtophora</i>	<i>citricola</i>
Dictynidae	Unknown	sp.
Eresidae	<i>Stegodyphus</i>	<i>dumicola</i>
Gnaphosidae	<i>Asemesthes</i>	sp.
	<i>Megamyrmaekion</i>	<i>schreineri</i>
	<i>Xerophaeus</i>	sp.
	<i>Zelotes</i>	sp.
Linyphiidae	Unknown	sp.
	<i>Microlinyphia</i>	<i>sterilis</i>
Lycosidae	<i>Hogna</i>	sp.
	<i>Pardosa</i>	sp.
Mimetidae	<i>Ero</i>	sp.
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i>	sp.
Palpimanidae	<i>Palpimanus</i>	sp.
Philodromidae	<i>Philodromus</i>	sp.
	<i>Thanatus</i>	sp.
Phyxelididae	<i>Malaika</i>	sp.
	<i>Vidole</i>	<i>capensis</i>
Prodidomidae	<i>Theuma</i>	sp.
Salticidae	<i>Heliophanus</i>	sp.
	<i>Myrmarachne</i>	sp.
	Unknown	sp.
Scytodidae	<i>Scytodes</i>	sp.
Segestriidae	<i>Ariadna</i>	sp.
Selenopidae	<i>Anyphops</i>	sp.
Tetragnathidae	<i>Diphya</i>	<i>simoni</i>
	<i>Leucauge</i>	<i>festiva</i>
	<i>Leugauge</i>	sp.
Theridiidae	<i>Chrysso</i>	sp.
	<i>Enoplognatha</i>	sp.
	<i>Moneta/Episinus</i>	sp.
	<i>Steatoda</i>	sp.
	<i>Steatoda</i>	<i>capensis</i>
	Unknown	sp.
	<i>Theridion</i>	sp.
Thomisidae	<i>Heriaeus</i>	sp.
	<i>Holopelus</i>	sp.
	<i>Misumenops</i>	<i>rubrodecoratus</i>
	<i>Synema</i>	<i>imitatrix</i>
Trachelidae	<i>Afrocto</i>	sp.
	<i>Thysanina</i>	sp.
Zoropsidae	<i>Pronophaea</i>	sp.

Reconfirming the presence of the Mediterranean recluse (*Loxosceles rufescens* (Dufour 1820), Araneae Sicariidae) on the West Coast of South Africa, after 110 years

Benjamin Carbuccia[†] & Cecile Roux[‡]

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Introduction

Loxosceles, commonly known as violin or recluse spiders, is the most widespread and diverse genus in the family Sicariidae (violin and six-eyed sand spiders), with 143 currently described species worldwide¹. This genus is well represented and diverse in South Africa, where 10 species² have been recorded so far, of which nine are considered native. The tenth and only non-native *Loxosceles* species recorded in the country is *Loxosceles rufescens* (Dufour, 1820), the Mediterranean violin spider. Originating from the Mediterranean region (Southern Europe, Western and Central Asia, and North Africa)³, this species is known for its tendency to travel with human transportation and to establish quite easily in new areas⁴. It has thus become extremely widespread, occurring as a non-native species in East Asia, North and South America, and Australia⁴.

In South Africa, its presence is only known from a single confirmed historical record, from a building in Cape Town². As this record is, in addition to that, very old (1914), it has been regarded as an isolated accidental import, with no evidence that the species had ever successfully established². However, in recent years, several specimens found in South Africa have been observed and photographed, whose appearance was highly similar to *L. rufescens*.

Description

All *Loxosceles* species have six eyes, grouped in three pairs, forming a “U” shape when seen from above, and slender legs devoid of spines but covered in short, curved setae (“hairs”). Unlike the closely related spitting spiders (Scytodidae), their carapace is flattened, not domed.

L. rufescens is a medium-sized (6-9 mm) species of violin spider, with a relatively pale colouration. The legs and carapace are beige to brown, but most commonly rufous in colour, with a beige to greyish, unpatterned abdomen. The only pattern this spider has (but which can sometimes be completely absent or very faint) is a darker spot on the cephalic region of the carapace, tapering posteriorly in a shape reminiscent of a bottle or a guitar (rather than a violin shape).



Figure 1. A typical-looking *Loxosceles rufescens* female from France (by B. Carbuccia)



Figure 2. An adult female without the “violin” pattern on the carapace, from Turkey (by B. Carbuccia)

It is thus markedly different in aspect from most South African *Loxosceles* species, which, for the most part, have a distinctly patterned abdomen. While *L. spinulosa*, from Western Cape, has no distinct pattern, it is generally much darker (blackish) in colour than *L. rufescens*, and examination of the genitalia (even macroscopically) of mature males allows definite identification. Another patternless species, *L. speluncarum*, occurs in Gauteng, but there is little chance of any confusion arising between this rare, micro-endemic, cave-dwelling species and *L. rufescens* (and in any case, mature male specimens can be easily told apart by their genitalia).

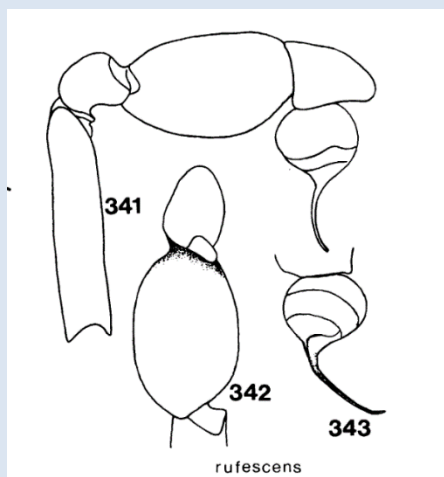


Figure 3. *Loxosceles rufescens*, male pedipalp; 341: retrolateral view, 342: dorsal view, 343: Bulb (in Gertsch & Hennik, 1983)

The male pedipalp of *L. rufescens* has a stout, distinctly swollen tibia and a short, rounded cymbium. The bulb is large and subspherical, with a thin, curved embolus, about as long or slightly longer than the width of the bulb. The bulb (bulbus) is larger than the cymbium or similar in size (which differs from *L. spinulosa*, whose bulb is much smaller than the cymbium).

New South African records

Unidentified *Loxosceles* specimens with a habitus very similar to *L. rufescens* have been found in Swartland, Western Cape, by Cecile Roux since at least 2015. Over a dozen specimens, of various life stages, were observed at the same location between 2015 and 2023, indicating an established and perennial population. Mature males were eventually found, and some photographs show the pedipalps well enough to confirm they are indeed *L. rufescens*, with their small, short cymbium and large bulb.



Figure 4. The first specimen found by Cecile Roux in Swartland, in 2015 (photo: C. Roux). Figure 5. A large female, found at the same location in 2023 (photo: C. Roux)



Figure 6. A mature male found at the same location in 2021. The view of the pedipalps allow identification as *L. rufescens* (photo: C. Roux)

Meanwhile, other, similar specimens have been found, photographed, and posted on social media by other members, from another location in Swartland, but also other parts of Western Cape such as Wellington (two specimens photographed by two different observers) and Porterville. While the habitus of these specimens is definitely similar to *L. rufescens*, the photos unfortunately do not allow unequivocal identification. However, the presence of a confirmed *L. rufescens* population nearby and the absence of similar native species make it highly likely.



Interestingly, similar specimens have also been seen outside of the province, respectively in Qonce (King William's Town), Eastern Cape, and coastal KwaZulu-Natal (unspecified location), suggesting that the species may potentially be more widespread in coastal areas of South Africa. These are, however, isolated records, so more specimens, and high-quality photos, would be necessary to confirm whether or not they are indeed *L. rufescens*, and whether these observations truly indicate established populations or simply accidental imports.

Figure 7. A probable *Loxosceles rufescens* from the Eastern Cape (photo: Morne Venter)

Ecology

In South Africa, all confirmed and suspected *L. rufescens* specimens have, so far, been observed in and around houses, which is consistent with the known synanthropic tendencies of this species. In its native Mediterranean range, it is quite common at ground level, under large rocks and rubble in pine forests, where it can be locally abundant (much more so than in buildings), and less commonly in more open, drier habitats such as rocky scrubland. It is also occasionally found in caves and manmade underground infrastructure, such as tunnels and basements.

As the climate in Western and Eastern Cape's coastal regions is suitable for the species' durable implantation⁴ and relatively similar to its area of origin, it seems likely that *L. rufescens* might also be found away from human dwellings in the future.

Medical significance

Loxosceles species are infamous for their cytotoxic venom, which can cause skin necrosis in humans, a syndrome called loxoscelism. However, the widespread fear they inspire in most parts of their almost worldwide range is out of proportion to their actual medical importance, and reinforced by high numbers of unrelated skin lesions misdiagnosed as bites⁵.

L. rufescens is no exception, and is known to be a cause of loxoscelism in the Mediterranean region⁶, where it is an object of excessive fear and alarmism⁷. Compared to other Old World species of *Loxosceles*, bites from this species and their effects are quite well documented^{7,8,9}. In typical *L. rufescens* bite cases, the evolution of the symptoms is slow; over the hours following a weakly to moderately painful bite, a small blister surrounded by erythema and bruising generally forms. When it does appear (only about half of cases develop into skin necrosis¹²), the lesion generally turns into a sloughing eschar after 3-4 days, which eventually heals spontaneously but very slowly, typically over the course of 9-12 weeks. In some cases, systemic symptoms such as fever or headache⁶ are experienced in the first few days. These clinical signs are typical of cutaneous loxoscelism, and similar to those usually observed in bites from other South African species¹⁰.

So far, severe cases of systemic loxoscelism¹¹, where the blood and internal organs are also affected by the venom, which is sometimes observed as a rare consequence of bites from some American species¹¹, have not been reported as a direct consequence of a verified *L. rufescens* bite, or from any Old World *Loxosceles* species. While there are press stories in Europe about alleged deadly bites (generally based on fragile or non-existent evidence), there is no confirmed record of a verified *L. rufescens* bite case with a fatal outcome.

Like all violin spiders, *L. rufescens* is a passive and unobtrusive animal, which does not bite readily. Even within its native range, and despite its synanthropic tendencies, bites by this species are rare: 53 cases (of which only six were verified bites, and 19, none of them verified, happened out of the species' range) have been recorded in France over a 12-year period¹². It is thus highly unlikely that *L. rufescens*, even if it multiplies and spreads farther into the country, will have any significant public health impact in South Africa. Its bites are not markedly distinct from native *Loxosceles* species, and all *Loxosceles* bites are a rare occurrence, even in places where the spiders themselves are abundant.

Conclusion

With the specimens found by Cecile Roux in Swartland, we are able to reconfirm, after almost 110 years, the presence of *L. rufescens* in South Africa. Those unidentified but similar specimens from other locations in Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal allow us to also hypothesise that it might be more widespread, or even spreading.

However, we cannot know whether the species has remained present but undetected in the Western Cape for more than a century, or if the specimens observed in the recent years are the result of one or several subsequent accidental introduction events (which is quite likely, as this species is known to travel easily).

L. rufescens would be worth looking at more thoroughly, with a particular attention paid to adult males (as they are the most readily identifiable) in order to better assess the extent of its presence in the country. We also want to emphasise that this species should not be overlooked as an option when attempting to identify a pale, unpatterned violin spider in South Africa.

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Arachnolingo:

Venomous, medically significant, dangerous. Part I: What does “venomous” mean?

By Benjamin Carbuccia

The following blog article was taken directly from Benjamin Carbuccia’s “Nopeland Discovery” blog, which can be viewed here: <https://nopelanddiscoveryblog.blogspot.com/>

From Benjamin: **Except when the source is explicitly cited, the images illustrating this blog are mine and are not free to use without permission.**

References are integrated in the text of the article; the words [in blue](#) are clickable and will redirect you to the sources of the information.

This is part 1 of an article that was so long it became a trilogy. Parts 2 and 3 will be published in the next two newsletters.

"-Is this spider venomous?
-It's not medically significant."

When you just want to know if you're in any danger around an animal you just found in or near your home, this answer can easily seem needlessly complicated, and even frustrating. It's tempting to assume that the person saying "medically significant" just wants to sound clever by using big words when they could just use simpler terms such as "venomous" or "dangerous". However, these words are not interchangeable, and it's important to avoid mixing them up. Here's why.



Almost all spiders, including this trapdoor spider (*Nemesia* sp.) are **venomous**. However, like most spiders, this one is **not medically significant**.

What does "venomous" mean?

It's actually pretty simple or extremely complicated, depending on the level of detail you want to go into. The broadest definition of "venomous" is "an organism which secretes and uses venom". Simple but unhelpful, as it directly leads to the much more complicated question of "what is venom?" That one goes into [deep levels of complexity](#), and is still [not fully agreed upon](#) by scientists worldwide.

The common definition of "venomous" in the English language, the one most often found in wildlife documentaries and other [sources intended for the general public](#), is based on the delivery mechanism: a venomous animal has to inject its poison into the target organism's system, while species that use toxic substances but don't inject them are poisonous.

"Venom is injected, poison is ingested." Is that the definition of venom? Sounds simple enough... Too simple, actually, to fully reflect the diversity of toxic substances and their uses in the natural world. Its main issues can be summed up with the following examples:

- A spitting cobra's venom is both cytotoxic and neurotoxic, and, injected through a bite can cause extensive tissue damage. However, spat in the eyes of a mammal, it also immediately attacks the corneal tissue and [causes extreme irritation by mere contact with it](#), without entering the blood flow (cornea is avascular tissue, it does not have blood vessels). Therefore, spitting cobra venom can have marked toxic effects, even when it is not injected.
- Indigenous G//ui and G//ana people of central Kalahari, in Botswana, hunt medium-sized to large mammals [with arrows poisoned with the raw, unprocessed contents of a spider's, *Argiope australis*, abdomen](#). Interestingly, it's not the spider's venom (harmless to mammals) that is used, but the guts and haemolymph, which seems to act as a poison potent enough to kill an animal within two to four hours. The absence of precautions to avoid contact of the poison with the hunter's skin, eyes or mouth suggests it is relatively harmless if ingested or absorbed through the skin, and has to enter the blood flow to take effect.
- European and North American water snakes (*Natrix* spp. And [Nerodia](#) spp.), along with [some other genera](#) of "nonvenomous" snakes, nonetheless [have a Duvernoy's gland](#), whose secretions are toxic to animals such as mice, and are believed to help subdue their (mainly fish and amphibians) prey. While these snakes have neither fangs nor grooved or enlarged teeth, or muscles to contract the glands and deliver their contents, the secretions continuously mix with the saliva and passively enter the prey's system when the snake bites and holds on. Thus, [these secretions](#) are now [commonly recognised as venom](#), even though the glands aren't connected to any type of specialised delivery apparatus.



While its venom is harmless to humans and other large mammals, *Argiope australis* is surprisingly used by some Indigenous people of the Kalahari to poison their arrows; they do not use its venom, but the contents of its abdomen, which seem to cause deadly poisoning when entering an animal's blood flow.

As these few examples show, the black-or-white, injected or ingested, distinction of “venom” and “poison” is not enough for biologists to work with. Just like everything in the living world, the venomous apparatus, and the venom, evolve constantly; there's a huge diversity of substances chemically or functionally akin to venoms, and also an enormous range of different structures to deliver those substances. Both venom and the delivery apparatus generally evolve from pre-existing substances (in vertebrates, it's often saliva or skin secretions) and structures (such as teeth, spines or fin rays) that get, with time and natural selection, modified for use as a hunting or defensive weapon. Therefore, at least initially, these features (the venom and the delivery apparatus) evolve independently; venom-like chemicals can exist without a specialised delivering apparatus (case of the *Natrix* water snakes), or even without anything to inject them at all (case of [toad parotoid gland secretions](#), for instance).

Thus, a definition of “venom” solely based on its mode of delivery **would lump together substances that don't have much in common** besides how they are delivered, **while artificially excluding secretions that have everything in common** with most of those clearly identified as venoms, *except* the way they're delivered. That's why scientists need a delimitation that is more specific than that.

Although there are several definitions of venom, which, depending [on authors](#) and [disciplines](#), vary slightly in the details, they all [combine a few common criteria](#):

- Venoms are [complex substances](#), made up of a variety of components (toxins), including proteins.
- Venom is produced by the animal, which uses it (autogenous) through [a dedicated and specialised secretory apparatus](#).
- Venom [has a harmful effect](#) on other living organisms (at least on some of them) and is [produced for use as a weapon](#) against them, be it to help subdue potential prey, defend themselves against potential predators, or both.
- In most cases, [there is some kind of apparatus](#) (which can be as simple as a spine or claw), which helps deliver the venom into the target's system by creating a wound. However, if a substance fulfils the previous criteria but not this one, it can still be regarded as venom. [Toad secretions](#), for instance, are generally classified as venom¹, although they aren't equipped [with anything to inject them](#). Meanwhile, [dart frogs do not secrete their own poison](#), but store and concentrate toxins they find in their food; it does therefore not fit the definition of venom, although it is used in pretty much the same way as toads use theirs.

The difference between “poisonous” and “venomous” in common language is thus not in line with the current definitions of “venom” used by biologists; *poisonous animals with venom are a thing!* How simple is that now?



According to the colloquial distinction between “venomous” and “poisonous”, toads (family Bufonidae) are poisonous; yet their poison is classified as venom¹.

Simple, right?

This makes things very complicated to the layperson; actually, they're even complicated to scientists who study them, as the exact definition of “venom” [is still debated](#) in the scientific community. The good news is that while it does matter to biologists, **none of that is very important in everyday conversations**. Some people will never miss an opportunity to smugly correct those who say “poisonous” instead of “venomous”, and act like it's a very big deal, but the truth is, this distinction is *actually of little concern* to non-biologists. Even scientists themselves are not that strict about it; the same secretions will sometimes indifferently be referred to as “[poison](#)” or “[venom](#)” in the literature, and even phrasing as “heretical” as “[poisonous snake bite](#)” will sometimes [be tolerated](#) in scientific publications.

The important point in all this is to understand that **none of the definitions of “venomous”, “poisonous” or “venom” are based on any notion of danger to humans**. As [Scott Weinstein explains](#) so well, “it is important to again re-emphasize that the coincidental medical effects of snake venoms should have no role in their definitions, as these were evolved long before humans”. To put it shortly, **venomous does NOT mean dangerous** to humans. An animal can very well be venomous and completely harmless to humans; this will not challenge its classification as a venomous species in any way. Being **harmless doesn't imply the animal is nonvenomous**, and **being venomous does not necessarily mean it is harmful** to humans. Actually, venom is incredibly widespread in the animal kingdom: nearly [all the major animal groups](#) include at least some venomous representatives. While snakes, spiders, scorpions and many insects are famous for being venomous, many other lesser-known animals, such as some worms, snails, mites, pseudoscorpions, corals, and even some mammals also are.



Left: Pseudoscorpions (which are a different order from true scorpions and are not closely related to them) are venomous, but they're also completely harmless to humans. **Right:** The family Uloboridae appears to be the only spider family (out of 135) to lack venom glands

All spiders, except the family Uloboridae, and the two species in the genus *Holarchaea* in the family Anapidae, which seem to have lost their venom glands, are venomous. All scorpions are venomous. However, [only about 1%](#) of the [50 000+ known](#) spider species, and [less than 10% of the ~2200](#) described scorpion species worldwide are equipped with venom that can cause clinically serious symptoms in humans. Actually, **bites or stings from most venomous animals pose little to no threat to human health.**



[Less than one in ten species of scorpions](#) is capable of causing serious envenomations in humans, and almost all of them, such as this *Buthus occitanus*, belong in a single family, the Buthidae.

The reason for that is simple: venom is a weapon used by animals to subdue prey, protect themselves against predators, or both. That means the main selective factor driving the evolution of venom and venomous apparatus in a species is its efficiency against its favourite prey items and/or its main predators. There is no living venomous animal species whose favourite prey or main natural predator is human. Therefore, efficacy against humans isn't a

driver of selection in the evolution of their venoms; **there is no known instance of an animal species whose venom evolved *specifically* to harm or kill humans.** The thing is, resistance and sensitivity to a toxic substance vary a lot from one group of living organisms to another; what's deadly to a fly can be harmless to a human, and vice versa. It is, for instance, a well-known fact that [slugs can safely eat](#) mushrooms [so toxic to humans](#) that a few grams are enough to kill an adult.



Left: To humans, the poisonous deathcap (*Amanita phalloides*) is highly toxic, and even a small piece of one of these mushrooms would be enough to kill an adult. However, it is not so toxic to slugs, which can happily and safely munch on it. **Right:** The vivid colours of the elegant grasshopper (*Zonocerus elegans*) warn predators that it is poisonous, as it stores toxins from the plants it feeds on. However, it is also [consumed by some human populations](#) who enjoy its pungent taste, apparently without perceptible harmful effects.

Same goes for venoms. Studies have shown, for instance, that [widow spider \(*Latrodectus* sp.\) venom](#) is considerably more toxic (in mg of venom per kg of animal) to mice than to frogs, much more to flies than to cockroaches, and that guinea pigs are much more sensitive to it than mice.

To us humans, that means that, *as we are not the intended target*, most animal venoms only have mild effects on us.

Species whose venom is significantly harmful to humans are generally [those that hunt mammals](#) on a regular basis or [have frequent hostile interactions](#) with them, or those whose venom contains [broad-spectrum toxins](#), active on a [very wide variety](#) of animal species. In some rare cases, it can also be an uncanny coincidence, where humans accidentally happen to be particularly sensitive to a toxin while not being its intended target at all; this is, for instance, the case of the δ -hexatoxins found in [the Sydney funnel-web spider's](#)



Scorpions feed mainly on insects and other arthropods; therefore, most species are equipped with venom that will kill insects rapidly, but will only have mild, local effects on humans and other larger mammals.

(*Atrax robustus*) venom, which induce strong pain in its small mammalian predators (rodents and marsupials), but, as a result of an evolutionary “accident”, are highly toxic to primates (which didn’t evolve alongside them), including humans.

As the vast majority of venomous animals species do not fall in any of these categories, most of them **do not represent a significant risk** to human health and life.

It is therefore **critically important to avoid mixing up** “venomous” (or “poisonous”) with “harmful to humans”, and, conversely, not to understand “nonvenomous” as “harmless”. These words are not synonyms. Not even close.



Nonvenomous does NOT mean harmless

But what about the animals whose venom *does* represent a risk to human health? What should we call them?

Find out in [part two](#).

¹ The source for this information is a search in [Google Scholar](#), with the use of the operator " " to restrict results to articles explicitly containing the terms “toad poison” or “toad venom” (because a simple search of the terms “toad poison” without the quotation marks will include results containing the broader term “poisoning”, which can apply to both poison and venom). The search for the terms “toad poison” yielded 553 results, while “toad venom” yielded 3500 results, showing that biologists studying toxic secretions from toads much more commonly refer to them as venom rather than poison.

Anka se goggastories

deur Anka Eichhoff

Die volgende stuk is direk vanaf Anka Eichhoff se blog. Hierdie sal ongelukkig die laaste goggastorie wees. Om haar stories te lees, besoek haar webwerf by <https://www.kyffhauser.co.za/Goggastories.htm>

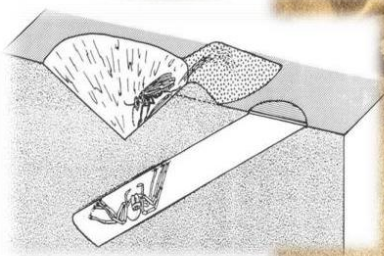
Namib sandwoestyn spinnekop *Carparachne alba* wat wiel (Fam.Sparassidae)



Spinnekoppe lewe al meer as 350 miljoen jaar op hierdie aardbol, soogdiere 250 en mense eers 2,3 miljoen jare.

En ons beweer, dat ons mense, die jongste van alle lewende wesens, die wiel uitgevind het! Ek sê, spinnekoppe het dit al lank voor ons uitgevind.

Hierdie jagspinnekop lewe in sandduine en het die rolbeweging as vinnige vlugmanier ontwikkel. Sy ergste vyand is roofwespes (*Schistonyx aterrimus*), wat die spinnekoppe uit die sand uitgrawe, verlam, na

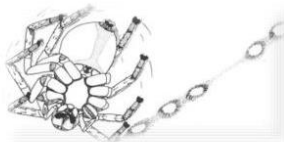


hul eie nes dra, 'n eiertjie op die spinnekop se agterlyf plaas en sodoende lewendige en genoeg kos vir die wesplarfie voorsien, sodat dit kan voluit ontwikkel tot 'n volwasse wespe.

Die skematiese voorstelling wys 'n die spinnekop uit te grawe.

wespe wat besig is om

As die spinnekop 'n wegkomkans kry, trek dit die bene styf teen die lyf en rol oor sy bene (sien skets) by die skuinste van die duin af met 'n spoed van 1m/sek of dan 60 m per minuut. Dit is vinniger as die wespe kan vlieg. So het die spinnekop 'n kans om spoedig weg te kom en dan in die los sand weg te kruip.



So lyk die plek waar 'n *Carparachne alba* woon.

Soggens vroeg voordat die wind waai, kan 'n mens dit die beste sien. Die geel kring wys, waar die tonnelingang sit.





Dit is merkwaardig, hoe 'n spinnekop dit regkry, om 'n buisvormige tunnel in los duinsand te bou, sonder dat dit platval! As 'n mens dit uitgrawe, lyk dit soos gebrei met sand en spinnekopsy (wat onsigbaar is) of soos 'n groot sandwurm.



..

Hierdie is 'n volwasse wyfie. So het dit gesit toe dit uitgegrawe is deur die toerleier. Sodra hy begin het om sy vingers naby haar te beweeg, het sy 'n dreighouding ingeneem, waarby een of meer pote hoog opgetel is.



Aangesien die lewensomstandighede in die woestyn baie moeilik is, het die spinnekoppe op diverse maniere spesifiek aangepas. Die uitdagings is beskerming teen geweldige temperatuurverskille tussen dag en nag, die wind wat die sand verskuif, water- en kosvoorsiening in 'n ultradroë omgewing met baie min plantegroei en die fyn, los duinsand wat die bou van 'n beskermende nes feitlik onmoontlik maak.

Dit is wel interessant om sulke klein diere in die sandwoestyn op te spoor en te sien, maar die versteuring en die vernietiging van die habitat kos die spinnekop geweldig **baie energie**, soos bv. die syproduksie om 'n nuwe tunnel te bou. Die energiereserves kan slegs weer opgevol word deur te vreet, en daarvoor moet die spinnekop genoeg energie hê, want dis 'n **jag**spinnekop en om met sukses te kan jag verg ook baie energie. Daaglikse versteuring in hulle woongebiede, soos vierwielmotorfiets- toere met besoekers het tot gevolg dat die sandbewoners verminder; hulle habitat word versteur.

Inligtingsbronne: Wetenskaplike artikels : The Surface dwelling Arthropod Fauna of Gobabeb... (J.Henschel, V.Mtsheni, John Pallet, Mary K.Seely)

Psammophily in Namib Desert Spiders (Joh Henschel)

Spiders Wheel to Escape (J.Henschel) The Complete Guide to Fossils & Fossil Collecting (Steve Parker)

Skematiese voorstellings (2 sketse): Joh Henschel

Teks en fotos: Anka Eichhoff

Oktober 2022

Spider of the Month

Here are the spiders of the month for October, November, and December. Members on our Facebook group nominate photos throughout the month, and at the beginning of each month, vote in a poll.

October



(1) Front-eyed trapdoor spider (cf. *Idiops* sp.; Idiopidae), Kyle Thomas. (2) Feather-legged lac weaver (*Uloborus plumipes*; Uloboridae), Jarrod Todd. (3) Big hairy hyllus jumping spider (*Hyllus* sp.; Salticidae), Daniel Rautenbach. (4) Flower crab spider (*Thomisus* sp.; Thomisidae), Rudi Steenkamp. (5) Tailed comb-footed spider (*Rhomphaea* sp; Theridiidae), Mike Green.

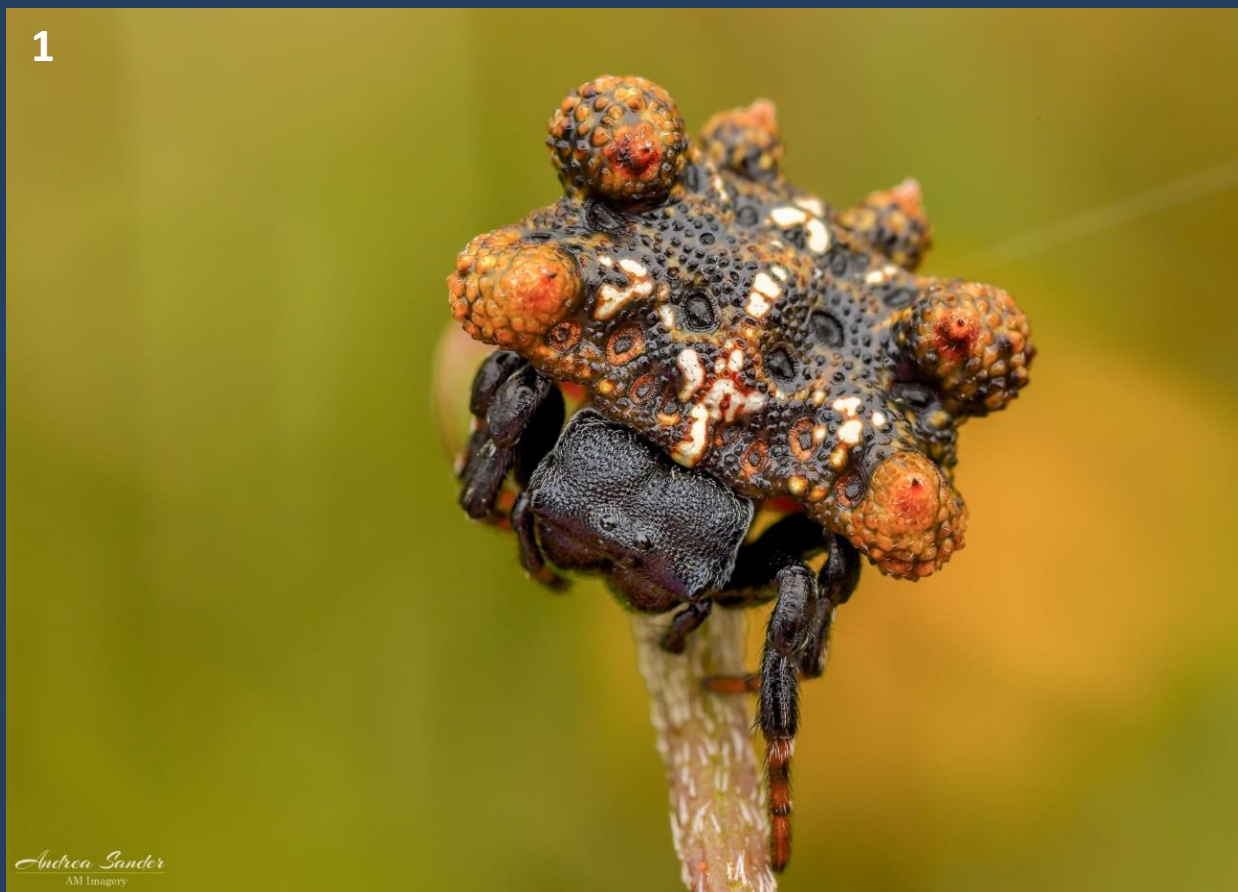
November



(1) White beach wolf spider (unknown; Lycosidae) Cecile Roux. (2) Makapan stenaclurillus jumping spider (*Stenaclurillus guttiger*; Salticidae) Robert Wienand. (3) Dew-drop spider (*Argyrodes* sp.; Theridiidae) Dawie Broekman. (4) Granulated flower crab spider (*Thomisus granulatus*; Thomisidae) Dawie Broekman. (5) Blue-lip evarcha (*Evarcha flagellaris*; Salticidae) Rudi Steenkamp (found by Mike Vickers in Bloemfontein).

December

1



Andrea Sander
AM Imagery

2



3



4



5



(1) Yates' box kite spider (*Isoxya yatesi*; Araneidae) Andrea Sander. (2) Black-hand orange jumping spider (*Cyrba* cf. *nigrimana*; Salticidae) Ruan Booysen. (3) Bushy-leg community-nest velvet spider (*Stegodyphus mimosarum*; Eresidae) Brendon Pietersen. (4) Decorated zodariid (*Psammorygma* sp.; Zodariidae) Cecile Roux. (5) Spiky field spider (*Pararaneus* sp.; Araneidae) Rudi Steenkamp.

Spider of the Year (2023)

The Spider of the Year (SOTY) is this Yates' box kite spider (*Isoxya yatesi*; Araneidae), photographed by Andrea Sander in Drummond, KZN. It was also the December Spider of the Month (SOTM). Of 233 people who voted, this photo received 82 votes. Andrea won R1000 for this photo.

Second place goes to Joey De Villiers and his green thyenula jumping spider (*Thyenula juvenca*; Salticidae), photographed in Skoenmakerskop, Western Cape. This spider was February's SOTM. With 77 votes, Joey won R500 for second place.

Third place goes to Dawie Broekman's ogre-faced net-casting spider (*Asianopsis* sp.; Deinopidae), found in Malelane, Mpumalanga. This was the June SOTM. This photo received 71 votes. Dawie won R300 for third place.

Congratulations to these three people, as well as all the other contenders!



The wonderful world of spiders

This section showcases spiders from other parts of the world.

1



2023 © frank deschandol
Instagram @frankcanon_image_in

2



3



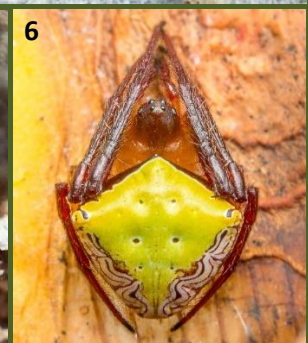
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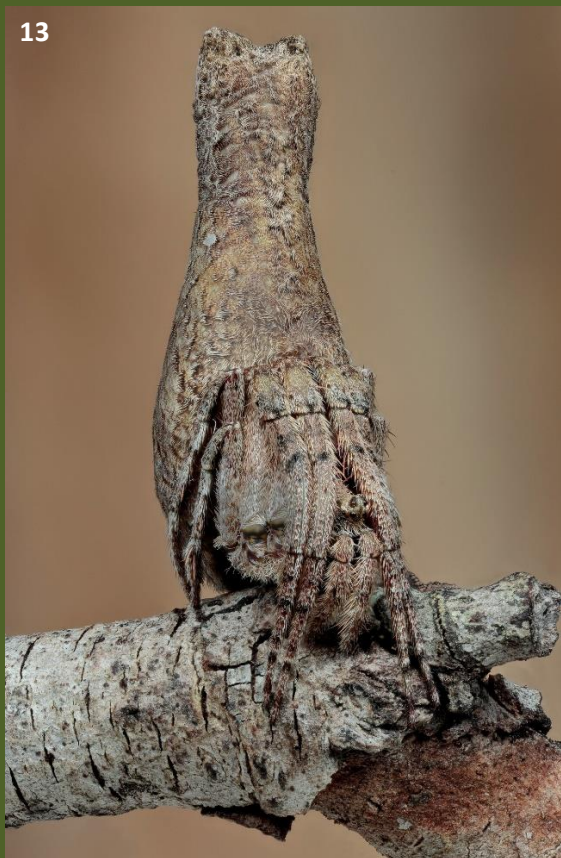
6



(1) *Acantharachne* sp. (Araneidae). Photo: Frank Deshandol. Location: Mukono, Uganda. (2) *Platythomisus* sp. (Thomisidae). Photo: Yahya Aziz. Location: Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, (3) *Arkys enigma* (Arkyidae). Photo: erinilewis. Location: Aireys Inlet, Australia. (4) *Cycloctenus* sp. (Cycloctenidae). Photo: Ra Chel. Location: Brisbane, Australia. (5) *Heriaeus* sp. (Thomisidae). Photo: Nickos Opsimoulis. Location: Greece. (6) *Leviaraneus noegeatus* (Araneidae). Photo: Joseph Koh. Location: Singapore.

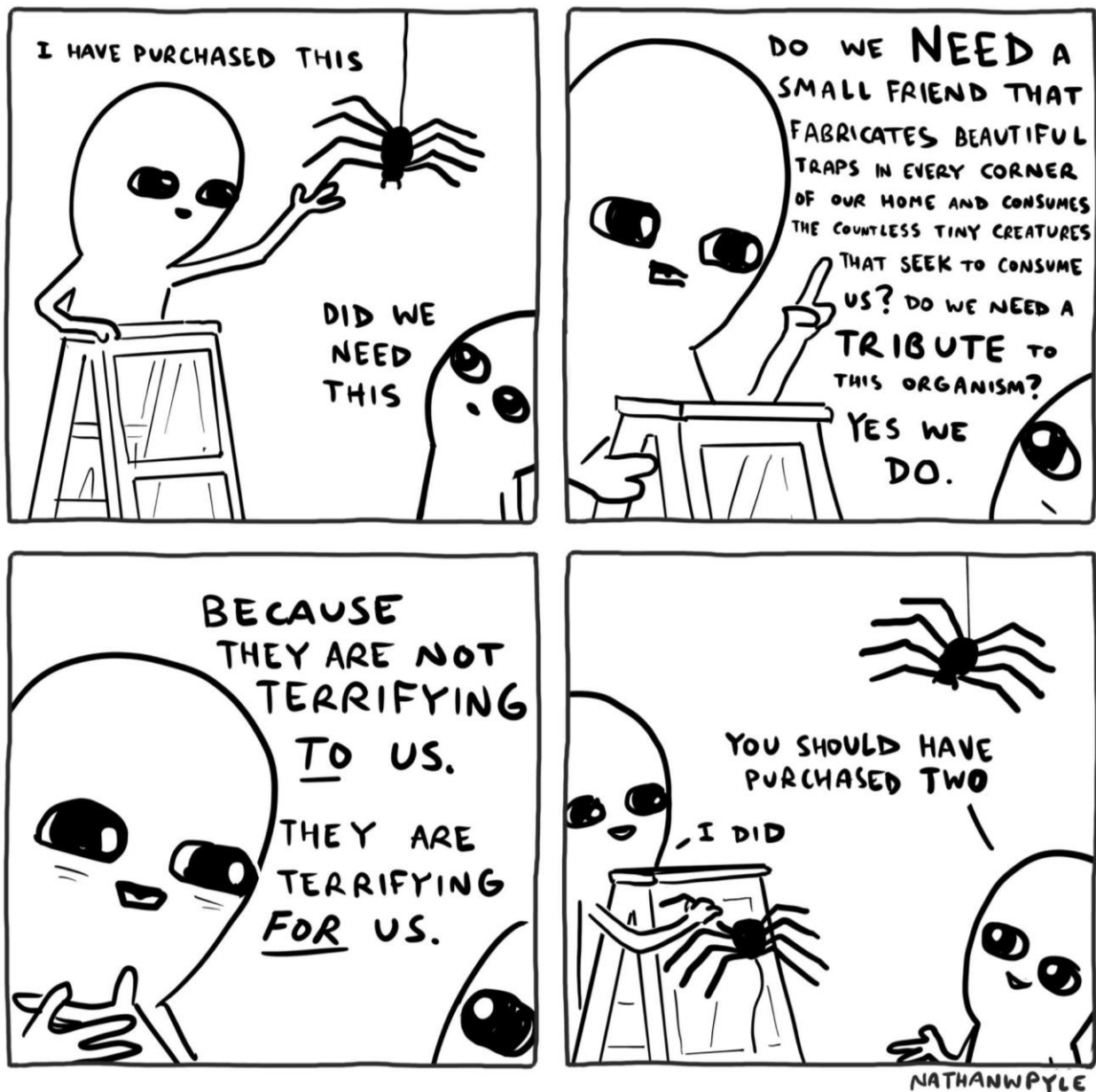


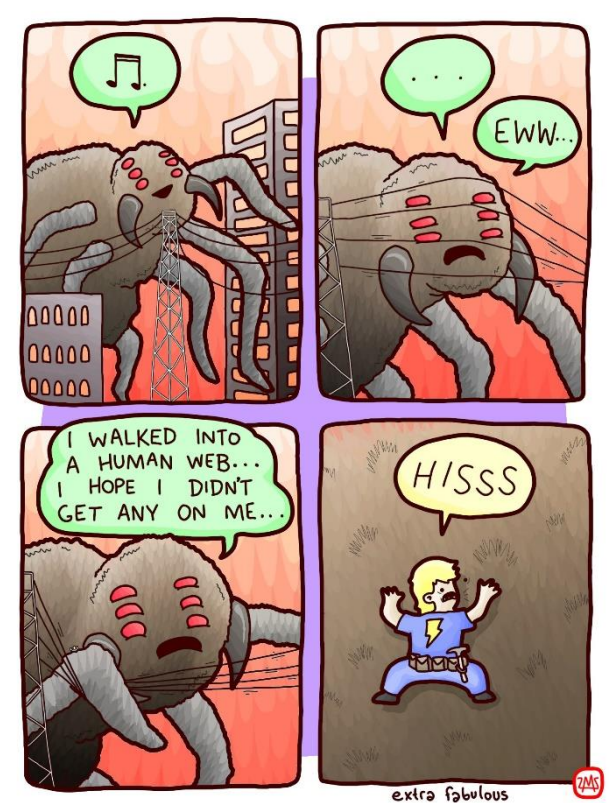
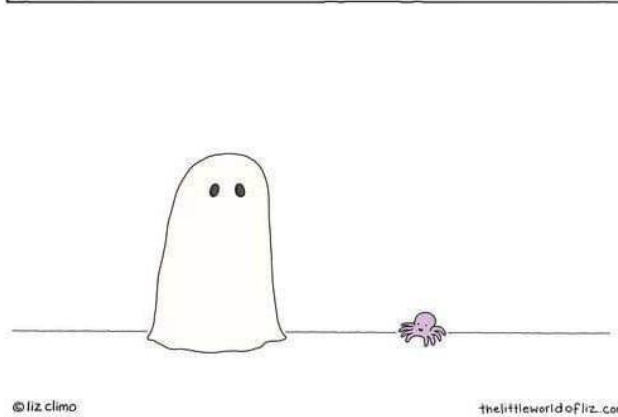
(7) *Celaenia calotoides* (Araneidae). Photo: Maurice Allan. Location: Bendigo, Australia. (8) *Leucauge sarawakensis* (Tetragnathidae). Photo: Roy Kittrell. Location: Sarawak, Malaysia. (9) *Viciria pavesii* (Salticidae). Photo: Chris Ang Photography. Location: Singapore. (10) *Maratus nimbus* (Salticidae). Photo: Maurice Allan. Location: Victoria, Australia. (11 & 12) *Araneus talipedatus* (Araneidae) (11: female; 12: male). Photo: Ian Wallace. Location: Melbourne, Australia.

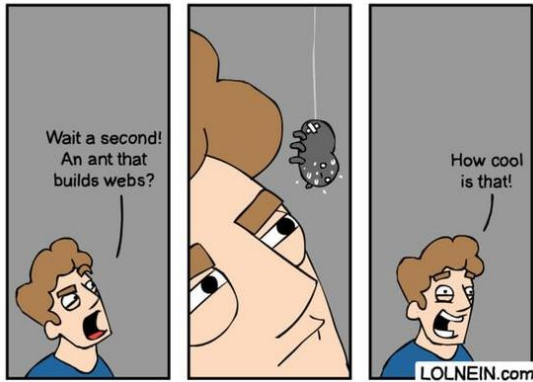
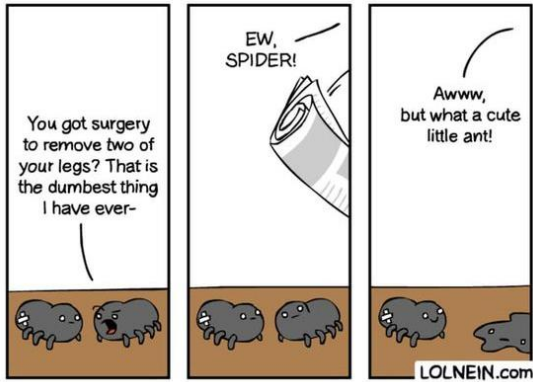


(13) *Poltys* sp. (Araneidae). Photo: Michael Doe. Location: Woy Woy Bay, Australia. (14) *Pandercetes gracilis* (Sparassidae). Photo: Ashok Manjanath. Location: Unknown. (15) *Cyrtarachne* (Araneidae). Photo: Jack K.H. Loo. Location: Malaysia. (16) *Herennia* sp. (Nephilidae). Photo: Hayath Mohammed. Location: Mysore, India.

On a lighter note







I GOT IT OFF THE WEB.
MERRY CHRISTMAS.



Upcoming events

DIARY: January to March 2024 www.spiderclub.co.za

At least one spider walk is planned for the Western Cape by Wessel Pretorius and Cecile Roux, and one in Bloemfontein by Rudi Steenkamp and Ruan Booysen.

Please keep an eye on our Facebook group (<https://web.facebook.com/groups/101951926508391/>) or on our website (<https://www.spiderclub.co.za/events/category/events/>). Alternatively, register as a member of The Spider Club of Southern Africa (<https://www.spiderclub.co.za/register/>) to receive email notifications about any confirmed events.

JANUARY

14

SPIDER WALK

Kloofendal Nature Reserve
Roodepoort, Gauteng

Come join us for a day of finding spiders (and other animals) in the 128-hectare park, which was one of the first nature reserves in Johannesburg. With a wide range of habitats, we are likely to find a wide variety of spiders. Bring your camera, as well as the necessities, like water, a hat, good hiking shoes, and, of course, your sense of adventure!

JANUARY

27-28

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SPIDER CLUB OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Magatashoek
Rustenburg, North West

Anyone is welcome to join us on Saturday, 27 January, to mingle and search for spiders at a guest farm near Rustenburg. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate any more people to sleep over.

JANUARY

?

SPIDER WALK

Swartland, Western Cape
TBA

No details announced yet.

FEBRUARY

19

SPIDER WALK

Rietfontein Ridge Nature Reserve
Gauteng

Come join us for a spider walk in Rietfontein Ridge Nature Reserve, where we will look for spiders and mingle with like-minded people. The reserve is about 24 km north of Johannesburg in the suburb of Paulshof. It is only 25 hectares big, but offers more than enough space to find some interesting spiders.

FEBRUARY	SPIDER WALK
?	Cape Town surrounds, Western Cape
	TBA

No details announced yet.

FEB/MAR	SPIDER WALK
?	Bloemfontein, Free State
	TBA

No details announced yet.

*We charge for attendance at field and certain other events: **R100 per adult and R20 per child 11 years and under, cash only, with the option of paying R200 PER NUCLEAR FAMILY for annual subscription. Members who paid the subscription fee do not have to pay at events.** Some venues will also require an entrance fee that must be paid by each individual. For field trips we will supply vials, magnifiers, plastic pill bottles, and some other basic collecting equipment, but please bring your own if you have as well as any reference books, a picnic lunch, adequate water, a hat, and good walking shoes. Book on info@spiderclub.co.za or 067 833 2191 or on our Facebook page. When booking, please give us your cell phone number and we will set up a WhatsApp group for the event.*



Join our community on Facebook to meet like-minded people and stay updated on upcoming events
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/101951926508391/>

Watch this space!

Keep your eyes on your e-mail and our Facebook page as other events may be organised, sometimes at quite short notice. We will attempt to give you fair warning.