

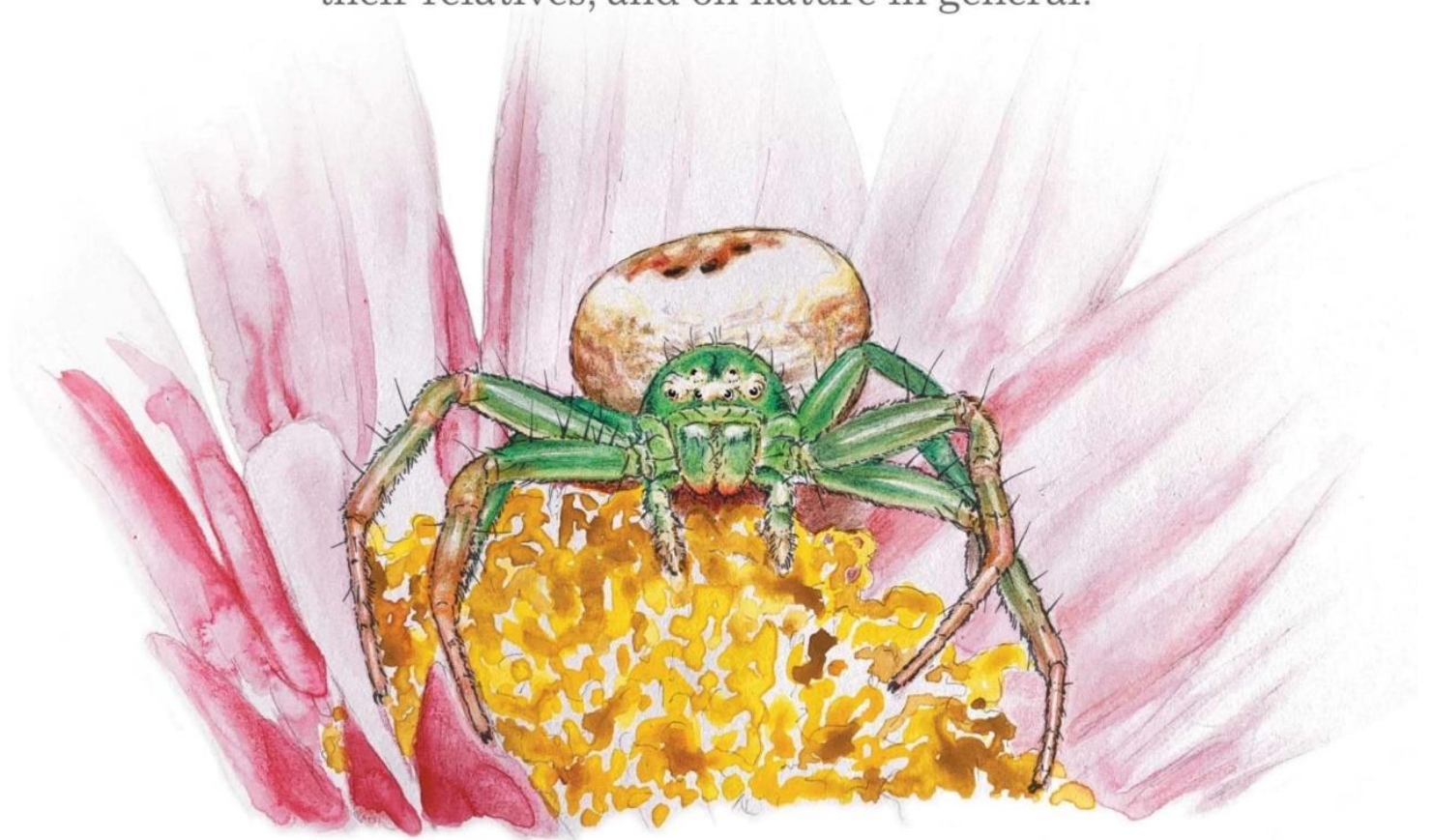
The Spider Club NEWS

September 2025



Vol. 41, No. 3

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



SPRING EDITION

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Martin Filmer 1939 - 2004



The spidering world suffered a very sad loss recently with the death of Martin Filmer on the 14th September 2004. He served as chairman of the Spider Club for a number of years, and his presence and huge personality will be sorely missed. Lorenzo Prendini kindly wrote the following which was read at his funeral.

'Martin was a mentor, friend and father-figure rolled into one. He encouraged my interest in arachnids and helped me to get out and study them when I had no way of doing so myself. I would probably never have pursued a career in biology if it had not been for Martin's encouragement. I was

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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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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.
- Jeanne van Aswegen, for proofreading the newsletter.
- The entire Spider Club committee for their contributions.
- Everyone on the Spider Club Facebook page 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.



From the hub

Hi spiderers!

Firstly, apologies for the somewhat late edition. I always take pride in my punctuality, but sometimes there is just too much to do to get the edition out in time. Finding news and writing text for the newsletter is already time-consuming, but then there is also putting everything together and doing the layout (in MS Word, which is not really a design program). If anyone has some experience with more user-friendly software and would like to help out by making the newsletter look better, please let me know. I will still find the content and ask others to contribute, I just need someone to put everything together. It will save me a lot of time and effort...

Anyway, it's spring again, and the fields are coming back to life. A new life also awaits our events organiser, Jarrod Todd, who is getting married to Bianca Hindmarch in October. Congratulations, you two! On behalf of the Spider Club, we wish you both a very happy future together. Unfortunately, that also means that Jarrod will be far too busy to organise any events for Gauteng this spring, and possibly the summer as well. Astri Leroy will also not be able to fill in as she is also too busy this spring. We will try our best to find someone to organise an event or two so that the Gautengers aren't left high and dry.

Bloemfontein will finally host another spider walk at the beginning of November. This will be the last of the three 50th birthday events held to celebrate the Spider Club's 50th birthday. We will try our best to make it BIG, so if you missed the ones in the Western Cape and Gauteng, feel free to join us in Bloemfontein! Also, if you perhaps bought *Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa*, which was published in June, and which is extensively covered in this edition (book review, photos, talks), you can bring it with so that I can write a personalised message for you and/or your children ☺

You might notice some new banners in this newsletter, such as for the Observations section and the new Spider Videos section. These were created by AI (ChatGPT) because I have zero graphic design experience, and we still haven't found a graphic designer to join our committee on a permanent basis. We would much rather have original images created by a person, so if you are interested in creating header images for the different sections in the newsletter, please do!

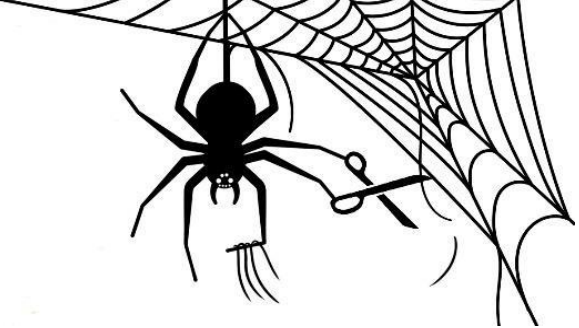
On that note, about 25 people have entered our logo design competition so far, where we asked people to design a new logo for the Spider Club, with the winner receiving a R3 000 cash prize. Unfortunately, many of those entries were AI-generated. AI still has a long way to go before it can draw a proper rain spider... Anyway, we decided to extend the deadline slightly in case someone else still wants to enter the competition. Just note that we **STRONGLY** prefer original, non-AI-generated images.

Yes, AI makes many things so much easier and quicker, but there are also some negative applications of it, such as people and social media pages stealing other people's photos and either removing the watermark or changing it just enough to skirt copyright laws. This is blatant theft, and pages that do this should not be supported. Cecile Roux touches on this matter [here](#). But yes, like she mentions, AI is here to stay. We need to learn to live with it but also how to recognise and call out its faults.

I hope you enjoy this edition, and like always, please let us know where we can improve, or if you have any ideas for new content.

- Rudi Steenkamp -

Snippets



Deadline for logo competition extended



The deadline for the design of a new Spider Club of Southern Africa logo has been extended from 20 September to 10 October, so if you hurry up, you can still submit your design. If you want to participate and need an extra day or so, please let us know; otherwise, we will assume that all the entries have been received. The winner will receive a R3 000 cash prize, and the logo will be featured on new merchandise, such as caps, coffee mugs, etc. To view the criteria for the design (even though you are free to do what you want), please see page 10 of our previous issue [here](#).

Astri Leroy resigns from committee



Astri Leroy, one of the club's founders, has resigned from the Spider Club committee. She filled the role of consultant, but will still be available to give advice when needed. This move was made to

ease the admin process in opening a new bank account, and having fewer members on the committee would mean less paperwork. For that reason, JP Schutte, our website host, also resigned but will still be available when we have any issues with our website. Thank you to both for the work you have done on the committee!







Great Southern Bioblitz



The Great Southern Bioblitz takes place between 24 and 27 October 2025. Countries from all over the Southern Hemisphere can participate by finding and photographing as many life forms as possible and uploading it to iNaturalist. South Africa usually does very well in this initiative, especially the Western Cape. To find out more and how you can participate, click [here](#). To join the project, click [here](#).



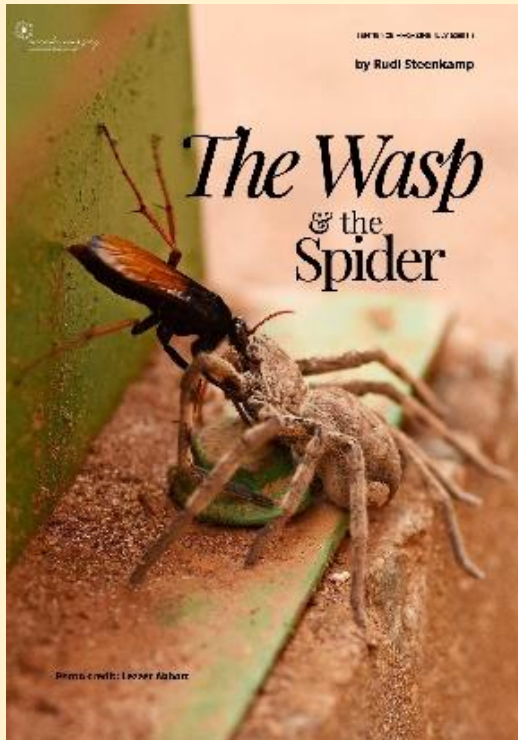
Most Observations

	cecileroux	10,158
	wesselpretorius	3,275
	fionahellmann	1,931
	suncana	1,786
	colin25	1,463
	hrodulf	1,418

Cecile Roux reaches 10 000 spider observations

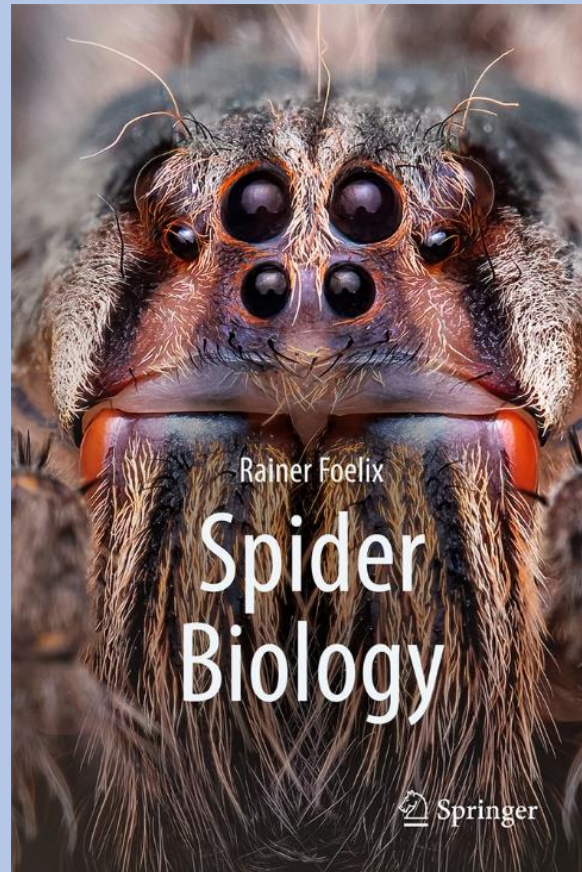
Cecile Roux recently reached the 10 000 spider observations on iNaturalist milestone. As things stand, she is second in the world in terms of spider observations. Considering that South Africa has little over 100 000 spider observations, Cecile contributed to 10% of the entire country's observations. While this is a remarkable statistic for one person, Cecile doesn't really care about that and just loves to go out in nature and finding and photographing all its treasures.

The wasp and the spider

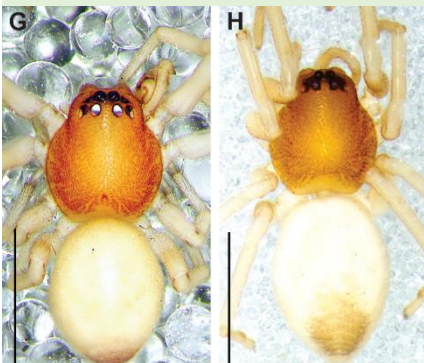


Sentience Magazine, in its second edition, did a story about rehabilitating spiders (especially rain spiders) from wasp stings. Written by Rudi Steenkamp, and in line with the magazine's ethos of empathy for all living creatures, the article also includes the perspective of the wasp. It also provides advice on how to rehabilitate a rain spider that was abandoned by a wasp. The article can be found [here](#). It is free to subscribe to the magazine. Past issues of *Sentience Magazine* and *WeLovePets* can be found [here](#).

Spider Biology now available



Rainer Foelix, author of *Biology of Spiders*, which was first published in 1979 and revised a few times since then, completely updated the book under a new title (*Spider Biology*) and publisher (Springer Nature). This is not an identification guide but rather focuses on the biology and natural history of spiders. If anyone has the book and would like to write a book review for it, please let us know. The book can be ordered online, including on Springer's website [here](#).



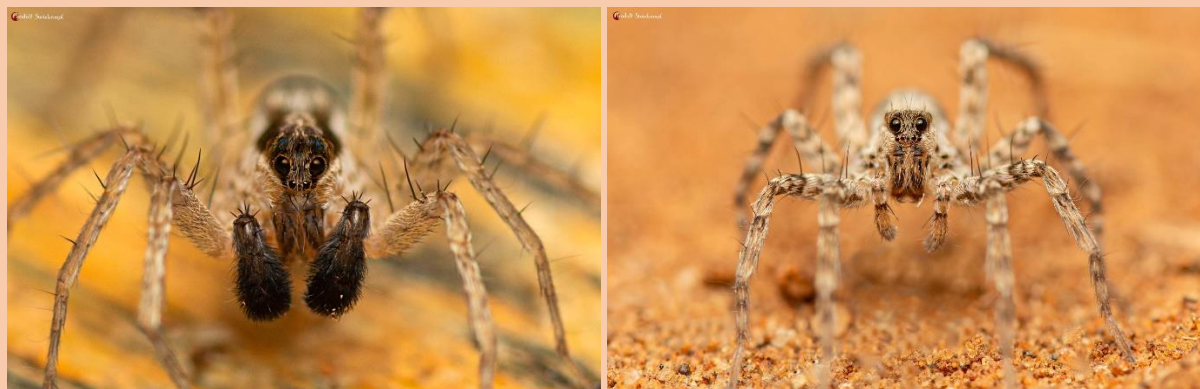
Three new *Trachelas* species in South Africa

In a recent revision¹ of the genus *Trachelas* (family Trachelidae, sometimes known as ground sac spiders) by Charles Haddad and Robin Lyle, seven new species from the Afrotropical region have been described, including three from South Africa: *T. falsus*, *T. humus*, and *T. leggi*.

Left: *Trachelas falsus* (female and male), one of three new *Trachelas* spp. described for South Africa. From Haddad and Lyle (2025).

¹ Haddad, C.R. & Lyle, R. 2025. A revision of the genus *Trachelas* L. Koch, 1872 (Araneae: Trachelidae) in the continental Afrotropical Region. *Zootaxa*, 5673(4):451-493. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5673.4.1>

Black-palp wolf spider moved to new genus



Spiniculosa crassipalpis male (left) and female (right). Photos by Rudi Steenkamp.

The black-palp slim-legged wolf spider (*Pardosa crassipalpis*) was recently moved to a new genus (*Spiniculosa*). According to Kronestedt (2025)², the male *Spiniculosa* species (two described) have “a row of short spine-like setae proventrally on the first leg coxa and trochanter respectively”.

Fundraising for Asian students to attend conference

Peter Jäger asked us to share the following:

Dear colleagues,

As you may know, I am fundraising to support Asian students and enable them to attend the Asian Conference of Arachnology in Laos this November. This cause is very important to me because the growing number of young Asian colleagues represents strong potential for our society. As you know, conference fees are increasing and some students cannot afford it to attend these important meetings. In Asia, students lack good opportunities to obtain travel grants, so I have organized a conference with no conference fee. I would also like to offer a few travel grants to students and young researchers.

While the support I've received so far has been very encouraging, but I still need help to reach my fundraising goal of €5,000.

Would you be willing to contribute to my fundraising campaign? Any amount you could donate would mean a lot to me and the students.

To donate, simply click on the following link to my campaign:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/scientific-conference-in-laos>

You can also help a lot by sharing the link to this fundraising campaign on your social media. The more attention it receives, the faster we will reach the fundraising target. Download link for flyer:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/2zmuysxrs9m76x20o8vnd/ACA-GoFundMe-ENGLISH.pdf?rlkey=q13o9oer3b4900zc7w2rrni95&dl=0>

If you have any questions about my campaign, please feel free to contact me at any time.

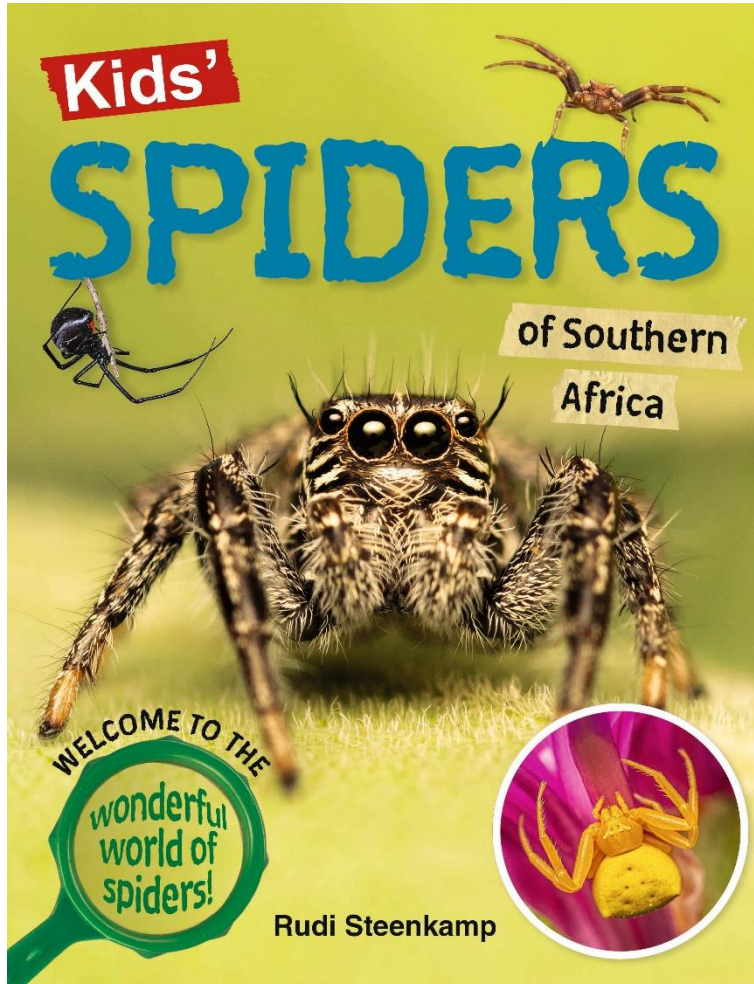
Peter Jaeger

² Kronestedt, T. 2025. *Spiniculosa*, a new wolf spider genus (Araneae, Lycosidae) from Africa, with description of a new species from the coast of Kenya. *Zootaxa*, 5666(2):211-224. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5666.2.4>

Book review:

Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa

Review by Ruan Booysen



Title: Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa
Author: Rudi Steenkamp
Publisher: Struik Nature (Penguin Random House)
Illustrator: Candiss Diamondis
Format: Paperback
Price: ±R190
Pages: 80
ISBN: 978 177989 015 3 (Print) / 978 177989 016 0 (ePub) / 978 177989 023 8 (Afrikaans edition).
Language: English and Afrikaans
Published: July 2025
Available at: Struik Nature, Takealot, Loot, Wordsworth Books, Graffiti Books, Amazon, Bargain Books, etc.

Did your eye ever catch something moving in the corner of your house? It looks leggy, perhaps even hairy? Suddenly, your seven-year-old child runs up to it and grabs it, while yelling, "Mommy look, it's a spider!!" Your face goes pale, and you are not sure what to do? Well, I have the book to recommend to

you (and your kid)!

Recently, a little gem of a book was published by spider enthusiast Rudi Steenkamp, chair of the Spider Club of Southern Africa, and an excellent macro photographer. His book, *Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa* (also available in Afrikaans: *Kinders se Spinnekoppe van Suider-Afrika*) will provide you and your children with all the information you need to identify and safely engage with spiders. While this information is useful to everyone, why not take it a step further and learn something more about these incredible creatures too? This book is perfectly tailored towards children, but also incredibly informative for anyone new to the world of spiders. Even specialists in the field can find it refreshing to read!

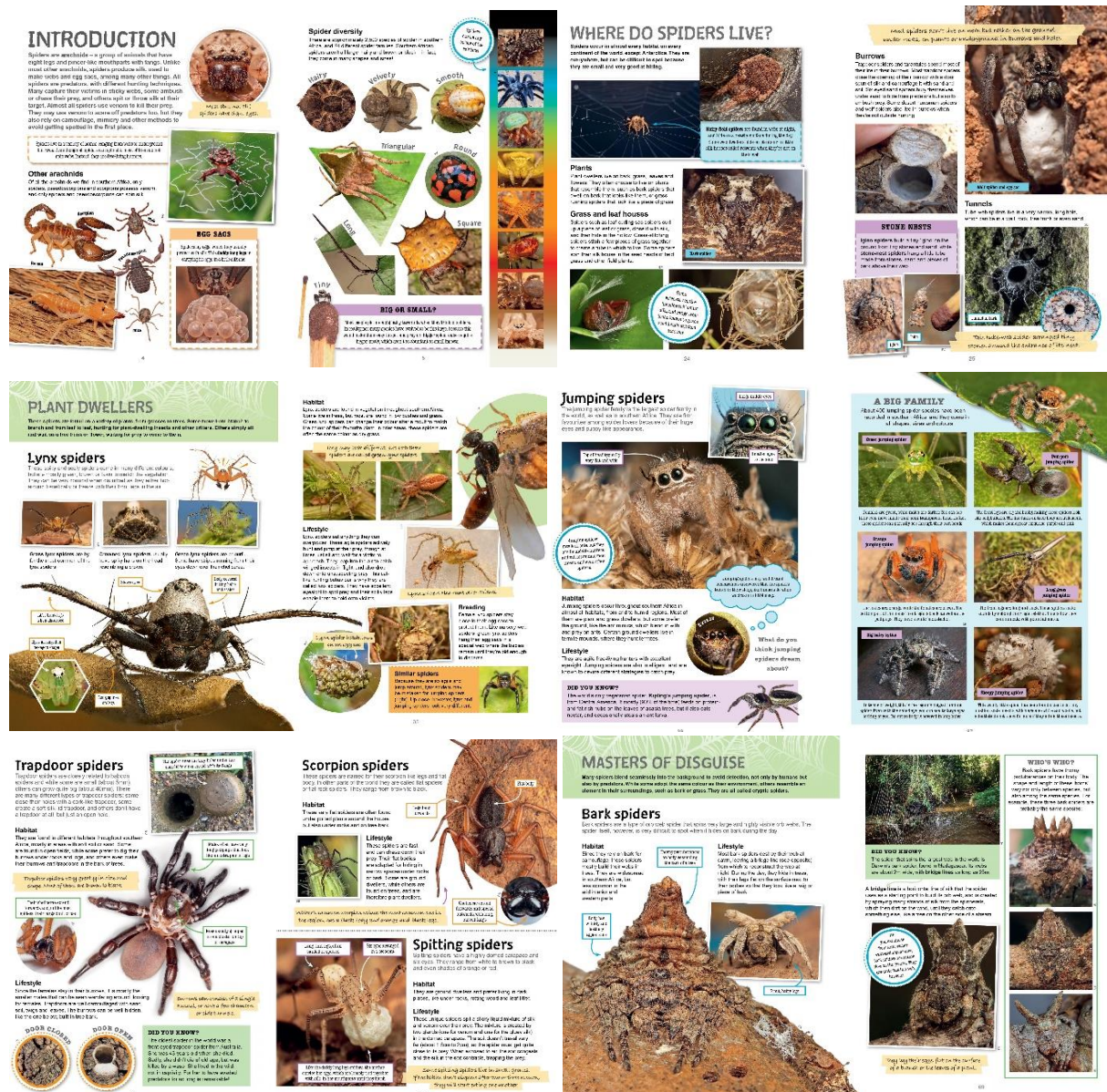
The book is vibrant and is full of colourful macro photos of spiders big and small (and a few other surprises too) to keep your attention. It covers a great number of spider-related topics, starting with the basics such as what spiders look like, how they relate to other groups of arachnids, what they eat, where they live, and so forth. It further expands on their perceived danger to humans and what their venom does. You will be pleasantly surprised on what you will learn here! The subsequent chapters explore groups of spiders from different trophic guilds such as those that hunt from webs, on the

ground, on plants or even near/on the water. Towards the end of the book other interesting biological phenomena are explored that occur in spiders such as araneophagy (can you guess what this is?), camouflage, mimicry and armoured spiders. Being a biology book, you will learn a bunch of new and interesting words. While this book is written with as little scientific jargon as possible, you may sometimes come across new words and forget what they mean, but if you do, just turn to the glossary at the back of the book to quickly refresh your memory!

Overall, this is a great starting point for anyone interested in arachnids and your children will learn some important information regarding these animals, sidestepping the fearmongering information that often plagues the Internet. The only criticism I have for this book is that it would benefit from including other arachnid groups (or perhaps other editions... wink-wink, nudge-nudge) and that was published 20 years too late! Since it is a softcover, wrap it neatly, then you can carry it with you when you go hiking!

Are you still reading this review? If so, read it again and go get it!

Here are a few spreads from the book:



Talking about spiders and Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa

After *Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa* was published in early July, I gave three talks on spiders in general and the book. Here is a summary of these talks.

Free State Arts Festival – Literature Festival 18 July 2025

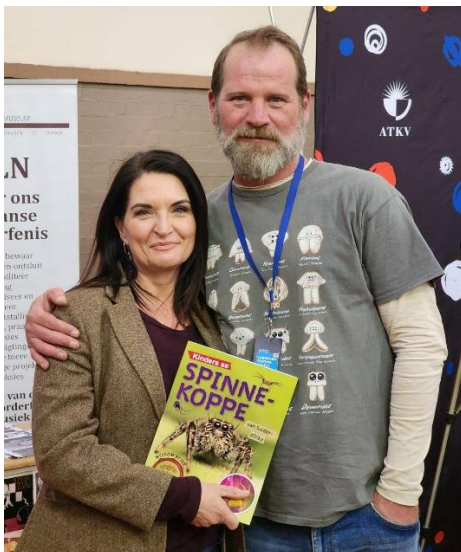


On Sunday, 13 July, Mia Amber Kahts from the Literature Festival of the Free State Arts Festival in Bloemfontein contacted me to ask if I would be willing to discuss my book at the festival the next Friday. It was very short notice, considering that the festival's programme was already settled, but I agreed.

I discussed the various sections of the book and spiders in general, with some interesting facts about some families. I talked for about an hour, with more

than 600 of my macro photos running in the background. Of course I could have talked longer, but another author had to talk after me, so I had to get off the stage 😊

Only 17 people attended, but that was more than most other book discussions at the festival. Also, I think some perspectives were changed, which is the main goal in everything we do.



Left: My sister, Natasja Lutjens, and I after the talk. Right: My better half (and the Spider Club's treasurer), Jeanne van Aswegen, selling books after the talk.

The Nature Diary, with Tim Neary

702 FM

20 July 2025

Tim Neary interviewed me on 702 FM via telephone. This interview lasted only 15 minutes, which is very short for someone who has a LOT to say about spiders ☺ Click [here](#) to listen to the interview.

Tiny Giants: Revealing the Hidden World of Spiders

2025 Kirstenbosch Wednesday Talks

6 August 2025

2025 KIRSTENBOSCH WEDNESDAY TALKS



TINY GIANTS

REVEALING THE HIDDEN WORLD OF SPIDERS

PRESENTATION BY RUDI STEENKAMP

WEDNESDAY • 6 AUGUST • 10H30

Brought to you by **roomtogrow**, **SANBI** and **Struik Nature**

This presentation, about an hour long, was about the role of macrophotography in the education (and science) about spiders. Brett Chilcott hosted the talk, which was uploaded on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmUKUjGclFk>

**Kroonboek**

Kinders se spinnekoppe van Suider-Afrika

Skrywer: Rudi Steenkamp
Uitgewer: Penguin Random House South Africa
ISBN: 9781779890238

Verken die wonderlike wêreld van Suider-Afrika se spinnekoppe – hulle kom in hordes verskillende vorms en groottes, en is veel slimmer as wat jy dink! Hierdie stampvol kinderboek verduidelik waar spinnekoppe woon, wat hulle eet, hoe hulle jag, watter gif hulle het, en hoe hulle hul kleintjies beskerm. Treffende makrofotografie verken die wêreld van spinnekoppe soos nooit tevore nie.



While I like to talk about spiders, I was glad when I didn't have to anymore...

I was honoured to have the Afrikaans version of the book being crowned the Litnet "Kroonboek" of the month by author Etienne van Heerden.

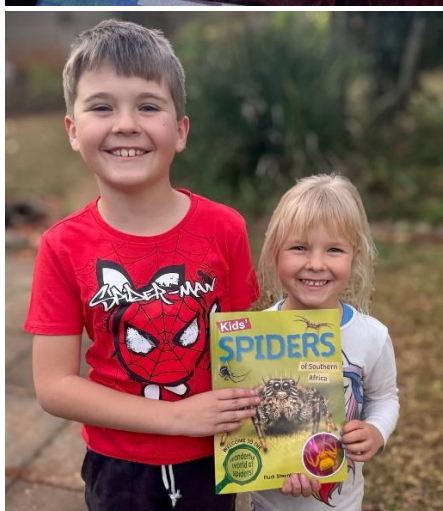
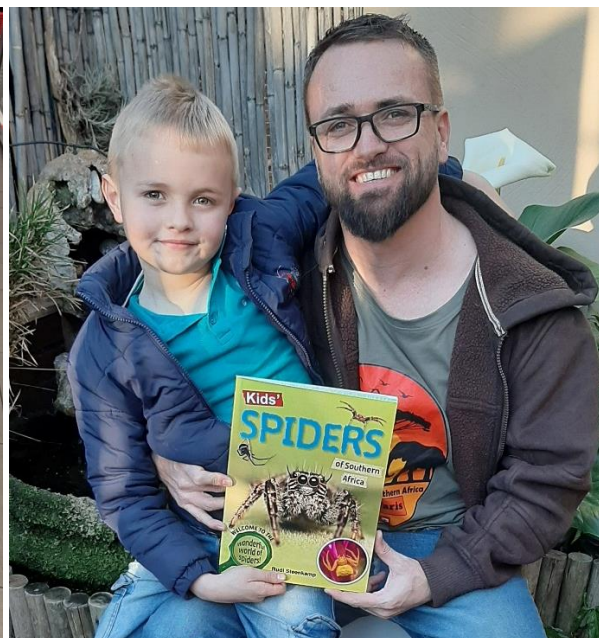
Thank you to everyone who supported me by buying the book and listening to these talks!

Kids with Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa

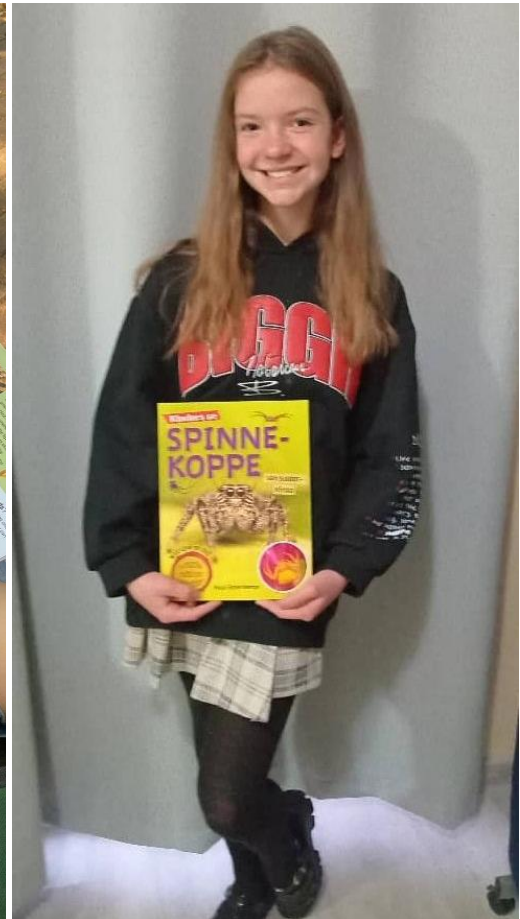
Here are a few photos of children with Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa, published with the consent of their parents.



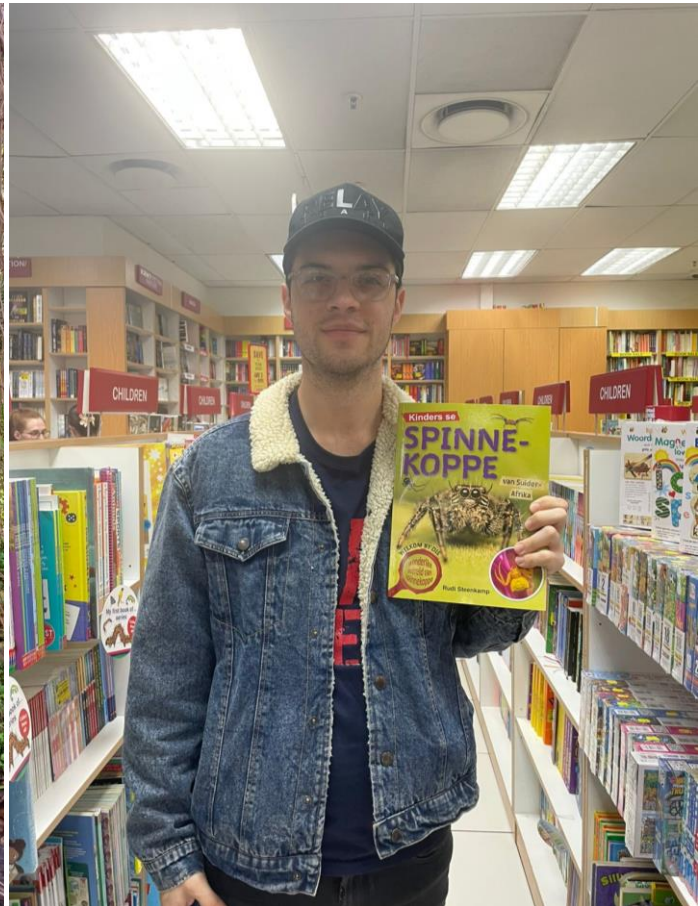
Grade R learners at Academia Pikkiepark Kleuterskool in Windhoek, Namibia. The book was donated to the school by Lalie Beukes. The children are aged between 3 and 6.



Top left: Reinhardt van der Linde (9). **Top right:** Xander Lategan (7). **Middle:** Sammy Beck (9). **Bottom:** Alex (8) and Alice Burns (5).



Top left: Lyana (5) and Lily Gouws (2). **Top right:** Leya (6) and Cleo Gouws (4). **Bottom left:** Luka Bradley (9). **Bottom right:** Zoe Beukes (11).



Even older children and adults can enjoy the book. **Top left:** Benjamin Pretorius (14). **Top right:** Etgar Lutjens (23). **Bottom left:** Mercia Coetzee (66). **Bottom right:** Ria van der Lith (71).



Interesting theridiid



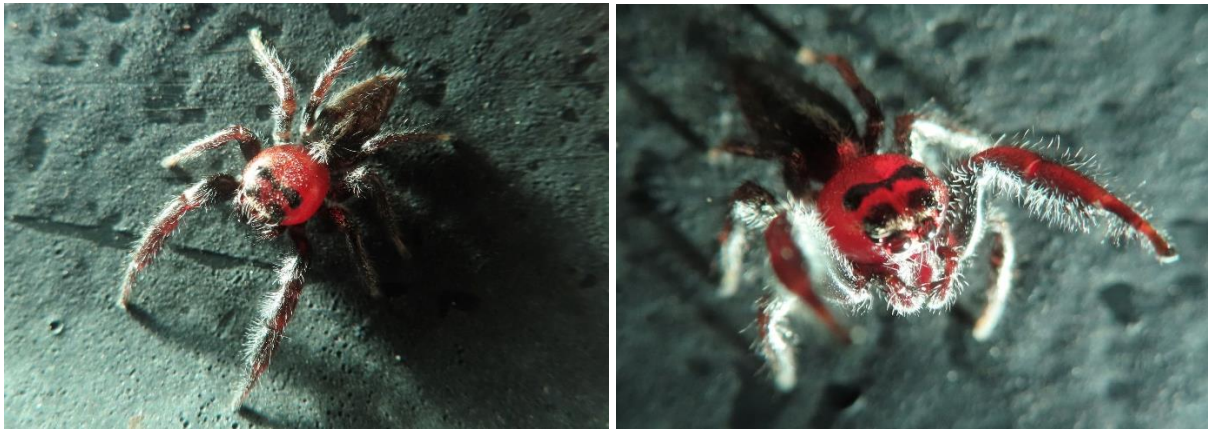
Suncana Bradley photographed these comb-footed spiders (Theridiidae) near Nqutshini in KwaZulu-Natal. We are not sure of the genus or species. If anyone has any information on these spiders, please let us know. Click on each photo to go to the observations on iNaturalist.

Trapdoor spiders mating



Tim Gutte photographed these open-hole trapdoor spiders (*Pionothele gobabeb*; Pycnothelidae) in Erongo, Namibia, mating. Dr Ian Engelbrecht said that he has never witnessed this species mating.

Red variation of jumping spider



Matthew Michael Burton photographed this male thylene jumping spider with an extraordinary red shine. Galina Azarkina identified it as either *T. bucculenta* or *T. inflata*. Robert Wienand thinks the deep red shine had to do with the lighting, but Michael said that it was actually this red.

Flower crab spider found with UV light



Chantelle Bosch was busy with a night walk in Namibia with a 365 nm UV torch, probably looking for scorpions, which glow under UV light, when she spotted this flower crab spider (*Thomisus* sp.; Thomisidae) glowing in the light. While some spiders glow under UV light, most of them don't. Since flower crab spiders ambush pollinators who can see UV light to find flowers, it probably helps the crab spider to camouflage itself on flowers.



Green lynx spider in desert

Logan Judd spotted this green lynx spider (*Peucetia* sp.; Oxyopidae) on the dunes of the Namib Desert near Gobabeb, Namibia. These spiders are plant dwellers, and in more arid areas they are often straw-coloured rather than green, to match the vegetation. The only forms of vegetation in the area, according to Logan, were some clumps of dry grass on the dunes.



Asemesthes ground spider feeding on a balbyter ant

Cecile Roux found this asemesthes ground spider (*Asemesthes* sp.; Gnaphosidae) between Pofadder and Kakamas in the Northern Cape busy feeding on a balbyter ant (*Camponotus fulvopilosus*). Judging by the colour of the abdomen, these spiders are most likely aggressive mimics of these ants. It

is also interesting that the spider chose to bite the ant below the head, which would have made it vulnerable to a defensive bite.

10-month-old boy bitten by black button spider

On 20 September, Madeleine Moukarzel Heyns posted a photo of a black button spider (*Latrodectus* cf. *renivulvatus*; Theridiidae) that bit her 10-month-old boy twice on his back. The spider was in the boy's clothes. She took the child to the hospital in Windhoek, Namibia, and said that he did not stop crying from 11:45 to 17:00. The doctors shared the following treatment: "In terms of treatment we did supportive care: cool compress, antibiotics, pain medication (with opioids) antispasmodic meds, antihistamines. No antivenom was used as there was no severe uncontrolled pain persistent muscle rigidity, or respiratory involvement issues. The risk of severe allergy to antivenom is higher to smaller kids so we decided not to go that route." Madeleine shared the following updates; the first the following day and the second two days later.



Madeleine Moukarzel Heyns · 1h
Update: baby's bloodwork looks good. We will probably be discharged today. I added a picture of the bite marks.
Symptoms includes: excruciating pain, disorientation, internal shivers, muscle spasms - in this case stomach. He is still very needy and crying a lot but he got a rash from the antibiotics and it itches. Obviously he can't scratch. So it might still take a few days before he is totally back to normal.



Hi. He has fully recovered. Thank the Lord! I add a picture of the bite sites this morning. One almost completely gone. The other healing beautifully.

Decorated velvet spider



Marina de Kock found this beautiful velvet spider (Eresidae) in Pretoria. It is presumably a female decorated velvet spider (*Paradonea* sp.). If anyone knows what species it is, please let us know via email.

Beautiful wolf spider



This gorgeous wolf spider (Lycosidae) was posted on iNaturalist by “dankeify”, who found it in Hout Bay, Western Cape. If anyone knows what genus it is, please identify it on iNaturalist [here](#).



I've always wanted to embed videos into our newsletter, which is why we wanted to move our newsletter to a digital format. Unfortunately, that has not realised yet, so instead I created this new section that contains links to interesting videos. Simply click on each picture to view the video.

Maratus

A 30-minute documentary (2015) on the search for a new peacock jumping spider found by hobbyist photographer Stuart Harris.



White lady trapdoor burrow

Video by Chantelle Bosch



Spiders with Danni Sherwood

British arachnologist Danni Sherwood gives a short description of what arachnologists do.



Train of baby trapdoor spiders

Uploaded by r/spiders



Tube-web spider creates tunnel in sand

Video by Chantelle Bosch



Lynx spiders mating



Eunette van Wyk-Schumacher from East London filmed this mating ritual of grass lynx spiders (*Oxyopes* sp.; Oxyopidae), as well as the mating process itself.

Spider-hunting wasp digs huge hole



This spider-hunting wasp, filmed by Chantelle Bosch in Namibia, went through great lengths to find the white lady huntsman spider hiding in her burrow in the sand. On previous occasions, Chantelle has spotted these spiders hiding in holes up to one metre deep!



Sand diver

Lisa Starr filmed this sand diver (*Psammoduon* sp.; Zodariidae) near Strand, Western Cape, doing what it is named after: diving into sand.

The video is uploaded as a reply to a comment on the post, so just click on “View all replies” to view the video.

Blast from the past!

by Rudi Steenkamp

Introduction

In the winter of 1975, six people – John and Astri Leroy, Ansie and Nico Dippenaar, and Leslie and Claire Herman – founded The Spider Club of Southern Africa. In the first year of operations, there were not much more than 10 members, and 50 years later we stand at 650 (and more than 70 000 on Facebook), including arachnologists from all over the world.

As the current chair and newsletter editor, I figured we'd have to preserve the club's history before it is lost to time, so we had all our old hardcopy newsletters digitised (Astri has taken very good care of these old copies). They will all be made available on our website soon.

In the previous edition, I covered the second decade of newsletters (1986-1995). The following are noteworthy extracts from the third decade (1996-2005).

JUNE 1996

Funny account in Nepal

When Astri and John Leroy visited Nepal, the kitchen staff wanted some of their super-strong spider whisky...

I had taken no alcohol so killed the spider by pickling it in whisky in a film canister. (It works surprisingly well!) One morning I forgot the canister in the tent and when I went to retrieve it from the kitchen staff they were a little crestfallen and the one that spoke the best English told me that they thought I had made the whisky extra strong by putting the spider in it and could they not keep it, please? No ways!

I am honoured indeed that the committee has unanimously agreed that from henceforth the award - to be presented to a young spiderer - be known as 'The Martin Filmer Floating Trophy'. I am thrilled that at this - my last year of tenure- a memory will go forwards of my efforts to keep the club of high standard, one of international repute and a happy one.

Mark Stanton was the first recipient of the 'Young Spiderer of the Year Award' presented at last years AGM. And now it is my very pleasant duty to award the 'Martin Filmer Floating Trophy' to the second recipient. It is awarded to the member who has come closest to the criteria set out by the committee, viz:-

- a) Activities at outings and meets - enthusiasm, participation, attendance and contribution.
- b) Collecting and keeping - enthusiasm, dedication, projects and reports
- c) Newsletter - contributions
- d) Lectures and field talks - bonus points

Congratulations to Sean Jackson- winner no. 2 - 1996 -1997. Sean scored on all four criteria with an enthusiasm that knew no bounds. A worthy winner indeed.

Finally a word of thanks to Michelle and Tyne Jackson for all the work put into today's catering - if it's anything like the Bash Party, we're in for a real treat.

Thank you all for coming and thank you my committee for making this AGM a special one for me. Thank you and God Bless You.

Martin - Chairman 1995-1996

ED: we also say farewell to Des Louw and Rob Ansermino who have both retired from the committee but NOT from the club. SEE NEW COMMITTEE on Back Cover

Martin Filmer Floating Trophy

I don't know when we stopped awarding this trophy, and some other awards, but perhaps it is time to bring it back. The times have changed, though, and people aren't as involved in the Spider Club as they used to be...

CHOCOLATE BOX SPIDERS?

If anyone wants to buy chocolates for me the only acceptable ones are Italian imported 'Ferro Rocher'. You can buy them at Dion and the Hyperama. The chocolates are nice but it is the boxes I covet, they are rectangular, light, strong plastic, they dose well and are just about the right size to display larger arachnids at shows and presentations.

Norman Larsen in *Die Burger*

Another Spider Club member made the newspaper.

Our man in Cape Town - Norman Larsen was in the news

"Die Burger" Dinsdag 31 Januarie 1995

Bekend maak bemind - ook die web en sy wewer deur Eben Human

'n Vlooi is 'n ding wat byt en 'n spinnekop iets om van nader te bekyk. Sô sal mnr. Norman Larsen van Kaapstad, een van die groot dryfvere agter die Kaapse tak van die Spinnekop Klub van Suid-Africa, jou gou vertel.

As in aanmerking geneem word dat daar reeds sowat 6 000 verskillende spinnekoppe in ons land gevind is en dat daar waarskynlik nog sowat 2 000 soorte is wat wag om ontdek te word, besef 'n mens gou hoe 'n wye veld daar is vir die amateur-natuurkundige om ook betrokke te raak.

Mnr. Larsen was self 'n entoesiastiese natuurfotograaf wat suidelike Afrika deurkruis het om ons wildlewe te fotografeer, maar toe die ekonomie begin druk, het hy na iets gesoek wat hy nader aan die huis kon bedryf. Dis toe dat hy ontdek dat jy net in jou huis en tuin sowat twintig verskillende spinnekoppe kan vind.

Die meeste spinnekoppies is maar baie klein en word skaars raakgesien. Begin 'n mens egter kyk na skyfies van mnr. Larsen van hierdie interessante diertjies, ontvou 'n wonderwêreld voor jou.

Dit was my vooreg om vier jaar gelede op 'n nagtelike uitstappie saam met mnr Larsen 'n webgooispinnekop in die Nuwelandse bos te herontdek. Hy is laas in 1904 gesien en daar is nou met deeglike studie vasgestel dat sy verspreidingsgebied nie net tot Nuweland beperk is nie, maar van die Sederberge tot by Bredasdorp strek.

'n Mens oorwin ook gou jou vrees vir spinnekoppe as jy eers meer van hulle weet en mnr. Larsen dink niks daarvan om 'n groot bobbejaanspinnekop oor hom te laat loop nie. Hy vertel dat hierdie ou grotes tot oor die twintig jaar oud kan word, maar liefst nie uit die veld verwyder moet word nie. Hulle vind moeilik 'n nuwe skuiling en vrek dan baie maklik.

Op die voorblad van Martin R. Filmer se spinnekopgids, '*South African Spiders*' (Struik, 1991), pryk 'n baie mooi foto van mnr. Larsen. Hierdie boekie is 'n goeie beginpunt en as die gogga eers gebyt het, kan jy aansluit by die Kaapse tak van die spinnekopklub

Spider club members living in the Cape Town area PLEASE contact Norman Larsen at (021) 47-9113 (w) or 461-4460 (H). Norman is trying to get spidering people more active in the Cape so if you are interested PLEASE contact him.



An "introduction" to the Internet

The World Wide Web was already invented in 1989 but it took a while before everyone jumped on the WWW bandwagon and started realising its potential. In 1996, we finally started using email. Here is a "crash course" in the Internet from Bob Dehning.

Webs of a different kind!!

Spiders, Scorpions and the Internet by Bob Dehning

Those of you who looked a bit closer at the Subscription Renewal forms will have noted a new heading: **email address**. This is an addition to the usual requests for updated postal address, telephone email numbers, fax number etc. Please members, we need to keep in touch with you, sometimes at very short notice, so these things are important! And just in case the term "email" does not mean as much to you as it should, we thought it time to tell you a bit about the new technologies...

As Spider Club members, you are doubtless familiar with spiders and their webs... But are you familiar with **The Web**? If you have not yet experienced Internet, and what it offers, you should make a plan to catch up, as soon as possible...

You may have heard some of the downside: chaos, anarchy, porn, chat rooms, web surfers, web junkies... Forget it all - yes there is the darker side of the web... if you go looking for it. And chaos and anarchy merely mean that there is no absolute central controlling body imposing a draconian order to the Internet. The US government tried to "take over" recently, "to protect children from the evils..." Fortunately they failed, because they would have done immeasurable damage to all of us. (parents: you bring your children up properly, use guard programs if you have to, but don't ask the government to step in, please...) Instead, the Internet is the most incredible way of accessing a seemingly limitless amount of information.

Probably nobody actually knows the extent of the Internet anymore. The survey results are widely disbelieved. But my favourite search engine (AltaVista) quotes 225,000 servers (centralised computers, not the end-users), 30 million pages of information etc, and since they have indexed virtually everything worth while, they probably have the most believable statistics. They are accessed 12 million times per day!

Virtually every academic establishment (worldwide) has a presence on the World Wide Web. Virtually every research establishment has a presence (other than the ultra-secret stuff). The Encyclopedia Britannica is there. The NASA establishments are there. National Geographic will be there soon... And all of this costs a trivial amount (e.g. R65) per month, plus local call telephone charges (e.g. R3 per hour). Where else can you access so much fascinating information for so little?

And the spiders and scorpions are there too...

So what do you need to access this? A computer of course... and it had better be a fairly fast one, if you do not want to find yourself frustrated. Even if you do not want to access the newer Java, multimedia, fancy stuff, even if you only download images when you actually want them, so much of what is out there includes images, that you need good equipment to really enjoy it.

For example, I use a DX 4/100 with 32 Mb memory. You need a lot of disk space, and a good monitor and graphics card. I have a 1024x768 SVGA card, set up for 64k colours. You absolutely must have a good modem. I have a 28,800 v.34 internal card (faster than external), with full compression and error correction etc. Anything less is purely frustrating. And you need a good service provider. You don't need a lot of software - beware of those who offer seemingly nice packages, they often bundle out-of-date modems and software into a less useful package, and you pay too much anyway. Once you have the software basics (which is shareware - anyone can give it to you, free) you pick up the rest of what you need off the Internet itself...

To the spiders etc: the problem with the WWW (World Wide Web) is to find things... Various organisations search out and index information, e.g. searchers like Yahoo! etc. The problem is that you are really seeing their view of that topic, and they may miss something. Then there are people like AltaVista who index everything, which means that you don't miss things, but you have to filter the huge amount of hits which flood down on you. For example, searching for a simple word like "spider" got 100,000 hits (!), and "scorpion" got 10,000!

The problem is that the Net junkies refer to search engines as "spiders" or "web-crawlers". And then there is Spiderman etc. "Arachn" does only slightly better, because there are games, weird sites etc which use these words. However, I did browse around and filter stuff, and found some interesting sites, but for most people there are really only a few starting points, which I have listed below:

Description	address (URL)
Arachnology - Vamytven, UFSIA Antwerp	http://www.ufsia.ac.be/Arachnology/Arachnology.html
Cokendolpher: Arachnological Publications, Internet Discussion Groups / Databases, Societies	http://members.aol.com/cooke/society.html
Arachnomania	http://www.mcs.com/%7ESpider/arachnomania.html
Scott Stockwell's Home Page	http://wtbui.st.edu/wstockwell/stockwell.html

Cokendolpher maintains a list of Societies, people etc. Yes, the Spider Club of S.A. is featured there; Cheryl and I got the address, contacts etc corrected last year. Some email addresses are quoted, so that one can contact people directly.

Vamytven at University of Antwerp (Belgium) has made his site into the "hub of the spider world", with links to virtually everything useful. So he is an excellent starting point to reach other sites. This is the beauty of the WWW - once you find a good site, it invariably has a list of "good links" or "cool links" to other sites, and so you go wandering around the world, finding new places etc.

ArachnoMania sells spiders, and has some interesting information, photographs etc. While there are obviously controls on movement of spiders, the articles and pictures are still worthwhile.

Scott Stockwell works at a part of the Smithsonian Institute, and has collated lots of data on Scorpions, including a North American key. As an example of where the technology is going, he has an excellent section on Scorpion Morphology, with pull-down lists of terminology, with explanations, drawings, images etc. A sort of teach-yourself-scorpions! He also features "scorpion du jour" photographs etc. He is busy doing what looks like really great work on building databases, keys etc. So keep a watch on his site.

Enough for now - those who use Internet, please send us email at dehning@cis.co.za so that we know how to contact you, and tell us of interesting sites etc, and we can follow up with more information, later...

And how about other things?

Well, I probably use Internet about 50% of the time for my work. Whether you are a scientist, doctor, engineer, whatever, there is information useful to your work. I use it to keep up to date on computer stuff, and relieve costs from my clients in terms of adding value to the work I do for them.

The other 50%? Well that is serendipitous browsing... Increasing my knowledge... Satisfying my interests, some of which I never knew I had... For example, I wondered about the number of hurricanes they were experiencing last season in the Caribbean. Bill Gray had the answers (he predicts activity a year ahead). That led to an interest in ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation), which led me to predict last August that we were in for a VERY wet summer (true, but Water Affairs missed that one), and earthquakes, volcanoes, why oceanographers like rubber ducks, etc etc etc...

You lose some sleep (in SA early morning is the time to browse...) but it costs little. Remember it is only a local phone call. But it can become addictive... Isn't the search for knowledge always?

Incidentally, if you want to print out what you see while browsing, you need a good printer. Retire that tired old dot matrix. Try to squeeze the budget to a 600 dot per inch Laser or ink-spitter. The extra quality of the 600 dpi makes a huge difference!

If you don't understand the above paragraphs, don't worry - I am not giving a computer tutorial etc, phone me and we'll chat about it...

So now you are connected... What can you do with it?

email - you can keep in contact with everybody, get quick replies, cheaply...

WWW - you can browse this world of information

FTP - you can update programs, usually for free

newsgroups - keep in touch with what is going on...

and more...

If you really want to waste time in chat rooms, if you really want to waste bandwidth using the Net like a cheap phone service (digitising voices) - I hate you, but I suppose it's your right to do so...

Many of you probably use some sort of local email at work, e.g. Microsoft Mail or Exchange, ccMail, da Vinci etc. Internet email is an extension of this sort of system to the whole world. You address a message to a **user name**, at a **computer domain**. For example, my email address is dehning@cis.co.za (user dehning, domain cis.co.za). This preparation is often done offline, then when you connect to your service provider (ISP), you send queued mails, which get stored at the ISP's computer, for forwarding to the named user. Your ISP's computer sends out messages, looking for the specified domain, and other computers respond if they know about it. Eventually, provided that you did not mis-spell it, someone responds, the emails sent on, etc. Eventually it gets stored at the receiving user's "Post Office" computer, from where he fetches it, when he chooses (most people check at least daily).

The advantages of email? Cheap, quick are obvious advantages. But there is also a more subtle one - most users respond immediately, personally, while a fax may get buried in a secretary's IN tray and take a much longer time to get to the recipient, and then because it is not online, there is not the pressure to respond quickly, so usually he doesn't! But email is read online (although you can disconnect from your ISP while processing incoming emails), and one tends to reply immediately.

It is also very easy to send it to a list of people, easier than a fax which still requires multiple transmit operations... So we think it's a nice way to keep in touch with those of you who have an email address. But you must tell us the address...

The WWW (world wide web), developed at CERN, is like reading pages of a book. These can contain text and graphics. More recently, also animations, sound clips, video clips etc. And on a page, many phrases or words can be linked to other pages (so called hot links). When you click your mouse on these highlighted areas, the new page gets loaded and displayed. And as you can imagine, you can wander around for hours, following a thread of interest.

In order to organise yourself, you store the addresses of interesting pages as "bookmarks", i.e. your own private list of interesting places. Because these are stored as a file, you can pass interesting ones to other people as attachments to an email etc.

FTP (file transfer protocol) allows you to download data or software. One use is to update your software, which is why I said one should not pay much for the initial software to get connected, because you will quickly throw it away and use newer versions, better versions etc.

New committee

Astri Leroy took over as chairperson from Martin Filmer, while Jonathan Leeming was appointed as the treasurer.

1996 - 1997 COMMITTEE

Astri Leroy (011) 763-6568 h

Chairperson/Sect . (011) 766-1748 w

Jonathan Leeming . (011) 692-3063 h

Treasurer

email : quagga@global.co.za

Werner Croucamp . (011) 637-2927 h

PRO

email: werner@gecko.biol.wits.ac.za

Paul Jackson (011) 849-6669 h

PRO (011) 456-1232 w

Cheryl Dehning . . (011) 316-1426 h

Editor (011) 316-1095 h

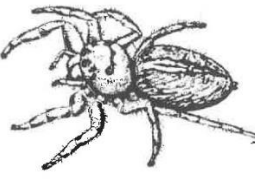
c/o email: dehning@cis.co.za

New spider book

AFRICAN SPIDERS
an identification manual
by
A.S. Dippenaar-Schoeman & R. Jocqué

Price: R195,00 (incl. VAT) South Africa
70 USD (incl surface mail) other countries

Order from: PPRI Publications,
Private Bag X134, Pretoria, 0001,
Tel: (27) (012) 808-0952
Fax: (27) (012) 808-0321
e-mail: NIPBKG@PLANT1.AGRIC.ZA



A Salticidae (Jumping spider), an example of an illustration from the book (Artist: Elsa van Niekerk)

The birth of SANSA

SANSA - SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SURVEY OF ARACHNIDA

The Biosystematics Division of the Agricultural Research Council - Plant Protection Research Institute, initiated and co-ordinates SANSA, which aims to make an inventory of the biodiversity of arachnid species in South Africa. This survey includes collecting and computerizing information on the biodiversity, including distribution and abundance, of arachnid species in this region. Several projects with this aim are currently underway, including:

- compilation of a spider catalogue;
- inventory of spiders in different agro-ecosystems;
- survey of spiders in the National Parks and Nature Reserves;
- survey of spiders of the Soupansberg;
- survey of spiders from rehabilitated forest, Richards Bay;
- survey of spiders from Ngoma State Forest;

Several co-workers have already shown an interest in co-operating on this joint project. People interested in making a contribution can contact Ansie Dippenaar directly :
Tel (012) 329-3269; e-mail: rietasd@plant2.agric.za

MARCH 1997

First Yebo Gogga

As far as I know, this was the first Yebo Gogga expo.

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Spider Club News 12 (2)

REPORT ON YEBO GOGGA '97

by Werner Croucamp

This year your club became famous during the Yebo Gogga exhibition held from 3-9 March at the Johannesburg Zoo. Those who attended will know just how popular our display was, how much fun we had and how the public just couldn't get enough. Astri Leroy, Jonathan Leeming, Mark Stanton, Rosemary Hood, my wife Anneke and I started to set up on the 1st and 2nd under the tent in the garden, without realising what surprise the weather had in store for us.

SEPTEMBER 1997

First indemnity forms for outings

2

Spider Club News 12 (3)

Outings - Indemnity forms and why!!

Outings are for everyone! Our motto with which we would like to encourage members to come on outings. You don't need to be "fit", we do not climb mountains or have endurance walks. Bring a picnic lunch, drink, hat, bundu type footwear and any equipment you like or think could be useful. (Empty film cassettes, plastic fruit jars, small type hand gardening tools, packed into backpack or sling bag).

Lots of interesting things are seen on a spider outing, like birds, snakes, spiders, centipedes, scorpions and people. While we assume everyone on a outing will look after themselves, we do advise first-time outing members of the safety precautions to be taken while looking under rocks and old tree trunks.

There have been occasions when the unexpected happens - like the outing some years back when the wasps were strangely aggressive and anytime we, unknowingly, came close to any wasp nest, they would attack without warning, something we had never before encountered. A few of us suffered painful stings that weekend. Thank goodness, no-one had any allergic reactions, as we did not have indemnity forms with all the necessary information, although we did have basic first-aid medication on hand.

Later enquiry from an entomologist explained this unusual behaviour. Apparently, thunderstorm activity caused heightened electric fields in the air and this aggravates the wasps - hence the strange and unexpected attacks.

Recently another incident brought the Indemnity form idea to mind.

Snakes are sometimes encountered, usually moving away from the group, and left in peace by everyone. But on this occasion some children, whose parents had not come on the outing, decided to catch the snake (illegal!) and would not listen when told to leave the snake alone. Luckily for all concerned they were unsuccessful and the highly dangerous snake disappeared into the undergrowth.

This incident placed the person who had transported the children in a very difficult position, namely the child refused to obey him or anyone else and WHAT if the child had been bitten. We had no information on the child's medical problems if any, or who to contact in such an event.

While some members may feel that signing an indemnity form is an infringement on their privacy, it is a necessity if you are on an outing - for your safety and those around you!

DECEMBER 1997

Cheryl Dehning resigns as editor



Spider Club News 12 (3)

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Farewell

APOLOGIES FOR THIS VERY LONG OVERDUE NEWSLETTER - the end of last year was very hectic, with husband going overseas and Xmas and trying to keep home and hearth together.

I have been the Editor of the Club Newsletter since September 1991 (26 Newsletters), progressing from using "NewsMaster" and adding pictures and cartoons by 'cut & paste' method. This newsletter was produced using WordPerfect 7, with the pictures being scanned in, edited and retouched where necessary, the text sometimes also scanned but usually retyped as the dot matrix of fax machines does not scan very well.

Over the years the Club outings have varied in the places we have been to, like "2D Ranch" next to Loskop Nature Reserve, a terrific place, which now I'm pleased to hear, has been added to the Nature Reserve, so it will be safe for future generations. Many private farms have been visited and explored, interesting people met and many long hours over evening braai's reminiscing and arguing over the day's findings.

Sadly the number of people coming on outings has dwindled, even though the membership has increased. What is the problem. - is it too many other commitments!??? Or is it just that there is so much more going on in everyone's life, that we barely have time to enjoy it.

So it is with mixed feelings that I bid you all adieu and hope to see you on the outings and remember the Annual General Meeting on the 6th June.

Some of the Committee members are going to take over the production of the Newsletter as they have access to computers and a scanner, so it shouldn't be too big a change. I shall be available to assist them if there are any teething problems.

NOW ITS TIME FOR SOME NEW BLOOD TO TAKE THE EDITORIAL REINS, and I wish new editor good luck, and hope you have as much fun, time and patience as I have had!
Cheryl Dehning

Well, that didn't work...

Martin sent the following article from the Cape Times:

NO FLIES ON TOLLA

Tolla van der Merwe, raconteur, jokester and television funny-man has been making people laugh since he was a barefoot boy. "My grandfather was bald," he recalls "and one day the flies were troubling him. I persuaded him to let me draw a spider on his head. The flies would be frightened off I told him."

That night he went to bed, forgetting about the spider drawn in indelible pencil on his bald head. Tolla's grandmother came into the room, saw this enormous spider on the old man's head and clobbered it with her shoe. "She nearly knocked him out," says Tolla. "Aaii - they were cross with me, but at least they laughed about it later."

Overkill?

HANNES & THE RAIN SPIDER A TRUE STORY ...

(Let's hear YOUR stories Joe Public vs. spiders.)

One day Martin Filmer's receptionist, Marge asked a certain Hannes to phone me as she often does when Martin is not there to field the calls. Hannes sounded almost in tears, he complained bitterly that he had taken his gun and "shot my lounge full of holes. Man - it's an ugly sight!" because there was a "tarantula on the wall." A rain spider, *Palystes*, of course ... It was obviously all my fault. He must now sell his house and move to Cape Town. I said I thought it was hardly worth it - *Palystes* are everywhere. I assured him that the ones in the Cape are bigger, bolder, better and much more vicious than Gauteng rain spiders. In fact they sometimes carry people away to their lairs in Skeleton Gorge. I also reminded him that he lived in Africa and suggested that Boere shouldn't cry. I don't think Hannes will join the Spider Club!

JUNE 1998

Were the sirens necessary?

CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE - THERE'S A GIANT SPIDER IN MY FIELD!!

The general public has plenty of excuses to be afraid of spiders. The mass media, in its various guises, cannot be relied upon to give arachnids a fair hearing. Ed.

Here's a local example of public misconceptions: I had a phone call from a Honeydew resident. He stays on a plot and was just leaving for work when a fire engine drew up, sirens shrieking and lights whirling. A fireman jumped down and asked my caller if he was the owner of the property. "No" he replied - but I am his son. What's the problem?" The fireman answered that he had been called to remove a giant spider living in the grass. It was yellow and black and definitely dangerous (everyone knows that yellow/black and red/black animals are brightly coloured to warn people). My caller was unconvinced and wanted confirmation that *Argiope* (striped garden spiders) - for that is what he described - are not at all dangerous.

Reprieve for a spider but the above does illustrate how ignorant many people are about spiders and other arachnids.

Astri Leroy

Trouble with editors

After Cheryl Dehning resigned, we struggled to find a more permanent newsletter editor. Here is a list of editors we've had between 1998 and 2006:

1998: Astri Leroy (temporary) (1 issue)

1998-1999: Karel Balt (5 issues)

1999-2000: Douglas Anderson (4 issues)

2000-2001: Astri Leroy (temporary) (4 issues)

2001-2002: Ian Engelbrecht (6 issues)

2003: Alan and Sharon Bosse (2 issues)

2003-2004: Miemmie Prinsloo (3 issues)

2004-2006: Ian Engelbrecht (8 issues)

Poor binding of spider book

AFRICAN SPIDERS an identification manual
by A.S. Dippenaar-Schoeman & R. Jocqué

is still available from:

PPRI Publications,
Private Bag X134, PRETORIA,
0001 South Africa.
Tel: +27 (0)12 808-0952
Fax: +27 (0)12 808-0321
e-mail: NIPBKG@PLANT1.AGRIC.ZA

In South Africa at:

R195.00 (incl. V.A.T.)

Other countries:

US\$ 70

PLEASE NOTE: THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE BINDING, WHICH COMES APART IF YOU USE THE BOOK AND IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE IT REBOUND PLEASE RETURN IT TO ANSIE DIPPENAAR AND SHE WILL ARRANGE TO HAVE IT DONE AND RETURNED TO YOU.

We have come a long way...

Today, we have 53 357 recorded spider species. Still much work to do to get to 170 000!

170 000 SPIDER SPECIES?

In February a discussion developed on the Arachnology list and was summarised by Kevin Skerit: "More than 34,000 (spider) species have been described, with an estimated 170 000 extant (still existing) species globally."

(Coddington and Levi. 1991. Ann. Rev. Ecol. Syst. 22: 565-92).

This appears to be the most reliable cited estimate, although some indicated that described species number nearer to 35,000."

I am impressed. Ed.

SEPTEMBER 2000

Photo of R.F. Lawrence and Clare Herman



These two are probably the most illustrious past members of the Spider Club. The gentleman with the goatee is Dr. Reginald Frederick Lawrence, the "father" of South African arachnology and the lady is Claire Herman, co-founder member of the Spider Club. This historic photo was taken in 1977 at Kenton-on-Sea where Dr. Lawrence had "retired" whilst he curated the arachnid and non-insect invertebrate collection at the Albany Museum in Grahamstown. He was probably the most prolific publisher of scientific and popular articles on non-insect invertebrates during the arachnologically dry years of the 1950's - 1970's. Claire's husband Leslie Herman posted this photo to us from La Jolla, California where he now livesshame!

JUNE 2002

Who drew this?

Come on... this is a gross misrepresentation of the Spider Club on an outing. We have always respected the environment and teach attendees to do the same.



Some might say that we would stop at nothing to get that prize specimen. Okay, okay, I am sure we aren't that bad! But I am not quite sure who the characters in this cartoon are supposed to portray exactly? On a more serious note though, it is the policy of the Spider Club to preserve the environment, and we take special care to turn back rocks and to release specimens that we don't need. - Ed

MARCH 2001

Promises of a website

In 2001 we tried to get our website up and running, but it took much longer than anticipated. As far as I could determine, by 2005, where this Blast from the Past ends, we still did not have a website up and running.

WEBSITE

Our club website seems to be on its way at long last. We will keep you posted, maybe we should have a web launch party? Maybe it could coincide with the AGM. This means that the warning of a subscription increase stays. Subs. will probably be R60 per annum from July 2001. This will also be ratified at the Annual General Meeting.

SEPTEMBER 2001

John Leroy back in charge

From the Chair:

What goes around comes around. I am back in the chair again. And after so many successes by my predecessors their acts will be difficult to follow. All I would like to say in this particular snippet is a huge thankyou to all members who were involved with the shopping centre promotions as well as at the Transvaal Museum Bugs Week. They are all mentioned individually in the report back above. More members need to join us at these events. Yours in spidering. -John

MARCH 2003

Ian Engelbrecht temporarily leaves Spider Club

If I recall correctly, Ian went to Thailand for a year. No worries; Ian would be back to resume his role as the newsletter editor.

(Editors' note — Ian Engelbrecht is leaving SA for a well deserved extended adventure break from his successful studies and we only hope we can step into his shoes as we take over editorship of the newsletter from him. A big thanks to Ian from all the spider people for all the work he has done for the club to date. Besides editing the newsletter, Ian worked as an exceptional advocate for spiders and scorpions and for the Spider Club at many community events.)

"Fourteen years ago, at the tender age of nine, I joined the Spider Club. I had no idea what I was in for! All that I can say is that it has been a great experience from every aspect, and a learning curve second to none. The experience culminated with being appointed as the editor of the Spider Club News, which was also great fun. It is with a little trepidation that I leave a country as beautiful and with as much to offer as South Africa, even if it is just for a short while. But as interesting an adventure as it is on which I am about to embark, I know that my scorpion and spider collecting days in South Africa are far from over, and I look forward to seeing everyone and sharing a few good jokes around the campfire again when I get back." Ian

Columbia space shuttle disaster also claimed 8 spiders

The horrific accident on 1 February 2003, when the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated when re-entering the atmosphere, killed not only the seven astronauts on board, but also eight garden orb-web spiders. The September 2003 edition includes a few articles from before the incident and the purpose of the experiment. These "astroarachnids" also had names:

The spiders on the space mission are: Wako (Aboriginal name for "spider"); Jenni and Kevin (named after Jenni and Kevin Manning who introduced and sought funding for the STARS program from the USA); Boomer (Aboriginal for "large kangaroo"); Mangurruwerr (Aboriginal for "spider"); Winimbeliny (Aboriginal for "spider"); Kumo (Japanese for "spider"); Spinna (Lichtenstein for "spider").

Data is scheduled to be downloaded from the spiders' habitat and other STARS experiments to the Internet web site www.starsacademy.com/sts107 tomorrow. There the students and public will be able to watch lead spider Wako go as it sets about building a web in microgravity. Australian Associated Press (AAP)

Editor's note: The following 3 articles were followed with great sadness and as we only now come to terms with our grief as a result of this great loss, the events are only published now. Our condolences to the friends and families of all (including a few Australians) aboard the Space shuttle Columbia's final flight. The articles are copied verbatim from the source.

January 17, 2003

Aussie spiders spin space history

Eight Garden Orb Spiders from Australia are expected to be circling earth today after being blasted off into space onboard the NASA STS-107 Space Shuttle Columbia this morning at 2.39am AEDT.

The spiders are part of the Spiders in Space program, a science teaching initiative run by Spacehab Inc in the USA that aims to encourage students to take an interest in science topics related to space research.

The space science project team includes students from Glen Waverley Secondary College, aerospace engineering researchers from RMIT University, an entymologist from Melbourne Zoo, and NASA scientists.

The lift-off is a critical milestone for the team involved in the project, who have spent more than three years working on the experiment. Team members from Glen Waverley Secondary College, who were among the VIP visitors to the Kennedy Space Center this morning, watched the launch with relatives of the astronauts on board and other Spacehab guests.

With the launch a success, the experiment will be monitored over the 16-day mission. The Glen Waverley Secondary College students and RMIT University researchers will study how the spider adapts to microgravity. PTO.

SEPTEMBER 2004

Meet Astri Leroy

Since Astri is rather quiet on our Facebook group, new members will probably know very little about her. Here is a little more about our founder and matriarch, who is still very active behind the scenes.

ARACHNID AUTHORITIES

A page dedicated to bringing you the big names in the spider and scorpion world. The purpose of this page is let people know that even the 'experts' out there had to start somewhere, and will hopefully provide inspiration to others out there.

Astri Leroy

Amateur Arachnologist and founder of the Spider Club of Southern Africa



The original title for this column was to have been "Natty Professors" - nutty I may be but professor, definitely not! I have no scientific training; do not earn my living as an arachnologist so I can follow my interests wherever they take me. Unlike professional scientists who have to "publish or perish", I don't have to produce a thing if I don't want to. That's cool!

I cannot remember NOT being fascinated by small creatures - growing up as a child on an isolated farm in the Western Cape had a huge influence, creatures were all around me. I had my own private place, a wooden Wendy house. A "keep out" sign sorted the people but wild things, including spiders, cannot read. Most I ignored or evicted, depending on size but one pretty golden brown spider with a nice red diablo on her belly was allowed to stay because she caught the huge, absolutely loathed "giant" moths with pink furry armpits and huge eye spots on their hind wings. I fed her the odd fly or grasshopper so that I could watch her "flow" from her retreat on a thread, throw sticky silk on the insect and delicately nip the end of a leg. Eventually I tapped her out of her web, scooped her into my hand and

carefully carried her to show my father. His reaction astounded me! My Dad who insisted I rescue snakes from the swimming pool and scorpions from under the doormats, knocked my pretty spider onto the ground and squashed her! That was the first inkling I had that spiders could be dangerous. He then showed me lots of other spiders that were to be treated as friends. Striped garden spiders bundle grasshoppers in silk, fat, slow, pale coloured spiders under a log made my hair prickle but still enthralled me but nothing, not even my father, could persuade me that rain spiders were harmless and we had LOTS of them. They were amongst the only "flies" in the ointment of my childhood except for SCHOOL!

After 10-odd years in Scotland, Europe and London full of "Africa-sickness" I turned 21, free to make my own decisions so I returned to Africa. What a relief! In Cape Town I met this handsome Belgian fellow, Jean-Marie "John" Leroy who also liked animals with more than four legs. My parents also returned to South Africa to live in George where we often visited and there were those bloody great rain spiders again! After a particularly grueling episode involving me, an outdoor loo and a really big rain spider my mother gave me J. H. Yates' Spider of Southern Africa (1968) for Christmas and we were SNAORED. John & I both wanted to find out more about spiders but in the early 1970's professional arachnologists were pretty thin on the ground and "normal" people thought they were nuts. Books were equally scarce. Following a career move to Klerksdorp, a tiny note in the Wildlife Magazine caught my attention: "Anyone who is interested in spiders, please contact Claire Herman". I did and through this we met Dr. Lawrence, Dr. Bruno Lamoral and Dr. Ansie Dippenaar. That's when The Spider Club was "born". You can read about that in 20th Anniversary issue of the Spider Club News Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1995.

Any club has to have a newsletter and we soon discovered that people out there wanted to know more about spiders than we were able to tell them. Our knowledge was woefully inadequate. In the 1970's there was little arachnological literature, so with the help of the three scientists we more or less had to teach ourselves. After several years people were really nagging for something more than the children's books on S.A. spiders and in 1991 Martin Filmer's "Southern African Spiders:

an identification guide" was published. This really set the ball rolling and now there are several useful publications to help the public.

Our interest has taken us from Singapore to Springbok and from Ecuador to Empangeni, through rain forests and deserts and all over South Africa. Arachnids keep me fit, stimulate my mind, stretch my ingenuity and just plain fascinate me. There is a certain intellectual challenge to teaching oneself spider taxonomy and systematics and even how to use keys and scientific literature to identify them. There is also an undeniable aesthetic appeal, (try telling arachnophobes that spiders and scorpions are beautiful) and the satisfaction of belonging to a small and exclusive group of enthusiasts. There's the pleasure of knowing more than most on a given subject and seeing kids' faces light up in fascination and let's face it, the sheer fun of scaring the pants off the general public!

There are so many people we would just never have met without this passion for little creatures. For some reason spider people are an interesting bunch. Their friendship has given me immense pleasure and some anguish but all in all it has been and remains a most stimulating and satisfying interest. For me this is not a hobby, it is more like a lifetime's passion!

Martin Filmer passes away

There is so much more to say about Martin Filmer, who played a huge role in the Spider Club. He was our longest-running chairperson to date and also published one of the first proper field guides to spiders in South Africa, whose revised edition is still sold today.

Martin Filmer

1939 - 2004




The spidering world suffered a very sad loss recently with the death of Martin Filmer on the 14th September 2004. He served as chairman of the Spider Club for a number of years, and his presence and huge personality will be sorely missed. Lorenzo Prendini kindly wrote the following which was read at his funeral.


'Martin was a mentor, friend and father-figure rolled into one. He encouraged my interest in arachnids and helped me to get out and study them when I had no way of doing so myself. I would probably never have pursued a career in biology if it had not been for Martin's encouragement. Like everything in his life, there were no half-measures with Martin. He got all the literature, equipment and gear for going into the field and for collecting and studying his spiders at home. He immersed himself, and those around him, completely. I'll never forget those trips in Martin's spider-mobile, kitted out with all the equipment needed for camping, with spiders painted on the outside and rubber spiders hanging from the mirror on the inside! I'll never forget the people, young and old, gathered around Martin at the campfire listening to his stories and wicked jokes. I'll never forget those parties at the house in Parktown --the hub of Martin's spider web. The excitement he had for his spiders that had begun with his earlier collections (so masterfully assembled in the underground pub) and later extended to his more recent interests in dinky cars and whiskies, touched all around him. I have often wondered what it must have been like to be Martin, to have lived so many different lives --sailor, racing driver, knife-thrower, homeopath, twitcher, arachnologist, author, entrepreneur, husband, father, to name but a few -- and so successfully. The 'fat old bald fart' as he was fond of calling himself, was an inspiration to us all. I will miss him tremendously, but his memory will live on.'

Children's section in newsletter

The September 2004 issue featured the first "Spiderlings" section, aimed at educating children about spiders. Perhaps this is something we should bring back so that we can help raise a new generation that loves and admires spiders and other arachnids.



SPIDERLINGS



Hello Spiderlings!!

Welcome to the first junior page in the Spider Club Newsletter! Did you know that baby spiders are called spiderlings? Well, they are! Since you are the junior members of the Spider Club, we thought it would be a good name for your page.

This is a very good time of year to see what spiders there are in and around your homes and gardens because they're just beginning to emerge after the cold winter months. The best way to observe spiders is in their natural environment but you need to be patient. By watching spiders, you will be surprised at just how much you can learn about them.

If you decide to catch a spider so that you can have a better look at it, remember to put air holes in the container. It's usually a good idea to give it something to climb onto like a small branch and some sand in the bottom so that it can get a grip on the surface and walk around. Remember to feed your spider - it will only eat living insects such as crickets, moths, flies, cockroaches, bees, fish moths, mosquitoes etc. It is important to lightly spray a little water into the container every second day so that your spider doesn't dehydrate (this means dry out). Try looking at your spider through a magnifying glass and see if you can see the following parts:

CEPHALOTHORAX - this is the spider's head and thorax fused or joined together. All of the spider's legs are connected to this part. It contains the central nervous system, venom glands and part of the spider's digestive system.

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SEPTEMBER 2005

Bigger committee

The committee grew to eight members after adding a merchandiser and webmaster (the website was still not online at this point).

Once we have chosen a new logo (or decide to stick with the old one), we will continue with merchandise. If you have any ideas of what you would want to buy (coffee cup, caps, licence disk holders, bumper stickers, calendars, etc.), please let us know!

EVENTS

50th birthday celebration:

Agricultural Research Council, Roodeplaat, Gauteng, 30 July 2025

By Astri Leroy



Astri Leroy and Jarrod Todd bidding farewell to the old Spider Club logo, which will most likely be replaced by a new logo soon (unless committee members vote to keep the old one). Photo of Astri on the left taken by Robin Lyle, and photo of Jarrod by Astri Leroy.

The Gauteng celebration of 50 years of The Spider Club of Southern Africa was held on a lovely warm winter's day under the trees outside the Biosystematic department of the ARC (Agricultural Research Council) in Roodeplaat north of Pretoria. Only two of the original members, John and Astri Leroy, were able to be there, sadly the other two, Ansie and Nico Dippenaar were unable to attend.

Jarrodd Todd, who needs no introduction, and Robin Lyle of the ARC hosted the several dozen Spider Club members who attended and Jarrod in his usual warm and friendly style got the party going and introduced Robin to those who didn't already know her.

The first order of events after we arrived and signed in (after all, the ARC *is* a government institute!) was Robin using a pull-down screen on which she explained some of the basics of arachnology to the audience. That pull-down screen is a lovely tool! She also took everyone through the National Collection of Arachnida and explained its importance to science.



Robin Lyle (left) gave a presentation on the basics of arachnology. Right: The kids and most of the adults were enthralled during her presentation. Photos: Astri Leroy.

Then, when the lunch was being prepared, we had a short spider walk in the veld, although at this time of year spiders are quite hard to find and Astri gave a brief history of how the club began.

Jarrold and his fiancée, Bianca, made boerie rolls with chakalaka and other kinds of relish, washed down with cooldrinks, and Astri brought an awesome celebratory cake with edible decorations, including the spiders. When we cut the cake, the kids asked if they could eat the spiders and were gleeful when we told them they could but one or two kids had to be separated when they all wanted "the big rain spider"!



Left: Robin and Jarrod getting the boerie rolls and cooldrinks ready (photo by Astri Leroy). **Right:** Two of the Spider Club's founding members, Astri and John Leroy, with the 50th birthday cake (photo by Robin Lyle).



Left: The Spider Club's 50th birthday cake, complete with edible spiders and logo (photo by Robin Lyle). **Right:** Jarrod showing the children a tarantula (photo by Astri Leroy).

After lunch, Jarrod gave a quick course in macrophotography, demonstrating the kind of photographic equipment that is necessary and how to use it.

As always, it is wonderful to be with a crowd of like-minded people and we had a really fantastic day.



The old and new. John Leroy, the Spider Club's first chairperson, with a future club member (photo by Astri Leroy).

Plettenberg Bay Spider Walk

16 August 2025



Attendees at the second Plettenberg Bay Spider Walk. Photo by Graeme Copley.

Bradley Raath, who led his second spider walk in Plettenberg Bay on 16 August, shared the following:

“We had a good turnout, despite the cloudy, chilly morning. We started by showing some spiders I had found, including a Twig Spider (*Cyphalonotus larvatus*), a new spider for me.

We then went to a cycad which has become home to tropical tent-web spiders (*Cyrtophora citricola*). While I was trying to find the spider, someone noticed an Australian grey house spider (*Badumna longinqua*) grab a fly and retreat into its web, which it had built to the side of the massive *Cyrtophora* web. These Australians do turn up all over the place!

Then had a look at a young tree that has very many lynx spiders (*Oxyopes* spp.). Unfortunately, most seemed to be hiding from the chilly weather, but we did see a few. One of the young lads noticed some nursery-web spiders (*Euprosthenopsis* spp.) at the base of the tree.

I wanted to show a *Spiroctenus* specimen, so we dug one up that had made its burrow in the middle of the road. It was relocated to a safer place after the walk.

Those who made it to the end of the walk got to see a hedgehog spider (*Pycnacantha tribulus*) and her egg sac.

Thank you to Graeme Copley for taking photos of the event.”



Top left and right: Attendees searching for spiders (photos by Graeme Copley). **Middle left and right:** Tropical tent-web spider (*Cyrtophora citricola*; Araneidae). **Bottom left:** Masked crab spider (*Synema* cf. *decens*). **Bottom right:** Hedgehog spider (*Pycnantha tribulus*; Araneidae). Photos by Bradley Raath.



Top left: Jumping spider (*Thyene coccineovittata*; Salticidae). **Top right:** Australian grey house spider (*Badumna longinqua*; Desidae). **Second row:** Grass lynx spiders (*Oxyopes* spp.; Oxyopidae). **Third row:** Funnel-web nursery-web spiders (*Euprosthénopsis* spp.; Pisauridae). **Bottom left:** Open-hole trapdoor spider (*Spiroctenus* sp.; Bemmeridae). **Bottom right:** Crab spider (cf. *Diaea* sp.; Thomisidae). Photos by Bradley Raath.

Species list

Compiled by Bradley Raath

FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES
Araneidae	<i>Cyphalonotus</i>	<i>larvatus</i>
Araneidae	<i>Cyrtophora</i>	<i>citricola</i>
Araneidae	<i>Ideocaira</i>	sp.
Araneidae	<i>Pycnacantha</i>	<i>tribulus</i>
Bemmeridae	<i>Spiroctenus</i>	sp.
Desidae	<i>Badumna</i>	<i>longinqua</i>
Lycosidae	<i>Hippasa</i>	sp.
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i>	sp.
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i>	sp.
Pisauridae	<i>Euprosthénopsis</i>	sp.
Salticidae	<i>Thyene</i>	<i>coccineovittata</i>
Salticidae	<i>Tusitala</i>	sp.
Tetragnathidae	<i>Leucage</i>	sp.
Theridiidae	<i>Steatoda</i>	<i>capensis</i>
Thomisidae	<i>Synema</i>	<i>riflense</i>
Thomisidae	<i>Synema</i>	<i>decens</i>
Thomisidae	<i>Xysticus</i>	sp.

Kadotstroom spider survey

Hout Bay, Western Cape – 14 September 2025



The small group of individuals, organised by The Spider Club of Southern Africa, who helped survey the spider species found in the small wetland area in Hout Bay. Deep Blue Armed Response (on left) provided additional security, in case the group encountered any of dangerous individuals who might have moved into the area. Photo by Janet Pretorius.

The Kadotstroom nature park is a small wetland area that has been declared a protected area thanks to the work of a group of individuals who decided to conserve the piece of land. It has become overgrown with reeds, bushes, and various invasive species that were introduced when people discarded them along with their rubbish. Some homeless individuals and drug users began to move into the area. In response, some residents decided to clean up the area, and with funding from the Cape Town municipality, they hired labourers who started clearing the area by picking up rubbish and removing the reeds and other invasive species. They put up signs indicating that the municipality should not spray poisons or cut the grass, and also created footpaths for people to use when hiking through the area. This survey was initiated to demonstrate that the area is home to wild animals and plants that need to be protected.

- Wessel Pretorius -



Kadotstroom runs between some residential areas. On the left is Pierre Malan, who invited the Spider Club to help with the survey. In the middle is Norman Larsen, a well-known Spider Club member, and on the right is Chris Owen, who is involved in building several conservation areas in places like Limpopo. Photo by Wessel Pretorius.

It was a beautiful day! Twenty members of the Spider Club of South Africa turned out to do a survey of spider species in the Kadot. There was much shaking of bushes to dislodge the shy critters, with the result that spiders were not all we found. There were several bird species, a brown water snake and many bees, craneflies, stick insects, katydids and monkey beetles, to name but a few. There were frogs, and one of us, a retired game ranger, found the tracks of a water mongoose, confirming the source of the tracks Michelle and I found a few months ago. Around 40 species in total were uploaded to i-Naturalist. As early spring turns to summer, I expect that we will find many more species in what is essentially a very small area.

- Pierre Malan -



Thanks to a group of nature lovers, Kadotstroom is once again picturesque, filled with indigenous flora, and safe. Photos: Norman Larsen (top left) and Wessel Pretorius (rest).

Spiders



Salticidae (1-5): **1:** *Thyene inflata*. **2:** *Thyene bucculenta*. **3:** *Baryphas ahenus*. **4:** *Evarcha* sp. **5:** *Heliocapensis bellus*. **6:** *Miagrammopes* sp. (Uloboridae). **7&8:** Dictynidae. **9:** *Thanatus* sp. (Philodromidae). **10:** *Euprostenopsis* sp. (Pisauridae). **11:** Phyxelididae. **12:** cf. *Theridion* sp. (Theridiidae). **13:** *Araneus* cf. *nigroquadratus* (Araneidae). **14:** *Cyrtophora citricola* (Araneidae). **15:** *Scytodes* sp. (Scytodidae). Thomisidae (16-18): **16:** *Synema imitatrix*. **17:** *Oxytate* cf. *argentooculata*. **18:** *Phrynarachne melloleitai*.

Species list

Compiled from iNaturalist project

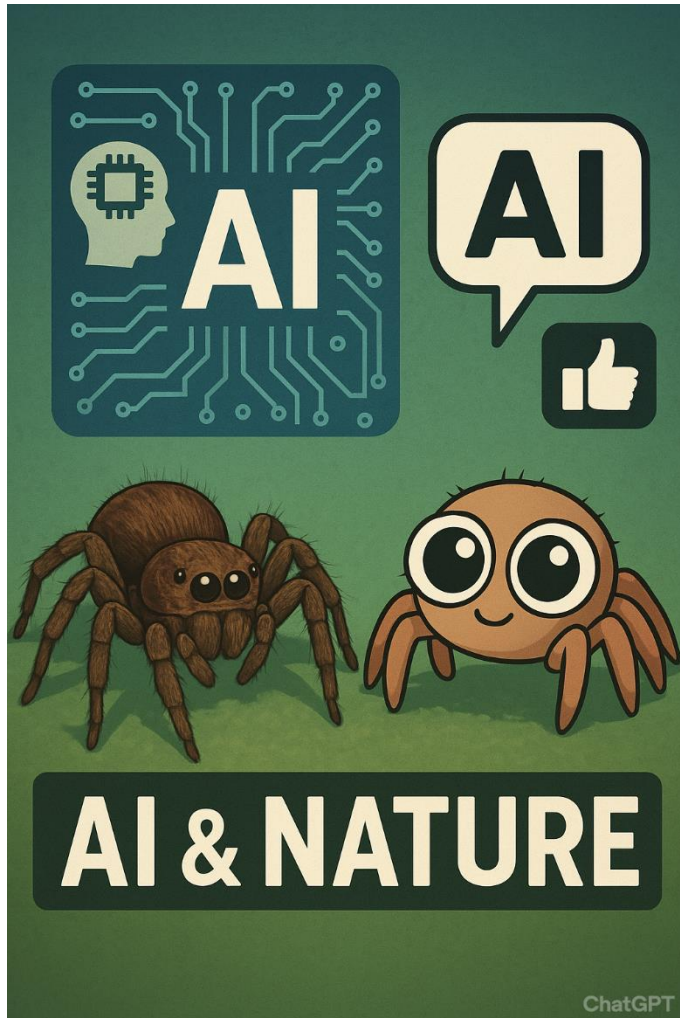
FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES
Araneidae	<i>Araneus</i>	<i>cf. nigroquadrata</i>
Araneidae	<i>Cyrtophora</i>	<i>citricola</i>
Araneidae	<i>Neoscona</i>	Several spp.
Araneidae	Several unknown	spp.
Clubionidae	<i>Clubiona</i>	sp.
Dictynidae	Unknown	spp.
Lycosidae	<i>Hogna</i>	sp.
Lycosidae	Several unknown	spp.
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i>	Several spp.
Philodromidae	<i>Thanatus</i>	Several spp.
Phyxelididae	Unknown	sp.
Pisauridae	<i>Euprosthenopsis</i>	<i>pulchella</i>
Salticidae	<i>Baryphas</i>	<i>ahenus</i>
Salticidae	<i>Evarcha</i>	Several spp.
Salticidae	<i>Helafricanus</i>	sp.
Salticidae	<i>Heliocapensis</i>	<i>bellus</i>
Salticidae	<i>Thyene</i>	<i>inflata</i>
Salticidae	<i>Thyene</i>	<i>bucculenta</i>
Scytodidae	<i>Scytodes</i>	Several spp.
Theridiidae	<i>cf. Theridion</i>	sp.
Theridiidae	<i>Enoplognatha</i>	sp.
Theridiidae	<i>Steatoda</i>	<i>capensis</i>
Theridiidae	<i>Theridion</i>	sp.
Thomisidae	<i>Oxytate</i>	<i>cf. argentooculata</i>
Thomisidae	<i>Phrynarachne</i>	<i>melloleitaoi</i>
Thomisidae	<i>Synema</i>	<i>imitatrix</i>
Thomisidae	Tribe Diaeini	sp.
Uloboridae	<i>Miagrammopes</i>	sp.

Full project available on iNaturalist [here](#).

Arachnida project on iNaturalist [here](#).

Web of deception: AI, social media, and spider photography

By Cecile Roux



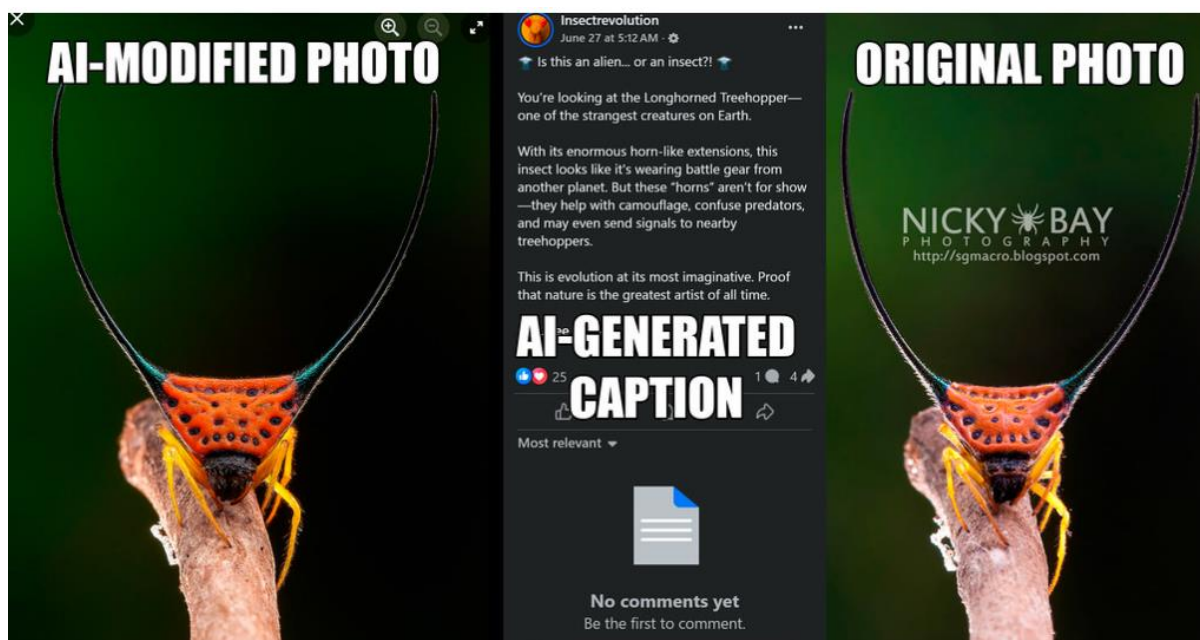
Love it or hate it, AI is here to stay and the uses and capabilities are expanding at a rate that is both exciting and daunting. Scientists and environmentalists can utilise AI to help collect, interpret, and analyse data, create models, predict natural events and trends – all in ways that were not previously possible. The benefits are clear.

One should, however, not be blind to the drawbacks and possible abuse of AI when it comes to nature conservation and perception, and the effects on the scientists, photographers, and writers who dedicate their time to these causes.

I am a passionate spider photographer, and I mainly use social media to share my photos. I do this not only to share my own enjoyment, but also to educate in a fun way and to try to get more people to connect with nature, to see the beauty around us. Social media is a fast and convenient way to reach many people, to spread awareness, and to educate.

Unfortunately, social media platforms are content-hungry machines. Once a photo is online, it can travel anywhere, stripped of context, ownership, and recognition. And there is a sharp rise in pages that actively do this by stealing photos, changing them just enough with AI help to escape copyright issues and to evade detection tools. It is easy to see that this can have financial and reputational impacts on especially professional photographers. Unfortunately, social media platforms haven't been sympathetic or proactive with regard to these problems, and it is hard to see how this can be curbed. There are many ethical and legal issues that should be addressed, but by whom? I would like to share this article by well-known macro photographer Nicky Bay. He shares some of his and other photographers' photos together with AI-modified versions that are being used to harvest "likes" and reactions, generating income for these pages, spreading false information in the process.

https://www.nickybay.com/ai-abuse-to-skirt-copyright-law/?fbclid=IwY2xjawLzJPBleHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHIm_bGcVXnxZmJ3Ek8YTX0kw5G_uT7zU92A9FXxs_8amZo9jdqkMDdEYA4A2_aem_y9sozhJx9s6GqLlyLxi0lw

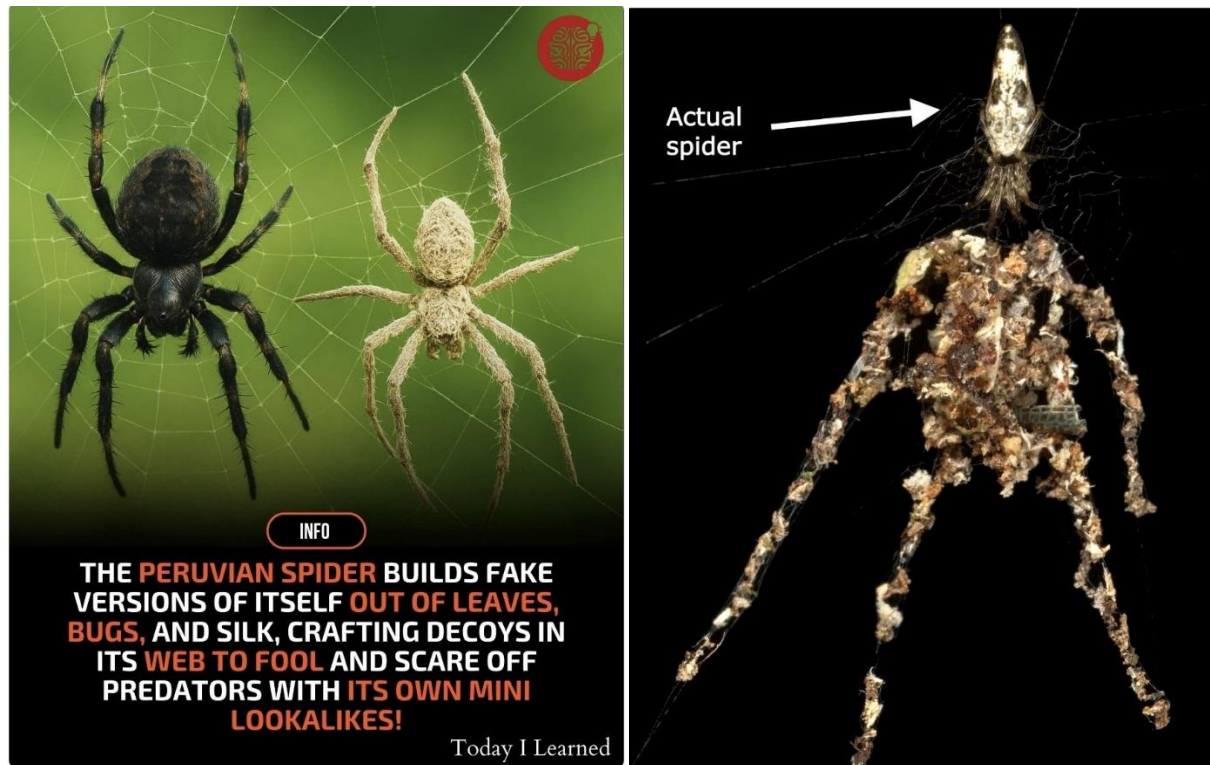


Examples from Nicky Bay's article range from rather realistic recreations (top) to complete (and ridiculous ones) (bottom). Still, people on sites such as Insectrevolution, one of the main culprits, still believe it.

Should prominent photographers choose to abandon social media, it would be a huge loss. Can we expect the average social media user to question all photographs and to only follow reputable pages? No, that is a pipe dream. People consume mindlessly, and enjoy beautiful, bright, eye-catching visual content, and the pages sharing AI-modified and AI-generated content exploit this.

One of my concerns is that this trend exacerbates the already existing disconnect between people and nature. One may argue that any enthusiasm for nature, and more specifically spider photos, is good. But I disagree. By far the most of the spiders in altered or generated photos are slightly cartoonified; the eyes are fewer and bigger, most features are simplified, the background is clean and pleasing, less hair on the spider – unrealistic, sanitised, and false images. Do we want people to think of spiders as plush toys or cartoon characters? Or do we want people to get interested in real nature, the intricate and fascinating creatures that spiders are? If people get used to these “clean” pictures, the real hairy

spider with the spindly legs on the wall will be less welcome. We need people to see nature as it is, to respect nature as it really is, in order to care about conservation and our task to study and protect. It is also worrying that these altered photos are most often accompanied by false information. Myths and falsehoods about spiders and insects already abound, and this new trend makes our task of educating much harder.



While there are many cases of real photos accompanied by incorrect information, there are also cases of correct info accompanied by AI images, such as this trashline orb weaver (*Cyclosa* sp.), with the fake AI images on the left, and the real spider, photographed by Jeff Cremer, on the right.

I do not offer solutions; I do, however, think that we need to talk about this and think about ways to mitigate the harm that is being done. How do we encourage critical thinking and skepticism without dimming the enjoyment? Let us start the conversation!

The A-Z of spiders

by Benjamin Carbuccia

S is for STABILIMENTUM

A stabilimentum is a wide, thick, irregular silk band some orb weavers in the families Araneidae and Uloboridae “decorate” their webs with. The stabilimentum is not made with the types of silk used in the rest of the web, but with the silk used for wrapping prey. Usually presenting itself as a wide band of white, opaque silk, it can have, depending on the species, the shape of a spiral, a zigzag, a star, a pair of straight bands with jagged edges, or sometimes more irregular and complex shapes. While its shape is often intriguing and beautiful, its function is actually quite a mystery. Many hypotheses have been proposed, and some have been investigated: unlike what had initially been assumed, and what gave it its name, it does not appear to stabilise or strengthen the web. It has also been hypothesised that it could make the web more conspicuous to large herbivores or birds, to avoid them accidentally passing through the web and destroying it, or that it could attract prey insects by reflecting UV light a certain way. Both of these possibilities have been studied, with mixed results, and, while neither of these has been truly ruled out, they haven’t been proved with certainty.

It is, however, possible that the stabilimentum may serve more than one purpose, and that this purpose may not be the same in every species that builds one.

In some species, for instance in the genus *Cyclosa*, one role seems quite obvious: camouflage. Many *Cyclosa* species build fairly complex stabilimenta, often mixing prey remains and various debris with the silk, and positioning themselves somewhere near the middle, perfectly camouflaged (which is why they’re called trash-line orb weavers).

They also place their egg sacs there, similarly covered with debris. At least two species of the genus build an irregular stabilimentum, strewn with debris, whose shape is astonishingly reminiscent of a spider. It is widely assumed (although one has to be careful with those interpretations, as the way we see colours and patterns might not be the same as what the intended target sees) that this strange device may act as a lure to visual predators such as birds, which will attack the shape instead of the much smaller spider hidden near it.



Left: A spiral-shaped stabilimentum built by a juvenile feather-legged spider (*Uloborus plumipes*). It’s not the typical stabilimentum built by this species, which is generally a pair of straight lines. **Right:** Trash-line orb weavers (genus *Cyclosa*) build a stabilimentum whose function is quite obvious: with its strange shape and pattern, the spider is nearly invisible in the middle of the debris-strewn silken ribbon



Left: Garden orb weavers (genus *Argiope*) like this *Argiope trifasciata*, often decorate their webs with a zigzag-shaped stabilimentum. **Right:** *Cyclosa* spp. also hide their egg sacs among the debris covering their stabilimentum.

T is for TRAPDOOR

Spiders are famous for their webs, but all Mesothelae, most Mygalomorphae, and some Araneomorphae (mainly in arid regions) in the families Sparassidae (huntsman), Lycosidae (wolf spiders), Eresidae (velvet spiders), Filistatidae (crevice weavers), Segestriidae (tube-web spiders), and Zodariidae (ant-eating spiders), actually live in burrows.

Because it is the only type of shelter found in all three major spider lineages, including all Mesothelae, the burrow is assumed to be the original type of shelter made by spiders, which ancestors of all modern spiders lived in.

Burrows have loads of advantages: the most significant is that, as long as it's deep enough, it offers a controlled environment, where temperature and humidity parameters are much more stable and bearable than outside. It also somewhat hides the spider from potential predators. Finally, it's a great spot to lie hidden in ambush, and a place to drag the prey into, restricting its chances of escaping, and eat it in peace.

However, none of these advantages are optimised with an open burrow: the open entrance still lets air and moisture in and out, and although it prevents attacks from all angles but one, a predator small or skinny enough (like a centipede) can still creep inside and trap the spider in its own shelter.

The most obvious improvement that makes things significantly safer is, of course, a door. No wonder trapdoor burrows are so widespread in spiders: Mesothelae and 14 mygalomorph families are collectively known as "trapdoor spiders", and trapdoors are also known more anecdotally in a few other families of mygalomorphs such as Theraphosidae, and in a few "true" spiders such as some Sparassidae, Lycosidae, and Eresidae.

These hinged doors are made of silk, and vary in thickness (depending on the families and species) from wafer-thin to almost plug-like. The silk door is generally mixed with dirt and camouflaged with sand or plant debris, blending so well with its surroundings that the burrow can be incredibly hard to spot. When the spider is hunting, it lies in ambush right under the slightly ajar trapdoor, hidden but ready to pounce if anything small enough moves within reach.

In case what comes near doesn't feel like prey, it will promptly shut the door, and many species will use their own body as a lock, pulling at the door from inside, with all their (surprising for such a little animal) strength. Some species even equip their burrows with some crafty defences: false bottoms or silk plugs that will make the burrow seem empty when the spider is hiding right underneath, or even secondary entrances that will allow an emergency escape in case a predator finds and forces the front door.

Sometimes, these silken doors and burrows can be so well-made they're actually watertight! A few species in the Indo-Pacific genus *Idiactis* (family Barychelidae) have adapted to life on the seashore, and live in watertight trapdoor burrows that get submerged at high tide!



Top: The incredibly well-camouflaged trapdoor burrow of a European trapdoor spider (*Nemesia* sp.). **Middle left:** Some species make very thin and flexible trapdoors. **Middle right:** On the other end of the spectrum, some trapdoors are very thick, sturdy and plug-like. **Bottom:** Some families of trapdoor spiders, such as Migidae (tree trapdoor spiders) have adapted to an arboreal life, building camouflaged trapdoor pouches on tree trunks!

U is for URTICATING SETAE

When fleeing isn't possible and they have to defend themselves, most spiders have fairly limited options: bluffing, using their silk, or their venom.

Bluffing with an intimidating threat posture can avoid a risky fight when it works. Defensive use of silk is a surprisingly efficient technique found in some web-building spiders, particularly widows (*Latrodectus*) and false widows (*Steatoda*), which throw an abundance of sticky silk on the attacker to impede its movements.

Finally, when all else fails, the last option most spiders are left with is a defensive bite; something they'll only do as a very last resort, because venom production is energetically costly, and using it for defence instead of hunting is a significant waste of energy; also, to bite, the spider has to get dangerously close to the attacker.

New World tarantulas (family Theraphosidae, subfamilies Theraphosinae and Aviculariinae), on the other hand, have another trick up their sleeve, which can deter a vertebrate predator with no waste of venom: they present their rump to the potential predator and rub it frantically with their back legs, releasing a cloud of urticating setae.

Urticating setae are a set of specialised, very small abdominal setae ("hair").

These urticating setae, which detach easily when the spider kicks them, look like tiny harpoon heads under the microscope.

If the predator is too close, the setae can become embedded in its skin or worse, the lining of the eyes, mouth, and respiratory tract. Because of their shape and small size, they'll cause mechanical irritation and are difficult to dislodge. Depending on the tarantula species and hair type (there are different types with different shapes), their effect can vary a lot in intensity. On human skin, the most virulent types feel like lots of tiny cactus spines that itch horribly, but when they hit the eyes or nostrils, they can cause severe irritation.

Because they have more soft skin exposed, mammals and amphibians are most vulnerable to this defensive weapon; it would have to get into the eyes of a bird or reptile to have a significant effect. On an arthropod's exoskeleton, however, it is quite inefficient.

New World tarantulas use their urticating setae as active as well as passive defence: they mix them with the silk lining their retreats, and the outer layer of the egg sacs.

Because setae aren't like mammalian hairs (which is why some consider it preferable not to refer to them as "hairs"), they don't grow continuously, but are only renewed when the spider moults. A tarantula that has used them a lot can sometimes end up with a "bald butt"; in captivity, this can be a sign that the animal is disturbed too often, and should be left alone, or have its enclosure moved to a quieter location.



Top left: New World tarantulas (family Theraphosidae, subfamilies Theraphosinae and Aviculariinae) such as this *Tlitolatl albopilosum*, are equipped with urticating setae on the abdomen. **Top middle:** There are different types of urticating setae, which are found in different genera (some have more than one type), whose effects are more or less intense. Types III and IV are said to be the most virulent (source: Kaderka et al., 2019). **Top right:** *Theraphosa* spp. (goliath tarantulas) are equipped with type III urticating setae, and are said to be among the most virulent (photo: Jérémie Lapèze). **Bottom left:** Tarantulas in the genus *Ephebopus* are an exception among New World tarantulas, as they are equipped with urticating setae on the pedipalps (photo: Jérémie Lapèze). **Bottom right:** Because they do not have urticating setae to defend themselves, Old World tarantulas (from Asia, Africa, and Oceania) tend to have a more defensive disposition, and some species have a venom much more potent on mammals than New World tarantulas (not this tiger baboon spider, *Harpactira tigrina*).

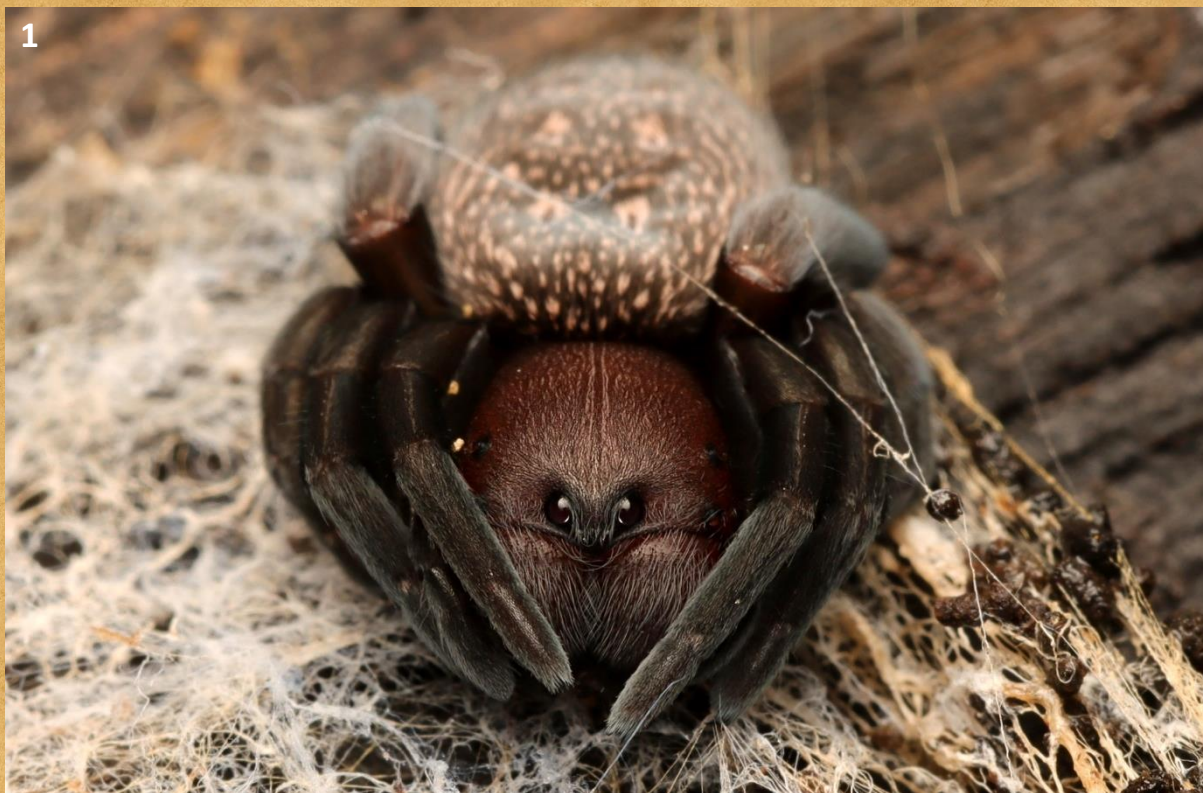


Spider of the Month

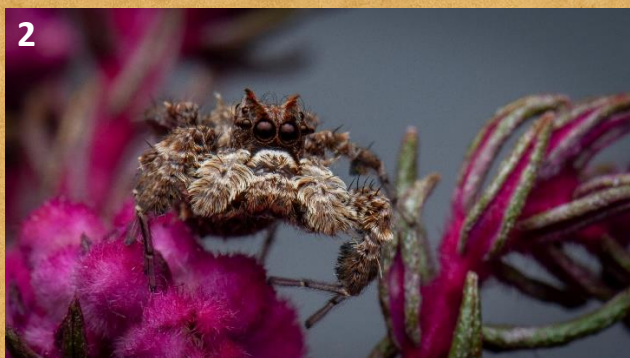
Here are the spiders of the month for July, August, and September. Members of our Facebook group nominate photos throughout the month, and at the beginning of each month, vote in a poll. Click on each winner to read more.

July

1



2



3



4



Sam Jacobsz

5



(1) Velvet spider (cf. *Dresserus* sp.; Eresidae), Cecile Roux. (2) Long-legged dandy jumping spider (*Portia schultzei*; Salticidae), Rion Lerm. (3) Evarcha jumping spider (*Evarcha striolata*; Salticidae), Robert Wienand. (4) Baryphas jumping spider (*Baryphas ahenus*; Salticidae), Sam Jacobsz. (5) Grass lynx spider (*Oxyopes* sp.; Oxyopidae), Robert Wienand.

August

1



2



3



4



5



(1) Tree trapdoor spider (*Moggridgea* sp.; Migidae), Bradley Raath. (2) Flower crab spider (*Thomisus* cf. *citrinellus*; Thomisidae), Cecile Roux. (3) Ground crab spider (*Xysticus* sp.; Thomisidae), Kyle Thomas. (4) Triangle orb-web spider (*Ideocaira* sp.; Araneidae), Suncana Bradley. (5) Wolf spider (cf. *Hogna* sp.; Lycosidae) Cecile Roux.

September



(1) Dandy jumping spider (*Portia schultzi*; Salticidae), Johan van der Waals. (2) African mask crab spider (*Synema imitatrix*; Thomisidae) Cecile Roux. (3) Ant-mimic jumping spider (*Myrmarachne* sp.; Salticidae) Desiré Pelser. (4) Hairy field spider (*Neoscona* sp.; Araneidae) Kyle Thomas. (5) Green grass crab spider (*Oxytate* sp.; Thomisidae) Edward Angus Burns.

The wonderful world of spiders

This section showcases spiders from other parts of the world. Click on the photo to go to the Facebook source.



(1) *Leucauge sarawakensis* (Tetragnathidae). Location: Singapore. Photo: Vin Psk. (2) *Myrmarachne dishani* (Salticidae). Location: Sri Lanka. Photo: Pasindu Dilshan. (3) *Emertonius exasperans* (Salticidae). Location: Singapore. Photo: Melvyn Yeo. (4) Jumping spider (Salticidae; genus/species not given). Location: Singapore. Photo: Vin Psk. (5) *Mantisatta longicauda* (Salticidae). Location: Philippines. Photo: Bald Guy With a Camera.



(6) *Thelcticopis orichalcea* (Sparassidae). Location: Singapore. Photo: Vin Psk. (7) *Phidippus putnami* (Salticidae). Location: USA. Photo: Matthew Lindsey. (8) *Encysosaccus sexmaculatus* (Araneidae). Location: Ecuador. Photo: Caitlin Henderson (She's Got Legs). (9) *Dolophones* sp. (Araneidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Craig Loechel. (10) *Micrathena gracilis* (Araneidae). Location: USA. Photo: Rey A. Acevedo.



12

K. H. Lai Photography



13



14

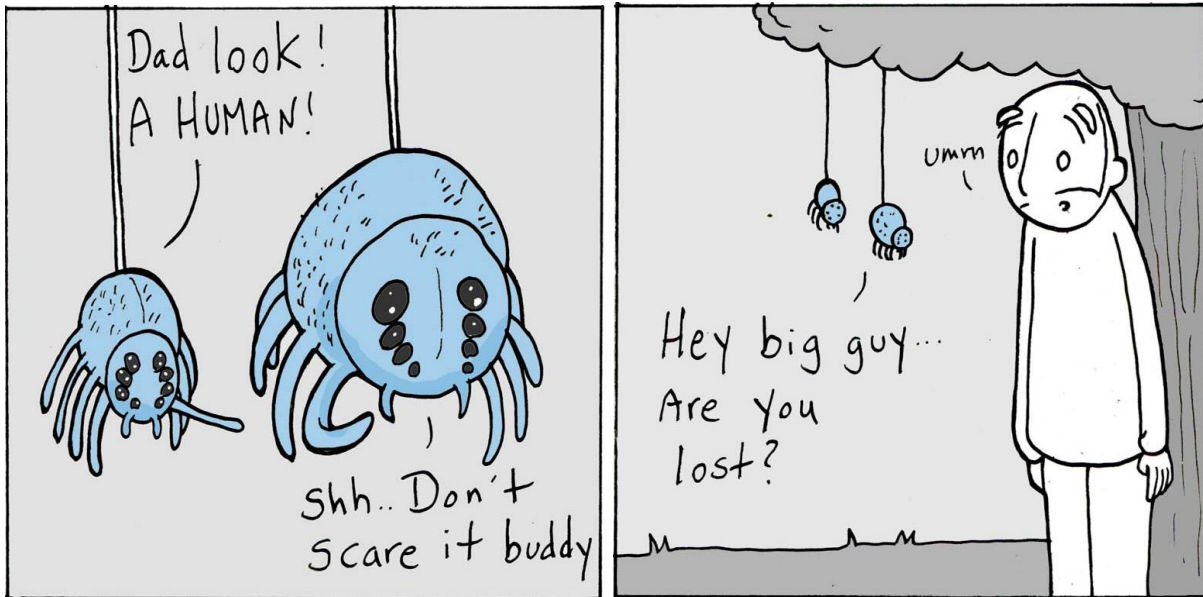


15



(11) *Nicolepeira flavifrons* (Araneidae). Location: Chile. Photo: Pablo Nuñez Fuentes. (12) *Phrynarchne* sp. (Thomisidae). Location: Not given. Photo: Lai Kok Hoon. (13) cf. *Synagelides* sp. (Salticidae). Location: Philippines. Photo: Bald Guy With a Camera. (14) *Maratus nimbus* (Salticidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Jürgen Otto. (15) *Maratus* sp. (Salticidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Jürgen Otto.

On a lighter note



@EIGHTLEGSONLY





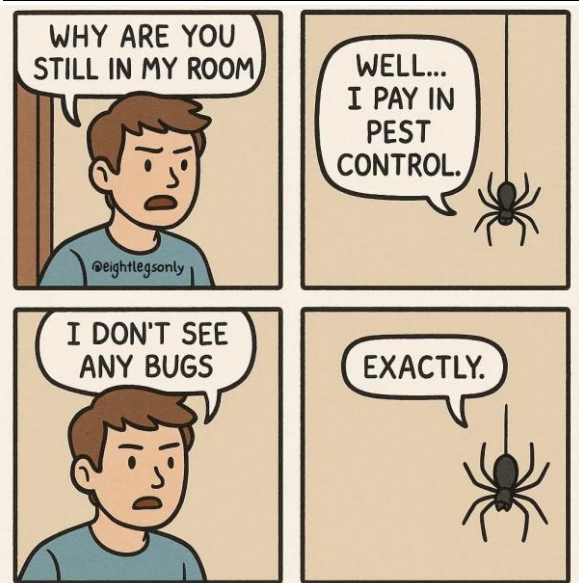
how am i supposed to believe humans are the dominant species when a spider is over here building a house with their butthole

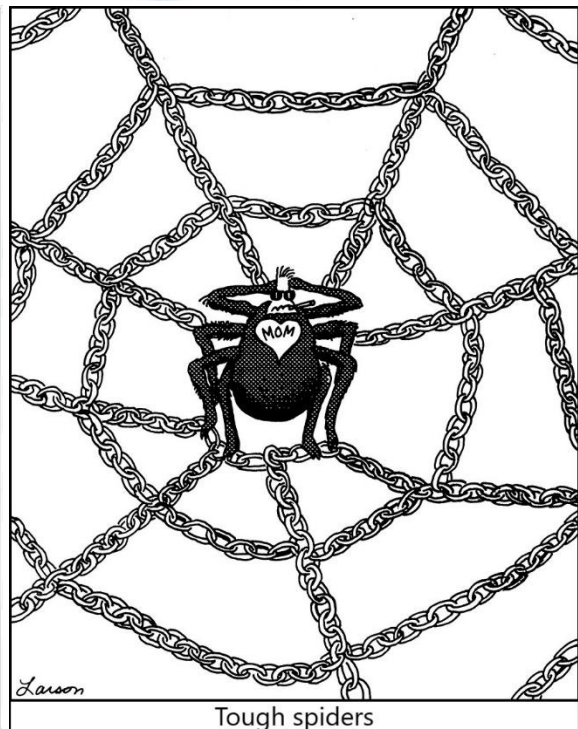
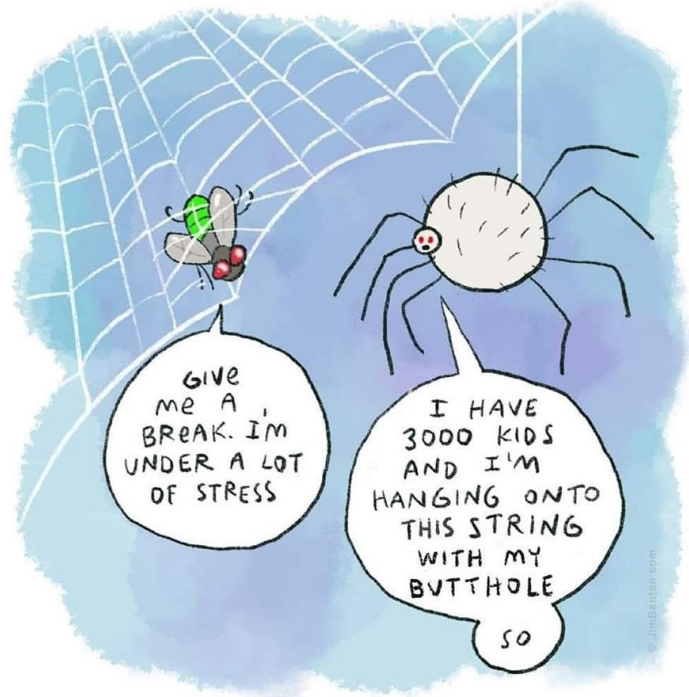
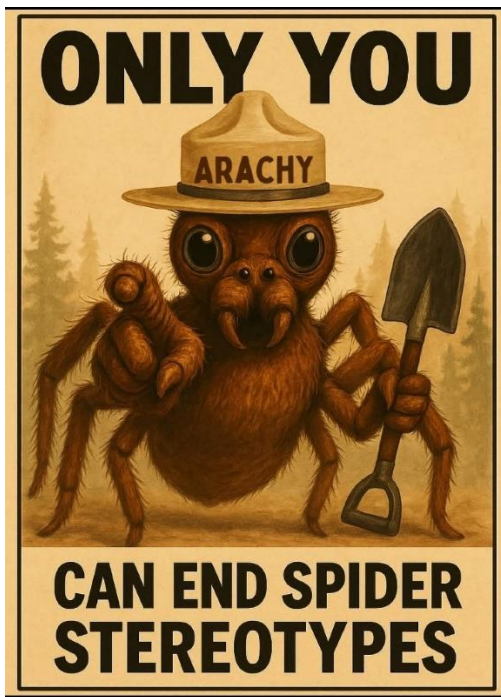


insect lovers when it is winter



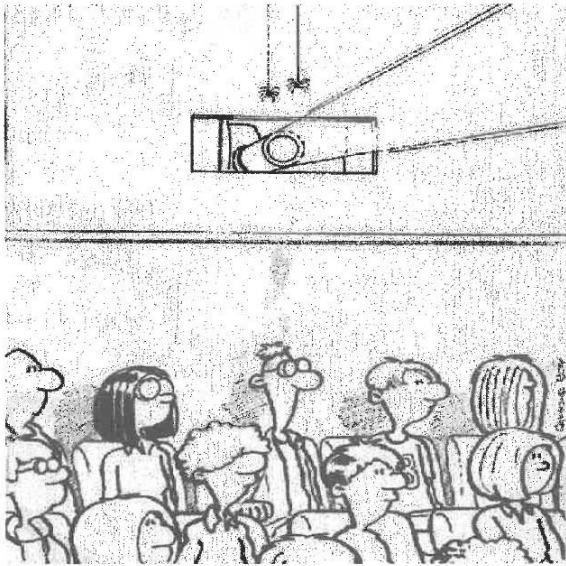
insect lovers when it is summer



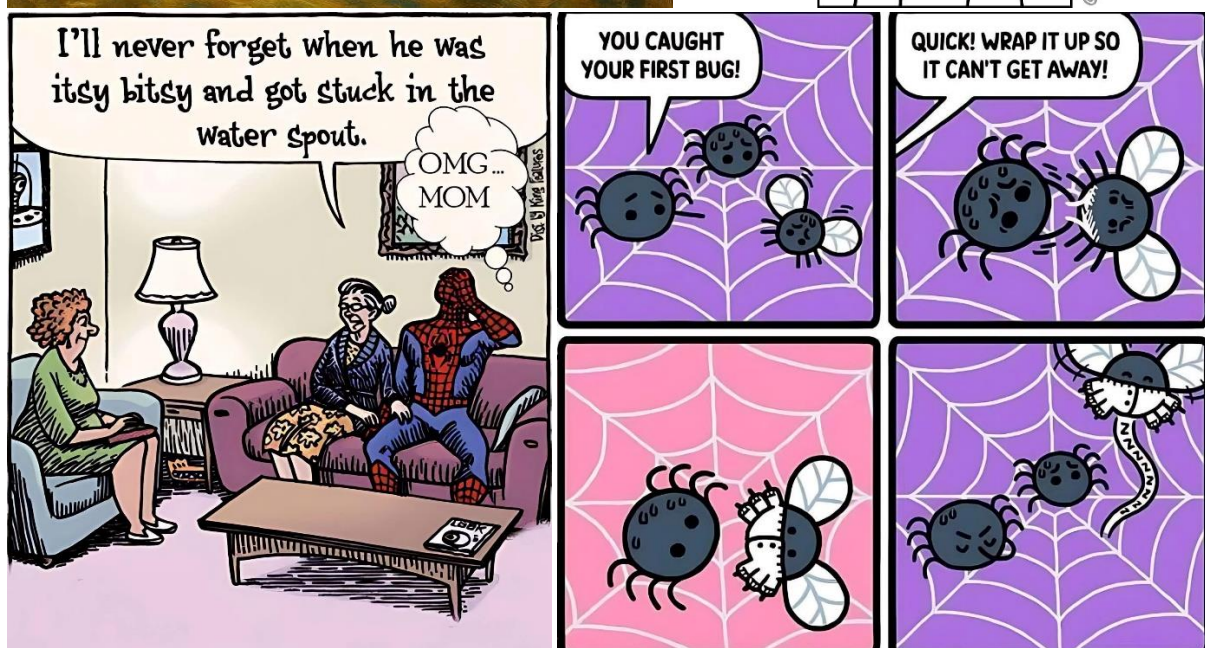
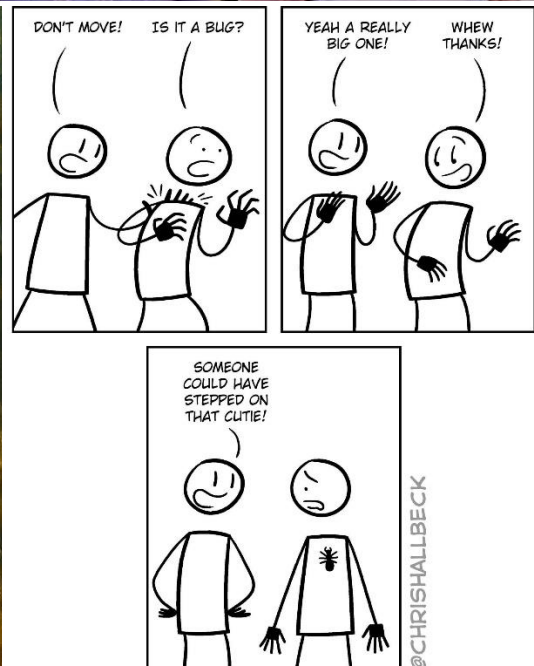


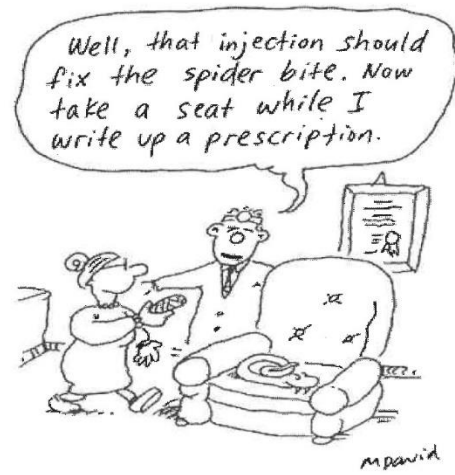
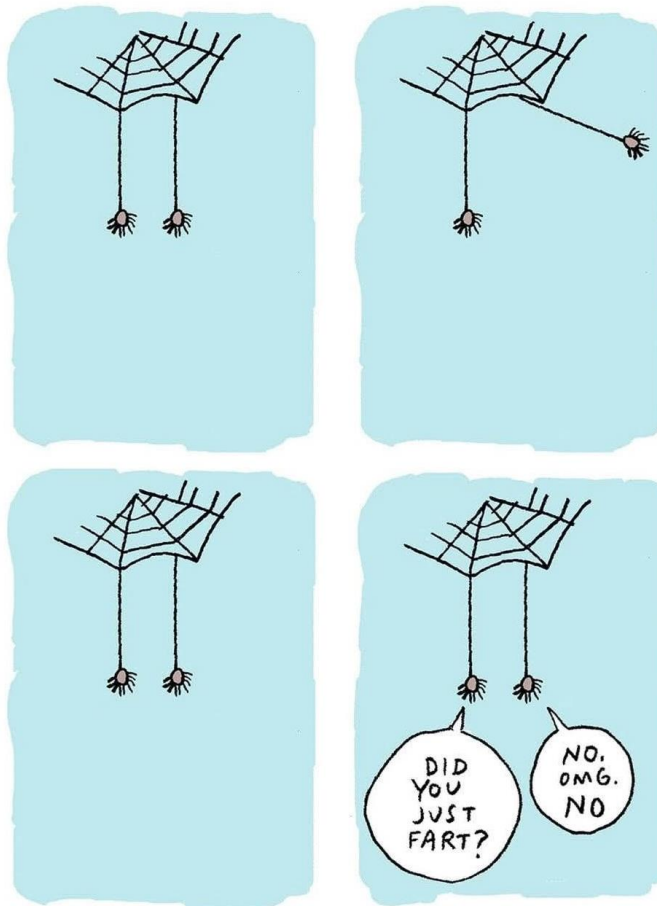
GF kills a spider during mosquito season
Me:





Moments later panic broke out in MovieTheatre-1 due to attack by 8-legged monsters





Upcoming events

DIARY: October to December 2025

www.spiderclub.co.za

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.

NOVEMBER

1

SPIDER CLUB 50th BIRTHDAY PARTY (FREE STATE)

Free State National Botanical Garden

Bloemfontein

This will be the last of three 50th birthday celebrations. We will have a braai (hotdogs) and drinks (non-alcoholic), and go search for spiders in the garden and on the hill. The Spider Club will pay for the food, drinks, and admission fees. There will also be cake! If you want anything specific, like alcoholic drinks or specific food, please bring it yourself. We will limit the number of attendees to 40, so be sure to RSVP to info@spiders.co.za or via WhatsApp to Rudi (064 842 8306).

Wessel and Cecile will probably hold some events in the Western Cape this spring, but nothing has been confirmed yet. Please keep an eye out on our Facebook group or website.

*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.