The Spider Club NEWS

December 2025 Vol. 41, No. 4

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

SUMMER EDITION

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About the Spider Club

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

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

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

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Find us on: facebook® at "The Spider Club of Southern Africa"

Your committee; always available and ready to help:

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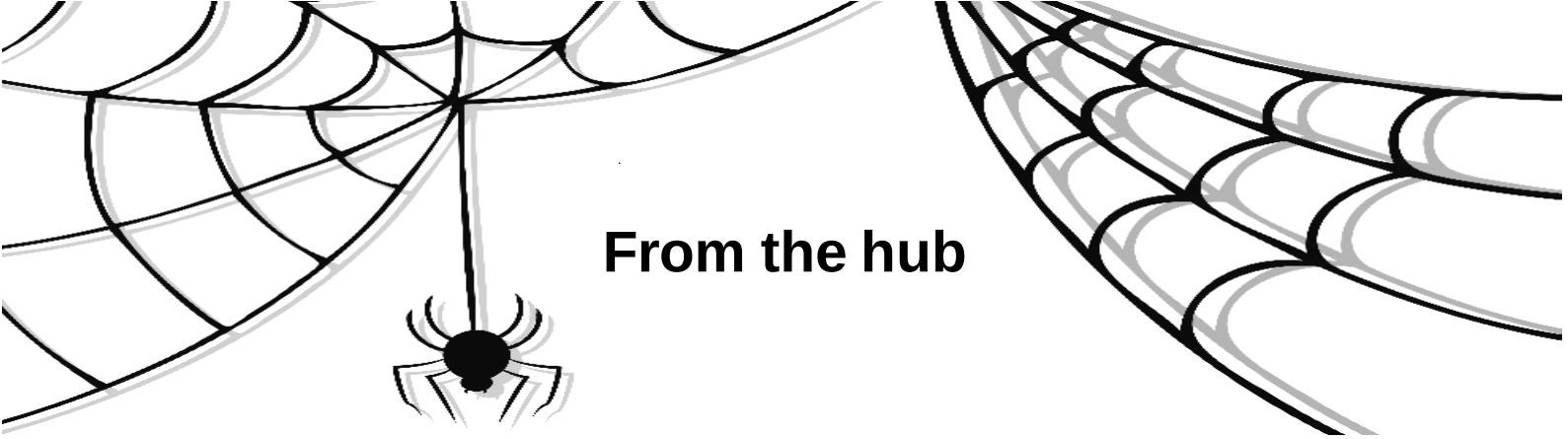
Acknowledgements:

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

- All the photographers of the photos used in this edition. Without you, these pages would be very dull.
- 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!

And so we have reached the end of 2025, and also the end of the Spider Club's 50th birthday celebrations. It was quite an eventful year for the Spider Club. We hosted events in the Western Cape and Gauteng and, to conclude, one in Bloemfontein, which is covered here.

We also have a new logo (see here) and will hopefully soon look into merchandising. If any of you have suggestions for what type of merchandise you would like, please let us know.

We will also soon have a new bank account (the whole process was a huge schlep). In order to make the bureaucratic process of opening a new bank account easier, Astri Leroy decided to resign from the committee. She has been the backbone of the Spider Club for 50 years now, and she has stepped up to save the club many times, as once again shown in the old newsletters (see Blast from the Past). Astri will still be active behind the scenes and will give us advice and input when needed.

We've had other committee members come and go, and have a new secretary and treasurer who both seem very dedicated to improving the club.

Our events organiser, Jarrod Todd, tied the knot with Bianca Hindmarch, and our resident arachnologist, Ruan Booysen, finally received his PhD. These two events are briefly covered in the Snippets section.

With my children's spider book published in July, it was quite a busy year for me too. The book is selling really well so far and hopefully will lead to a new generation of arachnophiles. We featured a review of the book in the previous edition, but here is another one, in Afrikaans, written by Mercia Coetzee for LitNet.

That's basically our year in a nutshell. Hopefully, future generations will continue this wonderful club for another 50 years and more! We couldn't have done it without the support of the community. We still want to encourage people to contribute more to the newsletter by submitting articles or simply posting interesting stories on Facebook that we can use in the Snippets and Observations sections. For example, if someone has Rainer Foelix's new book, Spider Biology, we would love to include a review of the book. We also welcome any reviews, such as a review for a movie, documentary, video game, website, or anything spider-related. Unfortunately, we had nothing to review for this edition.

And that's it from me for the year. I hope you enjoy this edition and, as always, please send us your feedback. On behalf of the Spider Club, we hope you all have a wonderful festive season and a prosperous 2026!

- Rudi Steenkamp -

Snippets

New Spider Club logo

The Spider Club finally has a new logo! After a long process, the committee decided on Theoni Jansen van Vuuren's design. Click here to see the other contenders. Thank you, Theoni, and thanks to everyone who entered!

A step closer to identifying zebra wandering spider

Photo: Robert Wienand

These "zebra/striped wandering spiders" have been known for a long while now, but they have remained undescribed for almost 20 years. They are mostly found around Mbombela (Nelspruit) but have been found elsewhere, such as northern KwaZulu-Natal. Until recently, they were identified as a member of the Ctenidae, but apparently these spiders were elevated to family level (Viridasiidae) in 2015 (Polotow, Carmichael & Griswold, 2015). Rudy Jocqué confirmed that it is a new *Viridasius* sp. Recently, Robert Wienand sent two adult males to Charles Haddad, who then sent them to Rudy, who is willing to describe this species. So far, only one *Viridasius* species is known from Madagascar.

Project Spider Webb

Stefan Obenauer (portioid on iNaturalist) started Project Spider Webb in order to obtain good-quality photos for Wikipedia articles on South African spider species. He provided the following information regarding the project (see the full description and other photos needed here), involving not only Peter Webb's photos but also any useful photos of South African spider species:

Background: Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman uploaded more than 3 000 photos by the late Peter Webb onto iNaturalist. Her team also produces PDF guides for all South African spider species … This project combines the two. Its goal is to have informative pages for the SA spiders on Wikipedia, with good images wherever possible. I started this around mid-September 2025. A lot of the production of the pages has been automated. On the earlier pages, there may be some low-quality content here and there, as I had not yet fine-tuned the scripts to produce these …

If you want to be part of this: Proof-reading the Wikipedia pages is never a bad idea. There is a workflow to find and integrate good photos from iNaturalist. You can help with this by:

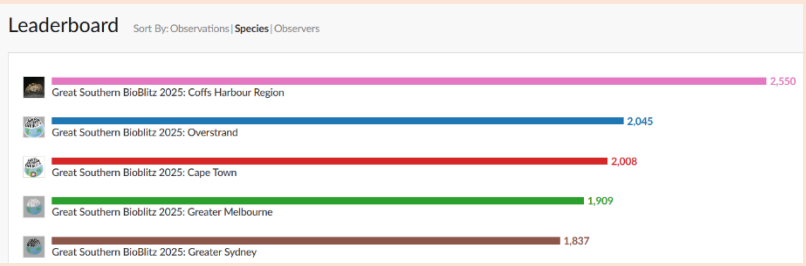
- adding or helping to identify to Research Grade observations on iNaturalist. The photos need to have a permissible license (CC0, CC-BY, CC-BY-SA).
- reaching out to iNat contributors with suitable photos under non-permissible licenses (e.g., non-commercial, -NC-). See sheet "Photos in need".

If anyone wants to help with or take over this project, please contact us.

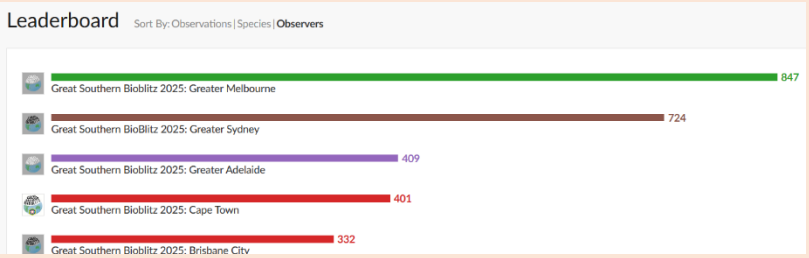
Great Southern Bioblitz results

The official results of the Great Southern Bioblitz (GSB) 2025 are not available yet, but we can see on the GSB's project data on iNaturalist how various regions in the Southern Hemisphere fared this year. Overall, 299 574 observations were uploaded, which accounted for 30 004 confirmed species (only those that could be identified to species level). In terms of arachnids, 955 species were recorded in the entire Southern Hemisphere. In Southern Africa, only 302 arachnids were recorded.

In terms of number of observations, the Overstrand region in South Africa was first with 15 064 observations.



In terms of species recorded, Coffs Harbour Region in Australia took first place with 2 550 species.



Greater Melbourne in Australia had the most observers (847). In South Africa, Cape Town fared the best with 401 observers.

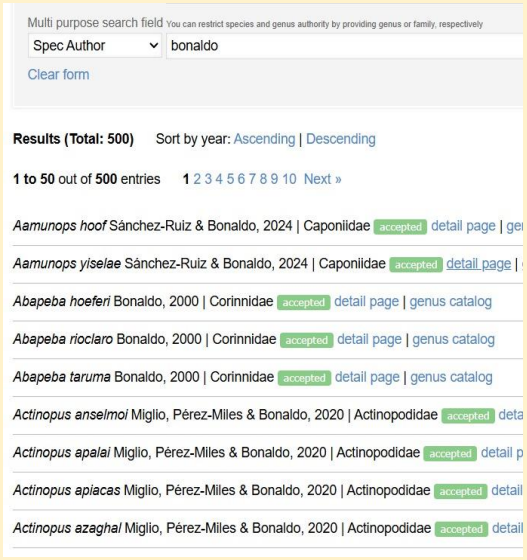
Here's how African countries fared this year

Edit

Country	Observations made	Species observed	People participated	Identifiers	Most observed species
AO Angola	69	48	8	42	*Eurasian Whimbrel (Numenius phaeopus)*
BW Botswana	408	287	20	145	*Sicklebush (Dichrostachys cinerea)*
SZ Eswatini	339	232	6	81	*Leopard Tortoise (Stigmochelys pardalis)*
GA Gabon	22	21	3	23	*Yellow Mexican Sunflower (Tithonia diversifolia)*
KE Kenya	1,886	587	94	168	*Sticky Psiadia (Psiadia punctulata)*
MW Malawi	102	78	10	37	*Common Dwarf Gecko (Lygodactylus capensis)*
MU Mauritius	58	37	8	27	*Red Fody (Foudia madagascariensis)*
MZ Mozambique	574	403	40	172	*Madagascar Periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus)*
NA Namibia	1,484	526	36	173	*Dollar Bush (Tetraena stapffii)*
RW Rwanda	50	23	25	31	*Bush Clockvine (Thunbergia erecta)*
ZA South Africa	52,387	6,138	1,468	1,238	*Black Wattle (Acacia mearnsii)*
ZM Zambia	245	157	17	88	*Knobthorn (Senegalia nigrescens)*
TZ Tanzania	10	9	5	11	*Mexican Ruellia (Ruellia simplex)*
ZW Zimbabwe	1,444	666	41	219	*Common Bulbul (Pycnonotus barbatus)*

iNaturalist - Southern Africa on Facebook posted the comparison on the left for African countries south of the equator. Southern African countries fared the best, notably South Africa, but also Namibia and Zimbabwe; however Kenya also made a mark. Sadly, the most observed species in South Africa was an invasive tree from Australia.

Bonaldo reaches 500 described species



Congratulations to Brazilian arachnologist Alexandre Bragio Bonaldo for reaching 500 described spider species! Bonaldo has published 136 scientific publications. While much of his work is on Corinnidae, he has also worked on Oonopidae, Clubionidae, Caponiidae, Cheiracanthiidae, Trachelidae, and others.

World's largest spider web

Image credit: Urák *et al*. (2025)

The world's largest spider web was recently discovered. While it has been known since 2022, it has only recently received attention in a paper[1] by Urák *et al*. (2015). The communal web, not the work of a single spider but rather many individuals of two different species, is located in Sulfur Cave on the border between Greece and Albania. More than 111 000 spiders were found in the web, which is about 106 square metres big. The inhabitants are domestic funnel-web spiders (*Tegenaria domestica*; Agelenidae) and hammock-web spiders (*Prinerigone vagans*; Linyphiidae). See article in Live Science here.

Amateur arachnologist grant

Mike Vickers posted the following on Facebook (click here to go to the link for the grant):

Hi Arachnologists, I received this email from the American Arachnological Society (some may know me, but I work in Charles Haddad's lab doing behavioral research), and I thought I would pass this on. I looked at who was eligible for the Biological Recorder Grant, and I didn't see limitations, but I am not really sure... So, I thought I would put it in here for those that might want to do something. Before applying, maybe email them to see about eligibility; however, if you are interested, we have plenty of lab equipment to loan out for you to carry out your planned work. Especially if you are interested in learning techniques towards spider research (i.e., rapid sampling protocols). Anyway, take a look and see if it fits your interests. This is for "amateur" entomologists, arachnologists, and others who contribute significant knowledge through their biological recording and collections work, recording species occurrences, range shifts, and documenting shifts in biodiversity. (Please don't think negatively on the word "amateur" as it is just a phrase... I would say citizen scientists, researcher by default, etc.).

Also, if you are eligible and want to write something, but are like "blahhhhh what do I write", I can help with that 😊. Even a one-page thing can be a bit overwhelming, but it's all about balance.

[1] Urák, I., Vrenozi, B., Głąbiak, Z., Lecoquierre, N., Eiberger, C., Maraun, M., Ştefan, A., Flot, J-F. Brad, T., Dainelli, L., Sarbu, S.M. & Băncilă, R.I. 2025. An extraordinary colonial spider community in Sulfur Cave (Albania/Greece) sustained by chemoautotrophy. *Subterranean Biology*, 53:155-157.

Looking for spider experts in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal

The Spider Club of Southern Africa wants to expand our spider walks to other parts of the country, especially Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal because of the rich diversity of spiders, as well as the number of undescribed and new species. These experts will be expected to host a spider walk every now and then (at least once a year). If all goes well, we might be able to add these experts to a collection permit so that they can collect spiders for scientific research. If you are interested, please let us know!

Spider Club events organiser gets married

Our events organiser, Jarrod Todd, got married to Bianca Taylor Hindmarch on 25 October this year. On behalf of the Spider Club, we want to wish you both a very happy and prosperous future! Please don't forget about us at the Spider Club! ☺

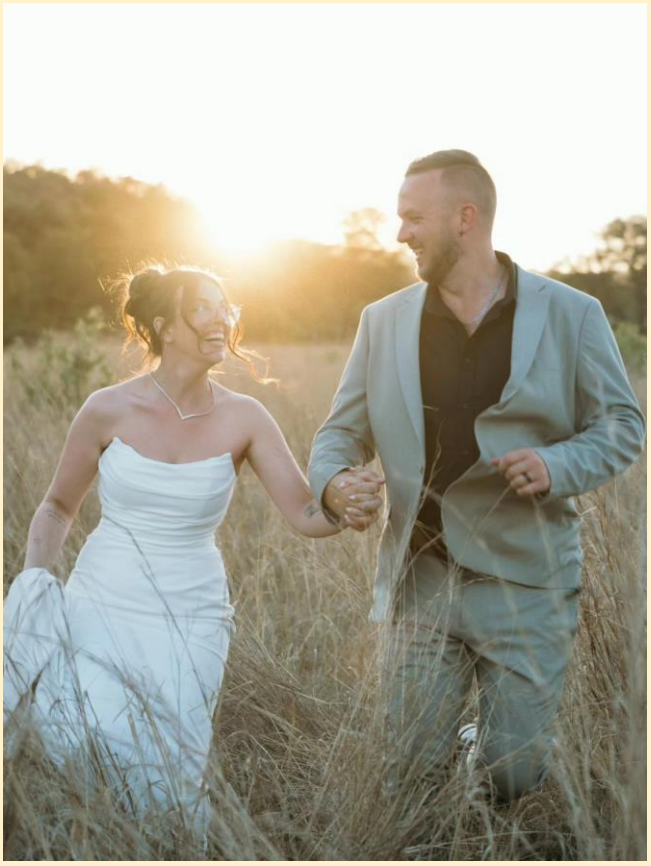


Photo: AM Photography

Antifreeze proteins help Clubiona spp. hunt in winter

On our Facebook group, Christopher Hines posted the following:

Clubiona spiders [leaf-curling sac spiders] don't think the weather outside is so frightful.

Many animals that survive frigid temperatures do so with the help of special proteins that bind to tiny ice crystals and prevent them from growing to damaging sizes. But spiders in the genus *Clubonia* don't just survive winter: They can hunt even when temps dip below freezing. And that's because their antifreeze proteins are super-potent.

Researchers[2] collected spiders they found crawling about a Czech orchard on subzero days, and performed proteomic and genetic analyses to examine their antifreeze proteins. While the proteins they discovered bear some structural similarity to ones from beetles and moths, they were distinct enough to suggest the spiders evolved them independently. The scientists also found that these "hyperactive" antifreeze proteins in *Clubonia* spiders bound to ice crystals faster than ones previously identified in insects.

Cool as this is by itself, it could also help farmers: "The ability of *Clubiona* and other winter-active spiders to continue to fend off pests in freezing temperatures is particularly important for perennial agriculture, as they could potentially be used to decrease reliance on insecticides, and therefore also combat insecticide resistance," said corresponding author Peter Davies in a statement.

[2] Graham, L.A., Pekár, S., Hainer, I.M. & Davies, P.L. 2025. Winter-active spiders (Clubiona) have a hyperactive antifreeze protein with a unique beta-solenoid fold. *The FEBS Journal*, https://doi.org/10.1111/febs.70323

New spider genus discovered in Madagascar

A female *Osmooka aphana*. Photo: Copyright M. Kuntner

EZ lab shared the following discovery on Facebook:

Our research team, led by Matjaž Kuntner (National Institute of Biology, Slovenia), has discovered and described a completely new spider genus and species from Madagascar's Marojejy National Park: *Osmooka aphana*.

This spider is exceptionally rare—only eight adult specimens are known worldwide. The first clue came from museum collections in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., where male and female specimens were found decades after they were collected. To learn more, the team from NIB and ZRC SAZU carried out two expeditions to northern Madagascar in 2022 and 2024, working closely with Malagasy collaborators. Even with intensive searching, only a handful of individuals were located.

Genomic analyses revealed a surprising result: the closest known relative of Osmooka is an Australian spider genus, Paraplectanoides. Together, these lineages form the family Paraplectanoididae, now expanded beyond a single genus. Divergence dating suggests their common ancestor lived about 57 million years ago, pointing to long-distance Cenozoic dispersal rather than ancient Gondwanan origins.

The discovery highlights both the extraordinary biodiversity of Madagascar and the ongoing need for taxonomic work on its little-known species. It also reshapes our understanding of spider evolution and biogeography.

The open-access study is published in *Insect Systematics and Diversity*:

https://academic.oup.com/isd/article/9/6/ixaf050/8369272

ISA members must register again

The International Society of Arachnology (ISA) has a new website, and for that reason, current members need to re-register. Jason Dunlop, secretariat of the ISA, posted the following:

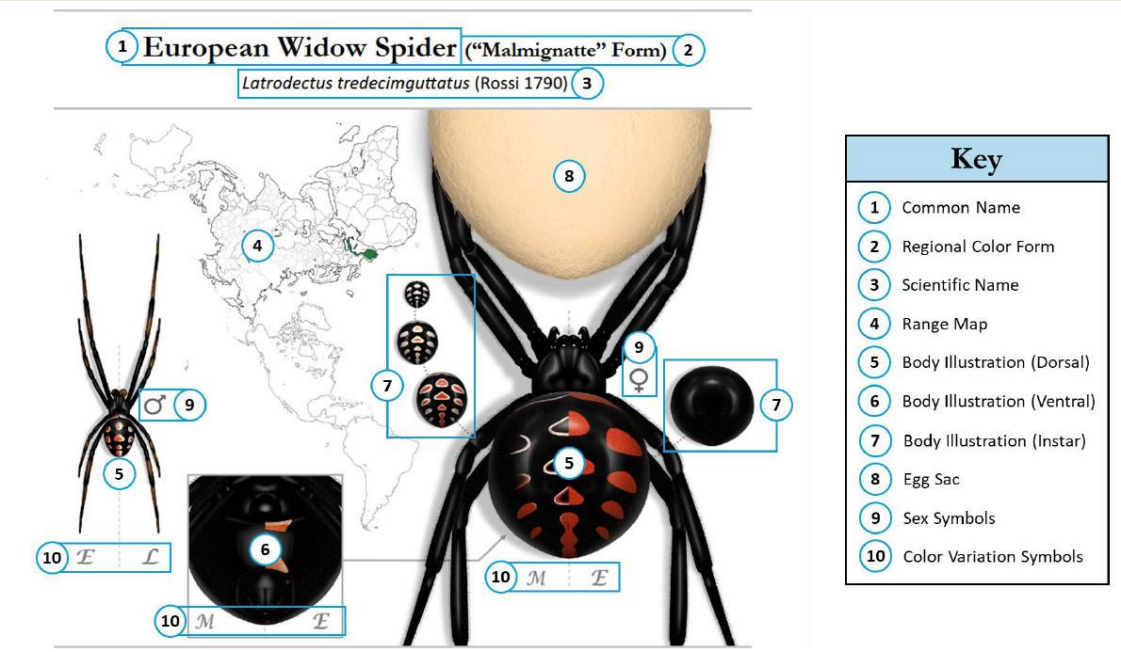
The new ISA website has finally gone live < https://arachnology.org/home > and I would like to draw your attention to the following important message from the President about registering (and re-registering) your membership. Please sign up as explained below to confirm your membership in the new system, and please be patient if your registration is not confirmed immediately as this has to be done manually (by me) and I am not always on my email.

Follow-up:

This message is to remind you that ALL members need to register in the new system https://arachnology.org/isa/membership/registration, even if you were previously a member. Eventually, the mailing list will change to only those people officially registered in the new website. People with lifetime, honorary and waived membership need to contact us directly for details.

Special thanks again to the webmaster, Peter Michalik, who has been coordinating and developing the new system, with our partners PS Brands.

Upcoming book on widow spiders of the world



An example of what each Latrodectus entry will look like. Note that the book is still in progress and that the distribution maps will be updated.

Chris Alice Kratzer, author and illustrator of *The Social Wasps of North America* (2022) and *The Cicadas of North America* (2024), is busy with a book on all the widow spiders (*Latrodectus* spp.; Theridiidae) of the world. The book contains not only brilliantly drawn images of these spiders (illustrated by Kratzer herself) but also very useful information on each species.

Since there are a few new species currently being described (she will co-author some of these descriptions), the book has been put on hold until 2026, probably in the first half. It will be available in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and (fortunately) South Africa.

Hopefully, we can get our hands on one of these books so that we can review it in a future edition.

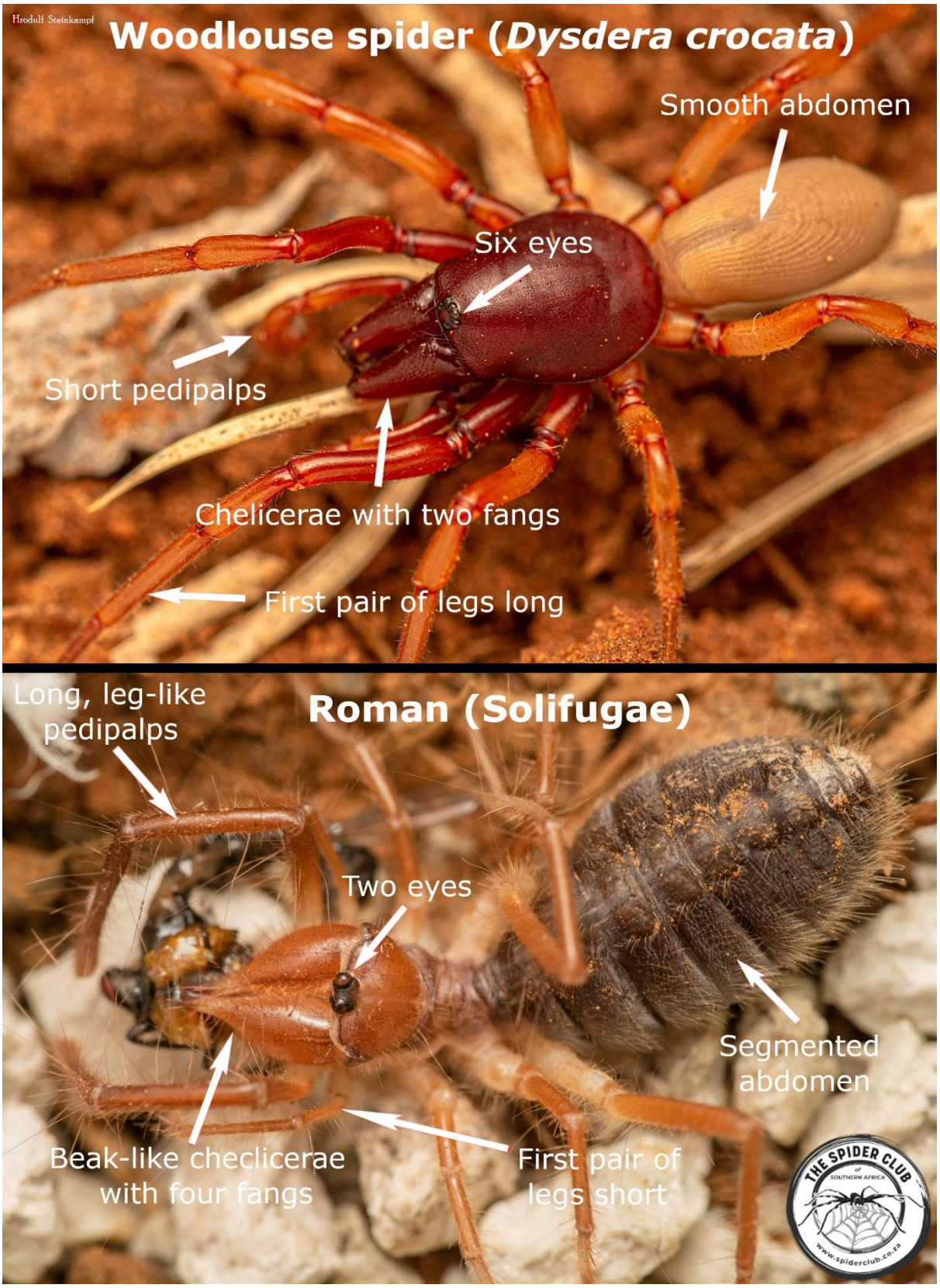
Ruan Booysen receives PhD

Congratulations to our resident arachnologist, Ruan Booysen, on receiving his PhD! The study, titled "Revision and molecular phylogeny of the spitting spiders (Araneae: Scytodidae) of Southern Africa", supervised by Prof. Charles Haddad, describes 38 new *Scytodes* species and updates the description of 27 existing species. The male *S. maritima* and female *S. elizabethae* are also described for the first time.

Ruan serves on the Spider Club committee as our resident arachnologist and co-organiser of Spider Club events in Bloemfontein. Among other things, he is responsible for identifying spiders from our spider walks and compiling a species list. On behalf of the Spider Club, we wish you the best for your career!

Posters

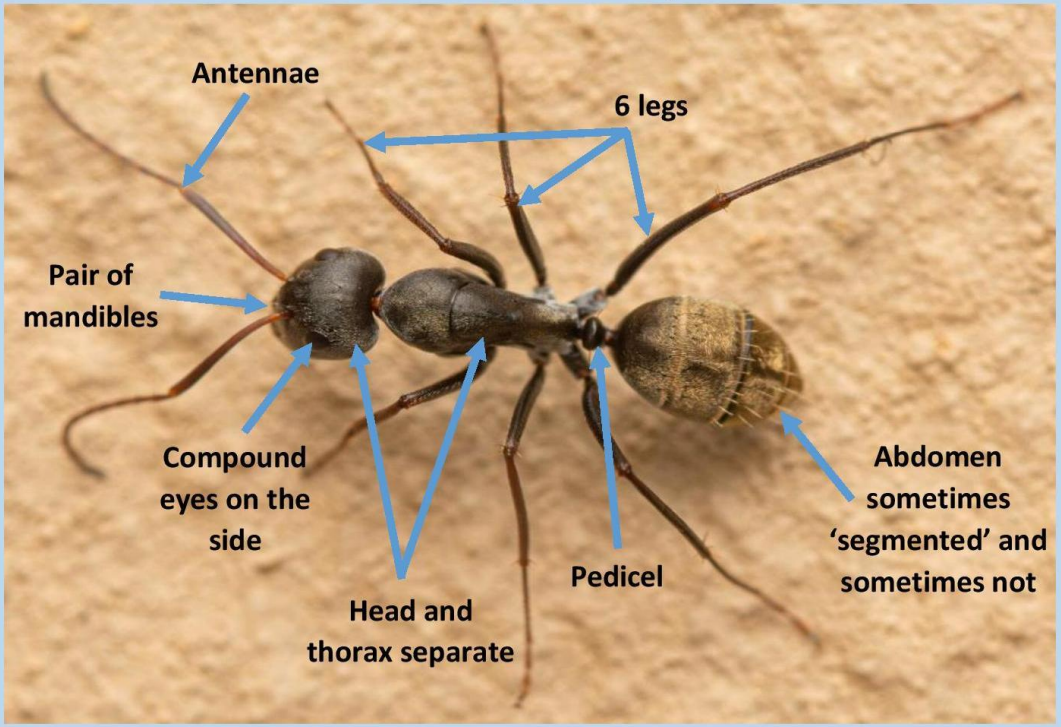
For some reason, every time someone posts a woodlouse spider (*Dysdera crocata*; Dysderidae) in the spider groups, there are always a few people who say it's a roman (Solifugae). Here are some very obvious differences between the two.



Speaking of romans, far too many people still think they are a type of ant, so we made this poster. Hopefully someone will at least learn something.

Romans ARE NOT a type of ant or even closely related!

ANT (insect)



Taxonomy:
Class: Insecta
Order: Hymenoptera
Family: Formicidae

Legs: 6

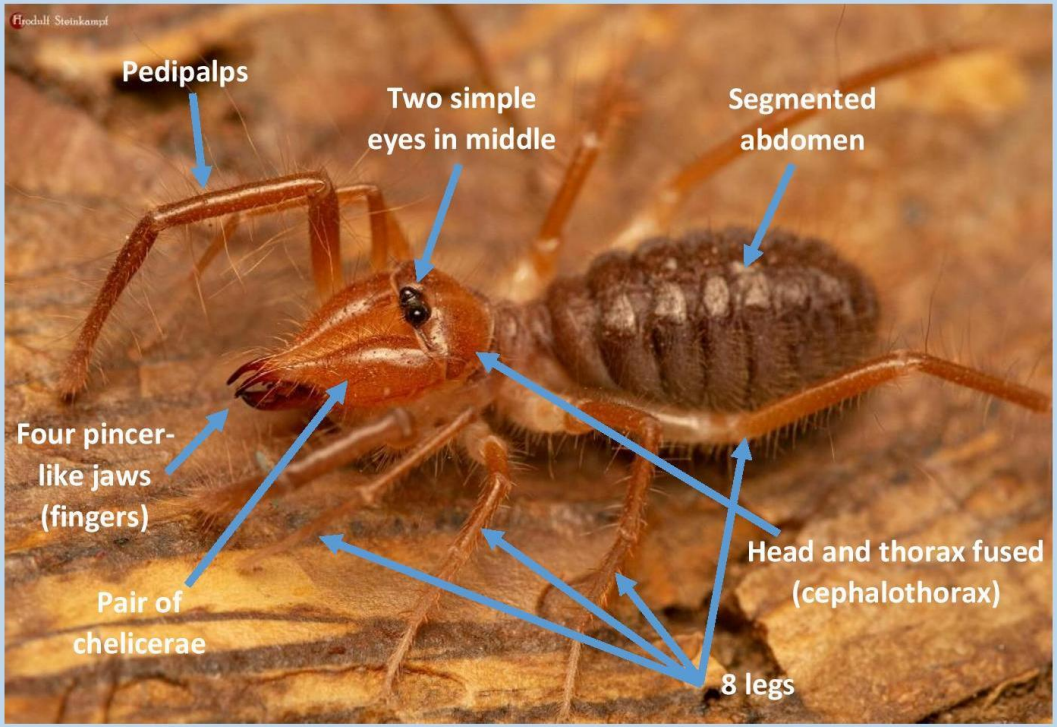
The closest relation between romans and ants is that they are both arthropods (phylum Arthropoda). However, they are still two completely different animals.

Eyes: Two compound eyes, sometimes with three simple eyes in middle

Body: Three parts (head, thorax, abdomen)

Mouth parts: Pair of mandibles, no fangs

ROMAN (arachnid)



Taxonomy:
Class: Arachnida
Order: Solifugae
Family: Several

Legs: 8

Humans are chordates (phylum Chordata), just like birds, sharks, salamanders, etc. So, a roman is as much a type of ant as we are a type of bird, shark, or salamander.

Eyes: Two simple eyes

Body: Two parts (cephalothorax and abdomen)

Mouth parts: Pair of chelicerae, four "fangs" (called "fingers")

Logo competition results

In June this year, we asked people to design a new logo for the Spider Club of Southern Africa to celebrate our 50th birthday. We requested people to use a rain spider, as we consider it to be our "national spider". However, people were free to use artistic freedom but were informed that rain spiders and original, non-AI designs would be given preference. The first round of voting was between the following entries (there were a few variations that I don't include here).

ROUND 1

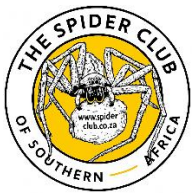
Unknown

Unknown

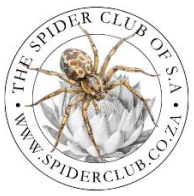
Arianna Ní Bhraonáin

Clarissa Cronje

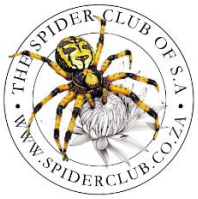
Daniel Larmigny



Fiona Black



Jacquiline du Plessis



Jacquiline du Plessis

Jacquiline du Plessis

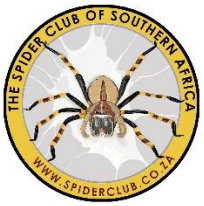
Jennifer Louise Kemp

Jennifer Viljoen

Kevin Zaayman

Kyle Smallberger

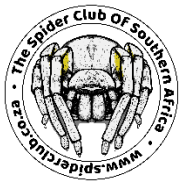
Lizelle du Preez



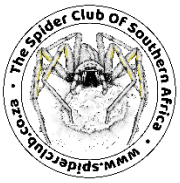
Louisa Gerryts

Louisa Gerryts

Madri van der Merwe



Morgana Bristow



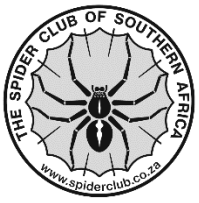
Morgana Bristow

Nadine Swart

Morné Zeelie

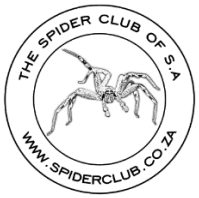
Natacha Visagie

Shané Rabbets



Divan Roets

Unknown



Unknown

Susan Kotze

Tanya Venter

Theoni Jansen van Vuuren

Vinia Zaayman

We reduced this number to all logos that received two or more votes. We also included the old Spider Club logo for those who wanted to vote to keep the old one. That amounted to 16 options.

ROUND 2

For Round 3, we reduced the number to the top 10. In this round, the old logo was eliminated, which meant that we would have a new logo instead of keeping the old one.

ROUND 3 (TOP 10)

ROUND 4 (TOP 5)

This was reduced to the Top 5:

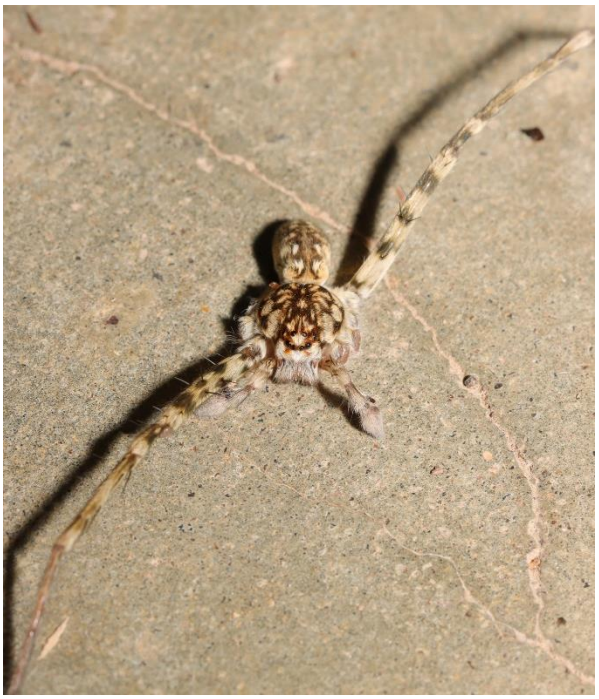
In the final round, the votes weren't unanimous, but 70% of the votes went to Theoni Jansen van Vuuren's design, and after a few tweaks, the other 30% agreed with the choice. Here are some of the variations:

WINNER (Theoni Jansen van Vuuren)

ê

Two-legged huntsman still hunting

Cecile Roux posted this two-legged huntsman (cf. *Palystella* sp.) from Brandvlei in the Northern Cape. She said: “Two legs. But very active. Propelled itself in a sort of cartwheel manner with the help of its palps. Still hunting, saw it with prey later. Sad to see, but amazing that an animal can survive like this.”



Unknown crevice weaver

Mike Hooper posted this crevice weaver (Filistatidae) from Daan Viljoen near Windhoek, Namibia. Ivan Magalhaes, an Argentinian arachnologist specialising in Filistatidae, said, “Definitely Filistatidae, and a very interesting one!! Some *Pikelinia* have hairy legs, but this one definitely is the hairiest prithine filistatid I’ve seen.” He asked whether this specimen has been collected, but Mike has not answered yet.

Rear-horned baboon spider found in Bloemfontein

Dewald du Plessis posted this photo on iNaturalist of a rear-horned baboon spider (*Ceratogyrus darlingi*). Bloemfontein is far outside their normal range, so it's unusual. Dewald asked: "Could it maybe be an escapee? I recall an exotic pet shop in the province that was closed about 15 years ago after a raid by Nature Conservation found local mygalomorphs sold to the public as New World tarantulas." Considering that this is a male and that male baboon spiders don't live nearly as long as the females, this is unlikely, and the mystery remains as to how this spider made its way to Bloemfontein.

Unusual ant-eating theridiid

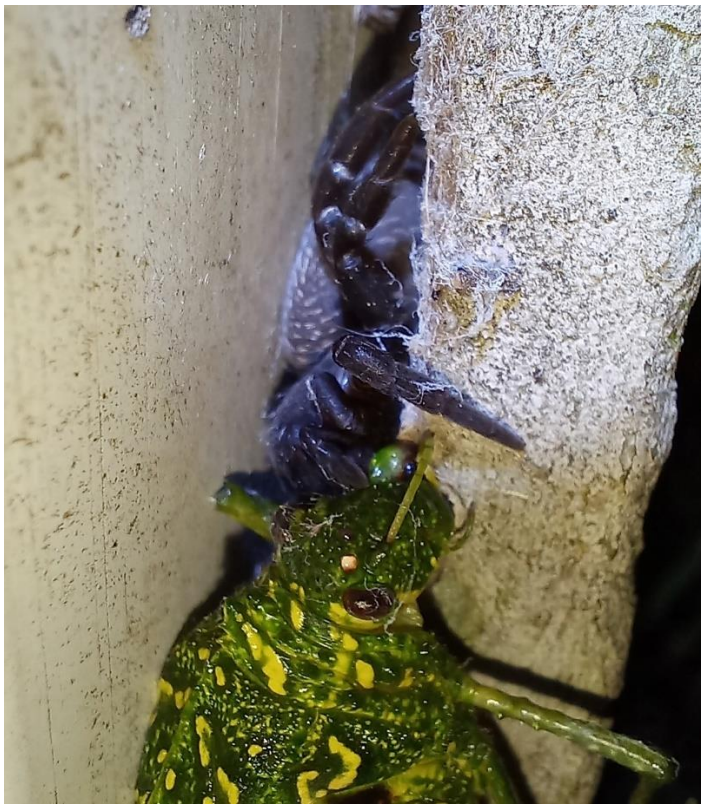
Arno van der Vyver found this ant-eating theridiid (*Euryopis* sp.) near Theerivier in the Western Cape. It doesn't match any of our described species, but we only have two confirmed species (*E. funebris* and *E. episinoides*), so this one probably counts as one of the few undescribed ones. Unless, of course, it's just a variation.

Unusual lynx spider

Wickus (surname not given) from Pretoria posted this lynx spider (cf. *Oxyopes* sp.) from Brummeria in Pretoria, near the Pretoria National Botanical Garden. Our lynx spiders are clearly in dire need of revision, since most of our *Oxyopes* species were described by Lessert about 100 years ago. This will most likely be one of the undescribed species.

Velvet spider with huge prey

Vinia Zaayman from Plettenberg Bay photographed this velvet spider (cf. *Gandanameno* sp.) feeding on a silver-spotted bladderhopper (*Physemacris variolosa*). This spider lives in the gap on the side of some Nutec cladding on the outer wall of the house. Vinia says she has a few velvet spiders living on that wall.



Beautiful running spider

Jessica Kemper posted this photo of a running spider (*Thanatus* sp.; Philodromidae) on iNaturalist. It was found near Luderitz, Namibia. It is probably *T. vulgaris*, but a beautiful variation.

White variation of zodariid

Myhet on iNaturalist (real name not given) posted this burrowing ant spider (cf. *Psammorygma* sp.; Zodariidae). The markings on the abdomen are usually orange or red. This white variation is not often seen.

Wolf spider with babies under water

Marjory Fouche took this photo of a wolf spider (Lycosidae) with her babies on her back under the water in her swimming pool. It is not unusual for wolf spiders to spend some time underwater. They create a thin film of air around their abdomens through which they breathe. I wonder, in the case of these babies, does the mother create a film of air around all the babies, or does each individual baby do that themselves?

Orange fish-eating spider

Eugene Troskie found this orange fish-eating spider (*Nilus* sp.; Pisauridae) near Phalaborwa in Limpopo. We're not sure if it's a variation of an existing species, or perhaps something new.

Daddy longlegs with wolf spider

Gerhard Geldenhuys photographed this common daddy longlegs spider (*Smeringopus* sp.; Pholcidae) feeding on a wolf spider. It's not unusual for them to catch prey much larger than they are, and we've reported on them even feeding on baboon spiders in previous issues.

Beautiful asemesthes ground spider

Cecile Roux found this asemesthes ground spider (*Asemesthes* sp.; Gnaphosidae) near Clanwilliam in the Western Cape. Could it perhaps be a variation of *Asemesthes subnubilus*, or something else perhaps? Either way, it's a beautiful specimen.

Beetle crab spider with bee

Karin Jansen van Vuuren posted this photo of a beetle crab spider (*Mystaria* sp.; Thomisidae) feeding on a bee. These spiders are expert bee and wasp hunters and will often tackle much larger prey. Karin said:

"While visiting a friend in Richards Bay, a bee fell onto the table and seemed to be struggling with something on her foot. It looked like white fluff. After a minute or two she looked like she had died. On closer inspection, we saw something that looked like a tick attached to her abdomen. I took a photo of the 'tick' and saw it was a spider."

Fish-eating spider feeding on fish

Belinda Derman photographed this fish-eating spider (*Nilus* sp.; Pisauridae) in Wildevoëlvallei near Cape Town. These spiders hunt fish by sitting on the edge of the water with their front legs on the surface. Fish, thinking it is a meal, are lured closer, and the spider then grabs it and wrestles with it, sometimes underwater, until the fish is subdued by the venom. They also sometimes catch small frogs and other marine vertebrates but will often settle for an arthropod, like a dragonfly.

Odd false button spiders

Cecile Roux found many of these false button spiders (*Steatoda* sp.; Theridiidae) in Melkrivier in the Northern Cape. Could they perhaps be *S. erigoniformis*? The banded legs of the male don't match the male shown in the SANSA photo guide.

Unknown orb-web spider

Moira Fitzpatrick posted this photo of an unknown orb-web spider (Araneidae) on iNaturalist, found in the Debshan Grasslands near Shangani, Zimbabwe.

First record of Zenonina in Zambia

Arnout de Vries posted this photo of a stump-backed wolf spider (*Zenonina* sp.; Lycosidae) from Kafue National Park in Zambia. It is possibly the first record of this genus in Zambia.

Jumping spiders mating

Megan Fisher photographed these two jumping spiders (*Hyllus brevitarsis*; Salticidae) mating. She found them in Sabie Park in Mpumalanga.

Rain spider steals tissues

Wendy Leppard, from Johannesburg, posted the following about a common rain spider (*Palystes superciliosus*; Sparassidae) "stealing" her tissues.

"I noticed a tissue hanging from the top of the window and on investigation, I discovered the most charming rain spider nest that she made using a tissue as the base! The photos are not very good - 2nd photo shows the tissue and the reflection in the window… I love the idea that she helped herself to a tissue from the box on the window sill below - bottom photo is her sleeping on the nest."

Beautiful spiky field spider

Brass Brassett posted this beautiful spiky field spider (*Pararaneus* sp.; Araneidae) from the Balule Nature Reserve in Limpopo. It's likely just a variation of an existing species, but stunning nonetheless!

To view the videos, simply click on each picture.

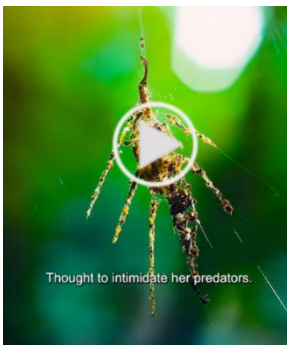
If you know of any videos that we can feature here, please contact us.

Bark spider camouflage

Mandy Robbertze posted this video showcasing the excellent camouflage of a bark spider on tree bark.

Mexcala jumping spider hunting ant

Carla Farinacci filmed this ant-mimic jumping spider (*Mexcala quadrimaculata*) following an ant. These spiders are aggressive ant mimics, which means they hunt their models instead of mimicking them for defence.



Spider builds decoy of itself

In the previous issue, we touched on AI images, including one of a trashline orb-web spider (*Cyclosa* sp.; Araneidae) building a decoy of itself. Here is a video of the actual spider.

New spider genus discovered in Madagascar

On page 10, in the Snippets section, we report on *Osmooka aphana*, a new spider genus discovered in Madagascar. This video shows the journey of the researchers, led by Matjaž Kuntner from the National Institute of Biology in Slovenia, as they finally describe this species.

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 slightly more than 10 members, and 50 years later we stand at 650 (and more than 75 000 on Facebook), including arachnologists from all over the world.

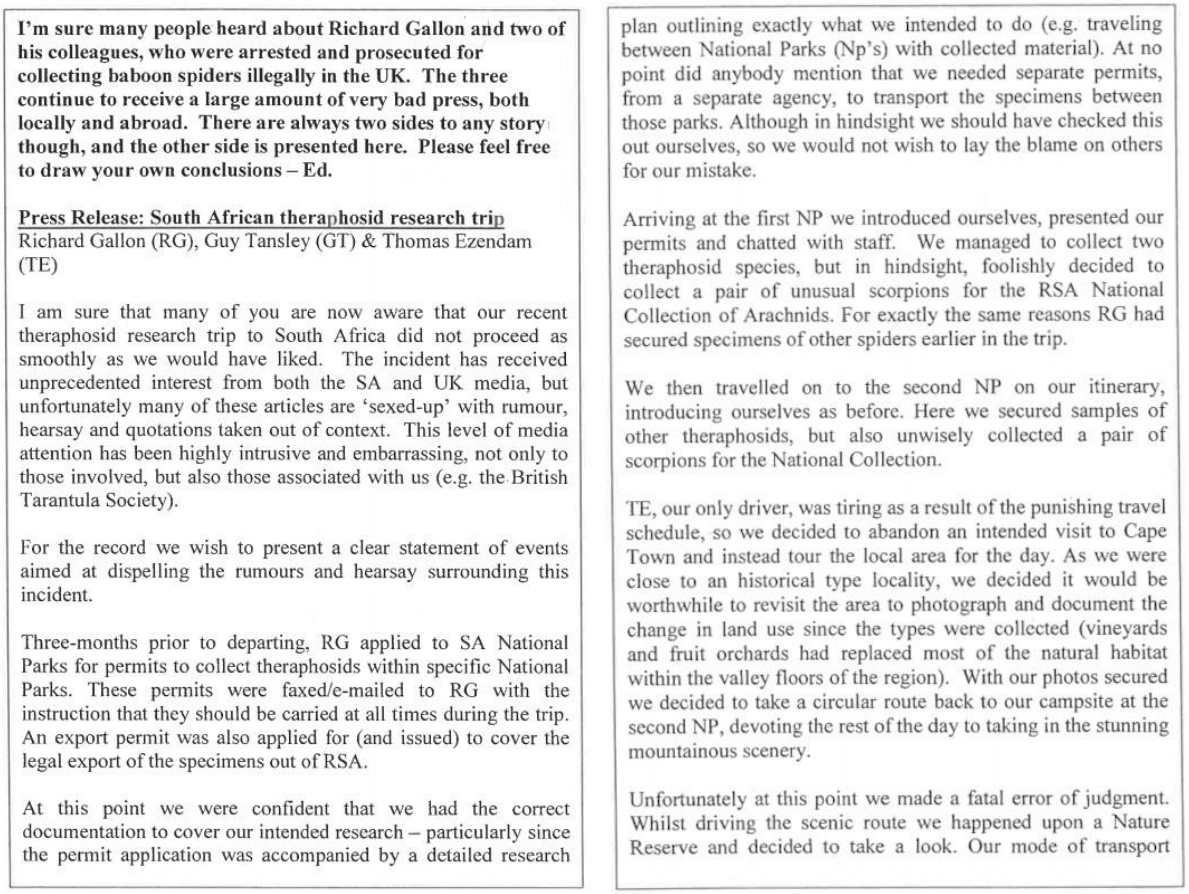
As the current chair and newsletter editor, I figured we'd have to preserve the club's history before it is lost to time, so we had all our old hardcopy newsletters digitised (Astri has taken very good care of these old copies). They will all be made available on our website soon.

In the previous edition, I covered the third decade of newsletters (1996-2005). The following are noteworthy extracts from the fourth decade (2006-2015).

JUNE 2006

Nasty experience for British in South Africa

During a research trip by the British Tarantula Society in South Africa, they had an unfortunate encounter with the authorities. Hopefully that didn't deter them from visiting our beautiful country in the future. Here is their side of the story:



I'm sure many people heard about Richard Gallon and two of his colleagues, who were arrested and prosecuted for collecting baboon spiders illegally in the UK. The three continue to receive a large amount of very bad press, both locally and abroad. There are always two sides to any story though, and the other side is presented here. Please feel free to draw your own conclusions – Ed.

Press Release: South African theraphosid research trip
Richard Gallon (RG), Guy Tansley (GT) & Thomas Ezendam (TE)

I am sure that many of you are now aware that our recent theraphosid research trip to South Africa did not proceed as smoothly as we would have liked. The incident has received unprecedented interest from both the SA and UK media, but unfortunately many of these articles are 'sexed-up' with rumour, hearsay and quotations taken out of context. This level of media attention has been highly intrusive and embarrassing, not only to those involved, but also those associated with us (e.g. the British Tarantula Society).

For the record we wish to present a clear statement of events aimed at dispelling the rumours and hearsay surrounding this incident.

Three-months prior to departing, RG applied to SA National Parks for permits to collect theraphosids within specific National Parks. These permits were faxed/e-mailed to RG with the instruction that they should be carried at all times during the trip. An export permit was also applied for (and issued) to cover the legal export of the specimens out of RSA.

At this point we were confident that we had the correct documentation to cover our intended research – particularly since the permit application was accompanied by a detailed research plan outlining exactly what we intended to do (e.g. traveling between National Parks (Np's) with collected material). At no point did anybody mention that we needed separate permits, from a separate agency, to transport the specimens between those parks. Although in hindsight we should have checked this out ourselves, so we would not wish to lay the blame on others for our mistake.

Arriving at the first NP we introduced ourselves, presented our permits and chatted with staff. We managed to collect two theraphosid species, but in hindsight, foolishly decided to collect a pair of unusual scorpions for the RSA National Collection of Arachnids. For exactly the same reasons RG had secured specimens of other spiders earlier in the trip.

We then travelled on to the second NP on our itinerary, introducing ourselves as before. Here we secured samples of other theraphosids, but also unwisely collected a pair of scorpions for the National Collection.

TE, our only driver, was tiring as a result of the punishing travel schedule, so we decided to abandon an intended visit to Cape Town and instead tour the local area for the day. As we were close to an historical type locality, we decided it would be worthwhile to revisit the area to photograph and document the change in land use since the types were collected (vineyards and fruit orchards had replaced most of the natural habitat within the valley floors of the region). With our photos secured we decided to take a circular route back to our campsite at the second NP, devoting the rest of the day to taking in the stunning mountainous scenery.

Unfortunately at this point we made a fatal error of judgment. Whilst driving the scenic route we happened upon a Nature Reserve and decided to take a look. Our mode of transport

boldly announcing our presence by virtue of its size, noise and prominent signage proclaiming "Arachnological Survey Group" and "Caution, Live Beneficial Insects". On arrival we paid the admission fee into the honesty box and recorded our presence in the visitor's book.

The afternoon sun was hot and the car park hummed with a mischievous party of school children. In these circumstances we were not going to leave our rucksacks unattended on an open truck, so decided to take them with us on our walk. TE initially left his bag on the truck, but we persuaded him that it was unwise given the raucous nature of the school party.

Unfortunately curiosity took the better of us, and without thinking, we proceeded to turn path-side rocks in that instinctive fashion that anybody with an interest in invertebrates does. Unbeknown to us our activities were been watched from afar by "keen-eyed" staff. The oppressive heat of the day quickly sapped our enthusiasm, so after 20 minutes or so we decided to return to the truck.

On our return RG was approached by a reserve official who had been lurking out of sight behind some vehicles. The official politely asked what we were doing, making small-talk about the truck and wildlife in general. RG unashamedly replied that we were conducting research on baboon spiders in the national parks, at which point the official asked whether we would mind if he could check our rucksacks (which of course we freely agreed to).

Along with the usual contents of a day-rucksack (drinks, snacks, guide books, leaflets, sun-block, insect repellent, compass, camera lens, camera flash etc.), the search revealed a number of items associated with arachnological research (GPS, field notebook, pencils, sample pots, ruler, trowel and forceps). A single live spider was also present which had been collected earlier in the day from a NP, but unfortunately we were unable to prove the origin of this unlabelled specimen, so we were suspected of securing this specimen on site.

We showed the official our National Park collecting permits and research protocol and also encouraged him to contact well-respected arachnologists to vouch for our credentials. Unfortunately our appeals fell on deaf ears and to make matters worse the validity of our National Park permits was incorrectly questioned (but later acknowledged the following day). We also stated for the record that specimens collected from the NPs were housed in our tent back at the NP campsite. The official requested our Passports and we presented them, not wishing to enflame the situation. After phoning his superiors the official informed us that he had sufficient grounds to detain us and we were escorted to the local police station and our possessions confiscated (these were returned to us after the case was closed).

We immediately hired a lawyer and readily agreed to give our full cooperation to the officials. Helping them catalogue the specimens we had collected and offering advice on their immediate care; a procedure which, together with assessing our campsite, lasted until 6:30 in the morning!

We were given a couple of options including a full trial, which we were told could last at least 3-months and cost a fortune in legal fees; enter into a so-called *plea bargain* where we admit guilt and clear the matter up quickly and efficiently for both sides.

At this point we realised (were informed) that we had transgressed the law by not having the correct paperwork to move/possess specimens between the National Parks (even though our permits covered collecting within the NPs), we thought it futile to pursue the matter to a full trial, since this would be expensive and time-consuming for both parties.

The officials drew-up the *plea bargain* and we agreed to this under legal advice from our lawyer. Obviously there were aspects to the wording of the *plea bargain* that we found unpalatable, but we were not in the driving seat and realised that they needed to present a compelling case for the *plea bargain* to succeed. And ignorance of the law is no defence!

We were formally charged and appeared before a magistrate (approximately a week later) to finalise the matter. We pleaded guilty to the three charges and accepted our punishment: 10,000 Rand (with 7,000 Rand suspended for 5 years) each.

Numerous letters of support were submitted in our favour from the "Great & the Good" of South African arachnology, expressing their shock and despair over the matter.

Indeed our case has had serious and long-term implications for all invertebrate research within that region of South Africa. We subsequently heard that agricultural research groups studying crop pests have abandoned 3-weeks of research within the province as a direct result. South African invertebrate biologists are extremely worried what message this case has sent out to researchers both at home and aboard.

Although our prosecution was simply intended to warn others of the necessity for correct paperwork, the actual result may be counterproductive in that all future researchers will think twice before contemplating research within that area. At a time when the cataloguing of the world's biodiversity is of paramount importance for conservation initiatives, it is a pity that this event may herald a 'research dark age' within that region.

At present we know virtually nothing about the taxonomy or ecology of the baboon spiders of that area. Sadly, this event has done little to address this gaping knowledge gap.

Taxonomic research on theraphosid genera takes years of painstaking study, often at the expense of our own paid work. This research is undertaken at our own expense, but yields vital new information on the biodiversity of South Africa's baboon spiders. In the past RG has selflessly shared his knowledge and taxonomic expertise with South African conservationists. He will continue to do so despite this incident.

Many of you will be familiar with the sensational accusations leveled towards us in the press. For the record we feel it necessary to address the more hurtful/damaging points. Paraphrased below:

"accused of taking specimens out of the country" – False, we were not charged with this at all.

"it is believed we were going to send the material out of RSA illegally in the post" – False, why then had we bothered to apply for export permits, or for that matter consult DEFRA literature to ensure the legality of bringing non-plant pest, non-CITES invertebrates into the UK?

"works closely with South African researchers who expressed scepticism over the group's arguments" – All the RSA researchers we work with are in our favour; why else would they send letters of recommendation to our lawyer?

"collected by means of digging holes, which disrupt the soil ecology and may lead to localised erosion." Interesting to see this levelled against us, particularly as this very issue was

identified and addressed in RG's research protocol: "Turned rocks would be returned to their original positions and excavated soil tamped back into position."

"forced to plead guilty against his will" – False, given that "forced" implies we were cajoled into the matter, when in fact it was a rational decision taken under legal advice.

"stealing fauna" – False given that collected material would be returned to South African institutes and museums. It's a strange kind of "thief" which advertises their presence/intentions, fully cooperates with law enforcement, and returns the specimens to the very same country after first undertaking free and beneficial research on them.

"comparisons drawn with the illegal trade in folk medicine" – truly preposterous given that our case was purely for scientific reasons, with stated objectives which would be of benefit to conservation in the long run!

In essence, what was essentially a matter of confusion over permits and their coverage (on our part) has escalated into a fiasco fuelled by media hype and sensationalism.

The legislation around collecting, transporting and keeping spiders and scorpions is very fragmented, often differing markedly between one province and the next. This makes it difficult for local collectors, as well as foreigners to find out which permits they need to conduct research. Fortunately it looks like this situation may change with the new threatened and protected species laws that should come into effect in the near future, which are currently open for comment and available on the website of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, www.environment.gov.za - Ed

MARCH 2007

In 2007, we changed our mission statement to include the word "fun", since learning about spiders should be fun! At the bottom is our previous mission statement.

Mission Statement

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

Mission Statement

The Spider Club of Southern Africa is an environmental interest group. Our aim is to encourage and develop an interest in arachnids, including spiders, scorpions, solifuges, whip spiders, harvestmen and pseudoscorpions, and to promote this interest and the study of these animals by all suitable means.

Ian Engelbrecht appointed Principle Nature Conservation Scientist at Department of Agriculture

NEWS:
Ian Engelbrecht has been appointed ***Principle Nature Conservation Scientist: Invertebrates / Gauteng Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment.*** We wish Ian the best of luck in his new position. Ian will be keeping the club up to date on the latest rules and regulations. Details of the new permit system will be published in the next newsletter.

JULY 2007

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Jaco Le Roux Treasurer Merchandise	083 258 8969 Jaco.LeRoux@rs-components.com
Miemmie Prinsloo Secretary Newsletter Editor Regional Sub-Committees	082 772 3928 miemmiep@d-bit.co.za
Shirley Armstrong PRO Spiderlings	armalley@lantic.net

New committee

In 2007, Carol Smith became the chairperson, while Miemmie Prinsloo became the editor. Jaco le Roux, who is currently still in charge of our bank account, became the treasurer. We are in the process of closing that account so that poor Jaco won't have to deal with all the Spider Club's payments anymore.

Google Groups

Before we had a Facebook group, Spider Club members communicated via Google Groups. Launched in 2001, Google Groups is still a thing but I doubt that many people still use it.

How the club should be run and by whom

Previous committee's have on numerous occasions asked the members for input on where they wanted to go, what the club can do for them etc... There was very little positive feedback most of the replies were critical. It was agreed that members should play an ACTIVE role in running the club.
To achieve this, all members (for whom we have email addresses) will be invited to join the newly created "Spider Club" group on Google groups. Thru Google groups any member can put out an idea for an outing, exhibition, id course and anything else that will interest fellow spiderers. EXAMPLE: Joe wants to go to Graskop. He will send an email to spiderclub@googlegroups.com (which automatically will send an email to all members), If he receives enough responses, he can begin to organize the outing and ask the interested members for assistance. Using this method members get involved in the running of the club, promoting the club, and going to places that best suite their location.

SEPTEMBER 2007

One of the Spider Club's founders passes away

SAD NEWS

Leslie Herman 1910 – 2007.

On 19th August I received news that Leslie Herman, Clare's husband died on 22nd July in La Jolla, California, USA where he had been for many years after leaving South Africa. Clare and Leslie Herman, Ansie and Nico Dippenaar and John and I sat around the table in 1975 and started The Spider Club of Southern Africa. For many Spider Club members even 1975 is history - way before you were born. Very few of you will remember the Herman's but those that do will know what lovely people they were. With both of them gone it is the end of an era and even though I have not seen Leslie for years and Claire died many years ago I miss them still, they were like family to me, well almost better because they didn't think I was odd to be interested in arachnids!

Leslie was born in London in 1910, that made him 97 years old. It amazes me to think he was alive through both the 1st and 2nd World Wars and old enough to remember both, he immigrated to South Africa in 1916. I don't know when he and Clare married but by the time I met them they were in their middle years. Their 5 children were already grown and had left home and both were always extremely busy and involved in all sorts of things, in Claire's case this included spiders and guide dogs for the blind. Leslie may not have always been interested in the same things but supported Claire in all her endeavors and sometimes became quite enthusiastic about them.

LESLIE - JOHN AND I AND THE SPIDER CLUB SALUTE YOU AND KNOW THAT YOU WILL BE OVERJOYED TO JOIN CLAIRE IN THE HEREAFTER. MAZELTOV!

MAY 2008

Chairperson Carol Smith resigns…

FAREWELL.

As those of you who are members of the googlegroup must be aware we have come to another cross road in the life of The Spider Club of Southern Africa. Our Chairman and leading light, Carol and Educator/Editor, Shirley Armstrong tendered their resignations as office bearers on the Spider Club Committee in May with immediate effect. Both of them were enormously involved Spiderlings which has been a wonderful part of the club and they both have promoted the club vigorously and using arachnids and have done amazing things in educating young and old but particularly youngsters to appreciate understand and we hope LOVE nature in general, small creatures and arachnids in particular. Shirley got the newsletter ready to send but battled with time constraints and the difficulties of integrating and attaching certain files. Both Carol and Shirley are very busy people with limited resources and they found that their time was just too limited to do justice to their positions in the club. We really do understand and are immensely sad to see you go. Thank you from all of us for the huge efforts you made with so very little encouragement, in fact probably with more brickbats than thanks. Please don't leave the Spider Club entirely. If you don't feel pressured to organize it you can probably now enjoy it.

AUGUST 2008

… and Astri steps in yet again

Astri Leroy has saved our butts so many times by stepping in as either chairperson or editor when someone suddenly resigns or someone else doesn't want to fill the spot. We just want to take this opportunity to thank her for her tireless and selfless dedication to the Spider Club! We wouldn't still be here without her…

Committee members

Editor: Joan Faiola	082 565 6025	joan.faiola@philips.com
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PRO/Marketing Alistair Mathie,	079-109-7940	alistairm@fcb.co.za
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Events organizer Danie Smit,	083-642-3139	danie@combustion.co.za
Webmaster:	The Web page moving	
	But it is still www.spiderclub.co.za	

Joan Faiola becomes editor

Also in 2008, Joan Faiola became the editor of *The Spider Club News*. She would become the longest-running editor in the club's history, serving for about 11 years before she sadly passed away. She probably would still be the editor if she hadn't passed away…

NEW NEPHILA SPECIES FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR – ALSO THE LARGEST

Researchers Matjaz" Kuntner and Jonathan A. Coddington have released a paper describing the first *Nephila* to be described since 1879. The new species is to be named *Nephila komaci*, honouring Kuntner's late friend Andrej Komac. The paper describes the renown of *Nephila* as being the largest web-spinning spiders, making the largest orb webs, and their being model organisms for the study of extreme sexual size dimorphism and sexual biology. In studying the new species in relation to the known species, the authors concluded that *Nephila* females increased in size almost monotonically to establish a mostly African clade of true giants. *Nephila* male size hovers around values roughly one fifth of female size. Therefore the males are also large but in proportion to the females are not exceptionally so.

A specimen was housed in the national collection at PPRI in Pretoria, having been collected at Sodwana Bay in 1977-78 (Now the paratype.) It had been incorrectly identified as "*Nephila inaurata madagascariensis*. Charles Haddad collected a female in Maputaland in July 2004, and a male in the same location in 2002. The authors thanked Charles Haddad for recognising the importance of the new material and for sharing field data.

Citation: *Kuntner M, Coddington JA (2009) Discovery of the Largest Orb Weaving Spider Species: The Evolution of Gigantism in Nephila. PLoS ONE 4(10): e7516. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0007516*

DECEMBER 2009

In 2009, Kuntner and Coddington described *Trichonephila komaci* (then *Nephila komaci*). With a body length (excluding legs) of almost 40 mm, it is considered the largest web-dwelling spider in the world, occurring in Tanzania, South Africa, and Madagascar.

JUNE 2010

Astri resigns as chairperson (again)

Don't worry, she'll be back… ☺

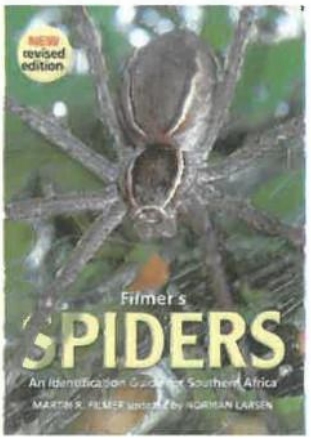
From the Editor:

In June 2010 we bade farewell to Astri, who indicated that she wishes to stand down as chairman. On behalf of the members, I would like to thank her for her efforts in the past two years of her tenure, when we witnessed the revivification of the Club. Her legacy will be the foundation that has been laid for the Club to continue to go from strength to strength. Astri has, however, indicated that she would like to remain on the committee in a "lesser" role. We all welcome this, as we don't want to lose our mentor!

Norman Larsen revises Martin Filmer's field guide

Before Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman's *Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa*, published in 2014, Martin Filmer's *Southern African Spiders: An Identification Guide*, published in 1993, was basically the only field guide to spiders we had. In 2010, Norman Larsen revised his field guide, which for at least the next four years would remain the gold standard. Unfortunately, Martin passed away in 2004. Thank you, Norman, for honouring his memory by revising his book.

Book Review:
Filmer's Spiders An Identification Guide for Southern Africa
Martin R Filmer revised by Norman Larsen
ISBN 978-1-77007-801-7
Second edition Random House Struik 2010 128 pages Full-colour illustrations throughout.



Review by Joan Faiola

Norman Larsen's revision of the late Dr Martin Filmer's useful guide was awaited by this reader with great anticipation. The original book was one of my tools in getting rid of my arachnophobia, and for that I am eternally grateful. However, it was already out of date by the time I bought my copy. Even so, it accompanied me on my trips everywhere, along with Astri and John Leroy's book. Between the two books, I gained a lot of knowledge in the field.

Norman Larsen's revision builds on Martin Filmer's original work, and follows the text and arrangement of families in the original, but it is now lavishly illustrated with first-class photographs, replacing most of the line drawings of the first edition. Some of these drawings are retained, along with new ones by Nicole Larsen. The balance between photos and drawings is perfect. Norman has dispensed with the graphic symbols of the first edition, and has updated all the names of genera and families that have changed. In all, 69 families are represented, including some not featured in the first edition.

What stands out is the excellence of the layout of the new edition, and use of fonts and varied font sizes and emphasis. Somehow this new edition is much easier to read.

I have only a couple of quibbles - the caption on Page 83 is wrong - *Dysdera crocata* is NOT an intertidal spider. I would also have liked a section detailing the taxonomic changes between the two editions. A few errors crept in with respect to the credits for a handful of photographs, but that will be corrected in future reprints.

This is a book that all spider lovers should own.

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SEPTEMBER 2010

Alistair Mathie becomes chairperson

Following Astri Leroy's resignation as chairperson, Alistair Mathie became the new chairperson. Astri remained on the committee in charge of membership and organising events.

First photo of our Spider Club stand

This was the first time a photo of our stunning new Spider Club stand was published in the newsletter. This stand would feature at many expos, such as Yebo Gogga, in the coming years. With our new logo, we probably need a new gazebo…

DECEMBER 2010

New rain spider described

Palystes kreutzmanni (Jäger & Kutz, 2010) was the 13th, and therefore the last, rain spider species to be described not only in South Africa but the world. There are still a few undescribed species that are awaiting description. Currently, we are aware of 10 undescribed *Palystes* spp., some of which fall in the kreutzmanni group. Three of the 10 known undescribed species were found in Nieuwoudtville alone.

Another *Palystes* species for South Africa – now there are 13 (in South Africa)

Peter Jäger and Dirk Kunz, scientists at Frankfurt am Main, Germany have described a new species of *Palystes* from the Western Cape.

***Palystes kreuzmanni* sp.n. – a new Huntsman Spider species from fynbos vegetation in Western Cape Province. South Africa (Araneae, Sparassidae, Palystinae,** in ZooKeys 67:1-9 (2010)

A new relative of the ubiquitous Rain Spider *Palystes superciliosus* has been discovered in the Western Cape, in fynbos vegetation near Kleinmond. It has been named *P. kreuzmanni* in honour of Mr Jürgen Kreutzmann in recognition of his work in biodiversity and nature conservation in South Africa.

The new species favours *Leucadendron* (Proteaceae) bushes, and makes retreats between the apical leaves thereof.

P. kreuzmanni 's relationships with other members of Palystinae were studied. Males are distinguished by differences in the embolus (part of male copulatory organ), and females by clear differences in the genitalia.

Photo: Norman Larsen

This attractive new species is one of the smaller Palystinae, males being around 13mm and females up to 17mm, compared to 35mm-plus for a *P. superciliosus*.

Spider Club plays role in getting LG commercial pulled

In 2010, our chairperson, Alistair Mathie, wrote a letter complaining about cruelty to spiders displayed in an LG commercial. Early the next year (see next entry), the commercial was pulled in South Africa.

LG advertisement featuring a spider being nuked

We received a number of complaints from the public and members regarding an ad being flighted by LG on prime time TV, which appears to show a spider being nuked by a little girl squirting shaving cream. Alistair, our chairman, wrote to the Saturday Star newspaper, and his letter was published there last Saturday (11 December):

I'd like to nominate the LG ad in which a girl "rescues" her hysterical parents from a spider by smothering it in shaving foam for the biggest Onion Award you can spare. As chairman of the Spider Club of SA, I speak for my colleagues and concerned members of the public who have contacted us; we are disgusted and appalled by this tasteless, ignorant and environmentally insensitive ad. Since 1976 the Club has worked tirelessly to educate the general public about peacefully co-existing with arachnids. This ad promotes the opposite - it encourages the public to torture spiders to a prolonged, unpleasant death. Even if a spider were able to escape from the shaving foam, the residual sticky foam would certainly restrict its mobility, compromise its breathing and limit its sensory capacity (blocking its eyes and sensory organs). The spider would be condemned to slow asphyxiation and/or starvation. At best, it would be unable to avoid becoming a meal for a larger predator (that would, in turn, ingest the inedible foam). The obscure disclaimer that "No spiders were harmed" is even more misleading – it could be misconstrued to mean that foam isn't harmful to spiders. In this, the International Year of Biodiversity, it beggars belief that anyone could produce, never mind broadcast this commercial. In a world where there is already so much stupidity and cruelty, the last thing we need is advertisers suggesting that it is clever and/or amusing. Implying that such crass and environmentally unacceptable behavior is endorsed by Google as well as by LG (with the ironic payoff "Life is good when it's green") surely earns all concerned (or unconcerned as it may be) a pelting with rotten Onions.

Alistair Mathie

MARCH 2011

LG commercial gets pulled

LG CELLPHONE ADVERTISEMENT WITHDRAWN

Ten individuals in addition to the National Council of SPCAs complained to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) regarding the LG Cellphone advertisement: - the one where a young girl sprays a spider with shaving foam. The complaints were "that the commercial perpetuates negative conceptions about spiders and promotes the unnecessary and cruel killing of living creatures. This would negatively influence children."

The N SPCA stated in a communication to the ASA that, "The message in this advertisement is abominable and we firmly believe it contravenes Section 18 of the ASA Code. It would be interesting to measure this against the Animals Protection Act itself. It is beyond belief that anyone could come up with such an idea. We wonder which advertising agency this was."

The N SPCA was advised on Friday 18 February that commercial had been withdrawn by LG and would not be broadcast in South Africa again.

LG stated in its defence that the commercial "was produced in Korea as part of a global campaign." In which case, WELL DONE SOUTH AFRICA! We congratulate the complainants for their stance and commitment to the cause. The ASA is thanked for reviewing this issue and for its efficiency in giving detailed feedback to the complainants.

The N SPCA felt sufficiently strongly on this issue that the document from the ASA has been forwarded to overseas organisations including the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and the Humane Society in the United States who may wish to take up the issue elsewhere.

The N SPCA refutes the argument put forward to the ASA by LG that in the advertisement, covering a spider with shaving foam "allows for the safe removal and release of the spider without harm to the environment." On the contrary, it is a cruel way of killing a spider.

JUNE 2011

Darwin's bark spider described

New *Caerostris* species in Madagascar makes gigantic webs – *Caerostris darwini*

Matjaz Kuntner and Igni Ignarsson have described a new species of *Caerostris* or Bark spider in Madagascar, which makes possibly the biggest web of any spider known.

Web gigantism in Darwin's Bark Spider, a new species from Madagascar (Araneidae: Caerostris Matjaz Kuntner and Ingi Ignarsson, in 2010. The Journal of Arachnology 38:346–356

Much has been made in the scientific press, particularly on the Internet, of the huge webs made by the new species *C. darwini*. Indeed, the webs are spectacular, built over water with bridge lines of up to 25m, and webs of up to 2.8m², the biggest webs the authors have seen. But the authors make the point that *Caerostris* is also poorly known as a genus, and it requires further study from an evolutionary point of view; its diversity, biology, and phylogenetic relationships all deserve a closer scrutiny.

The study emphasises behaviour, and describes evidence of kleptoparasitic species (Argyrodinae.) for the first time in *Caerostris* webs. Caerostris display "extreme sexual size dimorphism with large females and small males, which is manifested in enigmatic sexual behaviours such as mate guarding, male-male aggressiveness, genital mutilation, mate plugging, and self-castration".

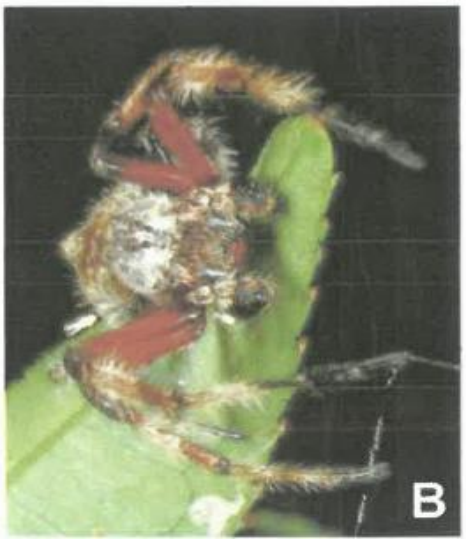
The authors also touch on the other species in the genus that occur in Madagascar.

This interesting paper is copiously illustrated with fine colour photographs of webs, and specimens in habitat, and taxonomic drawings in support of the new species.

Photos:

Caerostris female from Madagascar

Caerostris darwini male



Another chairperson resigns…

Alistair Mathie resigned as chairperson in 2011 after only 8 months. Guess who took over again? ☺

On a personal note, with deep regret I must sign off for the last time as Chairman – my relocation to Nigeria necessitates my resignation from the committee, whose unwavering dedication, friendship and support I cherish and for which I have the utmost gratitude.

Yours arachnologically

Alistair

MARCH 2012

First mention of Facebook group

Our Facebook group was created by Astri Leroy in 2009, but the first time it is mentioned in the newsletter was in 2012. Also, this is the first time we've mentioned a "Spider of the Year", which was a thing before "Spider of the Month", which we started late in 2019. Back then, the committee chose the winner and not the members.

Following on this I would like to elect *Paraplectana* as the spider of the year. See the article *"Our lady (bird spider) of Africa – or a further example of common names being confusing"* in this issue Both The Spider Club (via Facebook and on e-mails) and the Virtual Museum have received a number of photos of these spectacular orb weavers this season, one of which landed up on a bakkie side mirror, much to the driver's interest, he must have been using his vehicle as a very big sweep-net!

Our Facebook page is going like a Boeing and it is so interesting getting photos of spiders from all around South Africa and neighbouring countries. If one checks the distribution records in published scientific papers many species that are definitely found in South Africa are not officially recorded from within our borders. So we await with interest the Spider Atlas that is in the pipeline from Dr. Ansie Dippenaar.

JUNE 2012

First Facebook button in newsletter

Our June 2012 edition was the first time we included the "Find us on Facebook" button.

Contact Us

WEBSITE: http://www.spiderclub.co.za EMAIL ADDRESS: info@spiderclub.co.za

Visit our website, and send us photos and news that we can post there!

Find us on Facebook

.... At the Spider Club of Southern Africa page

Charles Haddad received PhD

On the local front, we were happy to learn that Charles Haddad has been awarded his PhD from the University of the Free State. His dissertation was entitled "Advances in the systematics and ecology of the African Corinnidae spiders (Arachnida: Araneae) with emphasis on the Castianeirinae". Well done, Charles! More information on his achievement and his paper can be found in SANSA News No. 16, obtainable at ARC's website at http://www.arc.agric.za/home.asp?pid=3291, where all the back numbers of the newsletters can be found, though inexplicably, not issue No. 1.

DECEMBER 2012

First record of *Tegenaria parietina* in South Africa

Padhraic O'Connor of Stellenbosch submitted these photos of what was subsequently identified as *Tegenaria parietina*, the Cardinal spider of Europe, and a relative of the common house spider that terrified me as a child. It appears to be the first record for South Africa, and is not listed for this country in the World Spider Catalog, though it appears to have travelled to Argentina and Uruguay. Padhraic found the spider in his bathroom.

This spider has immensely long legs for its body length (20mm for females, 18mm for males).

Photos © Padhraic O'Connor

JUNE 2013

Astri fills role as editor and chairperson

After Alistair Mathie resigned as chairperson, the committee decided that there is no longer a need for a chairperson, except for one chairing the Annual General Meetings. Astri therefore became the "chairman-by-default", and for a very short time helped Joan Faiola out with editing the newsletter.

For the moment I am wearing two hats,  that of editor and that of chairman-by-default. Our real editor, Joan Faiola, is back working full time often from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and has simply been unable to fit collecting material, collating, editing and writing the current The Spider Club News. As anyone who has edited a club newsletter knows that it is not for the fainthearted. It takes a lot of time and effort and I am very aware that Joan's editing act is a hard one to follow. Please bear with me as an interim editor.

MARCH 2014

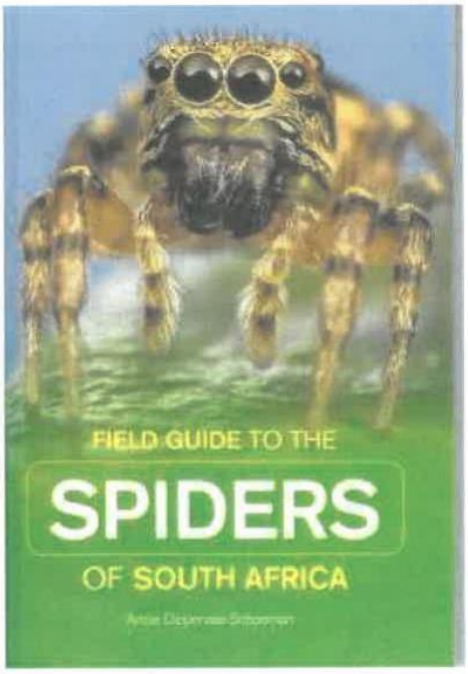
New field guide available

In 2014, Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman published her first field guide, titled *Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa*. It was a more detailed guide than Martin Filmer's guide and became the new gold standard for spider field guides in South Africa. Here is a short review. A more comprehensive review was done by Dr David Penney in the December 2014 newsletter, first published in the newsletter of the British Arachnological Society.

FIELD GUIDE TO THE SPIDERS OF SOUTH AFRICA
- Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman: 2014. Lapa Publishers, Pretoria. ISBN 978-0-79936018, 432 pages, soft cover, lavishly illustrated in colour

Also available as an eBook from Kalahari.com.

Review by Astri Leroy



At last! This is the book we have all been waiting for. Once you have a copy you will be able to do your own identifications. What a work, what a book, what photos! It's the book that should solve 90% of spider field identification problems. It is an absolute MUST for all nature enthusiasts, game guides, libraries of both public and private game and nature reserves, bookshops and National Botanical Gardens around the country - in fact anyone with an interest in the smaller denizens of our veld. It is sure to become absolutely indispensable to us spider people. I keep my copy right beside my computer and have found it endlessly useful.

Seventy spider families are covered, 370 major genera and 860 of the more common species are shown with descriptions and illustrations and more than 2000 colour photographs by many photographers. Special mention must go to Peter Webb who has crisscrossed the country to get shots of uncommon spiders. Ansie was very rushed to finish this book and some minor grammatical glitches and spelling errors crept into the script, but and I am sure she will correct these when she does a revision.

MARCH 2015

Leon Lotz receives PhD

Leon Lotz (left) was awarded his PhD degree in entomology at the December 2014 graduation ceremony at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Charles Haddad (right) was his study promoter, and Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman his co-promoter. His research formed part of a project spanning nearly two decades that continued work done during his MSc study.

His thesis, titled THE AFROTROPICAL SPECIES OF THE SAC SPIDER GENERA *CHEIRACANTHIUM* AND *CHEIRAMIONA* (ARANEAE: EUTICHURIDAE), makes an important contribution to a better understanding of the biodiversity of Eutichuridae sac spiders in the Afrotropical Region. Sac spiders are a significant group from a medical and agricultural perspective, and through his work, Leon provides the taxonomic basis to facilitate the accurate identification of these spiders. His work includes the redescription of 19 species and descriptions of 40 new species of *Cheiracanthium*, and the redescription of eight species and description of 41 new species of *Cheiramiona*. Apart from several revisionary and descriptive papers that have already been published since 1999, severa additional papers have been submitted for publication recently, dealing with both genera.

And that's it for our recap of the 2006 to 2015 newsletters. I will still recap the 2016 to 2025 newsletters in the March 2026 edition but I don't expect there to be many highlights.

EVENTS

50th birthday celebration:

Free State National Botanical Garden, Bloemfontein, 1 November 2025

By Rudi Steenkamp

Theoni Jansen van Vuuren cutting the spider cake that she baked for the Spider Club's 50th birthday party in Bloemfontein.

Earlier this year, the first of the Spider Club's 50th birthday celebrations took place in the Western Cape, followed by one in Gauteng. Bloemfontein was the last venue, and with sponsorship from the Department of Zoology and Entomology at the University of the Free State (UFS), we had high hopes that it would be the biggest one yet. With free food, drinks, cake, cupcakes, snacks, etc., as well as the use of UFS equipment like microscopes, sweep nets, etc., and with good weather, everything was set to be a huge success. Unfortunately, instead of the 50 people we expected, only 25 showed up.

The lower-than-expected turnout could be due to the fact that some people work on a Saturday (we usually hold the events on a Sunday), or the possible threat of thunderstorms (which gladly stayed away). We were also surprised at the shortage of children, with only two teenagers attending. Still, we were happy to have a good group of enthusiastic people, some driving as far as 400 km from the Eastern Cape to attend. We were also fortunate to have Prof. Charles Haddad and Dr Mike Vickers in our midst. In the end, it was the quality of the group that mattered, not the quantity.

Liezl Whitehead, Charles Haddad, Mike Vickers, and Ruan Booysen looking on while Rudi Steenkamp explains how to use a sweep net for beating bushes and trees. Photos: Natasja Lutjens.

We started the event in the lapa at the Free State National Botanical Garden, which was sponsored by the Department of Zoology and Entomology at the UFS. A huge thanks to the department's HOD, Prof. Liesl van As, for organising this, as well as to SANBI for giving us a discount on the rental of the lapa.

We didn't want to linger around the lapa for too long, so after I gave a quick presentation on why we are here, as well as how to use a sweep net and how to collect spiders, we set off into the garden. We expected people to break into smaller groups, even though it's best for everyone to stick together in order to get the most out of any educational opportunities, but from the get-go, people went off on their own, in many small groups.

Strolling through the Free State National Botanical Garden. Photo: Natasja Lutjens.

The plan was to do a quick walk through the lower parts of the garden, then go back to the lapa to braai boerewors for lunch, and afterwards go climb the hill. Unfortunately, the braai took a little longer than expected, and after everyone was stuffed with boerewors rolls and cake, enthusiasm to climb the hill was very low.

We had a huge storm in Bloemfontein the previous night, so the field was very wet and spiders weren't as abundant as usual. There was, however, an abundance of crab spiders, wolf spiders, lynx spiders, and some jumping spiders. With the heavy rains the previous night, there were high hopes of finding the extremely rare and elusive purse-web spider (*Calommata meridionalis*) in the pitfall traps set around the garden, but no luck…

There were some good finds, though. I found my very first larvatus twig spider (*Cyphalonotus larvatus*), an adult male. Shortly thereafter, Charles Haddad also found one, a female. Ruan Booysen knew exactly where to look for the very small and extremely cute beetle-mimic jumping spiders (*Pachyballus miniscutulus*) and found one, together with the small ladybird beetle (*Exochomus* sp.) they mimic.

Top: Charné Bornman taking a photo of a spider in a vial. **Bottom, from left to right:** Zilke Lutjens with a frog; Dietrich and Zilke Lutjens playing around; Dietrich and Pierre Lutjens climbing the hill at the garden. Photos: Natasja Lutjens.

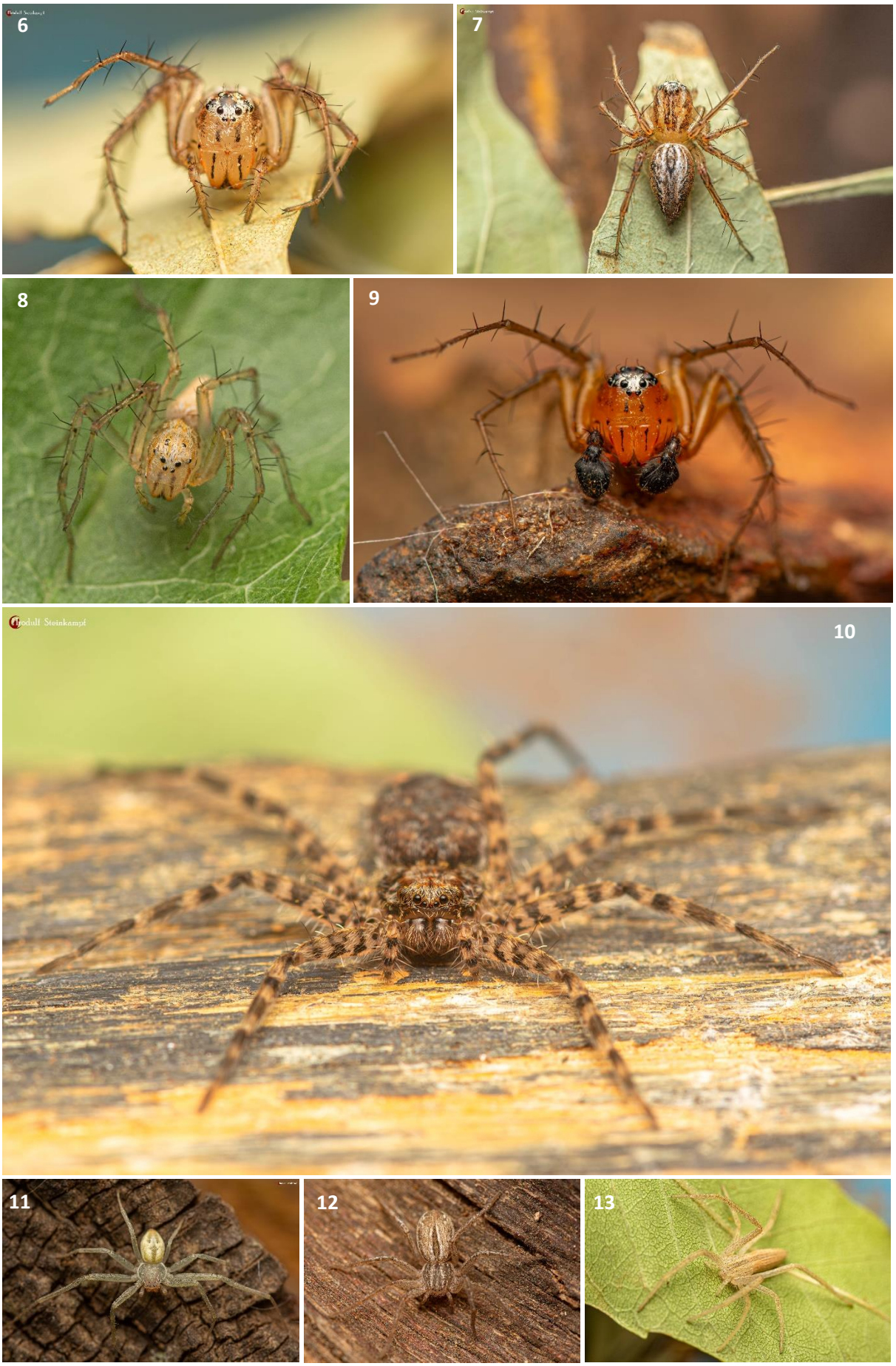
Top: Charles Haddad and Mike Vickers enjoying a beer at the lapa. Bottom left: The cake baked by Theoni Jansen van Vuuren. Bottom right: Spider cupcakes baked by Natasja Lutjens.

I was so busy running around that I completely forgot to take a group photo. Even though we couldn't capture the moment, I just want to thank everyone who attended for making the day special. We hope to see you all at the next spider walk!

Spider photos

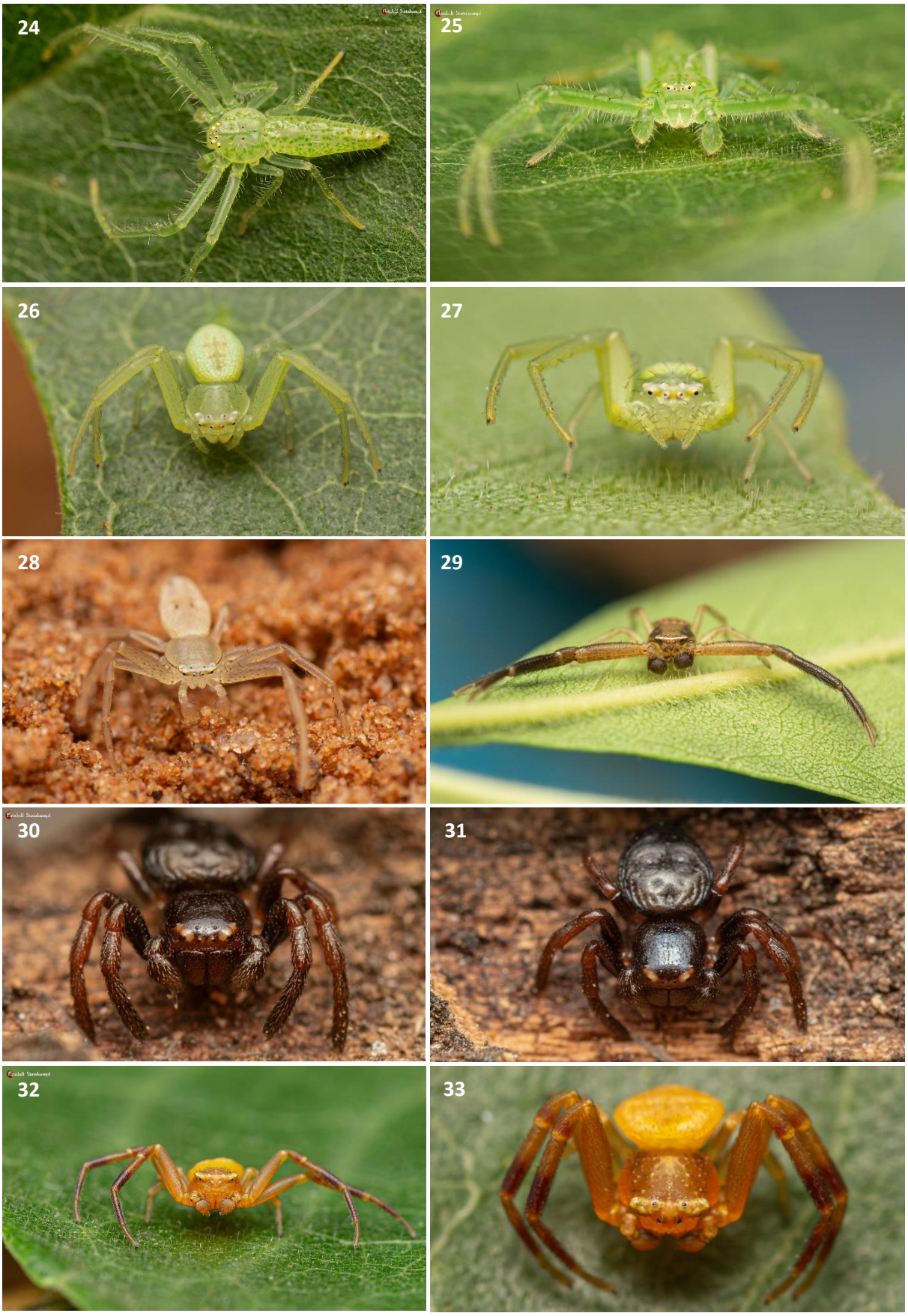
All photos by Rudi Steenkamp

1. Twig orb-web spider (*Cyphalonotus larvatus*; Araneidae). **2-3.** Ground sac spider (*Fuchibotulus kigelia*; Trachelidae). **4-5.** Common rain spider (*Palystes superciliosus*; Sparassidae).



6-9. Grass lynx spiders (*Oxyopes* sp; Oxyopidae). **6-8.** *Oxyopes bothai*. **9.** *Oxyopes* sp. **10.** Flattie (*Anyphops* sp.; Selenopidae). **11-13.** Running spiders (Philodromidae): **11.** cf. *Philodromus* sp. **12.** *Thanatus vulgaris*. **13.** *Tibellus minor*.

14-23. Jumping spiders (Salticidae): **14-15.** *Pachyballus miniscutulus*. **16-17.** *Thyene natalii*. **18-19.** *Rumburak laxus*. **20-21.** *Evarcha prosimilis*. **22-23.** *Helafricanus pistaciae*.



24-33. Crab spiders (Thomisidae): **24-25.** *Oxytate* sp. **26-27.** *Misumenops rubrodecoratus*. **28-29.** *Runcinia erythrina*. **30-31.** *Striphropus* sp. **32-33.** *Thomisus stenningi*.

34-35. False house button spider (*Theridion purcelli*; Theridiidae). **36-37.** White-spotted trochosa wolf spider (*Trochosa albipilosa*; Lycosidae). **38.** Proevippa wolf spider (*Proevippa fascicularis*; Lycosidae). **39.** Mesh-web spider (cf. *Obatala* sp.; Macrobunidae). **40.** Port Elizabeth spitting spider (*Scytodes elizabethae*; Scytodidae).

Species list

Compiled by Ruan Booysen

Family	Species	F	M	I	A	Total
Araneidae	*Cyphalonotus larvatus* (Simon, 1881)		1	1	0	2
Araneidae	*Neoscona subfusca* (C. L. Koch, 1837)	1			1	2
Cheiracanthiidae	*Cheiracanthium furculatum* Karsch, 1879		1		1	2
Linyphiidae	*Agyneta* sp. 1	1		1	1	3
Lycosidae	*Proevippa fascicularis* (Purcell, 1903)		1	1	1	3
Lycosidae	*Proevippa* sp.			1	0	1
Lycosidae	*Trochosa albipilosa* Roewer, 1960)	2			2	4
Macrobunidae	cf. *Obatala* sp.	1		1	1	3
Oxyopidae	*Oxyopes bothai* Lessert, 1915	3		2	3	8
Oxyopidae	*Oxyopes* sp. 1		1		1	2
Philodromidae	cf. *Philodromus* sp. 2		1		1	2
Philodromidae	*Philodromus* sp. 1	1			1	2
Philodromidae	*Thanatus vulgaris* Simon, 1870	2			2	4
Philodromidae	*Tibellus minor* Lessert, 1919	2		1	2	5
Salticidae	*Evarcha prosimilis* Wesołowska & Cumming, 2008	1		1	1	3
Salticidae	*Helafricanus pistaciae* (Wesołowska, 2003		1	1	1	3
Salticidae	*Pachyballus miniscutulus* Wesołowska, Azarkina & Wiśniewski, 2020	1			1	2
Salticidae	*Rumburak laxus* (Zhang & Maddison, 2012)	1		1	1	3
Salticidae	*Thyene natalii* Peckham & Peckham, 1903	1			1	2
Scytodidae	*Scytodes elizabethae* Purcell, 1904	1			1	2
Segestriidae	*Ariadna* sp.			2	0	2
Selenopidae	*Anyphops stauntoni* (Pocock, 1902)	1		1	1	3
Sparassidae	*Palystes supercilliosus* L. Koch, 1875			2	0	2
Theridiidae	*Steatoda capensis* Hann, 1990	1			1	2
Theridiidae	*Theridion purcelli* O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1904	1			1	2
Thomisidae	*Misumenops rubrodecoratus* Millot, 1942			1	0	1
Thomisidae	*Oxytate* sp.			3	0	3
Thomisidae	*Runcinia erythrina* Jézéquel, 1964		1	2	1	4
Thomisidae	*Stiphropus* sp.			1	0	1
Thomisidae	*Thomisus stenningi* Pocock, 1900		1		1	2
Trachelidae	*Fuchibotulus kigelia* Haddad & Lyle, 2008	1			1	2
Uloboridae	*Uloborus plumipes* Lucas, 1846	1			1	2
Total		**23**	**8**	**23**	**30**	**84**

F = Female; M = Male; I = Immatures; A = Adults

Spider Club assists in biodiversity survey

By Wessel Pretorius

Participants in the biodiversity survey in the Cederberg mountains. Photo: Christoff van Rensburg.

Cecile Roux and I, on behalf of the Spider Club of Southern Africa, joined the Cape Leopard Trust and other involved groups on Friday, 22 August, in the Cederberg mountains to survey some of the proposed private land that could be connected to form corridors between natural areas for the free movement of animals, like leopards, that were previously restricted. With the help of landowners, this would have an immense positive influence on biodiversity that has been restricted to many areas for much of modern times.

This initiative is very close to my heart, as many spider species (and thousands of other animals) face extinction when the natural areas become more and more isolated. Isolated natural spaces limit genetic diversity in species, as well as increasing the chance of species extinction by many folds.

The merging of these spaces through natural corridors is an incredible endeavour that requires hard work from private landowners, conservation groups like the Cape Leopard Trust, as well as people and organisations that fund these projects.

By focusing time, effort, and funding on these projects, it also creates opportunities for fieldwork and study of many of the undescribed invertebrates that live in these areas. There are many unknown species (including spiders and other arachnids) that are unique to these areas.

Since looking for spiders requires one to spend much of your time hunched over, on your knees, or sitting (or lying) on the ground, it was inevitable that we got left behind by the botanists and experts of other fauna and flora. To be honest, we didn't cover much ground at all; there is just so much to find when one focuses on the microscopic life. The realisation that you will never be able to see

everything that is there, nor ever cover all the areas out there, is a constant companion when looking for life beyond the macro lens.

One of the highlights of the day was the countless stone huntsman spiders (*Eusparassus schoemanae*) found in their retreats under the slate rocks in one area, especially since we don't often find them in our normal spidering spots. I found around 40 species of arachnids during the day, including a rather large Namaqua burrowing scorpion (*Opistophthalmus pallipes*).

Top left: Wessel Pretorius photographing a spider (photo by Jenny Parsons). **Top right:** Jean Stephenson from CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers) taking photos of the flora in the area (photo by Wessel Pretorius). **Bottom:** Some of the volunteers in the survey (photo by Christoff van Rensburg).

I am grateful to the Cape Leopard Trust, especially Sarah Hulley and Katy Williams, for allowing us to take part in this fantastic project. I would also like to thank Heather and Andrew Hodgson, who got us invited and who are also a very vital part of the Spider Club group of the Western Cape, joining most (if not all) of our spider walks. Andrew and Heather are part of The Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) programme, which is also a substantial partner in the Natural Corridors initiative.

Participants in the survey were treated to some beautiful scenery. Photo: Christoff van Rensburg.

The entire Piketberg to Cederberg corridor project on iNaturalist:
https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/piketberg-to-cederberg-corridor

Piece written by the Cape Leopard Trust concerning the corridors:
https://capeleopard.org.za/news-media/news/story/leopard-movement-corridors-building-connections-between-leopards-and-landowners

Wessel's photos of arachnids:
https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=piketberg-to-cederberg-corridor&user_id=wesselpretorius&verifiable=any&iconic_taxa=Arachnida

Cecile's photos of arachnids:
https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=piketberg-to-cederberg-corridor&user_id=cecileroux&verifiable=any&iconic_taxa=Arachnida

Spiders in a village garden

Text and photos by Cecile Roux

Cecile Roux's garden in Riebeek West, Western Cape.

I have been photographing spiders in my garden (and house) in Riebeek West in the Western Cape for the past 10 years. I started this journey in 2015 when I photographed my very first spider with my brand new camera and macro lens. My family brought me this present after noticing how I struggled to photograph tiny things with my mobile phone, things like flowers, seashells, and the occasional butterfly. None of us knew that I would spot an *Oxyopes* with a tiny bug in its jaws, take a photograph just for the fun of it, and fall headlong in love with spiders. I knew very little about them and used to be terribly afraid of them when I was younger. But I joined the Spider Club page on Facebook and later also started putting my observations on iNaturalist. When I first joined, the group of spider enthusiasts was small but dedicated. I loved learning from them, as they were learning from one another. Through the years, their consistent celebration of spiders and the tireless education and identifications paid off. Spider observations in South Africa are growing rapidly, as can be seen on iNaturalist and the multitude of posts on the Facebook pages. We still have a long way to go, but more and more people are becoming interested in these lovely creatures.

We often get asked where we find all the beautiful spiders. Some of us are lucky; we go on outings into the veld to search for spiders. But life rushes along; we don't always have the time to coordinate outings, and unfortunately, going out alone isn't safe, especially for me as a woman. Probably just as well; I would spend too much time away from home!

But I am fortunate to have a large garden, and I have found so many beautiful spiders that live here as our companions. We may have to move to another property in the near future, and I thought it would be good to see what I have been observing in this wonderful space and give tips on how to create a safe space for spiders. It is not just about the type of spiders I find; a garden is also a lovely small space where one can observe spiders and their behaviour and preferences over a long time. I try to keep my garden spider-friendly by not using any poisons, tolerating some weeds, having lots of wild spaces where I interfere as little as possible, and planting a wide variety of plants, mostly indigenous, and welcoming all insects.

Lawns

Also called green deserts by some of us. Most spiders avoid the shrinking piece of lawn we have. Really, only two spiders are found on the lawn regularly – lycosids and linyphiids. The lycosids can be seen at night with a headlight reflecting in their eyes – so many of them on the grass one feels bad for walking there! And on misty mornings, one sees countless tiny linyphiid webs between the grass leaves. I will not have a lawn when we move; every time a lawn gets mowed, it feels like a massacre.

Walls

Another seemingly dead space is the house walls. But lights from windows attract insects, which attract spiders. Outside lights do the same, but we replaced our exterior lights with bulbs that do not attract insects, so our walls are somewhat bare. Spiders love corners and doorways and any irregularity where they can construct a web, though, and those are always good places to search for them. Rain spiders are easy to spot on walls, waiting for prey. If you look closer, you may notice many small webs with *Oecobius navus* hiding. In corners, *Theridion* and *Smeringopus* compete for space. Some *Scytodes* also end up on walls, and strangely enough, *Tetragnatha* loves living on walls. And of course, *Latrodectus geometricus* loves a stoep with garden furniture, doorways, and light fixtures. *Menemerus* loves walls as much as trees.

Woodpiles

Woodpiles are a treasure trove. We go through a lot of *Eucalyptus* wood; we love braais in summer and a cosy fire inside in winter. I know people can be wary of woodpiles – what about snakes and other dangers? But in 20 years, we have never found a snake, scorpion, or anything else to be careful about in our woodpiles. The only thing to look out for is slight marital disharmony when someone wants to start a fire and I have to carefully inspect each piece of wood for spiders before it goes on the fire. But it is worth it. Who likes to live there? Pholcids, phyxelidids, gnaphosids, *Oecobius*, segestriids, *Steatoda*, *Diores*, *Dysdera*, and many salticids.

Leaves

Such magic. Green leaves, dried leaves. Once you start viewing leaves as spider accommodation, everything changes. So many spiders hide on the underside of leaves. And in trees, in shrubs, on decorative plants. *Myrmarachne* seem to prefer larger and broader leaves; I mostly spot them on *Agapanthus*, Arum lily, or *Chasmanthe* leaves. *Thyene natalii* likes ivy but can also be found in shrubs like *Tecomaria*; they also like wild olive trees. *Oxytate* obviously likes leaves, and it is hard spotting them stretched out on the underside. *Clubiona* and cheiracanthiidids make their retreats in folded leaves, and *Gephyrota* also prefer living in leafy shrubs a bit higher up. Oh, and dead leaves! I have banned leaf blowers, and raking is only grudgingly allowed in certain places in the garden. Some sturdy dead leaves are perfect places to construct hides and nests. And the leaves on the ground provide shelter, shade, and a wealth of prey. There is so much life under the leaf carpet on the ground in autumn and winter; it is amazing. Trachelids and lycosids love leaf litter, as do *Euryopis*, *Dysdera*, hahniids, and Clubionidae. There are also some grumpy-looking *Xysticus* to be found in leaf litter.

Trees and shrubs

Let us go higher up again. Orb weavers like trees and higher shrubs. It is important not to trim and clean up trees and shrubs too often. Dead branches and twigs provide the ideal firm structures for orb weavers to anchor their webs to. I have found so many *Neoscona* and some *Pararaneus* and even a stunning *Poltys* last year. Most of these can be seen at night; I like night walks in my garden. *Oxytate* often dangles on a single line at night, and some salticids also dangle higher up.

Rocks, stacked tiles, and building rubble

Not something neat gardeners want, but they provide perfect hiding places for many spiders. We have some discarded clay tiles that I refuse to move, and I don't often disturb the spiders there, but it is good knowing that they have a safe space. There are mostly phyxelidids, pholcids, eresids, gnaphosids, *Oecobius*, agelenids, scytodids, and even some stunning mimetids.

Ground covers and low shrubs

The best place to find spiders, though, is in ground covers and low shrubs. I always say – below your knees – spider heaven. The arthropod life in this zone is astounding. Not always obvious – one can sit down at the edge of a garden bed and see nothing. But when you wait long enough and slowly move the plants or gently shake the plants over a container, you see so much! In my garden here in the Swartland, the most common spider in this sphere is *Oxyopes*. They are quite easy to spot; they tend to sit in the open, waiting for prey. Salticids also thrive in ground covers; *Evarcha* is the most common there in my garden, followed by *Helafricanus*. I occasionally find *Harmochirus* here, always a privilege. I often see *Parapostenus* here, mimetids, lots of thomisids, some *Leucauge*, and a lovely variety of small theridiids.

It is a huge privilege to have so many spiders all around me here at home; they are infinitely interesting and good companions!

Cecile's iNaturalist project containing all life forms found in her garden:
https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/onderweg-station-road

All the arachnids found in Cecile's garden:
https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?iconic_taxa=Arachnida&project_id=onderweg-station-road&verifiable=any

Species list

Compiled by Cecile Roux

FAMILY	GENUS/SPECIES
Agelenidae	*Tegenaria domestica*
	Tegenaria parietina
Araneidae	*Argiope trifasciata*
	Cyclosa insulana
	Cyrtophora citricola
	Hypsosinga sp.
	Larinia sp.
	Neoscona subfusca
	Neoscona triangula
	Pararaneus sp.
	Poltys cf. *monstrosus*
Cheiracanthiidae	*Cheiracanthium* sp.
	Cheiramiona sp.
Clubionidae	*Clubiona* sp.
Corrinidae	*Cambalida* sp.
	Copuetta sp.
Cyatholipidae	*Cyatholipus* sp.
Dictynidae	Unknown
Dysderida	*Dysdera crocata*
Entypesidae	Unknown
Eresidae	*Dresserus* sp.
	Gandanameno sp.
Gnaphosidae	*Amusia cataracta*
	Camillina sp.
	Megamyrmaekion schreineri
	Micaria felix
	Xerophaeus sp.
	Zelotes sp.
Hahniidae	*Hahnia* sp.
Linyphiidae	*Microlinyphia sterilis*
	Ostearius melanopygius
	Unknown
Lycosidae	*Hogna* sp.
	Pardosa sp.
	Proevippa sp.
Mimetidae	*Ero* sp.
	Mimetus sp.
Miturgidae	*Parapostenus* sp.
Oecobiidae	*Oecobius navus*
Oonopidae	*Opopaea* sp.
Oxyopidae	*Oxyopes* spp.
	Peucetia nicolae
Philodromidae	*Gephyrota glauca*
	Thanatus sp.
	Tibellus sp.
Pholcidae	*Smeringopus* sp.
Phyxelididae	*Vidole* sp.
	Unknown
Pisauridae	*Cispius* sp.
	Euprosthenopsis sp.
	Rothus sp.

FAMILY	GENUS/SPECIES
Prodidomidae	*Theuma* sp.
Salticidae	*Belippo* sp.
	Evarcha denticulata
	Evarcha prosimilis
	Harmochirus luculentus
	Helafricanus sp.
	Heliophanus sp.
	Icius sp.
	Menemerus bifurcus
	Menemerus bivittatus
	Myrmarachne spp.
	Pellenes beani
	Phlegra karoo
	Pseudicius sp.
	Thyene natalii
	Thyenula sp.
Scytodidae	*Scytodes* spp.
Segestriidae	*Ariadna* sp.
Sicariidae	*Loxosceles rufescens*
Sparassidae	*Palystes superciliosis*
	Parapalystes sp.
Tetragnathidae	*Leucauge festiva*
	Tetragnatha sp.
Theraphosidae	*Harpactirella lightfooti*
Theridiidae	*Achaearanea* sp.
	Anelosimus sp.
	Chrysso sp.
	Enoplognatha sp.
	Episinus sp.
	Euryopis sp.
	Latrodectus geometricus
	Platnickina sp.
	Steatoda capensis
	Steatoda sp.
	Theridion sp.
	Tidarren sp.
Thomisidae	*Diaea* sp.
	Heriaeus sp.
	Misumenops rubrodecoratus
	Oxytate sp.
	Synema imitatrix
	Synema marlothi
	Thomisus kalaharinus
	Thomisus stenningi
	Xysticus sp.
Trachelidae	*Capobula* sp.
	Trachelas sp.
	Thysanina sp.
Uloboridae	*Uloborus plumipes*
	Uloborus walckenaerius
Zodariidae	*Diores* sp.

The A-Z of spiders

by Benjamin Carbuccia

V is for VENOMOUS

Which almost all spiders are; and if that sounds scary to you, it means you may have some misconceptions about what "venomous" means.

"Venomous" simply means that the animal is equipped with venom. There is still some ongoing debate in the scientific community about what is and is not venom (and it's more complicated than "venom is injected, poison is ingested"), but it is generally agreed that venoms are complex substances, made of a variety of components, of which at least some are proteins, produced by the animal itself (not taken from its food or environment) with a specialised secretory organ, for use as a weapon against one or several other animal species.

Generally (but not always, toad "poison" is commonly regarded as venom although it's not injected), venom is delivered to the target with some sort of modified spine, tooth or stinger that can inject it.

In spiders, it is injected through a bite, by the fangs, which are hollow and equipped with a small opening near their tip, by which the venom comes out.

All spiders produce and use venom, except for one family (Uloboridae) and two species in another family (Anapidae), which seem to have lost venom glands. That makes most spiders venomous.

However, you'll notice that the definition of "venomous" does not include any notion of danger to humans. An animal can very well be completely harmless to humans and still venomous, which is the case of most spiders. We are not their prey, nor are we their main predators, so spider venoms haven't evolved to harm us specifically. The few species whose venom can have medically significant effects on humans actually represent less than 1% of their total diversity.

1. The family Uloboridae is the only spider family whose members, such as this *Uloborus walckenaerius*, are known to be nonvenomous: they seem to have lost their venom glands, but still manage to hunt and feed skillfully without it. **2.** Widow/button spiders (genus *Latrodectus*) readily come in mind when one thinks "venomous spider", but this is actually just a misconception about the word. Black widows are among the few (about 1%) spiders which are medically significant, but almost all spiders are venomous.

Giant venomous spiders infiltrated the southeastern US and are expected to spread rapidly, experts say

By Megan Marples, CNN

Updated 1427 GMT (2227 HKT) March 8, 2022

3. An animal can very well be venomous and harmless to humans at the same time, which is the case of this *Argiope bruennichi*. While almost all spiders are venomous, their venoms have not evolved to be used against humans; we are not their prey or predators. That's why most spider venoms only have mild effects on humans, and very few are medically significant. **4.** It's important to understand that "venomous" does not mean "dangerous", because scaring people with spiders as a cheap way to attract attention is unfortunately a common practice in media. The word "venomous" is often intentionally misused to make harmless spiders, such as Joro spiders (*Trichonephila clavata*) sound more dangerous than they actually are.

W is for WEBS

Webs are probably what spiders are most famous for. It's the first use of their silk that comes to mind, and yet, far from the most widespread.

Actually, web-building spiders are a minority, both in numbers of species and families, compared to those that don't make any.

Webs are nonetheless a widespread hunting device among spiders, and one of their most conspicuous features. While some tiny species make miniature webs that could fit on your fingernail, the largest solitary spider webs, the immense orbs built by golden orb weavers (genera *Nephila* and *Trichonephila*) span up to two metres in diameter, and some social spider species, such as the South American *Anelosimus eximius*, build immense communal webs that can cover entire bushes or even small trees.

There's a huge diversity of web types and shapes: orb webs, sheet webs, funnel webs, scaffold webs, "gumfoot" scaffold webs, tube webs… This diversity often allows identification to family level, sometimes even to genus or species, without having to spot the spider.

Webs are snares, generally connected to a retreat where the spider hides, whose primary function is to alert it of the presence of a prey nearby. That's what the most "basic" types of webs, such as the trip wires radiating from Segestriidae (tube-web spiders) webs, do.

However, most webs do more than that, and also trap the prey, in order to impede the prey's movements and hold it back long enough to allow the spider to safely catch it.

Not all webs are sticky, and it's often simply its intricate and complex structure that makes it difficult for the prey to get out.

Nonetheless, sticky, or adhesive webs are a common occurrence; orb weavers (Araneidae, Tetragnathidae, Phonognathidae, and Paraplectanoididae) are famous for the sticky spiral, covered in glue droplets, that make their webs a dangerous trap for flying and jumping insects.

A large number of families, including venomless spiders (Uloboridae), hackled mesh-web weavers (Phyxelididae), and lace-web weavers (Amaurobiidae) are cribellate, which means that they use a particular type of silk that makes their webs incredibly adhesive, without the use of glue: cribellate silk, made with a special silk, weaving organ, the cribellum, and combed with a brush of stiff setae ("hair") on legs IV, the calamistrum, is made of a tangle of extremely thin fibres that give a fluffy aspect to the threads. This silk sticks strongly to exoskeletons by adhering on a nanoscopic scale, through the Van der Waals force.

Some webs have remarkably complex and cunning designs, such as the "gumfoot" webs built by some comb-footed spiders (Theridiidae), including widows (genus *Latrodectus*): their scaffold-shaped webs are made of several different layers, with a sheet-like structure in the middle where the spider circulates. It is not sticky, except some lower threads connected to the ground, which has a very sticky base, and are attached with a fragile anchoring point; when a terrestrial prey comes in contact with one of this sticky "gumfoot" threads, the base breaks, and the thread contracts, pulling it up, towards where the spider waits.

1. Orb webs are probably the most famous type of web. They're built by spiders in several families such as Araneidae (like this *Caerostris* sp.), Nephilidae, Phonognathidae, Tetragnathidae, Anapidae, Theridiosomatidae, and Uloboridae. **2.** *Caerostris* spp. (bark spiders) make the largest individual webs in comparison to their size. One species, *Caerostris darwini*, is famous for building its webs above streams, suspended on bridge lines that can reach 25 metres in length! **3.** Golden orb-web spiders (genera *Nephila* and *Trichonephila*) make the largest individual webs in terms of absolute size: sometimes, their orbs reach over 2 metres in diameter! **4.** The most basic web types, such as the radiating threads around this *Segestria florentina*'s tube web, only warn the spider about the presence of potential prey, without trapping it. **5.** Funnel webs built by Agelenidae such as this *Agelena labyrinthica* (grass funnel-web spider) are not sticky, but their dense, tangled structure helps slowing down the prey, giving the spider more time to grab it. **6.** Cribellate spiders, such as this hackled mesh-web weaver (Phyxelididae) make a special type of silk that they comb with a sort of stiff brush on their back legs, which creates a woolly silk that is extremely adhesive, without the use of glue. **7.** The messy appearance of black widow's (genus *Latrodectus*) web hides a remarkable complexity. Made of very strong silk, the web is connected to the ground by "gumfoot" threads, whose lower part is covered in large, sticky droplets, and attached to the ground by a weak fixation. When a prey item touches one of these threads, it gets stuck and the thread breaks and contracts, pulling the prey upwards, towards the spider.

X is for XIPHOSURA

X was a difficult one; I had to get creative…

Xiphosura are marine arthropods, commonly known as “horseshoe crabs”; but despite what this common name suggests, they aren’t crabs, or even crustaceans, at all. Unlike crabs, their first and foremost pair of appendages isn’t a pair of antennae, but chelicerae; they belong in the superclass Chelicerata, like spiders, scorpions, and other arachnids.

However, they weren’t traditionally included in arachnids, but in a different class, Merostomata; only terrestrial orders were included in Arachnida, while their two extant marine relatives, Pycnogonida and Xiphosura, were included in distinct classes.

At least, this was the case before some recent, groundbreaking phylogenetic studies consistently recovered horseshoe crabs as deeply nested among other orders of arachnids.

If that were to eventually become widely accepted, it would make the group of arachnids an artificial one, which would have to be redefined as equivalent to the group currently known as the superclass Chelicerata.

Xiphosura are famous for being incredibly ancient: the oldest fossils attributed to this group are more than 500 million years old! However, the widespread claim that they are “living fossils” is false, or at least, meaningless: the extant horseshoe crab species are not the same as the fossil ones, and just because their general external shape looks similar doesn’t mean they haven’t evolved at all.

While its longevity as a group is impressive, its modern diversity is very low: there are only four extant species of horseshoe crabs, three in the seas of Southeast Asia and one found along the Atlantic coasts of Mexico and the USA.

They are large animals, much larger than any land Arachnid: the smallest species, the mangrove horseshoe crab (*Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda*), reaches 30 cm (about 1 ft) in total length, while females of the largest species, the tri-spined horsehoe crab (*Tachypleus tridentatus*) can reach 80 cm (2.6 ft) in length!

They are bottom-feeding carnivores, which feed on live, slow prey, and on dead fish.

Horseshoe crab are famous for their blue blood (although it is not unique in the animal kingdom), which contains the copper-based protein haemocyanin in place of the iron-based haemoglobin, which is, unfortunately for them, sought after because of its demonstrated and alleged medicinal and pharmaceutical properties.

I apologise because I do not have any good pictures of these wonderful animals in their natural habitat, having never met one in the wild.

1. Live horseshoe crab at the Cape Town Aquarium, Cape Town, South Africa. **2.** Dried horseshoe crab specimens at the Antalya Aquarium, Antalya, Turkey. **3.** Microscope specimen of a juvenile horseshoe crab (right) at the Grant Museum of Zoology, London, UK.

Spider of the Month

Here are the spiders of the month for October, November, and December. 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.

October

(1) Baryphas jumping spider (*Baryphas ahenus*; Salticidae), Nico Hattingh. **(2)** Grass lynx spider (*Oxyopes* sp.; Oxyopidae), Nico Hattingh. **(3)** Arid rain spider (*Parapalystes* sp.; Sparassidae), Charl du Plessis. **(4)** Hairy flower crab spider (*Thomisus* cf. *spiculosus*; Thomisidae), Nico Hattingh. **(5)** Flower crab spider (*Thomisus* sp.; Thomisidae), Nico Hattingh.

November

(1) White sand wolf spider (Lycosidae), Cecile Roux. **(2)** Green jellybean spider (cf. Synotaxidae), Cecile Roux. **(3)** Jumping spider (cf. *Icius insolidus*; Salticidae), Nico Hattingh. **(4)** False pajama spider (*Hypsosinga lithyphantoides*; Araneidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(5)** Flower crab spider (*Thomisus* sp.; Thomisidae) Arnold Bester.

December

(1) Beetle-mimic jumping spider (*Pachyballus miniscutulus*; Salticidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(2)** Horned bark spider (*Caerostris* cf. *sexcuspidata*; Araneidae), Kyle Thomas. **(3)** Green lynx spider (*Peucetia* sp.; Oxyopidae), Ian White. **(4)** Larvatus twig orb weaver (*Cyphalonotus larvatus*; Araneidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(5)** Brown button spider (*Latrodectus geometricus*; Theridiidae), Braam Snr Collins.

Spider of the Year

In this year's Spider of the Year (SOTY), all three winners were entries by people who had never won Spider of the Month (SOTM) before. This is a first.

First place, and winner of a R1000 cash prize, is Shirley Zwingler with her photo of a ladybird orb-web spider (*Paraplectana* sp.; Araneidae). She found the spider in Karkloof, KZN. This photo was the March SOTM. This photo received 113 (53%) votes.

Second place (R500) goes to Adele Cranz for her photo of a two-tone stegodyphus velvet spider (*Stegodyphus bicolor*; Eresidae), found near Gamsberg, Namibia. This April SOTM received 96 (45%) votes.

Third place (R300) goes to Johan van der Waals for his September SOTM, a dandy jumping spider (*Portia schultzi*; Salticidae) he found in Eswatini. This photo received 84 (40%) votes. Johan donated his prize money to Huistoe Animal Welfare.

Congratulations to the winners!

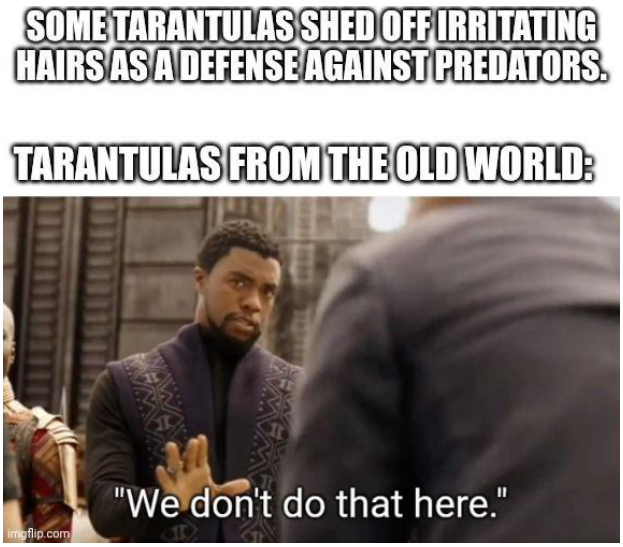
The wonderful world of spiders

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

(1) *Maratus robinsoni* (Salticidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Jürgen Otto. **(2)** cf. *Holoplatys* sp. (Salticidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Flynn Prall. **(3)** *Larinia* or *Lariniophora* sp. (Araneidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Vicki Poole-Vanderschuit. **(4)** cf. *Phoroncidia* sp. (Theridiidae). Location: Malaysia. Photo: Jack K H Loo. **(5)** *Stenaelurillus* cf. *abramovi* (Salticidae). Location: Thailand. Photo: Peter Grob. **(6)** *Parastalita stygia* (Dysderidae). Location: Croatia. Photo: Gianni Comotti.

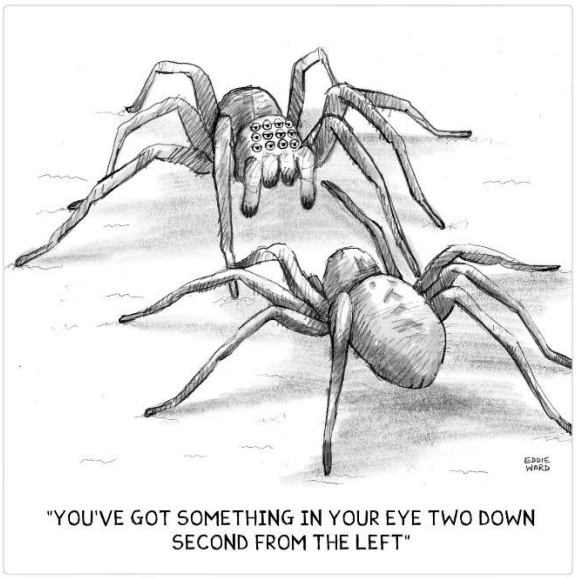
(7) *Oxyopidae* (genus not given). Location: Thailand. Photo: Peter Grob. **(8)** *Sinopoda caeca* (Sparassidae). Location: Laos. Photo: Nicky Bay. **(9)** Cyrtarachninae (cf. *Pasilobus* sp.; Araneidae). Location: Thailand. Photo: Nicky Bay. **(10)** *Peucetia* sp. (Oxyopidae). Location: USA. Photo: David R Lindsay. **(11)** *Pandercetes* sp. (Sparassidae). Location: Thailand. Photo: Phatsakorn Phaengnakhorn. **(12)** *Epeus* sp. (Salticidae). Location: Not given (somewhere in Asia). Photo: Lai Kok Hoong.

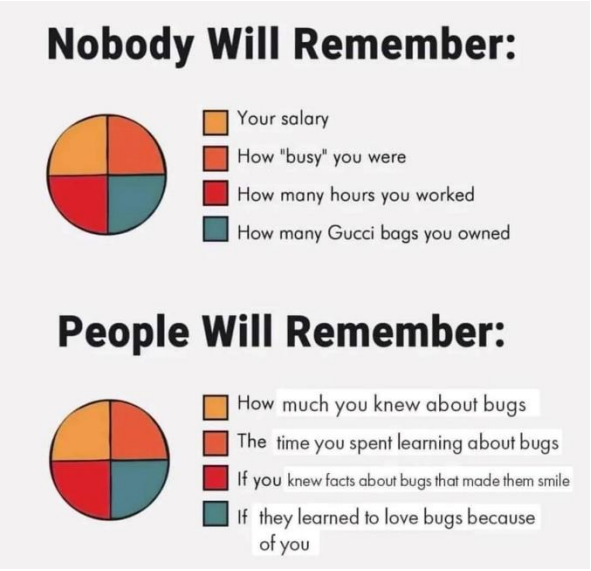
On a lighter note



Me when I'm explaining my love of spiders to others

Me when they for some reason feel obligated to tell me every time they squished/sprayed a spider to death even though I just told them that I love them



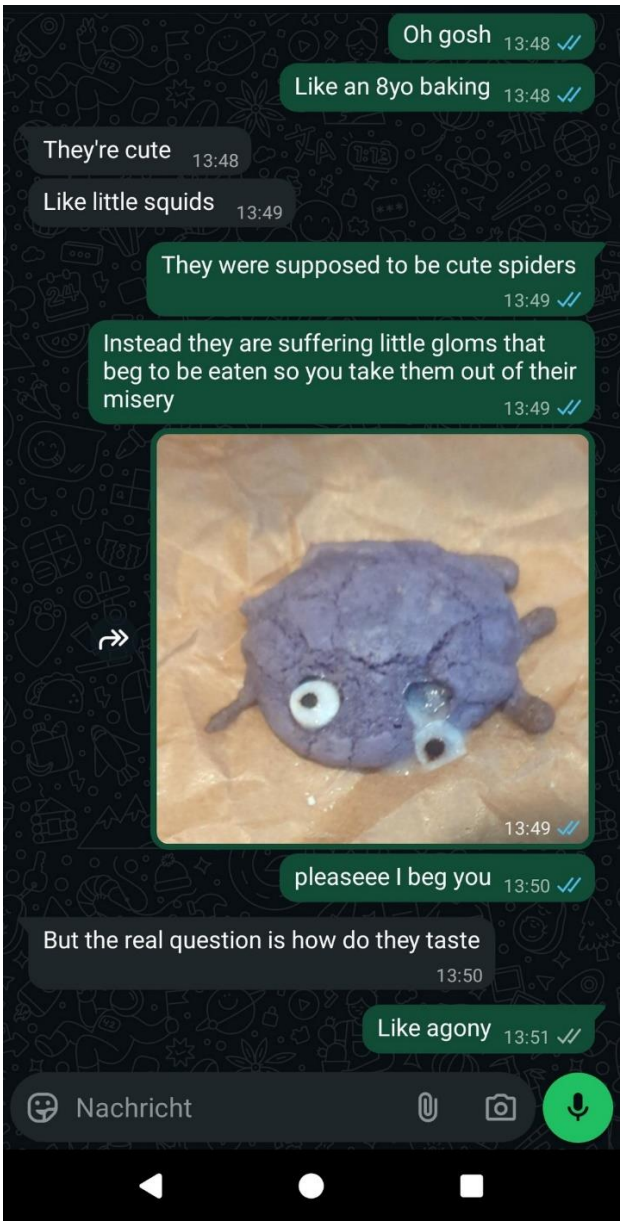


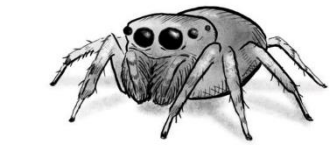

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO BE FOR HALLOWEEN?
CHECK IT OUT


I'M BOB MARLEY.


this World can be so Cruel,
so be Brave Enough to
Be Kind
EmiBoz

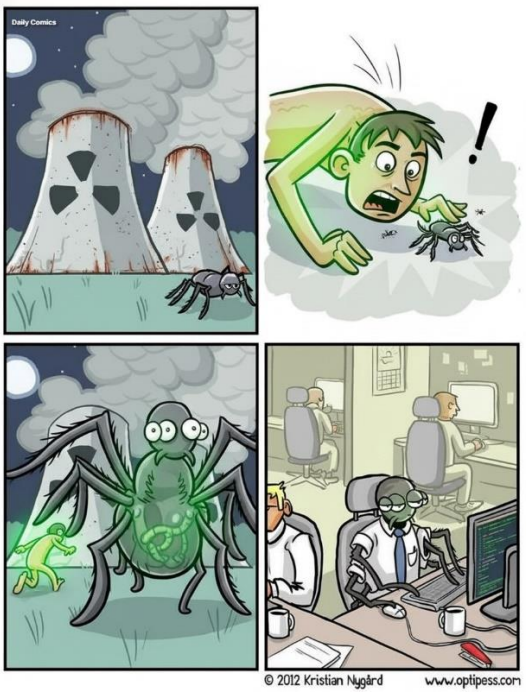

Jorik+Jakkals
ROOIROMAN!
BAARDSKEERDER!
SONSPINNEKOP!
SOLIFUGA!
AWESOME - ROWEND.
NEE, NEE, NEE, NEE, NEE, NEE, NEE.
MAAR... MAAR...
GELUKKIGE HALLOWEEN!

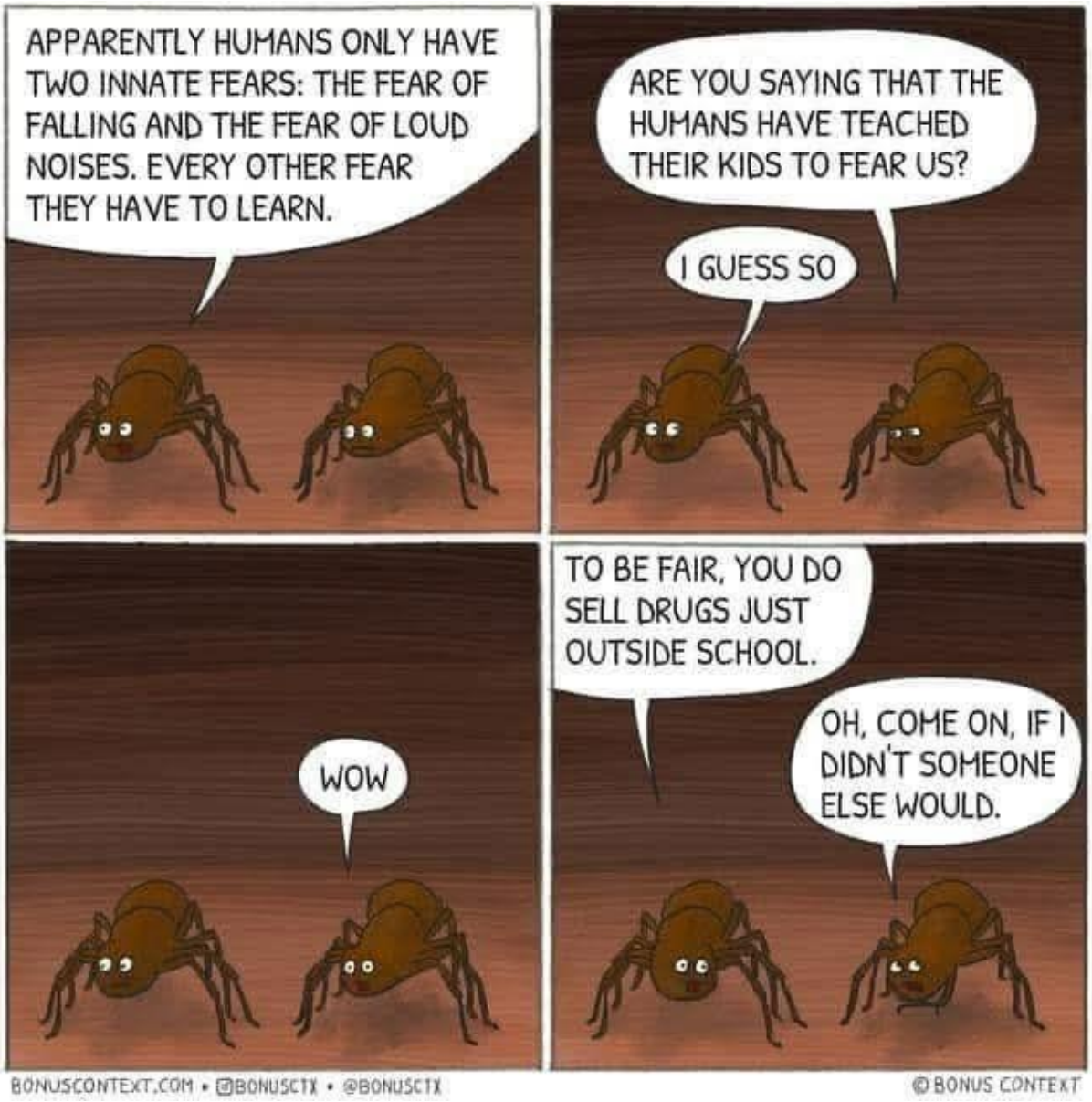




Jumping Spider

Jumping-to-conclusions Spider




APPARENTLY HUMANS ONLY HAVE TWO INNATE FEARS: THE FEAR OF FALLING AND THE FEAR OF LOUD NOISES. EVERY OTHER FEAR THEY HAVE TO LEARN.
ARE YOU SAYING THAT THE HUMANS HAVE TEACHED THEIR KIDS TO FEAR US?
I GUESS SO
WOW
TO BE FAIR, YOU DO SELL DRUGS JUST OUTSIDE SCHOOL.
OH, COME ON, IF I DIDN'T SOMEONE ELSE WOULD.
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Upcoming events

DIARY: January to March 2026

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.

We currently have no confirmed events but Jarrod Todd or Astri Leroy will hold a spider walk for Gauteng some time in the summer.

Wessel Pretorius and Cecile Roux will also very likely organise an event for the Western Cape.

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.