The Spider Club NEWS

June 2026 Vol. 42, No. 2

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

WINTER EDITION

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About the Spider Club

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

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

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

Contact us

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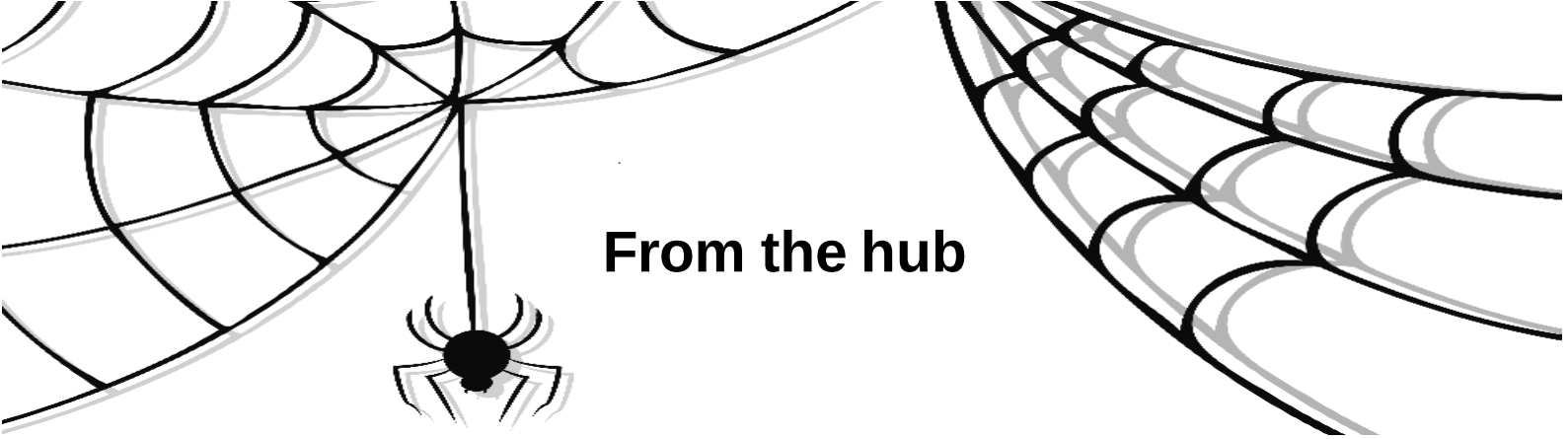
Acknowledgements:

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!

Apologies for the slightly late newsletter. On 28 June, we received the sad news of Mike Green's passing, and we wanted to include a short tribute to a great man (see pages 10-14), so we postponed the newsletter a little bit.

This will be the shortest newsletter in a while. I'm not really sure why. Perhaps it's because we don't have Benjamin Carbuccia's "The A-Z of Spiders" anymore. We still need something to fill that space, so if anyone wants to submit something we can include as a feature for the next year or two, we would really appreciate it.

Like the newsletter, all is quiet on the spider front because it's winter. We don't have any spider events lined up. In early September, Ruan Booysen and I will hold a spider walk for about 50 or 60 home-school children in Bloemfontein, but it's a private event. We usually have trouble handling 10 or fewer very inquisitive children who want to know as much as they can about everything, so I'm sure we'll have our hands full with 50 children. At least some of their parents will be present to help out. Hopefully we can sow some seeds of love for our spider friends and create some future arachnologists!

Speaking of children, it's been a whole year since *Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa* was published. From July 2025 to February 2026, we sold 2000 copies, which I don't think is too bad. Thank you to Struik Nature for their excellent marketing!

Still on the topic of children's education, I'm busy with a few educational animated cartoons about spiders. Of course I cannot animate, so I'm using AI. This can be very frustrating, as it's often difficult to tell AI exactly what to do, which results in many mistakes. To at least make the spiders look like they're supposed to, I use some of my own photos as reference images, turning them into animations. I then write a short story, using humour as a hook, and enter it as a prompt for AI. For example, I already have five cartoons, each between 1 and 2 minutes long: (1) a beetle-mimic jumping spider that fools predators into thinking it tastes bad, (2) a fishing spider catching a fish while a nearby frustrated fisherman has no luck, (3) a bird-dropping orb weaver grossing out a bird by making it think it's a bird dropping, (4) a dewdrop spider stealing prey from another spider's web, and (5) a wolf spider mother suffering through the incessant nagging of the babies on her back. I will soon create a YouTube channel for these cartoons and will keep you updated. The name of the channel will be Tiny Tutors. I hope you all will subscribe because I have a lot of funny and educational ideas, which will also include interesting (and funny) facts about other arthropods, and perhaps, in the future, even other animals, like frogs, birds, worms, etc.

I hope you enjoy this rather short newsletter, and as always, feel free to send any type of feedback or constructive criticism!

Happy reading!

- Rudi Steenkamp -

Snippets

Ant-eating theridiids moved yet again

Barely a month after some *Euryopis* spp. were moved to the genus *Emertonella* (Hu *et al*., 2026), Hu (2026)[1] realised he made a mistake and that "because *Dipoenoides* has priority over *Emertonella*, the use of the latter generic name by Hu *et al*. (2026) renders it invalid under the Principle of Priority (ICZN 1999: Art. 23)." So, all the ant-eating theridiids in South Africa are now in the genus *Dipoenoides*. Full article here.

Dipoenoides episinoides. Photo: Rudi Steenkamp

Latrodectus lucacha. Photo: Kabir Montesinos, on iNaturalist here.

New widow spider species

A new widow spider species, *Latrodectus lucacha* (Miller, Kratzer & Griswold, 2026)[2], from the Andes, was recently described, bringing the total count of widow spiders to 36 species. Full article here.

They're not done yet... a few more new species and changes are coming soon.

Chris Alice Kratzer, who is one of the co-authors in this article, is almost finished with her book on widow spiders of the world. She did all the illustrations herself, based on existing photos. She says it will also be available in South Africa, so it's something to look forward to!

Harvestmen (Opiliones) specimens wanted

The International Society of Arachnology circulated the following request:

Prashant Sharma (University of Wisconsin-Madison) is interested in assembling a higher-level phylogeny of Eupnoi (with emphasis on Phalangiidae) and is seeking collaborators willing to donate tissues of identified species for sequencing. If you are interested in participating in the project, please reach out to him at prashant.sharma@wisc.edu. The goal of the study is to produce a 250-300 taxon molecular phylogeny using UCE sequencing.

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1 Hu, C. 2026. *Dipoenoides* Chamberlin, 1925 is the valid name for the genus *Emertonella* Bryant, 1945 (Araneae, Theridiidae, Hadrotarsinae). *The Indochina Entomologist*, 2(22):227-230.

2 Miller, J., Kratzer, C.A. & Griswold, C. 2026. Description of a new Andean species of widow spider (Araneae, Theridiidae, *Latrodectus*). *ZooKeys*, 1281:49-67.

A sketch of *Coryssiphus* sp. by Jan Bosselaers.

New spider family (Systariidae)

The subfamily Systariinae, which fell under the family Miturgidae (sometimes called prowling sac spiders) has been elevated to family level (Systariidae) by Li, Zhang and Zhang (2026)[3]. South African spiders affected by this change include Coryssiphus spp., which were not too long ago included in the family Liocranidae (sometimes called spiny-legged sac spiders) before being moved to Miturgidae by Bosselaers (2024). Full article here.

ICA details

The 23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026) will be held in Kochi, Kerala, India, from 15 to 21 November 2026. Registration details, abstract submission guidelines, accommodation options, and other updates are available on the congress website here: https://ica2026.in.

First South African flash diffuser brand

For all the macro photographers who love to photograph tiny spiders, South Africa finally has its own flash diffuser brand, ProMacro. Developed by Tim Brammer, this diffuser differs from other diffusers in being built from durable fabric instead of plastic sheets, which means you can very easily roll it up. It is also extremely easy to assemble and disassemble, requiring only pushing three buttons (seven if you include the reflector panel). For more information, and to place your order, visit the website here: https://www.promacrodiffuser.com/

[3] Li, Z., Zhang, C. & Zhang, F. 2026. Advancing the systematics of Araneae: Ultraconserved elements phylogenomics demonstrates the non-monophyly of Miturgidae Simon, 1886 and supports the Familial Rank of Systariidae Deeleman-Reinhold, 2001. *Insect Systematics and Diversity*, 10(3):ixag022, https://doi.org/10.1093/isd/ixag022.

Petra Sierwald. Photo source: https://www.aracnidotaxonomy.com/2026/05/passing-of-petra-sierwald.html

In memoriam: Petra Sierwald

Tributes have been streaming in after the recent passing of Petra Sierwald. Dr Julian Siggers, president and CEO of the Field Museum in Chicago, shared the following:

Dear colleagues,

I am saddened to share with you that Petra Sierwald, Associate Curator of Arachnida and Myriapoda, passed away over the weekend. She built her career around collections-based biodiversity research in spiders and millipedes, with a focus on phylogenetics, systematics, and morphological evolution.

Petra was a leader in the field of millipede research, developing it into a vibrant international community as her former postdocs, students, and other trainees formed an active research and training network across the U.S., Mexico, Uruguay, Germany, Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and elsewhere. She led the development of the first global millipede species database (MilliBase.org) and served as its Chief Taxonomic Editor; she also obtained decades of federal grants for projects including the Spider Tree-of-Life and served as editor for several scientific journals.

Dedicated to collections-based research, Petra was instrumental in building and making accessible the Museum's Insects and Invertebrate collections. She also ran the Museum's first Research Experiences for Undergraduates programs, mentored graduate students and postdocs, and taught at the University of Chicago and other area universities. She served as Chair of the Museum's Scholarship Committee for many years and contributed to several permanent and temporary exhibitions, including *Underground Adventure*, *Spiders!*, and *Fantastic Bug Encounters*.

Petra's research spanned the globe, from Mexico and Panama to Myanmar, Vietnam, and South Africa. She also joined Rüdiger Bieler's marine programs, where as an accomplished scuba diver she helped to monitor coral reef health and to survey invasive species on deepwater shipwrecks. See Petra at work in this episode of PBS' *Changing Seas: Cryptic Critters*.

My deepest sympathy to Rüdiger and to all of you who had the chance to work with Petra through her many years at the Field.

Julian

Condolence card for Petra Sierwald

Heather Proctor shared the following:

Dear Arachnologists:

As members of this listserv you will recently have heard the sad news of the passing of Dr. Petra Sierwald. During the American Arachnological Society meeting in Nebraska this July, Paula Cushing will be gathering signatures on a card of condolence to be sent to Petra's family. For those who will not be attending the meeting but who wish to send condolences, I have just made a Google Sheet where you can add you thoughts. Paula will include a printed version of this in the card.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LRcPWBqmZDYwbxYWtMK25aOWJw7wIjBDrSgv1kupxgA/edit?usp=sharing

Please make your contribution to the Google Sheet by noon on 9 July (Edmonton, Alberta, time).

Thank you,

Heather

1st circular

The **African Arachnological Society (AFRAS)** and the Organizing Committee are delighted to invite members of the arachnological community and accompanying guests to the **15th AFRAS Colloquium,** organized through the **DITSONG: National Museum of Natural History**, Pretoria, South Africa.

This is a wonderful opportunity for international and local arachnologists to connect and discuss potential collaborative projects on the hugely diverse African arachnid fauna.

DATES

10 – 15 January 2027

VENUE

Lapalala Wilderness School (https://www.lwschool.org/), about 50 km from the small town of Vaalwater in Limpopo Province, South Africa, and 3.5 hours from Johannesburg.

https://www.lapalala.com/lapalala-wilderness-school/

The venue is an award-winning, off-the-grid, eco-built educational facility. Constructed from rammed earth, the state-of-the-art facility harmonizes seamlessly with the bushveld, creating a fully immersive nature experience. **Comfortable accommodation** ranges from private lodge-style ensuite rooms to shared dormitories with a unique one-to-one guest-to-bathroom ratio available to delegates on a first-come basis.

The Lapalala Wilderness School falls within the UNESCO-declared Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. While nested in the southeast corner of the **Big Five Lapalala Wilderness Reserve** (https://www.lapalala.com/lapalala-wilderness/), a secure fence separates the two properties to ensure a safe walking environment. The reserve has 73 small and large mammal and 278 bird species recorded. For arthropods, much remain to be discovered in this recognized biodiversity hotspot.

COSTS

***Registration Fee*:** R2,850 (approx. $175 USD) for delegates based in Africa; R3,500 (approx. $215 USD) for delegates not based in Africa.

Accommodation and meals: Packages*, incl. 15% VAT, range from R5,060 (approx. $300 USD) per person sharing up to R10,235 (approx. $600 USD) for a private room. All private rooms with ensuite bathrooms.

*All packages include accommodation and meals for five nights PLUS one Big Five safari game drive.

SPONSORSHIPS

Some part- or full- sponsorships will be available. More detail to follow soon.

AFRAS 15th colloquium 2027

1st circular

TRAVEL & TRANSFERS

***Airport Shuttle*:** Available upon request from O.R. Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg) at an additional fee.

COLLECTING

The venue is surrounded by bushveld savanna, situated on the banks of the Palala River, and with an unpolluted night sky. Delegates can roam freely and collect specimens across the secure, fenced 1,170-hectare property.

A Limpopo Province collecting permit will be available to all delegates.

Delegates that want to collect in other provinces, should contact the congress organizers for further detail.

FACILITIES AND OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Free high-speed WiFi
- Swimming pool
- Bush walks
- Visit to rock art site
- Obstacle course (for those joined by their families, or who themselves feel young at heart)
- Game drives (one inclusive on registration; additional drives at additional cost)
- Hands-on outreach activities at a rural school (additional cost)

AFRAS

The AFRAS Colloquiums are tri-annual meetings of local and international arachnologists who research African arachnids. We strongly encourage participation by students and fellow arachnologists in Africa. AFRAS is a non-profit organization. Membership is free.

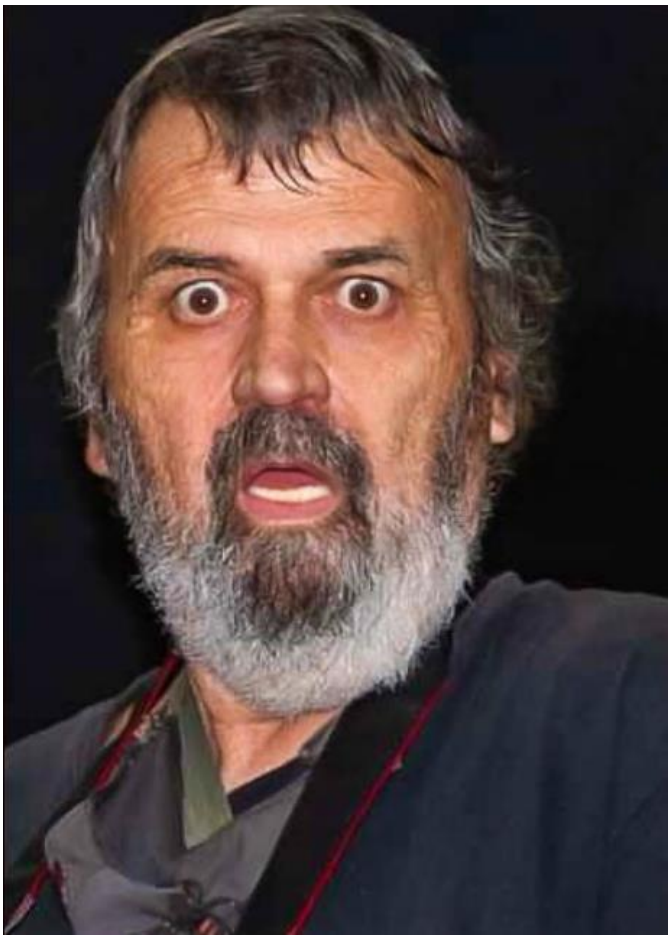
Further details on the 15th AFRAS colloquium will be updated on the colloquium website (https://afras2027.carlamani.com/). *If the website does not open, refresh the page or open in different browser such as Chrome.* The website can also be reached via the AFRAS website at http://afras.ufs.ac.za.

Or contact Tharina at the following details:
tharina@ditsong.org.za | Landline: +27 (0)12 492 2158 | Mobile & WhatsApp: +27 (0)72 317 8814

We are looking forward to seeing you here!

Tharina Bird (AFRAS Chair) and organizing committee.

Tribute to Mike Green
(10 June 1953 – 28 June 2026)



We are very sad to report the passing of Mike Green, who was a very active member of the Spider Club of Southern Africa's Facebook page. He passed away due to complications after back surgery.

In 2020, he contributed to this newsletter with "Mike's Musings", which consisted of various lessons about spiders, specifically aimed at beginners without knowledge of spider jargon. He also self-published a book about spiders, titled *Fascinating Creatures*, featuring all his own macro photos. He also self-published a book about macro photography for beginners.

Apparently, Facebook didn't like it that he thanked each and every person when they complimented his photos, so they detected it as spam. For this reason, especially in the last year, he had some trouble posting on Facebook groups. Every now and then someone would ask, "Where is Mike Green? We miss his photos! We miss him!"

We will miss his kindness, his never-ending willingness to help everyone, his love of educating people about spiders, his unique sense of humour, and of course his stunning macro photos of our spider friends. He was a person with a loving nature and a love for nature… Mike, you are already sorely missed.

On behalf of the Spider Club, we offer our condolences to his family and many friends. Below are some of the tributes to Mike, followed by some photos people took of him.

Yesterday, we lost a dear friend, Mike Green. Mike was a passionate nature lover and an exceptional macro photographer who found beauty in the smallest creatures. He especially loved photographing jumping spiders (Salticidae), along with countless other spiders and insects that many people overlook. He was kind-hearted, patient, and had a wonderful sense of humour. More than that, he was an incredible teacher and mentor. Mike taught me so much about macro photography, and we spent many, many hours together in the field, sharing our love for nature and discovering tiny wonders through our lenses. His knowledge, kindness, and passion inspired so many of us, and the world feels a little dimmer without him in it. Thank you, Mike, for your friendship, your patience, and for opening my eyes to the beauty of the small things in life. You will be deeply missed but never forgotten. Rest

peacefully, my friend. 🕷️❄️📷💚

- Ria van der Lith -

Sadly, I never got to meet Mike in person but my fondest memory of him will be the one and only phone call I had with him. Now, I am not the type of person to enjoy phone calls, I find them very impersonal. The phone call I had with Mike lasted over an hour and I can still hear his voice. He was an incredible lover of nature, always willing to teach and to share his knowledge and wisdom. An amazingly gentle soul and the type of person you feel that you have known forever. Your posts will be missed, your photographs on the groups will live on and the legacy that is Mike Salti Green will eternally stay with us.

- Garrie Gazza Wright -

This is the saddest news. What a huge loss. It was because of a photo Mike posted of the face of an ant that I started to get curious about insects and especially spiders. He was a fantastic photographer and a great person. I never had the honour to meet him in person but got to know him via messenger. He had an awesome sense of humour. I will miss him dearly. Rest in peace, my dear friend. 🌹😢

- Susan van den Bergh -

A gentle soul and true legend. Without even trying you changed the entire gogga and critter world for so many people. You will be missed my friend.

- Jannie Degenaar -

I am very sorry to hear this. The first time I ever saw a photo of a crab spider, it was Mike Green who posted it. His photos were brilliant, so clear and informative as well. I don't think any of us had a better introduction to Saltis either. He will be missed very much.

- Sheila Weber Bradnick -

What an incredible man which I never met, only through Facebook, and was respected. I will definitely miss his photos and knowledge. May you rest in peace, Mike, and thank you for your huge contribution on Facebook and impact in people's lives.

- De Villiers Arnoldi -

Mike was more than just a knowledgeable member of this group - he was a kind soul who touched many lives. I'll miss him dearly ❤️‍🩹

- Dalien de Klerk -

This is sad news indeed. May he RIP. He will be sorely missed. His photography was outstanding. He took the most beautiful pictures I have ever seen. Through his photos and comments his love for nature was shining brightly. Deepest condolences to his family and everybody who knew him. We gonna miss you on this group Mike. I was thinking about him this week and wondering what happened to him, because he was very active on this group and suddenly we didn't see him anymore. 💔🕊️😢

- Adéle Korb -

Ahh, that is sad to hear. I saw he was much quieter over the last while, and I missed his pictures, which were an incredible aide in my losing my fear of spiders, and also in helping my daughter lose her fear. I hope his family and friends know that his impact was far and wide and that they find peace in their own memories of him as the person as well as the legend.

- Janet Chadwick -

Mike was an amazing person who through his love for things small and many legged made SO many people appreciate that these creepy crawlies are in fact wonders to behold and to be appreciated. I was always in admiration of him with his salti pics but it went next level when I saw his cockroach pics 🪳🪳😂 Mike will be sorely missed by many people who had never met him but his pictures remain. What a legacy ❤️🕷️

- Janette Wood -

I never met Mike, but we sometimes chatted on WA just to say hi. He was always so 'happy-go-lucky', friendly and humble. We will miss you Mike, RIP. Condolences to Alanna, his

family and all his friends. This is his final 'Thank you'. 💔🕷️

- Joanie Beytell -

I never met him in person but I loved and admired his photography. He always had a cheerful presence on the groups we shared and he always answered if you asked for his help with an I.D. He will be hugely missed by so many of us.

- Jo Da Nobrega -

I was so sad to read this news and I remember looking at his photos in admiration of his skills. In 2017 after saving for a quite a while and after several chats with Mike on messenger to obtain his advice, I finally bought my macro lens and shared pics with him. He was so helpful in advising me on the sweet spot settings for my new lens in conjunction with the flash. Macro photography brings me such joy because it allows you to see a more personal side of nature up close and to see the subject's "character". It is a whole different world. If I hadn't seen his pics on the groups I may not have been as inspired to take the leap. I.'ll always be grateful. Rest in peace, Mike, and my condolences to the family😢

- Caroline Peace Kruger -

Sorry to hear Mike passed away. RIP. His photographs and comments about South African insects opened a whole new world to me, for which I will always be grateful.

- Shulamith Lotter -

The Salti dude. I am going to miss his pictures. His photos helped my mom deal with her fear of spiders and appreciate them. The man was a legend. Rest in peace my Salti dude.

- Cheryl Sadie -

He came over as such a gentleman... He always educated rather than criticise... His photos were incredible. Sending happy vibes to all that knew him! 🎉💪☼

- Marilyn Overend -

He taught me to appreciate Salti's! And embrace my childhood fascination with all things small and "creepy" (to some). Mr. Mike, you will be greatly missed.

- Mel Ellis -

Mike was such an amazing man and was my mentor at the start of my macro journey. We met when I went on a business trip down to the Eastern Cape. Mike and Alanna hosted me overnight and he patiently encouraged me on how to use my gear, and more importantly how to SEE the tiny creatures without disturbing them. Their hospitality and encouragement will never be forgotten and his passing is a great loss.

- Andrea Sander -

Very sad to hear of Mike 'Salti' Green's passing. Condolences to his loved ones. I have a signed copy of his book *Fascinating Creatures*, which he posted to me from Hermanus and which taught me a lot about spiders. His were the first macro photos I studied and really opened my eyes to the wonderful creatures. RIP Mike, a true gentleman, You will be missed. 🙏

- Pam Read -

I will miss him. He was loved by all who knew him. I think he was what they mean by saying someone is a people's person. His personality as his true colours, was shining brightly. I feel so sad. My condolences to his family.💔🙏

- Mariette Klynsmith -

I hadn't seen much of him on FB recently. But loved his whole persona. He always responded to comments with a thank you and was so knowledgeable - a knowledge he so willingly shared. I'm so saddened to hear of his passing - a huge loss to the FB community. I will miss him. RIP Mike. 💔

- Maddy Sams -

Mike with Ria van der Lith (left), Alanna (his wife, in front), and Carien van Rooyen (right). Photo: Alanna Green.

Mike with Juanita Marchant, Carien van Rooyen, and Ria van der Lith. Photo: Alanna Green.


Left: The lighter side of Mike. **Right:** Mike had a huge love for spiders and all of nature. Photos: Ria van der Lith.



Left: Mike and Esther van der Westhuizen. **Middle:** Mike busy photographing something small. **Right:** Mike with Carien van Rooyen and Ria van der Lith.


Left: Mike with his feet in the water on one of his bug-hunting trips with Bruce Blake. Photo: Bruce Blake.
Right: Mike and Juanita Marchant, with a copy of Mike's book, *Fascinating Creatures*. Photo: Alanna Green.

Interesting lynx spider

Elmé Coetzer photographed this interesting and most likely undescribed grass lynx spider (Oxyopes sp.; Oxyopidae) near Hekpoort in Gauteng.

Button spider feeds on snake

Petra Rough photographed this brown button spider (*Latrodectus geometricus*) in Rustenburg feeding on what appears to be a red-lipped herald (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*). It is not at all unusual for brown button spiders to catch and feed on snakes. They catch ground-dwelling prey in sticky threads glued to the ground, called gumfoot webs. The threads are spun under high tension, and when something walks (or sails) into these threads, the threads come loose and hoist the prey into the air. In the case of larger prey, the spider will slowly hoist the prey off the ground, out of reach of scavengers like ants.

Strange retreat or egg sac?

Justin Allart photographed this interesting silk structure between Bitterfontein and Nuwerus in the Western Cape. It appears that there is an egg sac in the middle.

No spider was found nearby, but it is likely that this was created by a huntsman spider (Sparassidae) of some sort. Benjamin Carbuccia said that he has seen a similar structure with a grass huntsman spider (*Pseudomicrommata* sp.) inside, but without the "belt" of silk.

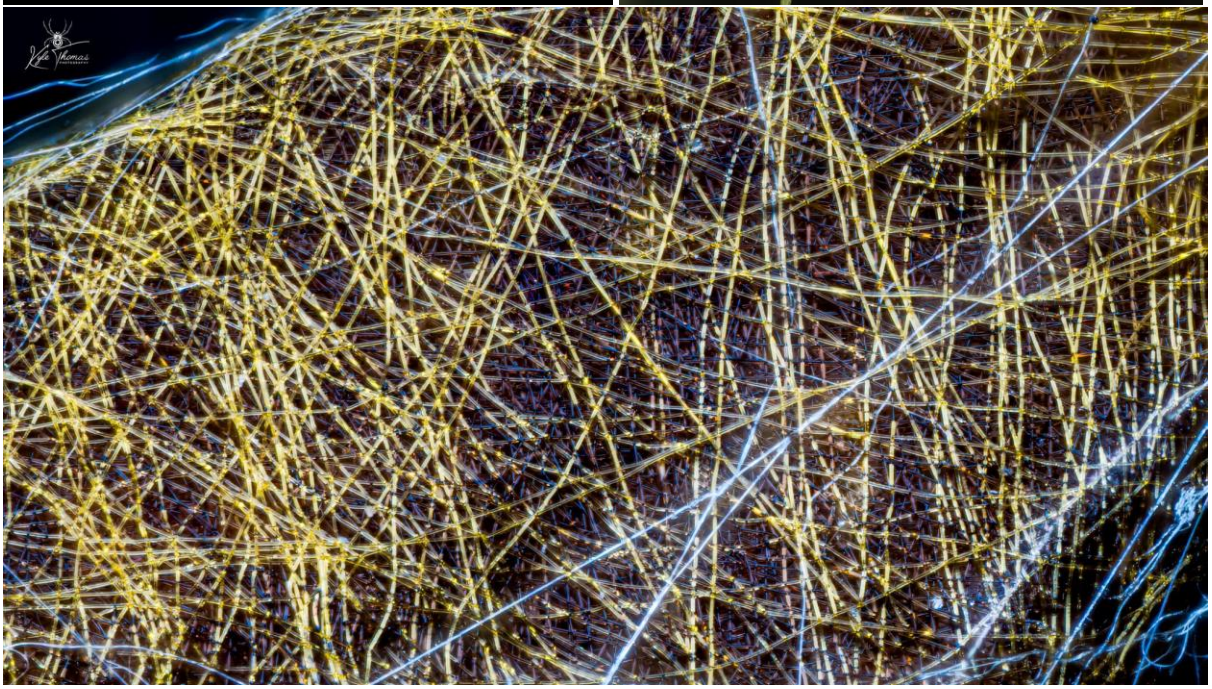
Justin did not open the structure, stating: "I was tempted to peek inside but thought that's a lot of hard work to ruin for the sake of my curiosity." It indeed looks like a lot of effort went into creating this structure. Well done to whatever spider is responsible.

Rain spider egg sac with bread clip

Janine Jinx Louw photographed this rain spider egg sac that recently hatched. In previous newsletters, we reported on various rain spider nests containing items other than the usual twigs, leaves, and bark. This one contains a single bread clip. What is odd is not only the very small size of the egg sac, but that, according to Janine, the eggs were laid only eight days prior. It usually takes about three to four weeks for the eggs to hatch, so eight days is a very short time.

Intricate egg sac

Kyle Thomas found this egg sac in the Karkloof forest in KwaZulu-Natal and took these stunning photos. He initially thought it belonged to a tailed comb-footed spider (*Rhomphaea* sp.) as there were many in the immediate vicinity, but when he opened the egg sac, it contained what appears to be one of the spider-hunting orb weavers (*Chorizopesoides* or *Chorizopes* sp.). There were six spiderlings in the egg sac. The bottom photo is a 5x magnification of the silk, showing that different colours of silk were used.



Ideocaira variation

Kyle Thomas photographed these three triangle orb-web spiders (*Ideocaira* sp.; Araneidae) in the Karkloof forest in KwaZulu-Natal. It is unclear whether they're three different species or three variations of the same species. So far, only *I. transversa* has been recorded from this area.

Double-doored trapdoor on tree

Kyle Thomas, again in the Karkloof forest in KwaZulu-Natal, photographed this tree trapdoor spider (*Poecilomigas* cf. *abrahami*; Migidae). These trapdoors are found on moss- and lichen-covered trees and have two openings rather than the typical lid-like trapdoor that opens in one direction, other than the "typical" lid-like trapdoor that opens in one direction.

The tables have turned

Morné Jonathan found this spider, most likely a flat-bellied ground spider (Gnaphosidae) feeding on a female brown button spider (*Latrodectus geometricus*) in Kuruman, Northern Cape. The brown button spider was presumably outside her web; otherwise, the roles probably would have been reversed, as *L. geometricus* are very good at catching ground-dwelling spiders, like this gnaphosid.

Shore jumping spiders

A few jumping spiders hunting in the intertidal zones on beaches have been recorded recently. The top two photos, taken by Rudi Steenkamp, are of male (left) and female (right) *Heliocapensis claviger*. They were found on the beach at the Treasure Beach Education Centre in Durban during the University of the Free State's Zoology/Entomology excursion to KwaZulu-Natal.

The bottom left photo was taken by Cecile Roux on the beach in Yzerfontein, Western Cape. She found it among some shells in a hollow among the rocks. It appears very similar to the female *Heliocapensis claviger* in the top right photo.

The bottom right photo (species unknown; maybe *Helafricanus*?) was taken by Pierre Malan in Kleinbaai, Western Cape.

All three were found in the intertidal zone, presumably hunting small isopods and other marine creatures. It is unknown what these spiders do when the tide comes in. They will probably retreat rather than submerge themselves under the water, like the intertidal spiders *Amaurobiodes* (Anyphaenidae) and *Desis* (Desidae).

Dew-covered orb web

Nothing unusual here; just a stunning photo of a dew-covered orb web, photographed by Anton van Niekerk.

Tropical tent-web spider webs

Louis and Annemarie Linde from Hartenbos, Western Cape, posted this photo of some yuccas covered in the webs of tropical tent-web spiders (*Cyrtophora citricola*; Araneidae). They tend to group together like this while they're juvenile. While spiders are excellent pest control, these spiders, in large numbers, can become a pest themselves in citrus orchards, where their dense webs prevent pollinators from doing their job, thus hindering the formation of fruits.

Unknown black trapdoor huntsman spider

Andries Cilliers photographed this unusual and most likely unknown huntsman spider near Kakamas/Kenhardt in the Northern Cape. Tristan Naudé found the trapdoor, while Andries found the spider. Charl du Plessis, in his post on the Huntsman Spiders of Southern Africa Facebook group, stated:

"We've seen *Orchestrella* from Namibia constructing a trapdoor, but this one's eye arrangement doesn't match this genus. I've compared the eye arrangement with all known genera, and it's totally unique. The nearest comparison, in my view, is *Arandisa* (although *Arandisa*'s ALEs are significantly bigger than its AMEs) and to a lesser extent, *Palystella*."

Click here for a video of the spider and its trapdoor burrow.

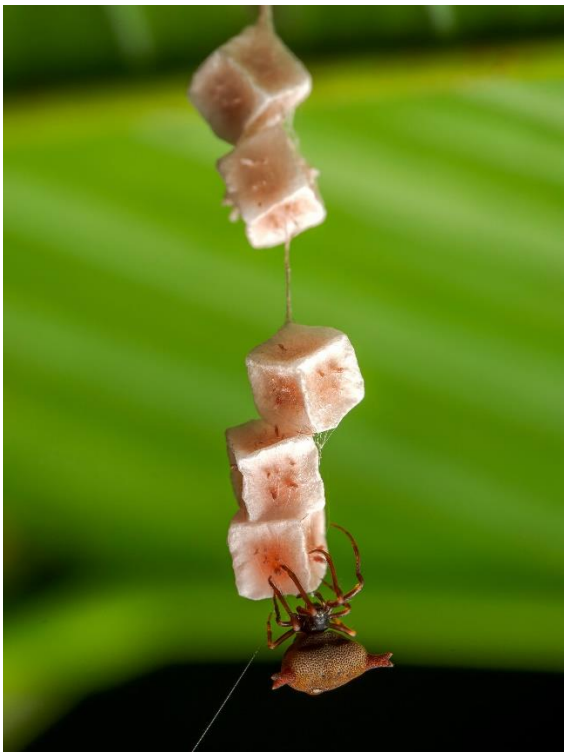
Are the “horns” of a horned baboon spiders hollow?

During the Wilderness Project in Angola earlier this year, Nicky Bay photographed this horned baboon spider (Ceratogyrus sp.; Theraphosidae). To find out if the “horn” is solid or hollow, he shone a light through it and found that it is indeed hollow. Nicky said the following:

“Most species of *Ceratogyrus* have short, sclerotised horns on their carapace, but this particular species (*C. attonitifer* or close) has a hollow (see additional photos in comments), soft horn and can extend all the way to the back of its abdomen. This individual, likely a juvenile, was found with its burrow in a dead tree, unlike other specimens in this genus.”

Cube-shaped egg sacs

Not from Southern Africa, but interesting enough to include here. Javier Aznar Photography, from Ecuador, posted this photo of what he claims to be a ray spider (Theridiosomatidae) with her cube-shaped egg sacs.



Ballista spider with gumfoot web

The hunting technique of this *Propostira* sp. from Australia (we have similar spiders in South Africa) was filmed for the first time (video here and article here). Some widow/button spiders (*Latrodectus* spp.) in the same family (Theridiidae) use the same method to hunt ground-dwelling prey.

To view the videos, simply click on each picture.

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

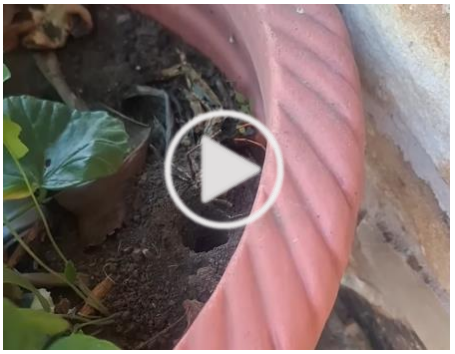
Afrikaans video podcast on spiders

Anien van Niekerk recently started an Afrikaans video podcast that focuses on scientific subjects. In this episode, she interviewed Rudi Steenkamp about spiders, and also discussed his children's spider book. The episode is about 40 minutes long. YouTube provides its own subtitles for non-Afrikaans speakers, but they're not very accurate.

In another episode, Anien interviewed Tiaan van Niekerk about tarantulas in a 33-minute video. Feel free to check out her channel, *Weet Jy Van Wetenskap*, about other science topics.

Wasp buries spider

L.J. Vorster from East London took this video of a spider-hunting wasp (cf. *Tachypompilus ignitus*) dragging a paralysed rain spider (Palystes sp.) to a hole in the soil of a potted plant.



Ant-eating theridiid feeding on ant

Thea Kruger from Pretoria took these videos of an ant-eating theridiid (*Dipoenoides* sp.) feeding on an ant, and also appearing quite protective of its catch, waving its front legs in the air. These spiders specialise in catching ants.

EVENTS

Yebo Gogga Exhibition:

Wits University, Gauteng

13-17 May 2026

By Astri Leroy

John Leroy showing some students at Yebo Gogga a common rain spider and how gentle they can be. The rain spiders were handled quite a lot by the students and behaved themselves really well. Photo: Astri Leroy.

The theme this year was "Food and Water". I was ready to prepare a poster about how spiders can get by using dew and condensation on their webs as well as simply their prey to satisfy their water needs, how spiders protect crops and food gardens as natural insecticides, how they are food for other creatures and so on, but as has been the case in years gone by, it's the drama of big spiders that attracts the youth, and Yebo Gogga is all about youth.

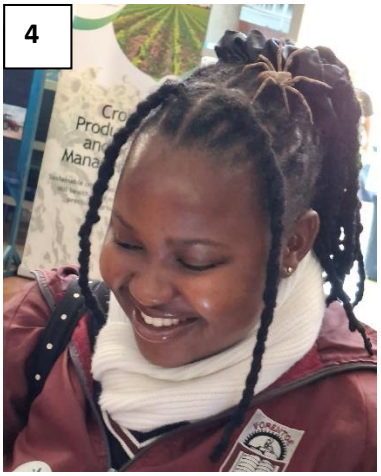
As usual, the two male and one female rain spiders, *Palystes superciliosus*, were wonderful ambassadors, as well as golden orb-web spiders, both *Trichonephila fenestrata* and *T. senegalensis*, which are abundant this year. We had one of each to show and talk about, as well as a brown button spider (*Latrodectus geometricus*), a male and a female flattie (*Anyphops* sp.), some daddy long-legs spiders (*Smeringopus* sp.), a spitting spider (*Scytodes* sp.), and a violin spider (*Loxosceles parramae*), collected two years ago.

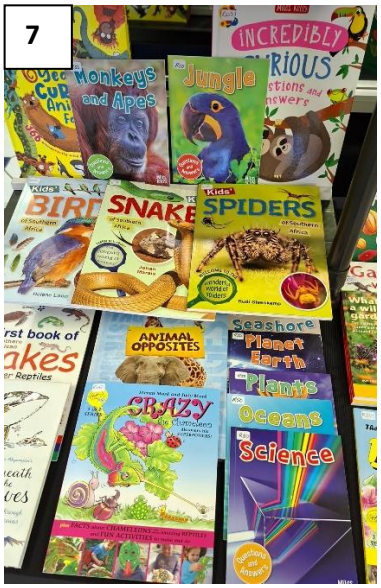
During the first three days (weekdays), over 6000 children came to our stand, and by Sunday lunchtime the number of attendees topped 7500. WITS ran out of tickets! The vast majority were scholars with their teachers and some WITS students and students from other institutions.

On Wednesday, we were almost overwhelmed by scholars from the amazing Helpmekaar Kollege, the first Afrikaans-medium high school in Johannesburg, started in 1921 at a time when all other schools in the city were English medium. The official foundation stone was laid by Barry Hertzog, no less. So I find it deliciously South African that all the scholars were black and fluent in English.

This year was a breeze as husband John was there too, and Clarissa Cronjé joined us from Thursday. It took her only a short while to get into the swing of answering questions and she was even more adamant than I that spiders may be venomous but they are not dangerous. It was lovely having her help and we all had time to relieve each other to visit other stands and do useful networking.

Unlike previous Yebo Gogga events when I found the hordes of children on weekdays exhausting, it was the moms and dads with their beloved kiddies that I found most trying. Sunday midday ended off with a lunch function in the museum and as usual I was fascinated to see how quickly students can demolish food.





1: The Spider Club's stall after it was set up. **2&3:** Astri Leroy and Clarissa Cronjé handling one of the rain spiders on display. **4:** One of the students with the rain spider on her head. Astri says the student fell in love with the spider. **5:** Another student with one of the rain spiders. **6:** People had the opportunity to look at spiders through a microscope. **7:** Some of the books on sale, including Rudi Steenkamp's *Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa*. Photos by Astri and John Leroy.

Wolf spider (Lycosidae) workshop – Chongqing, China

by Ruan Booysen

Figure 1. Attendees of the International Workshop on Revision, Phylogenomics and Evolution of Wolf Spiders, 13-16 May 2026, Chongqing, China.

Earlier this year, I was invited by Prof. Zhisheng Zhang and his colleagues of the Arachnology Laboratory at the School of Life Sciences, Southwest University, Chongqing, China, to attend a workshop focused on the spider family Lycosidae (wolf spiders). The theme of this workshop was "Revision, Phylogenomics and Evolution of Wolf Spiders", and it attracted some very interesting talks on this group. More on this later...

The trip started with a flight from Johannesburg to Singapore's Changi Airport, a truly impressive airport with its own butterfly sanctuary! Here I had about seven hours to explore and I was thinking of doing one of the free guided tours when I arrived, but after a 10-hour flight, I was quite exhausted. So, I had some Dan Dan noodles at one of the restaurants called LeMa Dumpling (樂妈饺子) (an incredible dish, by the way!) and explored the airport a bit.

That evening, I got onto my flight to China and after about five hours, I arrived at Jiangbei International Airport, Chongqing, where I met up with Dr Muhammad Irfam and Tianyu Ren. I arrived in China at about 1 am and only got to the accommodation closer to 2 am, so a good night's rest was in order. Several international researchers were invited to this workshop who have done, and are currently doing, exceptional research on wolf spiders (see Figure 1). There were also a couple of familiar faces whom I have met at previous arachnology conferences such as Prof. Yuri Marusik, Dr Galina Azarkina, and Prof. Cor Vink.

The first two days we had some discussions on Lycosidae overall, led by comprehensive phylogenetic research conducted by Dr Luis Piacentini. Through these discussions, we pinpointed some of the problematic areas in wolf spider research, specifically regarding their phylogenetic relationships, biogeography, and genetics. One thing that stood out to me during this time was that wolf spiders from Africa are not well studied and could provide valuable information on the origins of wolf spiders, but also missing links within Lycosidae. Another thing is that the subfamily Lycosinae is a difficult group to diagnose and probably has many misplaced and new species and genera.

The next couple of days, we were treated to some sightseeing in Chongqing where we visited several tourist attractions such as the Red Bridge (a.k.a. Qiansimen Bridge), Testbed 2, and Ciqikou Ancient Town. Here we tried various local cuisines, experienced Chinese markets, and shopped around for interesting gifts! For me, one day stood out; it was a field day at Jialing Mountain to collect some spiders. This was the first time I had ever found a short-tailed whipscorpion (Schizomida) (see Figure 2, left). I could not believe it when I saw it, and I was super excited. In South Africa, these arachnids are incredibly rare, with only one endemic species, *Megaschizomus zuluanus* (Lawrence, 1947) recorded from Dukuduku Forest in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 2, right). Another notable find was a large mygalomorph spider found by Galina, *Gigathele guizhouensis* (Hu & Li, 1986) (Macrothelidae).

Figure 2. *Left*: Short-tailed whipscorpion (Schizomida: Hubbardiidae). *Right*: Funnel-web spider, *Gigathele guizhouensis* (Hu & Li, 1986) (Araneae: Macrothelidae). Photos by Ruan Booysen.

All the attendees were asked to present something on wolf spiders during this workshop. On Friday, 14 May 2026, the talks started and continued until the next day. Twenty speakers gave their talks during this time, covering topics on wolf spider taxonomy, revision work, molecular and genomic studies, biogeography, ecology and behaviour. I presented an overview of South African Lycosidae and what we currently know. Some highlights from these talks were, for example, the taxonomy and systematics of South American Lycosidae by Dr Luis Piacentini, Hawaiian and Pacific lycosids by Dr Sven Weber, and the phylogenomics of wolf spiders by Jinxia Kong. It is difficult to choose a favourite as I enjoyed listening to all of them.

This workshop was one of the most interesting conference events that I have attended in a long time. Firstly, wolf spiders as a group are fascinating, and attending a workshop that is hyper-focused on this group with so many specialists makes it even more memorable.

Thank you to Prof. Zhisheng, his lab, and the organising committee for inviting me and for hosting such an incredible workshop.

Ruan giving his presentation on South Africa's wolf spiders. Photo: Galina Azarkina.

Ruan, sporting his Spider Club of Southern Africa T-shirt on the left, with the two Russians, Galina Azarkina in the middle and Yuri Marusik on the right. Photo: Anton Nadolny.

EDITOR: Singaporean macro photographer Nicky Bay recently visited Angola and took some stunning photos of spiders and other arthropods there. Every now and then, he also took photos of some spiders and other arachnids with his ultraviolet (UV) flash setup, which delivered some stunning and often surprising results. Before we look at some of his UV flash photos taken not only this year in Angola but also around the world over the last decade or more, here is a quick summary of animals fluorescing under UV light:

Some animals fluoresce under UV light because certain chemicals, proteins, or structures in their bodies absorb high-energy UV radiation and then re-emit it as visible light. This process is called fluorescence.

How it works:

1. UV light hits a fluorescent substance.
2. The substance absorbs the UV energy.
3. It quickly releases part of that energy as visible light – often green, blue, pink, or red.

This is different from bioluminescence, where animals produce their own light chemically (like fireflies).

Why do animals fluoresce?

Scientists are still studying this, and the reason varies between species. Possible functions include:

- Communication between members of the same species
- Camouflage or blending into fluorescent environments
- Mate attraction
- Warning predators
- UV protection
- Sometimes it may simply be a by-product of body chemistry with no special purpose

What causes fluorescence?

Different substances can fluoresce, including:

- Proteins
- Pigments
- Minerals in bones or shells
- Structural tissues like collagen or keratin

For example, scorpion fluorescence comes largely from compounds in the cuticle of their exoskeleton.

Examples of fluorescent animals

- Scorpion — glow bright blue-green under UV light
- Platypus — fur fluoresces blue-green and pink
- Flying Squirrel — often fluoresces pink under UV
- Chameleon — some species show fluorescent patterns through their skin
- Coral — many species fluoresce vividly underwater
- Green Sea Turtle — exhibits green and red fluorescence
- Parrot — some feathers fluoresce under UV

Many animals can also see UV light themselves, so fluorescence may appear far more dramatic to them than it does to humans.

In nature photography and arachnology, UV fluorescence is often useful for finding animals at night – especially scorpions, which can glow intensely even from several meters away.

Nicky Bay photographing a spider with a "normal" macro setup. Photo: Kelvin Dao.

Ultraviolet (UV) macro photography is a highly niche and challenging photography genre, largely because of the difficulty in finding a suitable subject, in getting the subject to be cooperative, and to get the exposure just right. Most examples of UV fluorescence in the world of arthropods had been restricted to scorpions until in recent years when I saw some examples of UV fluorescence in harvestmen by Paul Bertner. Since then, my group of photography buddies have been experimenting with UV exposures during our field trips and managed to land some pretty alien, mind-blowing results!

Most of the photographs were taken in Singapore unless otherwise specified. Thanks to my friends who have been constantly trying out UV on the various subjects that we found, especially Melvyn and Chris. Thanks to Javed Ahmed for valuable inputs in each of the posts that I write. Without them, this series would have been way less interesting!

Equipment for UV photography

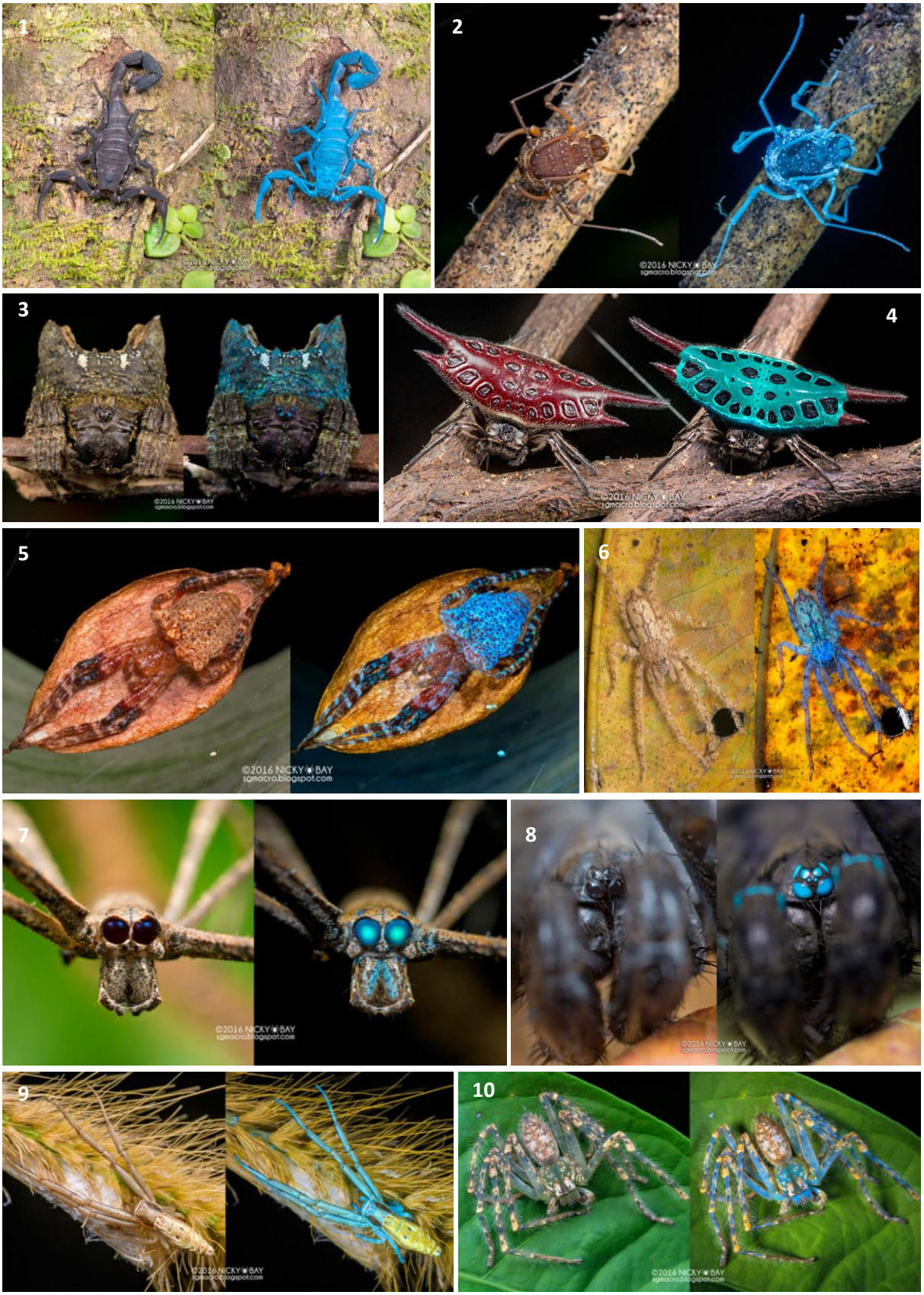
I have been receiving many questions about the equipment used for the UV photos and thought it would be better to answer them here. UV fluorescence is not UV light, so the presence of a UV filter does not affect the photo. The fluorescence is visible to the naked eye so all you need is a UV-emitting light. I am using many different models of UV lights, many of which are brandless and from China. Most give varying results even within the same model, so I am unable to recommend any "best" one. For a start, try UV lights with a shorter wavelength in the range of 365 nm and experiment from there. If you do attempt UV fluorescence photography, please read the warnings regarding use of UV lights below.

WARNING ON ULTRAVIOLET EXPOSURE

Prolonged exposure to certain wavelengths of ultraviolet can be dangerous to human skin and eyes, and possibly to some subjects as well. Please be aware of the risks involved before working with various ultraviolet wavelengths, and avoid using extended exposures.

- Nicky Bay -

Here are some older examples of arachnids photographed by Nicky with an older setup. For more of his photos of other animals, see here: https://www.nickybay.com/alien-transformations-under-ultraviolet/



1: *Tityus* sp. (Buthidae). **2:** Cosmetidae. **3:** *Caerostris* sp. (Araneidae). **4:** *Gasteracantha* sp. (Araneidae). **5:** *Cyrtophora unicolor* (Araneidae). **6:** *Pandercetes* sp. (Sparassidae). **7:** *Asianopis* sp. (Deinopidae). **8:** *Liphistius* sp. (Liphistiidae). **9:** *Runcinia* sp. (Thomisidae). **10:** *Gnathopalystes* sp. (Sparassidae).

Here are a few of Nicky's more recent photos from his trip to Angola using a new UV flash setup (see setup on the next page).

1: *Gasteracantha* sp. (Araneidae). **2:** *Isoxya* cf. *cicatricosa* (Araneidae). **3:** *Paraplectana* sp. (Araneidae). **4:** *Smodicinus* sp. (Thomisidae).

The setup

A bird-dropping crab spider *(Phrynarache brevis*; Thomisidae).

In preparation for my next expedition, I've been tinkering and testing with 3D-printed accessories for macro photography.

For this sample picture, I used 2 modified Godox MF12 units and designed mounts to position the flashes closer to the subject. This maximises the flash power that's required for UV-induced visible fluorescence (UVIVF).

To further increase and distribute the UV light, I designed flash caps layered with reflective material (aluminium foil) to bounce the light down towards the subject. Additional Blu-Tack was used to block any stray white light from the flash emitter.

I tried making the UV bandpass filter modular by mounting it onto a customised flash cap, but it reduced the UV output and wasn't ideal. See next page for the setup to show what it looks like. I am still fine-tuning the design. Welcome ideas for improvement!

Many many thanks to Minghai for loaning the 3D printer and helping with all the initial designs!

Panasonic Lumix DC-GX9, Laowa 50mm 2:1, Godox X3 trigger, UV-Modified Godox MF12 x2, custom 3D-printed mounts and reflectors. 1/200s, F/10, ISO200, flash power 1/1.

Accessories 3D printed using Bambu Lab A1 mini, PETG HF White filament.

For details on modifying the flash for UV emittance, refer to my older post: https://www.facebook.com/nicky/posts/pfbid02J3jQbqCLRiSUnCDJmLaJMUfhXDyCHQ2bwAAr9oTPyUkS5o655XQmaEAdVod67RgLl

- Nicky Bay -

Top left: Front view of the setup, showing the UV-bandpass filter on each modified flash mounted on the custom 3D-printed flash holder. Top right: Side view. Bottom: Top view showing the custom flash mount. - Nicky Bay -

Spider of the Month

Here are the spiders of the month for April, May, and June. 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.

April

(1) Bark spider (*Caerostris* sp.; Araneidae), Nicky Bay. **(2)** Crowned crab spider (*Smodicinus* sp.; Thomisidae), Nicky Bay. **(3)** Inkblot box kite spider (*Isoxya cicatricosa*; Araneidae), Nicky Bay. **(4)** Bum-eyed orb-web spider (*Bijoaraneus legonensis*; Araneidae), Nicky Bay. **(5)** Fiery evarcha jumping spider (*Evarcha ignea*; Salticidae), Rion Lerm.

May

(1) Ladybird orb-web spider (*Paraplectana* sp.; Araneidae), Nicky Bay. **(2)** Sheepy jumping spider (cf. *Oviballus vidae*; Salticidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(3)** Triangle orb-web spider (*Ideocaira* sp.; Araneidae), Kyle Thomas. **(4)** Flattie (cf. *Selenops* sp.; Selenopidae), Nicky Bay. **(5)** Dewdrop spider (*Argyrodes* cf. *argyrodes*; Theridiidae) Rudi Steenkamp.

June

(1) Ogre-faced net-casting spider (*Asianopis* sp.; Deinopidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(2)** Mirror spider (*Thwaitesia* sp.; Theridiidae), Nicky Bay. **(3)** White sand wolf spider (Unknown sp.; Lycosidae), Rudi Steenkamp. **(4)** Feather-setae crab spider (*Trichopagis* sp.; Thomisidae), Nicky Bay. **(5)** Bark spider (*Caerostris* cf. *sexcuspidata*; Araneidae), Nicky Bay.

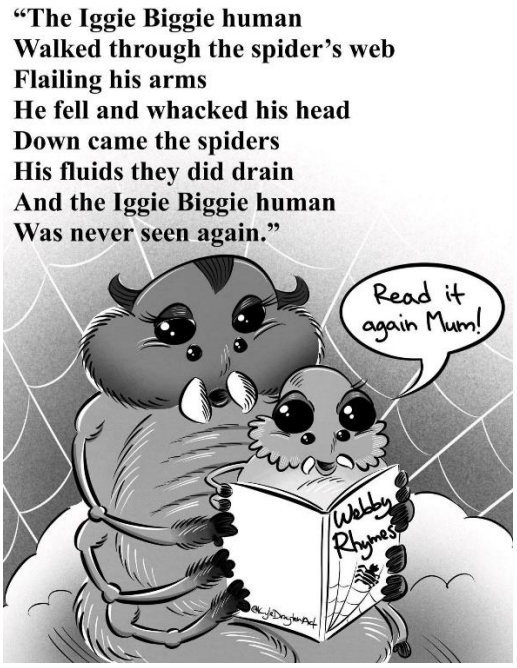
The wonderful world of spiders

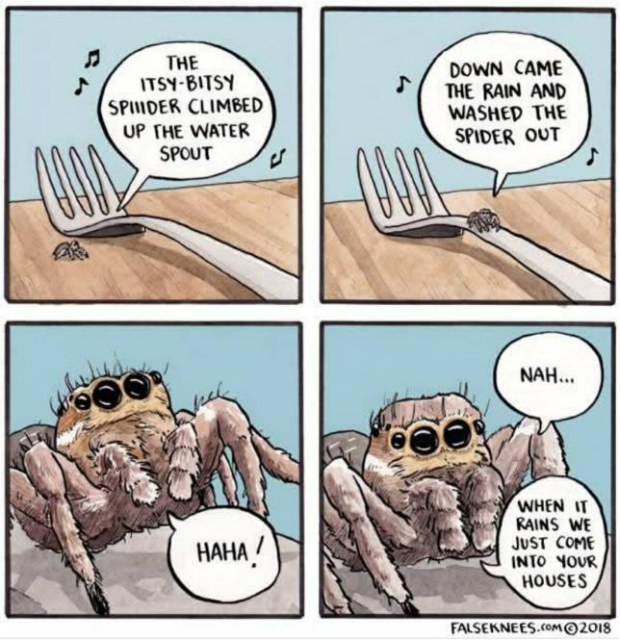
This section showcases spiders from other parts of the world. Click on the photo to go to the Facebook source.

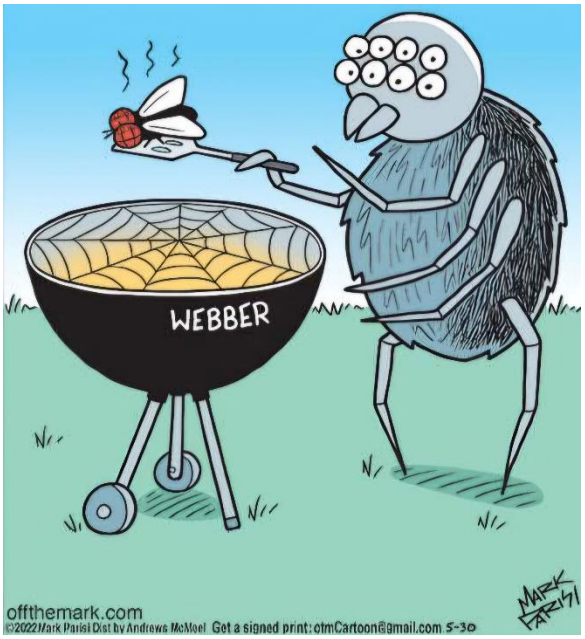
(1) *Amyciaea forticeps* (Thomisidae). Location: Singapore. Photo: Iamelmersworld. **(2)** *Uroballus carlei* (Salticidae). Location: Hong Kong. Photo: Jack K H Loo. **(3)** *Eriovixia* sp. (Araneidae). Location: Not given. Photo: Timothy Chua. **(4)** *Parawixia dehaani* (Araneidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Timothy Chua. **(5)** *Cosmophasis micarioides* (Salticidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Jacci Ingham.

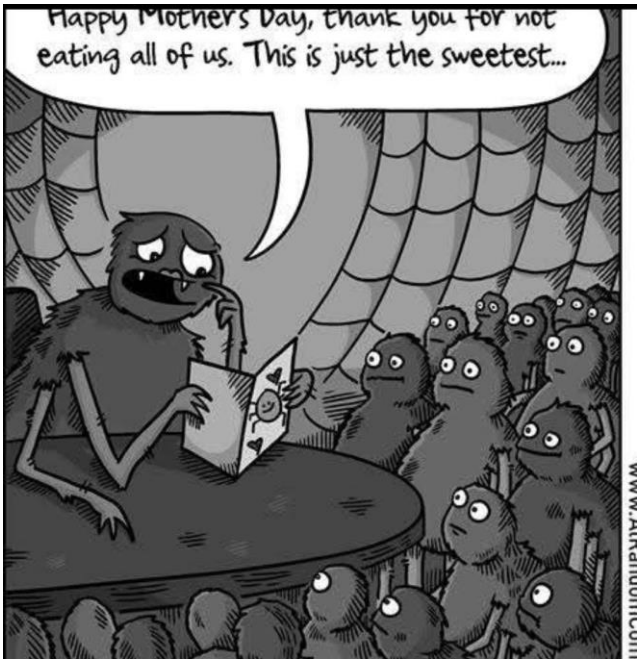
(6) *Eriovixia* sp. (Araneidae). Location: Singapore. Photo: Iamelmersworld. **(7)** *Rhene rubrigera* (Salticidae). Location: Thailand. Photo: Peter Grob. **(8)** *Mastophora cornigera* (Araneidae). Location: USA. Photo: Rick Malad. **(9)** *Epicadus granulatus* (Thomisidae). Location: Ecuador. Photo: Nick Volpe Wildlife Photography. **(10)** *Poecilipta* sp. (Corinnidae). Location: Australia. Photo: Flynn Prall. **(11)** *Paraplectana* sp. (Araneidae). Location: Indonesia. Photo: Macro Vlogs. **(12)** *Thianitara* sp. (Salticidae). Location: Thailand. Photo: Peter Grob.

On a lighter note

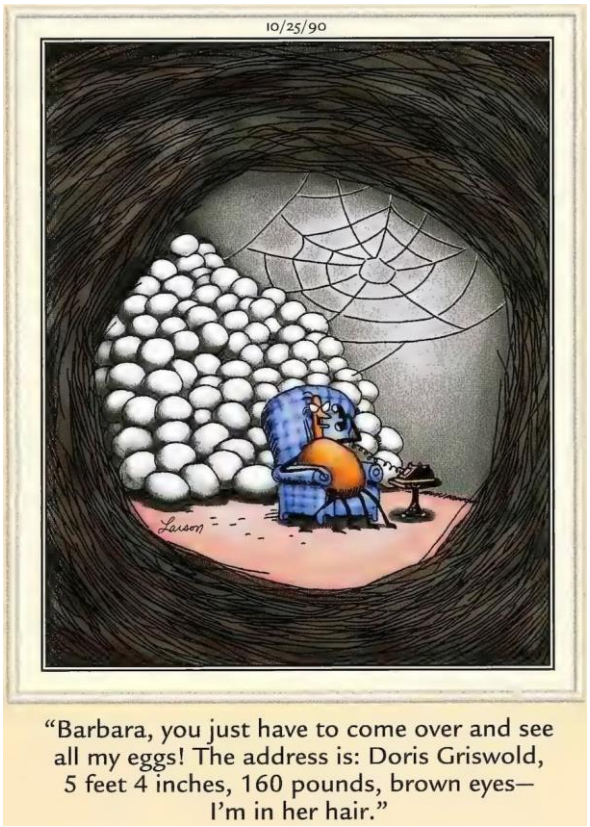


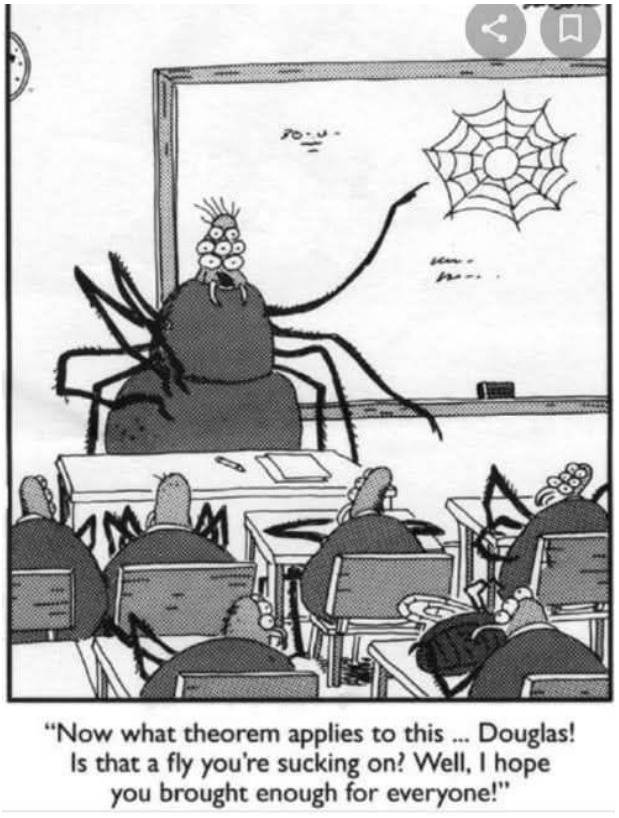





Happy Mother's Day, thank you for not eating all of us. This is just the sweetest...

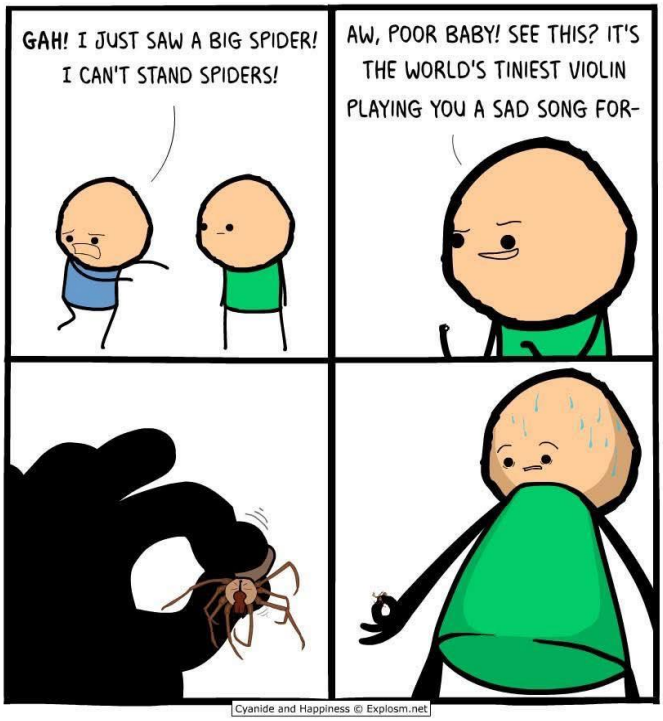

serinalion:
derples:
beesmygod:
thats a really long fox!!
ummm if you'll notice the fox part on the left has front legs and the fox on the right has hind legs :) That's eight legs :) obviously this is a spider not a fox :)
~follow for more science facts~
Thanks science side

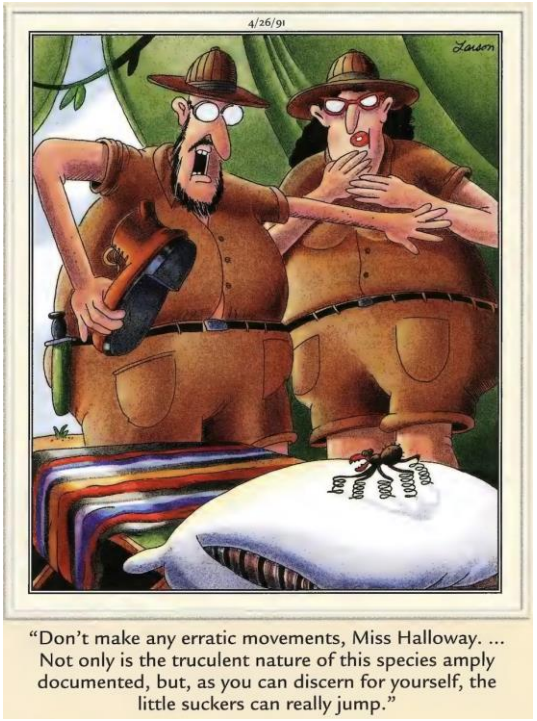

10/25/90
Larson
"Barbara, you just have to come over and see all my eggs! The address is: Doris Griswold, 5 feet 4 inches, 160 pounds, brown eyes—I'm in her hair."


"Now what theorem applies to this ... Douglas! Is that a fly you're sucking on? Well, I hope you brought enough for everyone!"


Male spiders when they catch the scent of a female nearby
The big woman still here?


ryuu !
@ryuuder
Follow
received this ominous text from my boyfriend
I'm going to put spiders in your underwear
? Excuse me
wrong person sorry baby
WHO WAS THE RIGHT PERSON THEN





"Don't make any erratic movements, Miss Halloway. ... Not only is the truculent nature of this species amply documented, but, as you can discern for yourself, the little suckers can really jump."