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**American Arachnological Society**

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## **MEET THE REAL-LIFE MONSTER FROM OUR HARRY POTTER NIGHTMARES**

**DENVER—14 March 2016**—In JK Rowling’s book “The Goblet of Fire” a bizarre and monstrous looking arachnid is used to demonstrate the unforgivable curses. The ill-fated arachnid that made it to the silver screen is a real animal and a distant relative of spiders called a whip spider (order Amblypygi). Whip spider researchers [Kenny Chapin](#) and [Eileen Hebets](#) recently published a [review of whip spider biology](#) in the latest edition of the *Journal of Arachnology*. These biologists are happy to forgive the tortuous scene since, “apart from being eaten on *Fear Factor*, this is the most stardom a whip spider has ever received” said Chapin. Whip spiders, he explains, are a fascinating but poorly understood group of animals. Some species have nearly two-foot (0.6 m) legspans and live in cracks and crevices in caves and tropical forests.

In their review article, the authors highlight some remarkable and little-known aspects of Amblypygi biology. For example, amblypygids can regenerate lost limbs throughout their lives; they can catch and eat moths caught on the wing; males use their large, spiny pedipalps to fight over females; courtship between the sexes can last 1 – 8 hours; and amblypygid moms protect their eggs in a pouch under the body and carry the newly hatched offspring on top of their abdomens.

This article summarizes what we know about the biology of these bizarre arachnids. The reality is not as monstrous as popular culture would like us to believe, but it comes close.

### **About the American Arachnological Society**

The American Arachnological Society was founded in 1975 to further the study of arachnids (spiders and their relatives), foster closer cooperation and understanding between amateur and professional arachnologists, and to publish the [Journal of Arachnology](#), one of the premier scientific journals presenting current research about arachnids. Connect with the AAS on its [website](#) or [Facebook](#).

**NOTE: Photos available**

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