

ANSWERING ARACHNO-QUESTIONS

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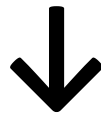
These examples show how questions are answered.

All have been edited for brevity.

Photos submitted by questioners are not saved.

Those shown here resemble the originals and were obtained from online sources.

Arachnid identification by AAS is a service for the public, not for scientists.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Ken Prestwich

developed AAS website, was first webmaster, put all *Journal of Arachnology* issues online.



Jan Weaver

redesigned website and is current webmaster.



Jon Reiskind

filled in for Jerry Rovner (answer person) when Rovner was abroad.



IDENTIFICATION REQUEST – WITH A GOOD PHOTO

Q: Can you please identify this spider? I can't seem to find anything matching it.

A: It's a nursery web spider (*Pisaurina mira*; family Pisauridae). You can read about it at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pisaurina_mira

If you Google its name, you can find additional information and a couple of videos.

You can learn more about the family to which it belongs at

<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CritterFiles/casefile/spiders/fishing/pisaurid.htm>



IDENTIFICATION REQUEST → BAD NEWS FOR A PROJECT

Q: Can you provide a name for the wolf spider shown in the five attached examples, all captured in Bond co IL in a short-grass habitat? It is being used in a project by my undergraduate students.

A: Unfortunately there are two *Schizocosa* species with similar patterns and overlapping size ranges in IL. They can be separated based on carapace markings: (1) median light band in *S. avida* ends at the posterior pair of eyes (a thin line runs between the eyes), whereas in *S. mccooki* it remains wide as it passes forward beyond the posterior pair of eyes. (2) submarginal light band is narrow in *S. avida*, wide in *S. mccooki*.

Thus, as to your five examples, 1 and 4 are *S. mccooki*; 2, 3, and 5 are *S. avida*.

PROFESSOR'S RESPONSE TO THE ANSWER: For the poster title the students will use “*Schizocosa* spp.” and within the poster will state that the study involved *S. avida* and *S. mccooki*.



IDENTIFICATION REQUEST – WITH A POOR PHOTO

Q: I can't ID this spider with the Internet pictures I found. Do you know what it could be? Also, I couldn't find anything that explained the white dot on the head, but maybe that is a disturbance in the picture.

A: It is a wolf spider (family Lycosidae), but it is too far away for a species identification.

The white dot is a reflection from an eye. In wolf spiders, six of the eight eyes have a reflective layer (tapetum) behind the retina to improve night vision, as found in many nocturnal animals. This makes it easy to find wolf spiders at night if you wear a headlamp.

You can read about wolf spiders at

<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CritterFiles/casefile/spiders/wolf/wolf.htm>



SPIDER + INSECT IDENTIFICATION REQUEST

Q: I got a shot of this encounter in Louisiana and would enjoy knowing both species.

A: It is a female whitebanded crab spider (*Misumenoides formosipes*; family Thomisidae) feeding on a painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*; family Nymphalidae).

This is one of the crab spider species that can slowly change color (white ⇔ yellow) to match the flowers on which they wait for prey. You can read about this and other crab spiders at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CritterFiles/casefile/spiders/crab/crab.htm>



IDENTIFICATION REQUEST – A SPECIES NEW TO NORTH AMERICA

Q: I have not been able to identify this spider that is all over my pool cage in Florida.

A: It is a colonial tentweb orbweaver (*Cyrtophora citricola*; family Araneidae).

You can read about this invasive species, which was first seen in the U.S. in 2000 in your state, in an excellent article by G.B. Edwards:

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/SPIDERS/Cyrtophora_citricola.htm

CORRECTING INTERNET MISINFORMATION



Quote and photo from “THE BEST OF SICILY” website:

“Zelotes messinai, the Sicilian Tarantula has a leg span of about five inches.”

Q: I’m writing a book on Norman Sicily and would like to include a photo of a Sicilian tarantula with a story about the Norman army camping on a hill infested with them, causing the men to abandon the camp. Based on “THE BEST OF SICILY,” the photo I want is of *Zelotes messinai*.

A: “THE BEST OF SICILY” is wrong. *Zelotes messinai* is a tiny spider (body length = ¼ inch). The earliest use of the name "tarantula" was for a large wolf spider with an undeserved bad reputation. (Google “tarantism.”) It was probably this species, *Lycosa tarantula*, that caused the camp’s abandonment. You can find a photo of it at the following link:

http://www.uam.es/personal_pdi/psicologia/spiderjc/

Ask the arachnologist, Dr. Joaquín Ortega Escobar, for permission to use it.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT BEHAVIOR

Q: Today I saw hundreds of spiders on cars in a parking lot. I watched some "fly" through the air with their silk caught in the breeze.

What surprised me was how big they were--about the size of a jumping spider--much larger than what I guessed a newly hatched spider to be. Were these newly hatched, or could there be another reason there were so many?

Ballooning behavior is not limited to spiderlings that have recently left the egg sac. Given ideal weather conditions in an area, hundreds of larger juveniles--even adults--of some species will use this means of dispersal.

Indeed, the relatively large size of some silk-borne spiders is remarkable. In the genus *Stegodyphus*, ballooning can involve adults measuring up to over ½ inch in body length and weighing over 100 mg. See the following article to learn more about this behavior http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballooning_%28spider%29

INFORMATION REQUEST INVOLVING BEHAVIOR OF “A SPIDER”

Q: A friend of mine said she saw a spider in Pittsburgh, PA that had decorated itself with moss. Are there species of spiders that are known to do such a thing?

A: There are no spiders that decorate their bodies with moss. But there are some small insects that do so: lacewing larvae (order Neuroptera), which attach debris of all sorts. Because it's hard to see how many legs are present in this situation, your friend may have mistaken such an insect for a spider. Take a look at the photo at the following link to see what I mean:

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/11659>

EMAIL RESPONSE TO THE ANSWER:

**Yes, I showed the picture of the lacewing larva to my friend, and she said that it was a match!
Thank you for taking the time to clear this up.**

INFORMATION REQUEST FROM AN ARACHNOPHOB

Q: I just abandoned my car and walked home in the dark because there was a big spider on the inside of my windshield. I know that spiders are an important part of the environment, and I don't want to hurt them. Is there any natural deterrent that I can put in my car? I'm scared that it's going to happen again while I'm driving and that I will have an accident.

A: The following link is to a page describing what are claimed to be natural spider repellents:

http://www.ehow.com/way_5410696_homemade-spider-repellent.html

But even if any actually work, there's no guarantee that a spider will not briefly enter your car.

It's important to know that, of the several thousand spider species in North America, big spiders are not among those few spiders that are dangerous.

This video of a very large spider crawling on a hand shows that such spiders do not try to bite:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IXZFqUbFoc>

(If you squeezed it to make it bite, the typical result would be no worse than a bee sting.)

Remember this: our big spiders are not dangerous, but walking alone in the dark is!



IDENTIFICATION REQUEST – AN ARACHNID OTHER THAN A SPIDER

Q: Can you please tell me what type of spider this is? It was found in Apache Junction, AZ. Any information would be greatly appreciated, as I cannot seem to find anything online.

A: It is not actually a spider, but is another kind of arachnid called a tailless whipscorpion (order Amblypygi). You can read about these non-venomous arachnids at http://www.oaklandzoo.org/Tailless_Whip_Scorpion.php

In the U. S., they are limited to some of the southernmost states, such as yours.

You can watch a video about the capture and handling of a large one in a tropical rainforest, showing that they are not dangerous--except that they can pinch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awtMPTI7Cks>