

Some Common Spiders of Zimbabwe



Arranged by Jonathan Whitaker



Rhomphaea affinis (JW)

Introduction

Spiders are found nearly everywhere. They come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, fitting in perfectly to the many habitats that surround us. Zimbabwe is particularly rich in arachnofauna, with thousands of species of which only a small fraction have been well studied.

The astute among you will notice that this booklet seems a little slim to contain information on all of these spiders, and this is indeed the case. Instead of attempting to cover ALL spiders, the intent is to provide a friendly overview of those most likely to be encountered by the casual observer.

I've grouped them roughly by family and tried to move consistently from those that build large, high webs down slowly to those living on or underground. **Dangerous spiders** (there are few) have their own section at the end.

This revised edition includes the jumping spiders from 'Common Jumping Spiders of Zimbabwe'.

Spiders Covered:

- Golden Orb Weavers
- Garden Orb Weavers
- Kite Spiders
- Hermit Spiders
- Bark Spiders
- Field spiders
- Long-Jawed Orb Weavers
- Hackled Orb Weavers
- Net-Casting Spiders
- Cobweb Spiders
- Cellar Spiders
- Nursery Web Spiders
- Wall Spiders
- Long Spinned Bark Spiders
- Crab Spiders
- Running Crab Spiders
- Jumping Spiders
- Lynx Spiders
- Sac Spiders
- Velvet Spiders
- Phyxelid Spiders
- Spitting Spiders
- Wolf Spiders
- Tropical Wolf Spiders
- Flat-bellied Ground Spiders
- Zodarids
- Baboon Spiders
- Trapdoor Spiders
- Rain Spiders
- Dwarf round-headed spiders
- Lungless Spiders
- Green Pea Spider
- Garbage-Line Web Spiders
- **Violin Spiders** 
- **Button Spiders** 
- **Six-Eyed Sand Spiders** 
- **Long-legged Sac Spiders** 

I hope that this book inspires you to find out even more about these fascinating creatures.

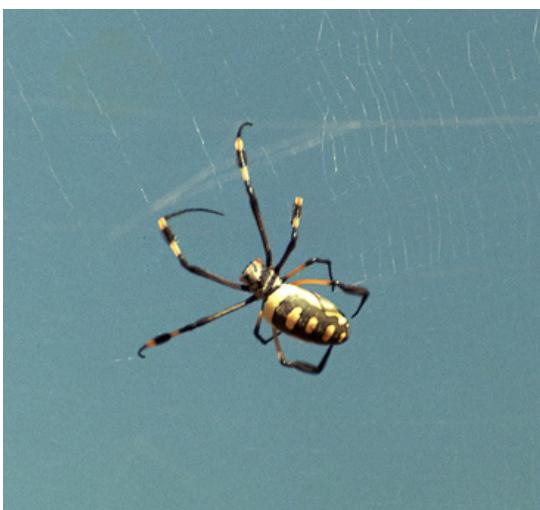
Golden Orb Weavers

These large spiders build strong webs that have ensnared many of us at some point in our lives.



Southern Blackleg Orbweaver
Trichonephila fenestrata - note black
brush on legs. Sandy Nell

Females mature early in the year, at which point you can often find several males hanging around the edge of the web. *T. fenestrata* and *T. senegalensis* are most common in Zimbabwe, although the Redleg Orbweaver (*T. inaurata*) has also been recorded.



Banded-legged Golden Orb-web
Spider, *Trichonephila senegalensis*

Garden Orbweavers

Genus *Argiope* ('silver head'). These large orbweavers often construct a web decoration ('stabilimentum') at the center of their webs.



Argiope sp. with cross-shaped
stabilimentum. ICR



Common Garden Orbweb Spider
Argiope australis. ICR



Banded Garden Spider *Argiope*
trifasciata (introduced). ICR

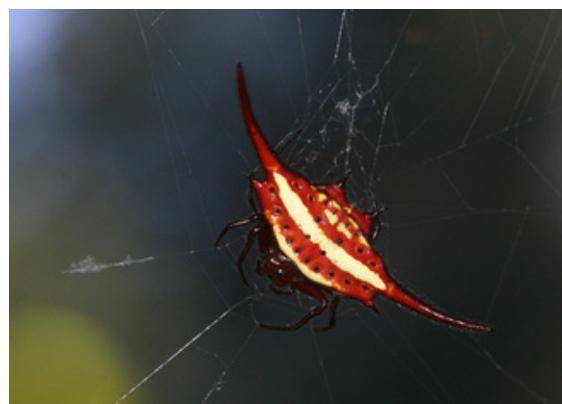
Kite Spiders

I call these two genera 'karate spiders' after their tendency to build their webs across footpaths.



Biscuit Boxkite, *Isoxya tabulata*, JW

Boxkite spiders (*Isoxya sp.*) and Spiny Orbweavers (*Gasteracantha sp.*) can be quite variable in colour. With *Gasteracantha* in particular the length of the spines is the best way to tell the different species apart in the field.



Longhorn Kitespider, *Gasteracantha milvooides* (c) Bart Wursten – some rights reserved (CC BY-NC-SA)



Shorthorn Kitespider, *Gasteracantha sanguinolenta*. © Bart Wursten, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC)

Hermit Spiders

These spiders spend most of their time in a tubular retreat above a large orb web.



African Hermit Spider *Nephilingis cruentata* in her retreat. JW



African Hermit Spider with male visible top right. Largest F:M size ratio recorded JW

Bark Spiders

Genus *Caerostris*. These spiders hide on tree trunks during the day, emerging at night to construct large webs between the trees.



Caerostris sp., DR



Caerostris sp., JW

These spiders can be quite variable, both in colour and in overall shape.



Caerostris sp., DR

Field Spiders

Spiky Field Spiders (*Pararaneus* sp.) and Hairy Field Spiders (*Neoscona* sp.) are two large, variable genera of orb weavers. They build a web each night.



Neoscona sp. hiding out in a rose during the day. JW



Spiky Field Spider, *Pararaneus* sp. in a web at night, JW



Hairy Field Spider aka Spotted Orbweaver *Neoscona* sp., JW

Cucumber Spiders

Genus *Prasonica*. Small green orb-weavers that can be easily overlooked. There are several species, with different patterns on the abdomen.



Prasonica nigrotaeniata, JW



Male *Prasonica* sp., JW

Trash-line Orbweavers



Common Garbage-Line Web Spider
Cyclosa insulana, JW

Misc. Orbweavers

There are so many unique species in Araneidae that we can't possibly cover them all, but here are three more you may encounter:



Hypsosinga holzapfelae, previously placed in the genus *Araneus*, JW



Tropical Tent-web Spider *Cyrtophora citricola* with characteristic square web pattern. Colour varies. GC



Green Pea Spider, *Araneus apricus* (Family Araneidae). In many the brown markings are absent. JW

Long-jawed Orb Weavers



Silver Vlei Spider, *Leucauge* sp., JW

These spiders build smaller, horizontal orb webs with an open hub in the centre. Males have elongated jaws, although 'Long-jawed Orb Weaver' often refers to the genus *Tetragnatha* specifically. Many species are associated with water, and so *Leucauge* sp. are also referred to as 'marsh spiders', 'water orbweavers' and similar.



Leucauge levanderi ©
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The long jaws of *Tetragnatha* sp., JW



Tetragnatha sp., JW



Leucauge thomeensis, quite different
from the other *Leucauge* JW



Leucauge sp. near the open central
hub of the web.

Family Uloboridae and Deinopidae

Hackled Orb Weavers



Uloborus plumipes with crushed ball of prey. JW

This whole family has no venom glands. Instead, they rely on web to capture and envelop prey.



A small Hackled Orb Weaver, family Uloboridae, JW



Miagrammopes sp. imitating a stick. They hold a single line of stretchy silk, releasing it when prey touches the line. JW

Net-Casting Spiders



Long-palp Ogre-faced Spider, *Deinopis cylindrica*

Net-casting spiders hold a square of sticky silk and hurl it onto passing prey.



Ogre-faced Spider, *Deinopis anchietae*
© Wynand Uys, some rights reserved
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Hump-back Spider, *Menneus* sp.

Cobweb Spiders



False House Button Spider, *Theridion* sp., JW

A large family of spiders that build messy tangle webs and are often found around homes and gardens. The button spiders are in this family, but will be included in the 'Dangerous Spiders' section. The other species can be hard to identify, which has left the family lacking in taxonomic attention.



An undescribed species from Harare, Zimbabwe. Species #3 for the time being. JW



Thwaitesia sp. Similar to *Argyrodes* sp. which can also have shiny silver markings. JW



Achaearanea sp. These will often fill their web with debris such as past prey, snake skin, leaves etc. JW



False Button Spider, *Steatoda* sp. near its fresh egg sac. JW

Cellar Spiders

Affectionately known as 'Daddy-Long-Legs', these spiders share our homes and catch mosquitos and other pests (and also other spiders) in their messy webs.



Giant Daddy-long-legs Spider, *Artema atlanta*, © Aniruddha Singhamahapatra
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Giant DLL after a green meal, JW

They carry their eggs in their jaws, and the young only disperse after their first moult.



Smeringopus sp. with young, JW

Nursery Web Spiders

Pisaurids are generally large spiders that build dense sheet webs (or funnels in the case of *Euprosthenops*). The family also includes fishing spiders that hunt tadpoles and fish.



Crown Pisaurid, *Rothus* sp., GC



Funnelweb Spider *Euprosthenops* sp.



Dark Fisheating Spider *Nilus margaritatus*, GC

Family Selenopidae and Hersiliidae

Wall Crab Spiders

Family Selenopidae, a common resident in many of our homes.



Selenops radiatus. MF



Anyhops sp. DR



Selenops sp.

These spiders are excellent for pest control, feeding on cockroaches, moths etc.

Long-Spinnered Bark Spiders

Family Hersiliidae, also known as tree-trunk spiders after their preferred habitat. The long spinneretts (the 'tail') are diagnostic.



Common Long Spinned Tree Spider
Hersilia sericea, JW

These spiders are extremely fast and timid, and they blend in well with bark and lichen. However, the females remain stationary when guarding their egg sacs, providing an opportunity for a closer look.



Hersilia sp. on eggs. JW

Crab Spiders



Thomisus scrupeus, JW

Ambush predators that often take on prey many times their size, crab spiders are a hugely diverse family that can be found anywhere prey might try to land.



Oxytate concolor, JW

Look in flowers for the colourful *Thomisus* species, or check out flowering trees where you might find a tiny 3mm *Mystaria* dangling from a silk strand with a bee.



Diaeapuncta, JW



Misumenops rubrodecoratus, JW



Simorcus sp., JW



A flower crab spider, *Thomisus* sp. in a rose, JW



Parabomis megae, a small (2-4mm) ambush predator. Despite relative abundance this species was only described in 2020. JW

Running Crab Spiders

Originally a sub-family within Thomisidae, the Running Crab Spider family (Philodromidae) are well-camouflaged ambush hunters that can move very fast when disturbed



A running crab spider, *Philodromus* sp.
found at the Spider Club AGM, JW



Thanatus sp., DR

The family is quite variable, and there are some undescribed species around.



Slender Crab Spider, *Tibellus* sp., JW

Jumping Spiders

Jumping spiders are one of the largest and most diverse spider families. They are also my favourite group, so much so that they originally had an entire booklet devoted to them. The contents of 'Common Jumping Spiders of Zimbabwe' are included and take up the next few pages. Their prominent front-facing eyes give them excellent vision for hunting and also make them easy to identify. Since they are all harmless to humans and completely adorable, they make a good first spider to learn :)

Genera covered:

- Portia
- Holcolaetus
- Menemerus
- Tusitala
- Brancus
- Thyene
- Phintella
- Heliophanus
- Harmochirus
- Evarcha
- Hasarius
- Baryphas
- Pellenes
- Hyllus
- Myrmarachne
- Mexcala
- Natta
- Pseudicius
- Phlegra
- Stenaelurillus

Portia schultzi - Long Legged Dandy

Habitat: Walls, Shrubs

Size: Medium

Identifying: Unusual appearance, 'mustache'

Species: schultzi



Portia schultzi male (c) Peter Vos – some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

Portia is a famous spider hunter, using a wide range of techniques to take on large prey. They are common house guests, preying on the false house buttons (*theridion* sp) and daddy long-legs (*pholcidae*) that make their homes indoors.



Portia female, (c) Wynand Uys – some rights reserved (CC BY)

Holcolaetis

Habitat: Walls, rocks, tree trunks

Size: Medium/Large

Identifying: Long flat bodies, unusual scorpion-like movement

Species: holcolaetis, vellerea



Holcolaetis zuluensis female (c) Wynand Uys – some rights reserved (CC BY)

Another wall-loving spider hunter, these spiders have a very strange way of moving about. They will jump to catch prey, but usually advance in a sort of creeping shuffle waving their front legs.



Holcolaetis zuluensis male (c) Joan Faiola, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

Menemerus - Wall jumping Spiders

Habitat: Walls, tree trunks

Size: Medium

Identifying: Fairly flat bodies, habitat and orange eyefield

Species: bivittatus (most common), bifurcus, carlini and zimbabwensis



Menemerus bivittatus - Grey Wall Jumping Spider, JW

The common name of 'Wall Jumping Spider' is an apt one. They are plentiful in and around buildings, especially where lights attract prey.



Menemerus bifurcus - Zambia Menemerus Jumping Spider, JW



Menemerus bivittatus mating, picture by Dan Rautenbauch



Menemerus bivittatus - picture by JW showing two views of the same spider



Menemerus carlini, JW



Menemerus sp. male, JW

Tusitala

Habitat: Trees (leaves), shrubs

Size: Medium

Identifying: Body slopes backwards

Species: *barbata*, *lyrata*, *hirsuta*



Tusitala hirsuta female, JW

Although usually found in trees where they make retreats among the leaves, these spiders often wander into homes as well. They are quite variable, but a picture of the underside can help with identification.



Tusitala hirsuta male, JW



T. hirsuta underside (female), JW



T. hirsuta in leaf retreat after moult (female), JW

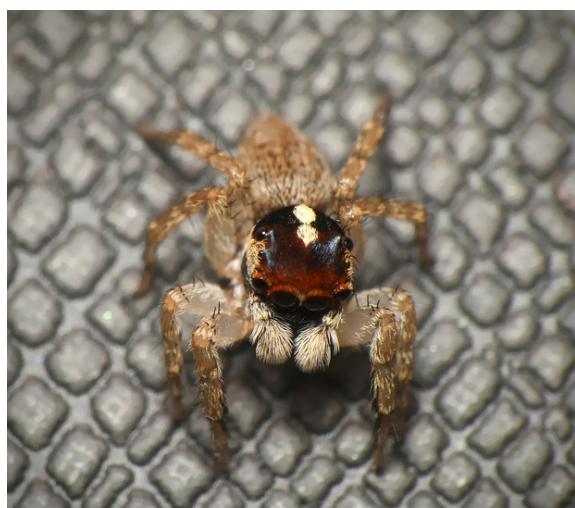
Thyenula

Habitat: Shrubs, leaf litter

Size: Medium-Small

Species: Various species

Charming little spiders, quite common around homes and gardens.



Thyenula munda male, JW

Brancus Mustelus

Habitat: Trees (leaves), shrubs

Size: Medium

Identifying: Colouration



Brancus mustelus female, JW

These striking saltis are some of the best jumpers of the family, leaping large distances to move between branches or catch prey.

They are sexually dimorphic, with the males looking very different to the females:



Brancus mustelus pair, JW

They are also one of the friendlier species and have a tendency to jump on anyone trying to take their picture.

Thyene

Habitat: Trees (leaves), shrubs

Size: Medium

Species: Genus in need of revision, but most common seem to be inflata, natali, coccineovittata and buccellata



Thyene sp, possibly coccineovittata, (c) Alexandre S. Michelotto – some rights reserved (CC BY-SA)



T. inflata, (c) Wynand Uys – some rights reserved (CC BY)



T. natali, (c) Wynand Uys – some rights reserved (CC BY)

Phintella

Habitat: Shrubs

Size: Medium/Small

Species: *lajuma*, *aequipes*, etc



Phintella aequipes male (males have stripy legs), JW

Less often encountered, but common enough and often found by searching with a torch at night (some hang by a thread overnight) or shaking branches over a sheet.



Phintella aequipes female, (c) Wynand Uys, some rights reserved (CC BY)

P. *aequipes* has very distinct patterns, while other species can be quite plain.



Phintella lajuma - stark white, JW



Phintella lajuma, JW



Phintella sp. (we think), JW



Phintella sp. (we think), JW

Heliophanus

Habitat: Trees, shrubs, leaf litter

Size: Medium/Small

Species: Many



A large female Heliophanus sp, JW

Heliophanus is a huge genus of jumping spiders. Included here are some examples, but identifying to species is tricky.



A small Heliophanus sp., JW



Heliophanus sp, possibly *H. pistacea* or *H. debilis*, JW



A tiny Heliophanus sp in leaf litter, JW



Heliophanus sp male, Doug Charlton, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC)



Heliophanus sp female, (c) Doug Charlton

Harmochirus luculentus

Habitat: Ground level

Size: Small

Identifying: Chonky front legs



Harmochirus luculentus, JW

Often seen running about in leaf litter, pausing to wave those front legs.

Evarcha

Habitat: Ground level, shrubs

Size: Medium/Small

Species: prosimilus, ignea, flagellaris



Bluelip Evarcha Jumping Spider
Evarcha flagellaris, JW



Evarcha ignea male, JW

E. ignea and E. prosimillus males both have a brightly coloured red face and can be hard to distinguish, but ignea is usually a lighter orange shade. These are very friendly spiders.



E prosimillus, JW



E. prosimillus female. Hard to separate from other Evarcha species. JW

Hasarius Adansoni

Habitat: Generalist

Size: Medium

Identifying: Common spiders in houses. Differentiated from the similar Rumbarak laxus by having a white top to the whole palp and no white touching the eyes.



National Geographic

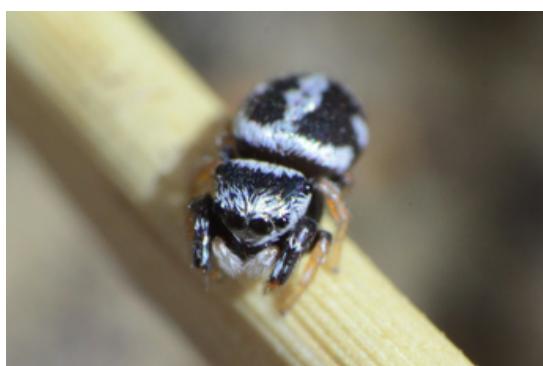
Adanson's House Jumping Spider
Hasarius adansoni (c) Richard Ong –
some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

Pellenes

Habitat: Grass, shrubs near ground

Size: Small

Very small, compact spiders.



Pellenes tharinae, JW

Baryphas aheneus

Habitat: Ground, shrubs

Size: Medium

Identifying: Teddy bear face :)

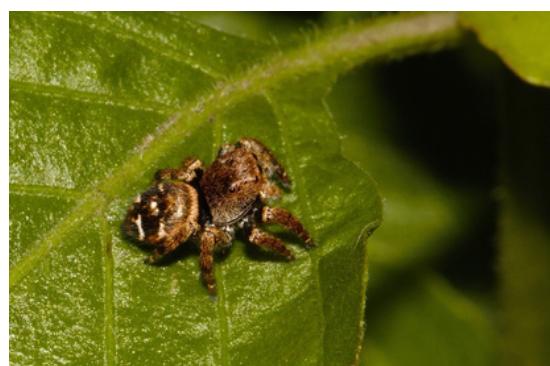


Baryphas Jumping Spider Baryphas aheneus, JW

These personable spiders are common across Zimbabwe.



Baryphas aheneus, JW



Baryphas aheneus © i_c_riddell, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC)

Hyllus

Habitat: Close to ground

Size: LARGE, some >15mm

Identifying: Impressively large and hairy

Species: *treleaveni*, *argyrotoxus*, *brevitarsis*, *dotata*



Hyllus treleaveni male, (c) william van Niekerk – some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

Hyllus is a genus of large jumping spiders, including *H. treleaveni*, the largest jumping spider in Africa. They are often seen on aloes and other low plants. The only salti I know of to have been observed preying on scorpions.



Black and White Hyllus Jumping Spider
Hyllus argyrotoxus © Joan Faiola, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC) I& JW



Hyllus treleaveni female (c) Christine Sydes – some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)



Hyllus treleaveni male with scale bar
(c) Christine Sydes – some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

All species in this genus can be quite variable and are sexually dimorphic, so check out pictures on iNaturalist et al to figure out species.



Hyllus brevitarsis, (c) Wynand Uys, some rights reserved (CC-BY)

Myrmarachne

Habitat: Ground level

Size: Small

Identifying: Ant-like appearance

Species: *M. marshalli* common, but many similar species



Myrmarachne sp, JW

These small ant-mimics roam around near ground level but can sometimes be found in their retreats, which are often built in corners or cracks of walls and garden furniture. The males have extended Chelicerae that help with their mimicry.



Myrmarachne sp, likely marshalli,
Thomas Shahan, some rights
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Mexcala

Habitat: Ground level

Size: Medium but highly variable

Identifying: Ant-like, waves front legs like antennae

Species: *elegans*, *quadrimaculata*



Mexcala elegans male, JW

These ant mimics will chase the ants which they resemble, often for long distances, keeping up their act.



Mexcala elegans, JW



M. quadrimaculata female. Can be hard to separate from *M. elegans*. JW

Natta

Habitat: Ground level

Size: Small

Identifying: Red/orange dots, elongated body, front legs

Species: *N. horizontalis* most common



Natta sp., JW

These small and fast-moving spiders can be tough to photograph. They rush about in leaf litter, pausing to give their front arms a wave. Similar to *Harmonchirus* but less squat and usually with one or more orange dots on abdomen.



Natta horizontalis (c) Wynand Uys – some rights reserved (CC BY)

Pseudicius

Habitat: Tree trunks

Size: Medium

Identifying: Similar to *mememerus* sp, eye field and abdomen pattern differ.



Pseudicius sp., JW



Pseudicius sp., JW

Phlegra karoo

Habitat: Ground level

Size: Medium



Phlegra karoo, JW

Stenaelurillus

Habitat: Ground and leaf litter

Size: Small/Medium

Identifying: Patterns, behaviour

Species: *termitophagus*, *guttiger*,
guttagus, *Stenaelurillus*
leucogrammus, ...



Termite Mimic Spider *Stenaelurillus termitophagus*, JW

Stenaelurillus is a genus of jumping spiders often found in leaf litter. Many are termite specialists, with some like *S. termitophagus* found feasting in groups around termite mounds.



A smaller *Stenaelurillus* (possibly *guttagus*) in leaf litter, JW



S. leucogrammus males facing off, JW

Males of *S. leucogrammus* spend their days chasing each other around, with each chase preceded by a challenge in the form of abdomen raising and posturing, after which one will flee leaving the victor to chase or take over the contested leaf.



Stenaelurillus termitophagus feeding on termites, JW



S. guttiger female, JW

Lynx Spiders



Oxyopes sp. likely *O. bothai*, JW

These agile hunters don't build webs to catch food. Instead, they are predominantly ambush predators, using their strong, spiny legs to catch prey. There are three genera in Zimbabwe.

- *Peucetia* (green lynx spiders) are large and a vivid green.
- *Hamataliwa* (crowned lynx spiders) have distinctive tufts of hair above the eyes.
- *Oxyopes* (grass lynx spiders) are very variable.



Peucetia sp., JW



Hamataliwa sp., JW



Oxyopes sp. guarding eggs. JW



Undescribed *Oxyopes sp.*, JW



Oxyopes sp., JW

Sac Spiders



Cheiramiona sp., JW

'Sac Spiders' can be a confusing term - at least three families share this common name. The bites of some long-legged sac spiders are potentially medically significant which has given all the rest an unfairly bad reputation.



A male long-legged sac spider,
Cheiracanthium molle, JW



Leaf Curling Sac spider (Clubionidae)
in its daytime retreat. JW



Graptartia Dark Sac Spider *Graptartia granulosa*. A velvet ant mimic in the Corinnidae family. DR



Ground and Ant-mimic Sac Spider,
Family Corinnidae © Wynand Uys,
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Leaf Curling Sac Spiders (Clubionidae) and Long-legged Sac Spiders (Cheiracanthyiidae) mostly hunt in plants, unlike those in the family Corinnidae, which, as the family name implies, hunt at ground level.



Corinnomma sp. (Corinnidae), JW

Velvet Spiders

The velvet spiders are a small but remarkable family. Some are social, and all share a unique type of maternal care. From Wikipedia: "Upon the birth of her brood, the mother spider liquefies her internal organs and regurgitates this material as food. Once her capability to liquefy her insides is exhausted, the young sense this and consume the mother."



Tree Velvet Spider, *Gandanameno* sp.,
JW

They make lacey, unkempt webs. Some (*Dresserus* sp.) live under stones while others (*Gandanameno* sp.) prefer trees.



Tree Velvet Spider web. JW

The 'Social Spiders' build communal webs that can grow large and encompass whole trees when there is adequate food. They retreat into tunnels within the web when approached. Together they can tackle much larger prey.



African Social Spider *Stegodyphus dumicola*, GC



Stegodyphus dumicola web, JW



Stegodyphus dumicola (male), JW

Phyxelid Spiders

Sometimes called lace web spiders, these are often found in web retreats under stones or logs.



Many Phyxelid spiders show irridescence under magnification. JW



Vidole capensis showing web.



Themacrys sp. © suretha_dorse,(CC-BY-NC)

Spitting Spiders

Small spiders often found in leaf litter. Characterised by 6 eyes in three pairs and the sloping head shape. These spiders are unique in being able to shoot a sticky web-like substance to ensnare prey from a distance!



Scytodes sp., JW

Most are <5mm long, and so this special ability is used for taking down larger prey and also as a defence against other spiders such as wolf spiders that might otherwise view the spitting spiders as a tasty morsel.



Scytodes sp. JW

Wolf Spiders

A large family that can be hard to ID to species. The only family that carry their young on their back. Ground dwelling, living in leaf litter or in burrows. You have hundreds in your lawn.



Wolf spiders can be told apart from tropical wolf spiders (Ctenids) by the eye pattern. Note four (not two) eyes visible in the bottom row.



Pardosa sp., JW



A large *Hogna sp.*, JW

Tropical Wolf Spiders

Family Ctenidae are also referred to as 'wandering spiders' but unlike some species elsewhere in the world, a bite from ours will do no serious damage to humans.



Afroneutria erythrochelis, a large species of Ctenid. JW



Ctenus gulosus, a species that seems to love our bathtub. JW



Note the eyes - Two large front-facing eyes and two smaller ones visible below them. JW

Family Gnaphosidae and Zodariidae

Flat-bellied Ground Spiders

This family contains many species that look identical except under a microscope, so identifying beyond genus is hard. They all share the elongated spinnerets.



Theuma sp., JW



Zelotes sp., JW

They build tubular silken retreats under stones and logs. They hunt at night by touch.



Drassodes sp., JW

Zodariidae

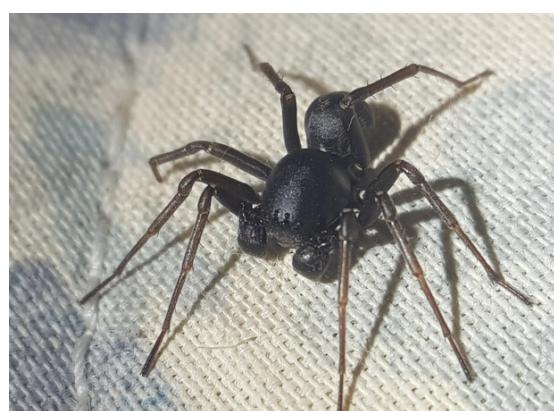
Sometimes called 'Ant-eating Spiders', this family does contain some species that prey on ants or termites but not all are specialists. Some construct burrows with lids.



Hermippus tenebrosus, JW

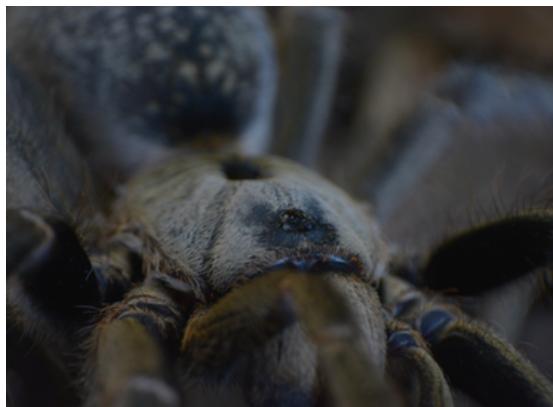


Diores sp., JW



Hermippus sp., DR

Mygalomorphs



Ceratogyrus sanderi (Family Theraphosidae), JW

Mygalomorphs are an infraorder of spiders whose fangs bite downwards rather than inwards. The group includes our tarantulas (baboon spiders as they are called here) as well as other species like the trapdoor spiders. Like the salticids, they deserve their own booklet so for now, we will simply show a few representative species.



Cranial Horned Baboon Spider
Ceratogyrus dolichocephalus, DR



Wafer-lid Trapdoor Spiders Family
Cyrtaucheniidae



Common Trapdoor Baboon Spider
Idiothele nigrofulva



Straight Horned Baboon Spider
Ceratogyrus marshalli DR



'Two-tailed Myg', *Telechoris striatipes*
(Family Ischnothelidae)

Miscellaneous Spiders

This section contains some spiders that didn't quite fit in with the rest of their family, or that represent a family that we have not otherwise covered.



Rain Spider, *Palystes* sp. (Family Sparassidae) - a common house guest during rainy spells, these large Huntsman spiders are harmless but give a painful bite when defending their nests. JW



Dwarf Round-Headed Spider, *Oecobius* sp. (Family Oecobiidae)
You likely have one of these tiny spiders on your windowsill running circles around a small sugar ant. JW



Tube web spider, *Ariadna* sp. (Family Segestriidae), JW



Caponia sp. (Family Caponiidae), DR



Palpimanus, one of the Palp-footed Spiders (Family Palpimanidae), DR



Funnel Weaver (Family Agelenidae), DR

Miscellaneous Spiders (cont)

It turns out there are lots of spider species in Zimbabwe! Here are a few more that I've found which seem worthy of inclusion in this book.



Hump Back Araneid Spider *Eriovixia excelsa*



Olios auricomis



Zenonina sp. (one of the more unusual wolf spiders)



Tetragnatha subsquamata



Probably an Ant-eating Spider,
Euryopis sp.



An undescribed 'strawberry Therid', family Theridiidae



Longleg Bolas Spider *Cladomelea longipes*

Miscellaneous Spiders (cont)



Mahembea hewitti, in the Orbweaver family. JW



One of the Sheetweb and Dwarf Weavers Family Linyphiidae



A male African Hermit Spider *Nephilingis cruentata*. These are much smaller than the females, showing one of the more extreme examples of sexual dimorphism in spiders.



Banded Stone-nest Spider
Nemoscolus cotti



Gephyrota glauca, family Philodromidae



An undescribed spider in the Chryssso group, family Theridiidae



Copa Dark Sac Spider *Copa flavoplumosa*

Dangerous Spiders

There are only a handful of dangerous spiders in Zimbabwe. Black buttons have neurotoxic venom which attacks the nervous system and causes all sorts of unpleasant symptoms. Brown buttons are similar although less extreme. Both buttons are web-bound and extremely shy to bite, so bites are rare despite the fact that both are common around human habitation.



Brown Button, *Latrodectus geometricus*. Patterns can vary but dark knees and a red hourglass on the underside are helpful for ID. JW



Black button, likely *L. renivulvatus*. Females can be entirely black, males stripey in red, white, brown/black. DR

Bites from Long-Legged sac spiders in the genus *Cheiracanthium* may cause necrotic skin lesions prone to secondary infections



Cheiracanthium sp. © Gareth Yearsley (CC-BY-NC)



Northern Violin Spider *Loxosceles simillima* © Joan Faiola, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC)

Then in family Sicariidae, we have violin spiders, which are common in homes but rarely seen. They can deliver a nasty tissue-destroying bite. And finally, the rare Sixeyed Sand Spider. Almost no bites recorded, but the venom is very potent and dangerous.



Sixeyed Sand Spider *Hexopthalma hahni* © djdouglas, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC)

Additional Resources

Here are some resources to go further:

- inaturalist.org - A great website/app where you can upload pictures of your finds and get identification assistance from the community. By using iNat you also contribute massively to citizen science, since your records can be used by researchers down the line.
- afspiders.wikidot.com/ - a wiki where I'm trying to collect as much information on our African spiders as possible (more a future project than a current resource)
- The Spider Club of Zimbabwe Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/spiderclubzw>)
- The World Spider Catalog (<https://wsc.nmbe.ch/>) - membership is free and grants access to a treasure trove of scientific literature. For each species, they provide links to the papers with the descriptions and diagrams that are essential when trying to identify a spider to species level.
- Baboon Spider identification video: <https://youtu.be/mA9v8JxDT8k> - great for anyone wanting to learn more about this family
- The South African spider photo guides available through <https://afras.ufs.ac.za/> are useful as there is a lot of overlap between South African and Zimbabwean arachnofauna.

Acknowledgements

Image attribution has been given where possible. Some records submitted through WhatsApp have no information associated - let me know if you see one of yours. The following abbreviations are used for some contributors:

- JW - Jonathan Whitaker
- DR - Daniel Lee Owen Rautenbach
- MR - Moira FitzPatrick
- ICR - Ian C. Riddel
- GC - Grahm Cochrane

A book like this is only possible in community. Experts help steer us amateurs in the right direction. Patient specialists help with identifications and feedback. Enthusiasts post pictures of their finds and in so doing build a store of invaluable data for those that follow. Friends provide inspiration and encouragement. A massive thank you to those listed above for their photographs and to Prof. A.S. Dippenaar-Schoeman and Dr Moira FitzPatrick for giving feedback. Any remaining mistakes or omissions are my own.



Holcolaetis sp. (JW)

