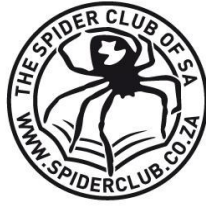


The Spider Club News



APRIL/MAY 2016 - Vol. 32 #1



Female rain spider *Palystes superciliosus* resting in a dead *Protea* flower – Yebo Gogga 2010 – Photo J. Faiola

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Don't forget to consult the SCSA diary on our website and Facebook page for super events coming up soon. If you are a registered SCSA member you will receive emails and/or texts advising you of what's coming up. As usual, Norman Larsen will be in attendance at the Cape Union Mart Adventure Centre in Cape Town's Canal Walk every Saturday 11-12 to demonstrate and talk about spiders.

About the Spider Club

The Spider Club of Southern Africa is a non-profit organisation. Our aim is to encourage an interest in arachnids – especially spiders and scorpions - 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.

Our Mission Statement

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

Contact Us

Committee

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

From the hub

SORRY FOLKS ☹️ For the usual reason of lack of spare time and content plus the many public holidays at this time of year, we're late again! We do apologise but we would also like to appeal to all of you out there to send interesting observations, reports and articles to Joan (joan@spiderclub.co.za) to include in our next Spider Club News. I know I repeat this appeal time and again but there is a reason, we need content.

PAY NO MORE!

By now you should be aware that annual subscriptions for all current and new members are suspended from July 2016 until further notice BUT from July 2016 we will ask for R50 per adult and R10 per child 11 years and under to attend events such as field trips that are organized by the club. This will apply to **everyone** except for the event leader. We still need a certain amount of money to run the club, send out your newsletter, notices and reminders. This one of the ways we plan to raise it. It seemed unfair that those distant members must pay for events when they cannot participate.

CALLING CAPETONIANS

Jacky is off to Cape Town the last week of May and has contacted as many spider people as she can, to get things going there. Good luck Jacky, tell us how things pan out and give our greetings to our colleagues in the fishing village.

NORTHWESTERS

We often get complaints that "everything happens in Gauteng". Ja well, it DOES, we are not called the powerhouse of Africa for nothing! So Niela who lives in Rustenburg took the bit in her teeth and arranged for us to visit a farm near Thabazimbi in Northwest Province. With very short notice the venue had to be changed because of riots, burning tyres – you know the deal – in and around the mines at Thabazimbi. Instead we went to an absolutely WONDERFUL farm called Loerkop off the N4 between Koster and Rustenburg. It is under 2 hours' drive from Johannesburg, less from Pretoria. The campsite was truly spectacular and the bush thick and beautiful. If you didn't attend, you truly lost out! See Jeremy's report and Niela's spider list.

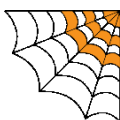
Summer is almost over and even in the intense heat and drought we experienced in the first half of the season spiders still operated although perhaps in lesser numbers than usual. We have had some notably successful and interesting field trips in varied habitats and if the numbers of spiders and other invertebrates are low, the variety is still astonishing. Have a look at the reports on a weekend at Gerhard Benade's farm, Deelfontein in the hills and valleys of the Vredefort Dome, our field trip to Korsmans Bird Sanctuary around a pan in Benoni on the far east Rand and Sunday 10th April's well-attended spider walk in the pretty Moreletakloof Municipal nature reserve in suburban Pretoria, a microcosm of the savannah biome. It really was a shame that so few went to Deelfontein because the accommodation was excellent with comfortable rooms, real beds and a great kitchen. The spiders were few but interesting and our charming host Gerhard is living the eco-dream, almost off the grid with composting loos and minimal water use in spite of having a fine big swimming pool just outside our front door. Vredefort isn't really far; in fact it is closer for me than Benoni! The only other Spider Club members who came to Deelfontein drove all the way from Rustenburg, Cherie and Niela du Preez. Now that is what I call dedication! See the report in this newsletter.

Please check our diary for events and join in the spider fun. You can volunteer to help at the stands at upcoming shows and we badly need spiders to for show, so if you have a rain spider or two please keep them. They are the best ambassadors for spiders that we know of but any of the familiar spiders; big enough to see are most welcome.

- Yebo Gogga 11 – 15th May at Wits University. Volunteers to contact Joan on joan@spiderclub.co.za
- LA Sport & 4x4 and outdoor exhibition at Capital Park in Pretoria 4th & 5th May, volunteers to contact Astri astri@spiderclub.co.za
- Then there's the A.G.M. at the Imbizo Centre at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden on 12th June.

It's your club. Your participation is vitally important so come along and meet fellow spider-people, enjoy good food, good company and not one but TWO presentations. Niela du Preez and Karel de Bont will entertain us, both of them are passionately interested in spiders and it shows.

Astri



Note from the Editor



Once again I have to apologise for the lateness of the newsletter. Unfortunately work, and some personal issues, has got in the way.

This is a bumper edition to make up for it, and if I were to give it a special title, I would call it Bumper Field Trip Edition. Between January and April we had some of the most exceptional field trips ever, and the contributions by participants were so particularly creative and well laid out to be included in the newsletter exactly as submitted. Thanks to all the contributors for your artistic submissions.

We are doing away with the diary at the end of the newsletter. We now have bulk email and bulk SMS, and details are also published on our website. Astri has listed the upcoming events in her Hub.

Look out for Tone Killick's interesting story of a parasite on an English clubionid – with excellent photos.

We have a fascinating and detailed account of a *Parabuthus* scorpion envenomation in this issue. For next time we will publish an account of a black button spider bite. (Not wanting too much venom in one issue!)

See You at Yebo Gogga! And great spider wishes!

Joan

SPIDER HUNTING IN A BIRD SANCTUARY?

KORSMANS BIRD SANCTUARY 24th January 2016

By Astri Leroy



It's a fact that birds eat spiders, so why a bird sanctuary? Well, we were invited and it is a new venue for the club. Korsmans is a natural pan which has been fenced and preserved in the Benoni suburb of Westdene on the East Rand (for those outside South Africa that is the far eastern side of Johannesburg). At some time in the last several decades *Phragmites* reeds were introduced which may or may not have been a good thing, but it does mean that there are places for small birds and invertebrates to hide above the shallow water. We had been advised to bring gumboots but those who had paddled out to a rocky island and some clumps of reeds looking for fishing spiders found mostly guano and dead coots.

It was a delightfully social occasion as well as turning up some nice spiders. Our hostess Jane Trembath is a niece of a friend of my youth and Lynne Chalmers, a scuba diving buddy, arrived along with a bunch of old and new Spider Club members and several members of Korsmans friends group, a super bunch of people.

As any of you from the northern provinces will know the second half of January this year produced about one third of our average annual rainfall so the long grass was wet, wet, wet by the 24th of January. To say the veld surrounding the pan was lush is an understatement. Check Jeremy admiring the green grass as if he'd never seen it before. Well that's kind of how we all felt after the extraordinary heat and drought of the first half of summer.



Above: Jeremy admiring the grass

Right: Sorting spiders

Top Banner: Esti and Jacky Photos © Astri Leroy



We found a variety of interesting spiders; Rueon and Wendy Scott did the dry-land hunting and came up with a spectacular ant-imitating corinnid in the genus *Merenius*. Grass sweeps showed that the most abundant orb-weaving spider was *Kilima decens* and as usual there were many small lycosids (wolf spiders) scurrying in the grass and over the water. We found what I thought was *Pirata africana* (African water wolf spider) in the shallows with her egg sac but when I had a better look it turned out to be *Hippasa australis* (funnel-web wolf spider).

Below left: ant-like corinnid



Below right: Araneidae – *Kilima decens*



WEEKEND AT THE DOME ARTS RETREAT ON THE FARM DEELFONTEIN - 13th & 14th February 2016

By Astri Leroy – with photos by Niela Du Preez



We were originally invited by Gerhard Benade about 18 months ago to present spiders to members of the public and to see what arachnids occur on his farm. We advised and advertised and marketed this mid-summer field trip to Spider Club members by every means possible but only three turned up - me and Cherie and Niela du Preez. The du Preez girls drove all the way from Rustenburg to Roodepoort then on in my car to The Dome. They are without doubt the most dedicated spider people I know!

From Roodepoort it should have been a 90 minute drive but heck, great directions notwithstanding I took a wrong turn at the very end and we only JUST squeaked in, still in our town clothes, in time to greet our guests and take them on a spider walk. The walk was great but the spiders rather scarce and when it was time to give a presentation I discovered I'd left my projector behind. No worries, the folk huddled round my laptop and were full of questions. Bad planning on my part!

The Dome Arts Retreat is structured for groups of musicians, not spider people and has really comfortable accommodation; we had a bedroom each in the original farmhouse. Our host Gerhard specialises in baroque music (no

don't ask me, I am a musical philistine!) and he is in the throes of building a theatre on his property. It is the only place where I have stored vials full of spiders on a grand piano. He also farms goats, repairs pianos and old cars, trained as a mathematician, is a mountaineer, is fluent in German, English and of course Afrikaans – maybe he has more languages, I don't know. Gerhard gets around the farm on a mountain bike, is training a Border collie puppy and builds his own buildings. He is a man of many parts.



When the guests had gone home we spent the afternoon looking for more spiders and were delighted to find an immature *Argiope australis* on a hillside path. The spider's web was in a rather awkward spot for photography on a stony slope but nothing puts Niela off her spider photography. The best locations for finding spiders were around the buildings and outbuilding not out in the veld which was still very dry. The underside of the thatch yielded both common (*Latrodectus geometricus*) and Zimbabwe brown button spiders (*L rhodesiensis*), more or less side-by-side and a nice big segestriid (tube web spider). There were flatties (*Anyphops* sp.) on both inside and outside walls and of course *Smeringopus* (daddy long-legs spiders) all over the workshop and more brown button spiders in the half-built theatre. Rubble was thoroughly investigated and many velvet spiders in the genus *Dresserus* were found under bricks, tiles and bits of corrugated iron.



The afternoon was rounded off with a swim in the big pool in front of the farmhouse and a braai in a raised lapa. We were desolated to discover no-one had thought to bring wine. After supper Gerhard took us walking on the opposite hills to see what we could find at night. Spider hunting at night is always exhilarating but our best find was not a spider but a small Highveld burrowing scorpion, *Opisthophalmus pugnax*.



Sunday morning we were visited by a beautiful spotted bush snake just outside the kitchen door which was photographed from every angle then released. Thereafter we got down to the serious business of identification, using my microscope, the Atlas, the book African Spiders, etc. See the list attached.

Thank you Gerhard for your hospitality and interesting conversations; we would love to visit again sometime.



DEELFONTEIN	Arachnids identified (or not!)		
ARANEIDAE	Orb web weaving spiders	<i>Argiope australis</i> imm	Common garden orb web spider
ERESIDAE	Velvet spiders		
	Tree velvet spiders	<i>Gandanameno</i> maybe <i>G purcelli</i>	No white rings round dimples on top side of abdomen and no spines under the femur and coxa of leg 1. 4-plate cribellum.
	Ground velvet spiders or horned velvet spiders	<i>Dresserus</i> maybe <i>D kannemeyeri</i>	Lots under rocks and rubble
LYCOSIDAE	Wolf spiders	<i>Allocosa</i> ♀	Can't identify to species
		<i>Pardosa</i> sp.	Can't identify to species
		<i>Hogna spenceri</i>	Abdomen ventrally completely black, no pale spots
		<i>Hogna transvaalica</i>	Abdomen ventrally black with 6 pale spots
		<i>Evippoma</i> sp.	
OXYOPIDAE	Lynx spiders	<i>Oxyopes hoggi</i>	Hogg's grass lynx spider
		<i>Oxyopes jacksoni</i>	Jackson's grass lynx spider
PHILODROMIDAE	Running spiders	<i>Tibellus</i> sp. ♀ ♂	Male and female but just immature.
		<i>Thanatus vulgaris</i> ♀ ♂	Common thanatus
PHOLCIDAE	Daddy long-legs spiders	<i>Smeringopus natalensis</i>	Common daddy long-legs
SALTICIDAE	Jumping spiders	<i>Heliophanus</i> sp	
		<i>Evarcha</i> sp	Maybe <i>Evarcha prosimilis</i>
SCYTODIDAE	Spitting spiders	<i>Scytodes</i> sp	
SEGESTRIIDAE	Tube-web spiders	<i>Ariadna</i> sp.	Don't know how to get to species
SELENOPIDAE	Flatties or wall spiders	<i>Anyphops</i> sp	Can't identify to species.
SPARASSIDAE	Huntsman spiders	<i>Eusparassus</i> or <i>Olios</i> ?	Juvenile, not even sure of genus
THERIDIIDAE	Comb-footed spiders	<i>Latrodectus rhodesiensis</i>	Zimbabwe brown button spider
		<i>Latrodectus geometricus</i>	Common brown button spider
		<i>Theridion</i> sp	False button spiders
THOMISIDAE	Crab spiders	<i>Monaeses</i> sp. imm maybe <i>paradoxus</i>	Spotted monaeses
		<i>Runcinia</i> sp imm maybe <i>R flavida</i>	Probably <i>R flavida</i> long grass crab spider
		<i>Synema nigrotibiale</i>	Black legged African mask crab spider
		<i>Synema imitator</i>	Tree African mask crab spider
SCORPION	Scorpioniadae	<i>Opisththalmus pugnax</i>	Highveld burrowing scorpion



OUTING TO MORELETA KLOOF

Report by Lezanne Roussouw

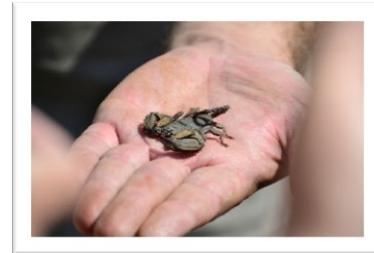
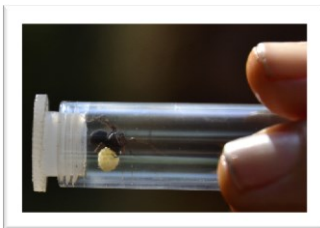
On Sunday 10 April 2016 a group of Spider enthusiasts attended a Spider Identification event hosted by Astri from The Spider Club of South Africa at the Moreleta Kloof Nature Reserve.

Astri opened the event with introductions and welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. We had a large group of attendees from different age groups. We searched under rocks, in between the grass, and in trees for Spider Webs and collecting specimens for study and identification.

All together we Identified +- 20 different species. One of the Spider Club members collected a Spitting Spider with her egg case. What a beautiful spider! During our break time, we all gathered around while Astri explained all the different species we collected. The specimens were circulated around the group in order for everybody to see what we had collected.

After our break we continued our search up in the rocky hilled area of the reserve where we identified, Flat Bellied Ground Spiders and Wolf Spiders; the Wolf Spiders seems to be the dominant family in the reserve. Two Scorpion species was also Identified: Lesser thin tailed Scorpion and Rock Scorpion. We had a good group and everybody participated in the search and all had fun, the children attending also found it very interesting and exciting. And not one of them was frightened by the sight of Spiders or Scorpions.

THANK YOU to everyone who supported and attended our event. We hope to see you at future events. A special thank you to Astri. It was a very informative and good experience.





SPIDER WEEKEND AT LOERKOP, RUSTENBURG

16 April 2016

By Jeremy Munton-Jackson, who took the photos

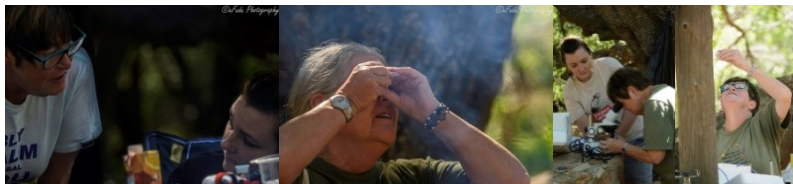
Group: Astri Leroy, Joan Faiola, Miemie Byrch, Jeremy Munton-Jackson, Niela and Cheri du Preez

This was certainly one of the more spectacular weekends, not only from the very interesting spiders and scorpions found, but from the sheer rugged beauty of the area. The bush was pristine-largely undisturbed, although they do run a few head of cattle on the farm.

Getting to the farm from the N4 was a breeze, but once on the farm, we were faced with a rough, stony road. So much so, that Joan was contemplating leaving her Nissan X-Trail at the house near the entrance before she received help going up. She was very proud of her 2 wheel drive performance, where many of the 4x4's have struggled. The campsite was "rustic" in every sense of the word! This is really just a clearing in the beautiful pristine bush, under a huge Syzygium tree.



A concrete braai fire area did duty for the cooking, and as the main centre around which, we gathered to eat, chat and sort spiders (Mostly Astri, Niela, Cheri and Joan).



The toilet/wash area consisted of a toilet (a loo with a view), a basin and a couple of walls...but no door...All of this was, of course, adequate for the basic needs of a weekend.



The spider hunts were a combination of reasonable exercise, fascinating bush and interesting finds. These included some of the real first time sightings for a couple of us. The likes of Social Spitting Spiders,



and one of the Net-casters (*Menneus camelus*) were brilliant to see.



Long-tailed single-line web spider (*Miagrammopes longicaudatus*)
(See below for the full list)

A night hunt for scorpions was a bit disappointing as we had expected to find more species. Between Niela and Cheri, they manage to find two scorpions despite having super high powered triple beam UV lights... However, we came across some diminutive terrapins in a small dam on the farm, which were no bigger than a matchbox, as well as Tanzanian long-jawed water orbweb spider along the banks, so the night was not completely lost.

Of course, first thing in the morning had to be coffee and rusks! Waking up to the spectacular mountain scape that surrounded us, was nectar for the soul!



Naturally with such an area, spiders weren't the only attraction. There were many other interesting insects, plants, rocks and just about anything that bush lovers would be enchanted with:



ARACHNIDS LISTED FROM LOERKOP FARM, 16 & 17 APRIL 2016 :				
	MAP REF -25.675279, 27.153691			
Araneae				
FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES	NOTES	Common names that I use
Ageleidae	<i>Agelena</i> sp.		More than 1 species?	African funnel-web spider
Araneidae	<i>Prasonica</i>	<i>nigrotaeniata?</i>	The most abundant orb webs	Common cucumber spider
Caponidae	<i>Caponia</i> sp.			Orange lungless spider
Corinnidae	<i>Corinomma</i> sp.?			Ant-like corinnid
Deinopidae	<i>Menneus</i>	<i>camelus</i>		Hump-back net-casting spider
Gnaphosidae	<i>Drassodes</i> sp.?			Dark-face ground spiders
Gnaphosidae	<i>Zelotes</i> sp.	<i>capsula</i> ? ♂		Dark ground spiders
Hersiliidae	<i>Hersilia</i> sp.			Long-spinnered bark spider
Hersiliidae	<i>Hersilia</i>	<i>sericea</i>		Common long-spinnered bark spiders
Linyphiidae	<i>Agyneta</i> sp.		♂	Dwarf black hammock-web spider
Lycosidae			Hmmm?	
Nemesiidae	<i>Hermacha</i> sp.?			
Nephilidae	<i>Nephila</i>	<i>fenestrata</i>	♂ and ♀	Black-legged nephila
Oxyopidae	<i>Hamataliwa</i> sp.			There were several
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i>	<i>schenkeli?</i>		different species of
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i> sp			oxyopid both ♂s and ♀s
Philodromidae	<i>Hirriusa</i> sp.			Ground running spider
Pholcidae	<i>Smeringopus</i> sp.		♂ and imm	Daddy long-legs spider
Pisauridae	<i>Perenthis</i> sp.		imm	
Salticidae	<i>Natta</i>	<i>chionogaster</i>	♀	Yellow-spot natta
Salticidae	<i>Thyene</i>	<i>ogdendi</i>	♀	Ogden's thyene
Salticidae	<i>Others</i>		3 others	
Scytodidae	<i>Scytodes</i>		At least 3 different species, 1 in web with various age groups in one web.	Spitting spiders
Segestriidae	<i>Ariadna</i>	<i>umtalica?</i>	♂ ♀	Zimbabwe ariadna
Selenopidae	<i>Anyphops</i> sp.		♂ ♀	Flattie
Sicariidae	<i>Loxosceles</i>	<i>simillima?</i>		Bushveld violin spider
Tetragnathidae	<i>Tetragnatha</i>	<i>subsquamata</i>		Tanzanian long-jawed water orbweb spider
Theraphosidae	<i>Harpactira</i>	<i>hamiltoni</i>		Highveld baboon spider

Theraphosidae	<i>Brachionopus</i> sp.			
Theridiidae	<i>Achaearanea</i> sp.			It isn't the bauble spider. Several un-named spp here.
Theridiidae	<i>Euryopis</i> sp.			Ant-eating theridiid
Theridiidae	<i>Latrodectus</i>	<i>geometricus</i>	♀	Brown button spider
Theridiidae	<i>Steatoda</i> sp.		2 sp.?	False button spider
Theridiidae	<i>Theridion</i> sp.?			
Theridiidae	<i>Thwaitesia</i> sp.?		In dried leaf retreat. Vertical, flatt web, egg sac.	
Thomisidae	<i>Thomisops</i>	<i>pupa</i>		Decorated thomisops
Thomisidae	<i>Thomisus</i>	<i>granulatus</i>		Granulated thomisus
Thomisidae	<i>Tmarus</i> sp.		Was there another one or only <i>T africanus</i> ?	
Thomisidae	<i>Tmarus</i>	<i>africanus</i>		African or fluffy-legged Tmarus
Trochanteriidae	<i>Platyoides</i>	<i>walteri</i>		Walter's scorpion spider
Uloboridae	<i>Miagrammopes</i>	<i>longicaudatus</i>	I think they were all same species. Only 1 adult	Long-tailed single-line web spider
Uloboridae	<i>Uloborus</i>	<i>plumipes</i>		Feather-legged spider
Zodariidae	<i>Systemoplacis</i>	<i>vandami</i>		Van dam's <i>Systemoplacis</i>
Solifugae			Check on Solpuga website	and ask Ian.
Opiliones	<i>Rhampsinitus</i> sp.?		Send to Leon Lotz when it	has been put in ethanol.
Scorpiones				
Buthidae	<i>Uroplectes</i>	<i>triangulifer</i>	Check this one. I am not	convinced.
Scorpionidae	<i>Opisthophthalmus</i>	<i>glabrifrons</i>		Shiny burrowing scorpion





Salticidae *Phlegma* -- " I AM WATCHING YOU"

Letamo Wild Life Estate

6 December 2015

Letamo Eco Estate Spider Outing

by Karel de Bont

Spider Outing Special Guest

On the morning of the 6th December 2015 spider club members joined forces with Letamo residents to find salticids with our special guest Galina Azarkina,



an expert on African Jumping spiders who hails from Siberia.

Our Host

Thank you Sandy and Lance Greybe for hosting us on Sunday, which, in spite of the heat, turned out to be a fantastic and extremely successful spider outing.



The young Ones



Everyone joined in the fun and whilst the young ones netted spider after spider, other members and friends had their hands full trying to identify them all.

Identification

Everyone joined in the interesting task of identifying the different species.



Loupes supplied by Astri proved to be very popular and just about everyone had a chance to experience a close-up view of the spiders collected



Activities for the day



The Pictures on the left and below clearly demonstrate the commitment of our quest Galina and veteran Astri.



They spend most of the time in the veld and among the trees or on their knees.

List of Spiders Found

Salticidae - *Festucula leroyae* P197

Salticidae - *Heliophanus patellaris* P201

Salticidae - *Thyene thyenoides* a stunning black and silver male P222

Salticidae - *Pellenes bulawayoensis* P214

Salticidae - *Phelgra* P215

Gnaphosidae - *Zelotes*, male with two dots on abdomen P305

Lycosidae - *Pirata africana* P332

Lycosidae - *Pardosa crassipalpis* with egg sack P331

Thomisidae - *Monaeses gibbus* P241

Araneidae - very tiny male P40

Philodromidae - *Tibellus flavipes* P186 I don't think it can be *T. flavipes*. I think probably *Tibellus minor*.

Cyatholipidae - male yellow setae on legs, eye pattern distinctive a block of 6 eyes with 2 larger eyes on either side P70

All page numbers refer to Field Guide to the SPIDERS of South Africa



Salticidae - *Thyene thyenoides* - Photos by John Leroy

After a very enjoyable and satisfying morning we went back to our Host's house where we had refreshments and continued with an identification session

Letamo guests : Robyn Labram, Anthony English, Lizette and Carter, Diana Lerche, Marie McCrae, Sandy, Nicole and Bryn.

Spider Club guest Galina Azarkina and members: Astri Leroy, Jacky Collier, Karel and Judy de Bont





SHORT REPORT ON PROJECT VISIT TO KLIPRIVIERSBERG NR - 6th March 2016

By Joan Faiola

No, we haven't given up on the Klipriviersberg project – it is still going, although we have now dispensed with pitfall trap collecting, concentrating rather on the other methods in order to get the widest diversity into the collection. The latest species count for the project, from Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman, is 133 species, but she adds that we should reach 150 or more. This includes 3 new salticids – new to science – that are currently with Charles Haddad of UFS. Thanks go to Ansie and Charles, and also Leon Lotz, for their assistance with the identifications.

On 6th March we were a small but enthusiastic group of spider hunters, including Ruan Booysen, who is a student of Charles Haddad at UFS.

The reserve had benefited from the late rains after a prolonged drought. We collected some nice salticids and thomisids, amongst other finds.

Sorting of our specimens has slowed down somewhat, due to other pressures on our time. Currently I am being assisted by Alice Aubrey, and we are just not meeting often enough! My wonderful new microscope is standing unused for long periods. If you are interested in sorting spiders and microscope work, give me a shout. We could do with more hands and eyes!



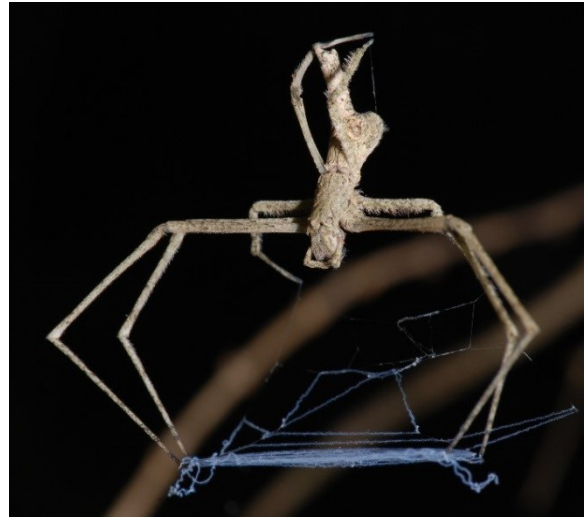
Above: *Tmarus cameliformis*, specimen collected at KNR last year



CAMEL-BACKED NET-CASTING SPIDERS IN THE GENUS MENNEUS (Family Deinopidae)

By Astri Leroy

The spider family Deinopidae is one of cribellate* spiders with only two genera *Menneus* and *Deinopsis* (ogre-faced net-casting spiders). The genus *Menneus* is recorded from Africa (three species from South Africa and three from East Africa), Australia and certain south Pacific islands (8 species). Our species are *M dromedarius* with an east coast and Madagascan distribution and *Menneus camelus* which is much more widespread in the summer rainfall regions. These two species look almost identical to the naked eye. The distribution of the Cape net-casting spider *Menneus capensis*, previously known as *Avellopsis capensis*, more or less coincides with the Fynbos biome.

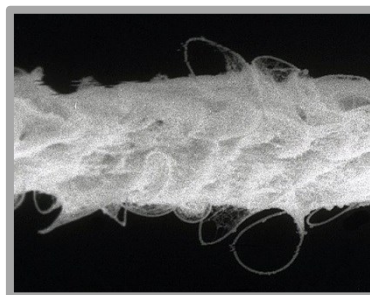


Female *M dromedarius* and *M camelus* are extraordinary-looking with their asymmetrically humped abdomens and immensely long first two pairs of legs. Adult males' abdomens don't have humps but their legs and pedipalps are even longer. One of the Australian species is called *Menneus quasimodo* so I guess they also have humped backs! *M capensis* doesn't have the camel-like abdominal humps, looks very different but has the same hunting method.

The hunting method of deinopids is where it gets really interesting. All are nocturnal and as darkness gathers they set about building their snares of cribellate silk. Hanging head upwards from a bridge line of non-sticky silk and pulling silk from its cribellum, the spider constructs a small, more-or-less rectangular web of finely combed and exceptionally elastic cribellate silk. It then turns, head-down and transfers this this silken rectangle to its long front legs. Hanging thus it waits, entirely still, for insects to pass close enough to catch and when one does it extends those enormously long legs extending the rectangular web at least three times its resting size and throws it over its prey which immediately becomes entangled and can be given the coup de grâce and consumed. Although the eyes of *Menneus* spp. are not as immense as the anterior median eyes of their close relatives *Deinopsis* their eyesight must be acute because they seldom miss with their throws, but from observing *M camelus* in my own garden I also think they detect the vibrations of movement and wingbeats of insects as well. If nothing comes close enough to be caught, the spiders only wrap up their web before dawn and hide, legs extended along a twig where they seem to simply disappear because of their excellent camouflage. The reason for those strange shaped abdomens and fringes of hair along the sides of their legs now becomes clear because they simply look like part of the twig they are hiding along.

Above Photo ©Astri Leroy

*If you don't know or have forgotten, cribellate spiders are those that use hackled of silk (more properly called cribellate silk) to entangle their prey instead of silk with adhesive droplets. The word cribellate refers to the cribellum, one or more plate-like organs in front of the spinnerets that are pierced by hundreds of tiny holes each producing an infinitesimally tiny strand of silk that is pulled together into a band and fluffed by the spider using a comb-like structure of stiff bristles, the calamistrum, on the upper surface of the metatarsus of the hindmost pair of legs. Even to the naked eye this silk looks fluffy, using a scanning electron microscope this is what a strand looks like:-



Picture of a band of cribellate silk taken from The Australian Museum web page

BRITISH CLUBIONID WITH PARASITIC WASP LARVA



Tone Killick of Gloucester in the United Kingdom wrote as follows:

I was contacted by Astri Leroy for permission to use my photos of a Clubionid with a parasitic wasp larva attached to the back of its cephalothorax. The spider is a *Clubiona* sp, highly likely *C. terrestris*, though I'm not 100% on my ID skills as yet. This is a UK species. I've been finding quite a few of these parasitised Clubionids over the last few weeks and was intrigued to find out the identity of the host. I decided to collect a couple for observation, a sub-adult male and an adult male. Sadly the sub-adult died after the larva deteriorated for reasons unknown to me. The adult male though is doing well. He's eating and showing no discomfort with the attached host. I sent my photos to Dr Mark Shaw, a leading British expert on parasitica.

He replied:

"It is a *Schizopyga* sp (Polysphincta group of genera). There is more than one *Schizopyga* that it could be, and the position (on the back of cephalothorax) is characteristic of the genus.... the spider normally makes a retreat before it dies".



Stung by a scorpion:

A true-life horror story

(First published in the Modderfontein Conservation Society April 2016 newsletter, and reprinted here with their permission)

Young David Conradie, a friend who lives in Hoedspruit, recently had the misfortune to be stung by a scorpion, *Parabuthus transvaalicus*. This is his story, in his own words, which covers six days of agony. It is lengthy, but well worth a read.

BEING A NATURE LOVER and spending most of my time exploring under rocks and cracks and crannies, I'm suddenly aware of just how fortunate I have been in the past.

I am a 33 year old, 86 kg male living in Hoedspruit in the Limpopo province north of Nelspruit and adjacent to the Kruger Park. My house is in a wildlife estate where we really have the best of both worlds, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Traffic often consists of an old giraffe blocking the road before we drop the kids off at school.

On the night of Wednesday, 17 February, only a day after my birthday, we decided to have a local braai to celebrate the event. It was a normal, hot night as we typically had been having at that time of the year.

Because I can't stand overcooked meat, I always end up being the one braaing, (not that my friends can't braai) and like always we have a couple of drinks. Now just to put everything into perspective and to explain more about my physical condition at the time, I'm currently running about 20 km a week and cycling about 70 km per week. Because of my training I do not consume the normal amount that we would have at an average get-together. I don't know if it would have made a difference had I consumed more that night?

I probably had a beer and three large whiskies with water and by about 21:00 as I turned back to check the meat I stepped on a *Parabuthus transvaalicus* scorpion which stung me on my left big toe.



I probably had a beer and three large whiskies with water and by about 21:00 as I turned back to check the meat I stepped on a *Parabuthus transvaalicus* scorpion which stung me on my left big toe.

Most South African scorpions are relatively harmless to humans; however, a small number can cause life-threatening symptoms.

I can remember shouting at the top of my voice "Owch!" The pain was in high gear straight from the word go. The colour around the sting was circling white and the area adjacent was getting red – and fast; I could feel the pain immediately extending up my foot towards my knee and eventually to my groin area.



The area around the sting changed to a purple colour and it took about four minutes for the pain to reach my groin exciting all my muscles and senses as it shot up. I remember thinking that this is such a practical way of illustrating how fast the body transports blood and fluids to the rest of the body, unfortunately in my case it was pain. Luckily for me and Kelly, my wife, we've got the most amazing friends and all of them jumped into high gear. We got hot water to try and break down the venom, we had cold water to prevent swelling and we had a double shot of whiskey to assist with the pain! All of the above was what we heard from folk tales and camp fire stories.

To be absolutely honest, the pain that I experienced then could not have been stopped or subdued by any of the above. I took four Myprodots and four Allergex pills that didn't make the slightest difference.

Now to try and explain the pain: imagine this: Your foot is sitting in a bucket of red hot coals. Someone has tied you down so you can't take your foot out, and in the meanwhile someone plugged you into his compressor and he is pumping away. So after about a half an hour my whole body had been covered by the most amazing "agonizing" super sense of touch. The mere touch of someone's hand on your shoulder feels like your skin is being rubbed off.

One thing that stood out was the strong desire to drink water, with a dry mouth sensation. Something that also stood out was the severe pain in localized areas like my groin and behind my knee cap above the total pain around my whole body. It was probably after 2 – 3 hours that I started having difficulty in swallowing and that my heart started to race and breathing became more difficult. Prior to the breathing constrictions I can recall telling Kelly that my throat felt funny. At this time there was a definite strange feeling in the back of my throat almost like an obstruction and I had the most uncomfortable feeling in my sinuses. The feeling can be compared to when you accidentally get water into your nose while swimming and that burning feeling that causes you to sneeze. It was also at that stage that my lips lost any sense of feeling and felt bloated and tingly.

Kelly called the ambulance and they arrived soon after. At this time, I can remember struggling to keep my composure in breathing normally and trying to control my body from curling and making uncontrolled movements. (Probably directly related to the pain and not involuntary muscular movements). I remember grabbing the side of the mattress and trying to transmit some of the pain from my body into the mattress. The decision was made to take me straight to Phalaborwa hospital which is about 45 min drive from my house. At this stage I hadn't received any extra painkillers or medication. The two gentlemen from our local ambulance response unit "Quemic" were great in helping me into the ambulance as this was not easy because of my super sensitive skin, and the poor guy became the mattress as I was so desperately trying to get rid of my pain.

On the way to the hospital I finished emptying the water bottle that Kelly had given me and I remember craving more, which was strangely a blessing in disguise as it took my mind off the excruciating pain.

I remember telling the two guys in the ambulance that I'm a *tuff* guy but this is unbelievable and that I do not wish this on anyone. I remember holding on and trying to be strong as I knew the hospital was not too far away. "Just a bit longer, just hold on a bit longer Dave," I remember going through my mind.

Unfortunately, I could not remember most of what happened for the rest of that night but I'll try to fill in where I can. They pushed me into the hospital and I remember having those massive bright lights in my eyes and closing them. I remember the guys handed me over and there was confusion as to whether I was allergic to penicillin or something like that. I repeatedly said I'm not allergic to anything. I'm not sure but it sounded like they injected me with adrenaline and an IV drip was fitted to my right wrist.

My blood pressure at this time was dangerously high and I remember multiple personnel asking me questions and I made a half-hearted effort to sign some documents. I had a fever at this time and remember feeling sick. If I was sick I could not say; I must have been taken over by the medication. Apparently I phoned Kelly around 2:30 am and told her "When you are finished, you must shower! Just shower!" This may have been a delusional affect as a result of the medication and/or pain??

The morning of the 18th I woke up with a nurse taking my blood pressure with that balloon-like armband and I remember curling from the pain as this device compresses your arm with air to pick up your heartbeat. And she was asking me “How you feeling Mr Conrad?” (They all get it wrong the first time) There was no change in the pain!!!! And I was wondering when is this feeling was going to go away!!! (As I’m writing this document I’m still wondering). The sensation in my body had multiplied and I was in such discomfort just from the clothes on my body and the linen on the bed. My skin seemed to be literally shooting at all cylinders and setting fire to all the points that were touching anything. I remember thinking that this is what Spiderman should feel like.

At this time my leg still felt as if it was tied down into that bucket of coals and my skin around the left foot felt like someone was literally busy peeling it off. There was a terrible feeling in my mouth like my teeth were covered with kid’s play dough or like a rugby gum guard and that the whole set was going to fall out at any time. My nerves all around my body were extremely sensitive. I remember that blinking my eyes was like having sand in them and the mucus in my nose was burning my sinuses.

But the weirdest thing ever was the sensation when I was drinking water!!! It felt like I was drinking soda water with an overload of bubbles in it. Or even more accurate is the crackling effect that you got from those sherbet sweet packets when we grew up - those granules that fizzed and popped when they touched your tongue. The effect was that it was painful to drink anything. I only later discovered it was the cold water, and that room temperature water was not so “fizzy”! Even holding on to the cold glass set off a burning sensation in my hands.

For the rest of my stay in hospital the symptoms partly stayed the same and I’m going to elaborate on some of the sensations that really stood out for me:

It was probably at this time that my situation started to get the better of me, and I remember being extremely frustrated as I realised that there was nothing I could do to correct it. The uncomfortable bed and burning sensation from my own skin and sense of helplessness was getting more and more pronounced. Knowing myself, it was probably better that I was alone and so spared friends and family the discomfort of being with a huge bear with an aching tooth.

I could not eat as my jaw muscles would contract when I opened my mouth, leaving me with an extremely sharp pain in my jaw that extended to the area I assume to be my taste glands in the back of my trachea. The feeling that was constant was the goose bumps around my body. Moving my head to get to my phone would set off a multitude of hair raising effects from the tip of my skull to the end of my little toe. The feeling got so annoying that I could remember trying to lie still for five minutes to see if I could get rid of it. Proper pins and needles all around my body even in places I did not know you could get pins and needles accompanied me deep into the night.



One of the sisters was so good to me and provided me with a stainless steel carafe that I could use to relieve myself, instead of having a catheter. The following piece will explain how this little scorpion can limit the use of your muscles. I would have to pull my body up from a lying position, with my two arms to get on to my bum, use both hands to lift my right leg off the bed and then my left leg off the bed. Then I would slowly lower my whole body and balance on my right leg while urinating. And while all of this was happening, the sensation in my right foot was electrified because of the weight of my body resting on it. Meanwhile, the cold carafe caused a shooting pain up my arm from the cold sensation, leaving me out of breath and feeling like I had just run three kilometres.



David with wife Kelly and son Logan at Fish Eagle Dam.

It was only on the Friday that I gathered enough courage to have a shower. Getting to the shower was a mammoth task even though it was only five metres away. There were lots of pauses to rest and stern talks to myself. The water falling on my skin was like thousands of arrows hitting me all at once. It was probably the fastest shower I'd ever taken. And I remember thinking that it was way too much trouble for that amount of pain. Drying myself was the next surprise. Because of my sensitive skin it felt like I was using a steel wool blanket instead of a woollen towel to wipe my skin. I remember just daubing my skin with the towel to limit the feeling.

It appears that I did not get the anti-venom from the hospital on the Wednesday night. The hospital did not have any in stock; they did however apparently inject me on Thursday night at some time. Now I can't recall having any relief or actually having the anti-venom so I can't comment on the effects thereafter.

Just to wrap everything up and to put all into perspective:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Fiery sensation in foot						
Fiery sensation in leg up to groin						
Tearing skin sensation on foot						
Super sensitive skin all-round						
Breathing problems						
Goose bumps all-round						
Super-sensitive skin on touch						
Mouth sensitive to cold						
Loose teeth sensation						
Throat obstruction						
Swelling explosion feeling in foot						
Jaw cramping feeling						
Total loss of body power						

Footnote: After three weeks David was able to return to work but he was still lacking feeling in his foot, a condition he was assured would come right, eventually.

Further reading: the following paper on the venom of this scorpion can be found at <http://www.pnas.org/content/100/3/922.full>

One scorpion, two venoms: Prevenom of *Parabuthus transvaalicus* acts as an alternative type of venom with distinct mechanism of action: Bora Inceoglu*, Jozsef Lango, Jie Jing, Lili Chen, Fuat Doymaz, Isaac N. Pessah, and Bruce D. Hammock – National Academy of Sciences of the United States, 2003

