



Mudpuppy's Pond

Black and Yellow Garden Spider: The Trapper

In among the cherry tomato plants in the garden, one day in mid-August I found a large spider web, about two feet wide. A thick zigzag line of silk was centered in the middle of the orb web.. And hanging upside down at the top of the web was the spider, a really large black spider with yellow stripes on the body and legs, which were very long. My mom called these spiders golden garden spiders; their real name is **black and yellow argiope**. And they are trappers. They don't see very well, but are very sensitive to the vibrations they feel through their feet coming from their web, telling them the size and location of a trapped bug.

A bee flew into the web, and stuck, trapped. The spider ran down the web, wrapped the bee in silk and bit it, injecting a poison, all in what seemed to be no more than two seconds. She then removed the bee from the web, carried it to the top of the web and proceeded to feed on it. Each night, she rebuilds her web.

This spider was a female because of her size. Initially, her body was shaped like a jelly bean, elliptical, but as her eggs grew inside of her, she became more plump and round. During the fall, she will lay her eggs, about 300-1400, in a couple of egg sacs which she will attach to dried grasses. She will protect these egg sacs until she dies during the first freeze. The eggs will hatch some time later in the fall and the baby spiders, spiderlings, will spend the winter in the egg sac and then leave the sac in the spring.

When I see these spiders I can almost smell the dry leaves of the coming fall. I know the summer is truly winding down and soon the ducks and geese will start moving south. -Carla Bascom



D. Clark



MO Dept. of Conservation

Wolf Spider: The Hunter

The hunters are the **wolf spiders**, a common brownish spider, well camouflaged, long legs. Some are large and hairy. They see fairly well, up to about four feet, and can run fast, over one and a half feet per second. They do not build webs. Active under the cloak of darkness, they stalk and capture their prey. Or they lie in ambush waiting to grab a passing bug, wrestle it down and then mash it up in their powerful jaws. During the day, they hide under rocks or in tunnels which they dig. They live through the winter.

Male wolf spiders attract females by waving their pedipalps (leg-like front appendages up and down. After mating, the mother spider finds a safe place and spins a sheet of silk in which she lays her eggs. She then bundles up the eggs and spins more silk around them for safety. She attaches the bundle to her abdomen (actually to her spinnerets) and carries it around with her. About a month later the spiderlings hatch and crawl up onto Mom's back and ride around for about a week. Wolf spiders live about two years.

The fun part about wolf spiders is that they are everywhere outside and very visible at night with the right equipment. Using an LED light, go outside at night where it is really dark, and shine the beam at the ground, slowly scanning back and forth. The ground will look like it is covered by lots of clusters of small diamonds. Each cluster is a spider. There are so many, and they move! It is truly beautiful. -Carla Bascom

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The Screech Owl returned to the barn on the first day of summer this year (June 21st). She had gone to the woods to nest very early in the spring. Once her family was raised and on its own, she came back to her familiar daytime roost in the old barn.

Soon after that, she began to lose her feathers. This is called *molting*. Birds molt their old feathers and grow new ones to replace them. She molted so much that, at one point, she was almost bald on top of her head, with just a few straggly little feathers sticking up where her tufts had been!

Now, as you can see by this picture, she's looking pretty again, and we're very glad to have her back in our barn. -Diane Clark

