

## A FEW LOCAL SPIDERS... Allison Watson

Spiders can be a fascinating group of animals to study—from the familiar ones around our homes to the tiny beautiful peacock spiders that have become well known in the media in recent years.

Spiders belong to the class Arachnida under the phylum Arthropoda. The distinguishing features include two body parts, the cephalothorax—head and chest together and the abdomen, four pairs of legs, no antennae, or wings.

**Australian Christmas Jewel Spider**—Family Araneidae, sub-family Gasteracanthinae

This Spiny Orb-weaver is mainly seen in summer. It can be colourful, sometimes black, with numerous spikes. They are active during the day and the spikes are said to deter predators. It can form large groups sharing a web. After reproduction, the adults die and the young live close to the ground where they are not often seen until after winter when they again make extensive webs higher in the vegetation.



Jewel Spider

**Daddy Long Legs**—Family Pholcidae

These are well known spiders living around our homes. There are nine introduced Daddy Long Legs and over 60 Australian species. They have six or eight eyes, slender legs, and a tangled unstructured web. The long legs mean they can catch prey much larger than themselves. There is a myth that their venom could kill a human if the fangs were large enough, but this is false. They catch their prey and bind them with silk rapidly using their long legs. It's amazing to watch this process. When they are completely bundled up and immobilized, they inject them and start feeding. The female Daddy Long Legs spider carries the egg sac in her chelicerae (jaws).



Wolf spider (mother)

**Wolf spider**—Family Lycosidae

Wolf spiders, body length 1.5-35 mm, hunt day or night and mostly live at ground level in leaf litter or burrows. Their reflective eyes make them easy to see at night. Huntsman spiders also have this eye shine. The female Wolf Spider attaches the egg sac to her spinnerets. After the spiderlings hatch, they are carried around on the mother's back for 4-6 weeks. They then disperse by air on silk and can travel long distances on the wind.



Flower Spider

**Crab or Flower Spider**—Family Thomisidae

There are over 120 described species of Crab spiders. These spiders are 2-23 mm and have a crab-like appearance and can move sideways. The two front pairs of legs are longer than the back. They have eight eyes with the lateral eyes on tubercles. They are daytime hunters and rely on camouflage and can adjust their colour to their flower host. At night they hide in a sac-like retreat in a leaf where they also lay their eggs.

**Lynx spider**—Family Oxyodidae

Lynx meaning cat-like, these spiders can jump like the Jumping Spiders. They are 5-12 mm, day active, have sharp spiny and slender legs. They are common in low vegetation and known to be good for pest management. They have no web and are good climbers. The egg sac is attached to grass or leaves, and the female stays with the eggs until they hatch.



Leaf-curling Spider

**Leaf-curling Orb-weavers** -Sub-Family Zyiellinae

These orb-weavers incorporate a dry or live leaf into the centre of web. The females mostly have an egg-shaped abdomen.



Lynx Spider

**References:** Whyte, R. and Anderson, G. (2017), A field guide to spiders of Australia, CSIRO Publishing, Victoria. Framenau, V. W. Baehr, C. and Zborowski, P. (2014), A guide to spiders of Australia, New Holland Publishers, Sydney.