

Spiders are perceived as pests because of fear, their web-building and their year-round visibility. All spiders eat only live food. Where there are insects, there are spiders. They can adapt to any habitat an insect can adapt to. They are one of our major beneficients without whom we would probably be up to our eyeballs in insects. Our local spiders are all relatively modest in size, far surpassed by their tropical relatives, some of which actually catch birds as prey.

Spiders disperse by walking, by hitchhiking on objects and by ballooning. Ballooning usually occurs in the spring when baby spiders climb to a high object, spin out a strand of silk, and catch the updrafts. Spiders have been sighted at 5,000 feet and can float 60 miles or more. They are not social animals and most would as soon eat a sister as an insect.

The spider society is definitely a matriarchy with many males surviving the romantic encounter with difficulty. There is usually strong sexual dimorphism with the females being much larger than the males. Spiders have a gradual metamorphosis, going through a series of molts. Most live one to two years, but tarantulas can live over 20 years. Spiders have book lungs, tubular tracheae or both. The lungs on the abdomen are a series of slits. The body fluid is hemolymph which circulates freely in the body cavity around the other tissues and organs. Spiders can "hold their breath" for a very long time, surviving in low oxygen environments. There is even a diving spider. The nervous system has three major components: mechanoreceptors (like the nerve endings in our skin), hairs and slits. They also have good chemoreceptors. Arachnids in general (spiders, harvestmen, mites, and scorpions) have 8 legs and a cephalothorax (head and abdomen fused).

All in all, they are a beautifully designed life system which is well adapted to their role on earth. See the beauty and lose the fear.