Entomological news.
[Philadelphia] American Entomological Society, 1925-
http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/2356

v. 84 1973: http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/20571
Page(s): Page 156

Contributed by: Smithsonian Institution Libraries
Sponsored by: Smithsonian

Generated 10 August 2011 2:45 PM
http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/pdf3/007659900020571
THE ABILITY OF A SPITTING SPIDER, SCYTODES HEBRAICA, TO CAPTURE FLYING PREY

Scytodes hebraica (Scytodidae) was common on the walls both inside and outside a house on the outskirts of Cali, Colombia (el. 1000 m, 4° N) in an area classified by Espinal (1968) as dry tropical forest. The spiders were inactive during the day, crouching in cracks and corners, but at night they came out on the walls. Spiders were generally immobile at night, resting facing down just off the surface of a wall on a very sparse mesh of threads.

The spiders captured prey by spitting on them as do other Scytodes (e.g. Bristowe 1958), but differed from those described in that they could apparently “shoot down” flying insects as well as capture those walking or entangled in webs. On several occasions I saw a S. hebraica capture an insect which flew near or collided with a spider. A small experiment showed that the spiders probably detect and react to flying prey rather than simply waiting passively for collisions. Covering my mouth and nose with my hand (to avoid blowing on the spider), I hummed loudly (approximately middle C) near a series of ten spiders. Some cringed or moved away as if disturbed, but several responded by immediately lifting their legs I or pawing the air rapidly for a moment with legs I and (?) II; one responded by immediately spitting onto one of its front legs, then cleaning the sticky material off in its mouth. This suggests that the spiders respond to the sound of flying prey by attempting to touch them with their legs, and then spitting to cause them to stick to their legs.

William G. Eberhard
Departamento de Biologia
Universidad del Valle
Cali, Colombia

LITERATURE CITED


1 I thank Dr. H. W. Levi for identifying the spider, and the Comite de Investigaciones of the Universidad del Valle for support.
The ability of a spitting spider, Scytodes hebraica, to capture flying prey

Scytodes hebraica (Scytodidae) was common on the walls both inside and outside a house on the outskirts of Call, Colombia (el. 1000 m, 4 N) in an area classified by Espinal (1968) as dry tropical forest. The spiders were inactive during the day, crouching in cracks and corners, but at night they came out on the walls. Spiders were generally immobile at night, resting facing down just off the surface of a wall on a very sparse mesh of threads.

The spiders captured prey by spitting on them as do other Scytodes (e.g. Bristowe 1958), but differed from those described in that they could apparently "shoot down" flying insects as well as capture those walking or entangled in webs. On several occasions I saw a S. hebraica capture an insect which flew near or collided with a spider. A small experiment showed that the spiders probably detect and react to flying prey rather than
simply waiting passively for collisions. Covering my mouth and nose with my hand (to avoid blowing on the spider), I hummed loudly (approximately middle C) near a series of ten spiders. Some cringed or moved away as if disturbed, but several responded by immediately lifting their legs I or pawing the air rapidly for a moment with legs I and (?) II; and one responded by immediately spitting onto one of its front legs, then cleaning the sticky material off in its mouth. This suggests that the spiders respond to the sound of flying prey by attempting to touch them with their legs, and then spitting to cause them to stick to their legs.

William G. Eberhard
Departamento de Biologia
Universidad del Valle
Cali, Colombia

Bristowe, W. S.
Espinal, L. S.

LITERATURE CITED


'I thank Dr. H. W. Levi for identifying the spider, and the Comite de Investigaciones of the Universidad del Valle for support.