

Sun Spiders, Wind Scorpions, Camel Spiders



When it comes to confusing names, the wind scorpion, aka sun spider, aka nina de la tierra, aka camel spider, aka hundreds of other names is about as confusing as it gets. It is an arachnid, making it a cousin of scorpions, but our species have no poisonous sting. And, while they have the largest jaws of just about anything when compared to their body size, they try to avoid biting. They are found in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres and, although they are not poisonous here, do have some more dangerous cousins in India and Africa. Our species is primarily *Eremobates* sp.

I was bitten by one that was in the sleeve of a shirt that had been hanging on a wall for a few days. I did notice the bite and it managed to bite me, again, before I got the shirt off. It was a female, I quickly noticed as I shook it out of the shirt I had quickly shed. I could tell she was a female by her distended abdomen that showed eggs clearly through her stretched, membranous abdomen. Almost ready to hatch I thought. Although I had been surprised by the bites she gave me they are not poisonous and left no mark, feeling more like a hard pinch than anything else. I let her scurry away, marveling at her rapid movement which gave the name wind scorpions because they “run like the wind”. I hoped that she would lay her eggs in the house so that I could have her young prowling around

for scorpions and beetles, which do make up an impressive part of their diet as they are carnivores (just not the “carne” we normally eat).

I saw her a few nights after our initial meeting, this time cutting up and eating scorpion. Her large mouth parts, called chelicerae, were used to cut the scorpion in two and then it looked as if she was slurping up the insides. This time I took a little more time to study her: the body was covered with delicate, silky hairs which are exceedingly sensitive to movement, allowing her to feel the coming of a potential predator or, maybe, just another potential meal. Just behind her impressive jaws are the pedipalps, the second pair of appendages after the jaws. There are long and slender, ending in cup-like suckers to assist in climbing vertical surfaces.

I don't know how many sun spiders I have seen over the years, many. Quite a few hang around the house, ignoring my family and pets. I wish I could say the same for my pets. I found that sun spider about a week later, lying in the water dish and dead. She no longer had any eggs so I hope her young are with me still, they do make good neighbors as long as you shake out your clothes first.

POSTED BY Patt Sims - January, 2010