

Tropical Factsheets

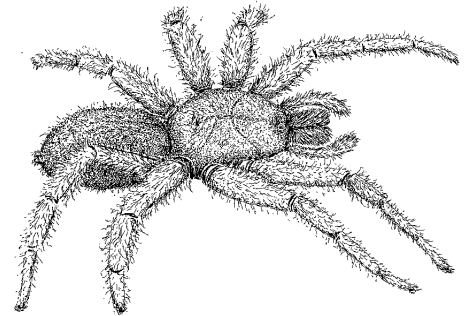
Common Cryptosphere Arachnids

Spiders

- Spiders are the most common ground-dwelling **predator** in the leaf litter of the rainforest.
- They are generally **nocturnal** and hunt their invertebrate prey at night.

Whistling Spiders or Barking Spiders

- These are the **largest** spiders in Australia. They are Australia's tarantulas. Their bodies grow up to 6cm long with a leg span of 16cm (as big as a man's hand).
- They are the most **primitive** spiders in Australia, and belong to the **Mygalomorph** group of trapdoor spiders.
- They have thick **hairy legs**.
- They have elongated **palps** on the front of the head which make them look like they have 10 legs.
- They live in the **ground** under logs and rocks and in silk-lined burrows which are up to one metre deep, and may have well camouflaged trap-doors.
- They mostly stay in their burrows in the **day** and come out at **night and dawn** to feed. Males search for their **mates** when it's dark.
- During **wet periods** they are sometimes forced out of their burrows when they become flooded.
- Their **fangs** are as big as the fangs of a taipan.
- These spiders **feed** on prey of their own size. Their diet consists mainly of frogs, large insects and lizards such as skinks.
- They ambush their prey **close** to their burrow.
- They rear up before striking. This is because their parallel **fangs point down** and they need to lift the front part of the body in order to strike downwards.
- They pounce on their prey and immobilize them quickly with **strong poison**.
- When the spider is alarmed it makes a **whistling noise** by rubbing together special spines on the base of the **palps** and the **jaw**.



Whistling Spider



Hunting Spiders

Wolf spiders

- Some Wolf spiders are almost as **large** as Whistling spiders.
- Most Wolf spiders are **brown** and many have **lines** on their heads.
- They live in the ground in **burrows**.
- These spiders are **nocturnal**.
- Wolf spiders have **good eyesight**. They have eight eyes at the front of their heads in two rows of four.
- They are fast-moving and **run down** their prey.
- These spiders feed mainly on **insects**. Two species of Wolf spiders prey on **cane toads**.

Huntsmen spiders

- These spiders are **large**. They can grow as big as a man's hand.
- They have black, yellow and red **markings** under their bodies.
- They live on the ground under **bark** and in crevices.
- They are **fast-moving**. Their **long legs** are built for speed.
- Their **flattened bodies** allow them to hide during the day.
- They have **large eyes** which help them see well at night.
- They feed on **insect** prey.

Lichen spiders

- Lichen spiders use **camouflage** to hide from predators. Their colours blend in with the bark and lichen on which they sit.
- These spiders feed on insects. They wait motionless for passing prey before ambushing them.

Jumping spiders

- Jumping spiders are mostly quite small.
- They have excellent eyesight, some as good as an eagle's.
- They are the only spiders that can **turn their heads**.
- Many species of jumping spiders in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland are **brightly coloured**.
- Jumping spiders can leap up to **25 times** their body length by suddenly increasing their blood pressure and extending their **third or fourth pairs of legs**.



Squatters

Dewdrop spiders

- These tiny spiders live on **other spiders' webs**.
- They **steal food** from the web - sometimes even from the mouths of the larger spiders.
- They range in colour from **silver to brown**.
- They are often **mistaken** for the mates or children of their host.
- There are **seven** known species of **tiny spiders** in the litter of the tropical rainforests in north Queensland.

Weavers

Spiny spiders

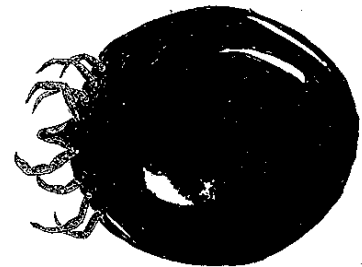
- Spiny spiders are **very common** in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.
- They build their webs **low** down in the vegetation.
- These spiders are **brightly coloured** with yellow and maroon stripes.
- They have **hard spiny coverings** over their abdomen, which give them a strange shape.

Mites

- Mites are **tiny relatives** of spiders.
- They **live** in moist soil, leaf litter and under bark.
- The Queensland Scrub Itch Mite (***Eutrombicula hirsti***) is common in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.
- Mites **crawl** but they can't fly.
- Mites are **omnivores**. They feed on **juices** which they extract from plants and animals.
- When the **larvae** of mites hatch from eggs, they usually only have **six legs**, not eight legs like the adults.
- The larvae, which are known as **chiggers**, feed on the blood of mammals including marsupials, rats and humans. They wait in low vegetation ready to cling onto passing animals.
- The mite which carries **scrub typhus** is ***Leptotrombidium deliense***.

Ticks

- Ticks are related to **spiders**.
- Ticks are **large mites** which grow to the size of a pea.
- An **immature tick** is the size of a pin-head.
- Ticks are **parasites**.
- They **wait** on grass and leaves until movement or exhaled carbon dioxide alerts them to their next victim.
- They drop onto their victim and attach themselves in a **protected** place.
- All ticks carry a **toxin** in their saliva which causes paralysis in their hosts. As the tick feeds it injects this poisonous saliva into the victim's body.
- During feeding a tick can enlarge its body up to **400** times its original size.
- Female ticks need to eat **blood meals** three times during their lives, but males do not feed at all. The female's **third** feed is the most dangerous as larger quantities of toxin are injected into the host.
- Ticks **drop off** their hosts after four to seven days, but sometimes they hang on for up to three weeks.
- They are most **common** from June to December.
- The Scrub Tick is one of the most **dangerous** animals in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.



Paralysis Tick

Amblipygids

- Amblipygids are a primitive group of arachnids related to the **scorpions**.
- Unlike spiders the abdomens of Amblipygids are segmented.
- They have **flattened bodies** which are adapted for living in crevices like Huntsmen spiders.
- Amblipygids are **endemic** to the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.
- They have **large pincers** used to trap prey.
- They are strictly **nocturnal**.
- They use special sensors at the tips of their **front legs** to feel their way around the leaf litter.