

Wolf spider



BITES

No one in Australia has ever died from a wolf spider bite – no deaths from any spider bite have been recorded since 1979.

200

There are more than 200 species of wolf spider.

TOADS

Two species of wolf spider in Queensland are known to prey on cane toads.

LIFESPAN

Wolf spiders live for up to two years.

NIGHT

Found roving along the ground, they are more active at night. When spotlighted at night their eyes glow green.

Known for their unique eye formation and cannibalistic mating ritual, the wolf spider's looks are much worse than its bite

Like all spiders, the wolf spider has eight eyes – but unusually they have two large eyes looking forward, two smaller eyes facing upward and a row of four smaller eyes beneath.

They are commonly found in Australia and many different species exist, with the garden wolf spider (*Lycosa godeffroyi*) being the most common. On average they grow to 2.5cm long, although they can be up to 8cm, and are grey-brown in colour.

HABITAT

The wolf spider can be found in common suburban gardens, but also resides in open areas, paddocks and grassland. It lives in vertical burrows which are usually in the ground and they have a rim of silk around the entrance as protection.

DIET

Wolf spiders do not spin webs. Instead they hunt for prey, waiting in particular areas for their next meal to come into view. The large set of eyes on top of its head gives the wolf spider excellent eyesight, which it uses to detect potential prey.

It eats crickets, other spiders, ants and other forms of small invertebrates. Larger varieties of wolf spider have been known to eat small frogs and lizards. When hunting, it will grab its prey with its front leg and then crush with its powerful jaws called chelicerae.

OFFSPRING

The male wolf spider has tufts on his forearm that he displays in a choreographed dance to attract the female.

The mating ritual can be quite dangerous for the male and often cannibalism occurs, with the larger female wolf spider eating the male. If he persists and is successful, he is often not eaten.

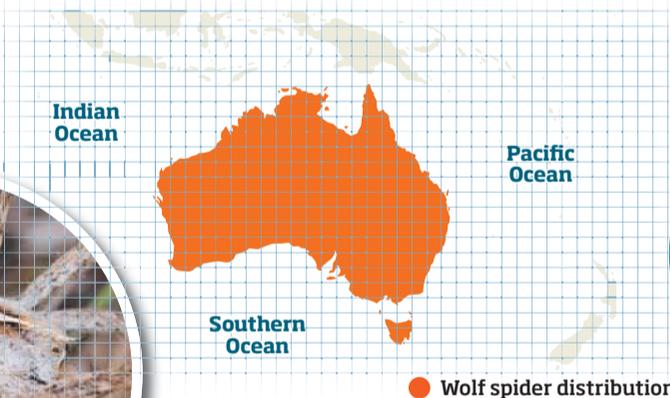
The male's large, well developed tufts and strong physique not only impress the female but ensure he can protect himself. The male begins by finding the silk dragline of a female spider. If she is seduced by his display, they mate and after a gestation period the female will lay eggs into a satchel she has prepared out of silk.

She attaches this to her abdomen with spinnerets and will carry the satchel with her, incubating the eggs in the sun while they develop.

After birth, the young wolf spiders live on top of their mother for a few days to a couple of months before dispersing.



GARDEN HOME



Baby love: Female wolf spiders incubate their eggs in a silk sac (top) and then carry the young on their back.

WEBSITES: www.csiro.au/resources/Wolf-spiders.html
reptilepark.com.au/animal/profile.asp?id=133

■ This poster complements the Mercury's BBC Earth David Attenborough Wildlife Collection NIE kit. DVD to watch is *Life in the Undergrowth: Silk Spinners (G)*. Compiled by Georgina Cook. Images: Thinkstock