

Wolf Spiders



Wolf spider with young. Photo courtesy of Joyce Gross.

Wolf spiders are the most commonly observed spiders seen during the day on the ground. In fact they are among the most active spiders during the daytime in California. These predators move swiftly from one place to the next, searching for prey in the daytime as well as at night. Their vision is excellent as is their sense of touch.

Wolf spiders are covered with a dense coat of hair, generally brown-colored with a lighter stripe or darker brown or cream markings on the body and

legs. The legs are long and held away from the body. A large species in the genus *Schizocosa*, averages 1 to 2 inches from leg tip to leg tip. This spider is commonly encountered in and around homes and farms in the Sacramento Valley, particularly in the late summer and fall months. In more coastal regions the genus *Pardosa* may be more common.

Wolf spiders belong to the family Lycosidae, which is in part Latin for wolf. They are so named because of their method of catching prey. These spiders do not build a web.

They only use silk to create a silken pouch to hold their eggs. Instead they are active hunters, like little tigers, either running down their prey or pouncing on unsuspecting insects. When resting and at night they hide under rocks or logs.

Females generally carry their white to yellowish silken egg sac around with them attached beneath the abdomen to their spinnerets. When the spiderlings hatch from the egg sac they climb up on the mother's back and ride around on her. At this stage the young spiders feed on prey captured by their mother. Once they are large enough to forage on their own they leave her.

Wolf spiders are very effective and important predators of flies, crickets and other moderate-sized insects. Although they have a briefly painful bite, the bite is less painful than a bee sting. There is no record of medical problems associated with the bites these spiders.