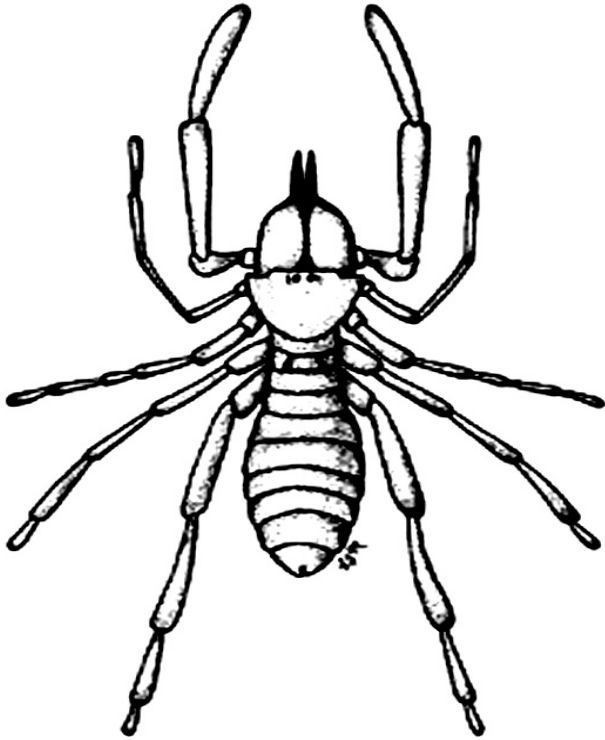




Sun Scorpions



Sun Scorpions, or solfugids, are arachnids, and therefore are related to both scorpions and spiders. They also are known as "sun spiders" or "wind scorpions", or in Mexico as "gluvia" or "genisaro". These animals often are feared because of their large fangs and ferocious, scorpion-like appearance. However, sun scorpions have no venom glands and therefore are harmless, lacking the ability to sting or bite.

There are about 120 species of Sun Scorpions in North America. The most common species

is pale in color and is the size of a small scorpion, averaging about 1 inch in length. They have four pairs of legs, but only the last three pairs are used for walking. The front pair of legs and the enlarged leg-like *pedipalps* are used to capture and consume prey.

Sun scorpions most commonly are found in deserts and other dry habitats throughout the world. They also occur in seasonally dry tropical forests. In California they are common in the Central Valley and foothill regions, as well as throughout the drier parts of the state.

Sun scorpions are fast, agile, nocturnal predators. They feed on live spiders, insects and other small animals that they can capture in their jaws. During the day they can be found in shallow burrows, or under rocks, boards and logs. Very little is known about the biology of these creatures in California.

Sun scorpions occasionally wander into homes, particularly at night. This wandering behavior occurs mostly during the summer months and is most frequently observed in new housing developments or in other areas where urbanization has disrupted the normal habitat of these creatures. There is no need for control measures as sun scorpions are harmless to humans and pets. In fact, an unfortunate consequence of increasing urbanization in California is the local extinction of these unusual animals.