

Sun Scorpions

Sun scorpions, or solfugids, are distantly related to both scorpions and spiders. They are also known as “sun spiders”, “wind scorpions”, “vinegarones”, or in Mexican - “gluvia” or “genisaro”. These animals are often feared, because of their ferocious, scorpion-like appearance. However, sun scorpions are harmless, lacking any kind of venom or the capability to sting or bite.

These animals are pale in color and are scorpion-sized, averaging about one inch in length in the U.S. They have five pairs of legs, but only the last three pairs are used for walking. The front pairs are used to capture and consume prey.

Sun Scorpions are most commonly found in dry to desert habitats throughout the world. However, 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 capture in their jaws. During the day they can be found in shallow burrows, or under rocks, boards, logs etc. Very little is known about the biology of these creatures in California.

They are known to occasionally wander into homes, particularly at night. This wandering behavior occurs mostly during the late summer to fall and is most frequently observed in new housing developments or in other areas where urbanization has disrupted normal habitat for 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 local extinction of these unusual animals.

A well known Internet hoax involves a photo of an American soldier holding what look like enormous sun scorpions, with the claim that they are flesh-eating anesthesia-injecting creatures, that scream, jump and run really fast. The only part of this that’s real is that they are pretty fast. These creatures are harmless.



Solfugid sun scorpion. Photo by Alex Wild; myrmecos.net.



Solfugid sun scorpion hoax photo.