

Solpugids

Solpugids are also called wind scorpions, sun spiders, and camel spiders. They are small but speedy predators. Their body is often covered with short hairs and divided into two distinct body segments - a cephalothorax (head) with two distinct eyes and four pairs of legs and a 10 segmented abdomen. In the western U.S., they vary in size from 15 to 45 mm (5/8 to 1 ¾ inches), are light tan to brown with an often darker abdomen.

Solpugids somewhat resemble scorpions without claws or stingers. Instead, they have blunt-ended "arms" called pedipalps in addition to their eight legs. They can run very fast carrying the pedipalps above their body. The pedipalps have sticky ends that allow them to catch and hold their prey and are also used for scooping water to the mouth. They have two pairs of large fangs (chelicerae) that work vertically like pliers and project forward from the mouth. None are known to have venom.

The name "wind scorpion" comes from the speed with which they run. These primarily nocturnal hunters usually feed on insects, spiders and other arthropods. Once caught, the prey is crushed by the chelicerae. When feeding, they suck out the prey's body fluids, and eat some of the fine particles, and discard the larger pieces. The southwestern U.S. is known to have over 50 solpugid species and more than 120 species have been described in North America.

Outdoors, these highly effective predators are considered beneficial and may even kill an occasional scorpion or centipede. If they are found indoors, they are either feeding on insects such as crickets or other insect prey available within the house. Otherwise, they are probably looking for a way to get back outside. Since they are fast, they can be difficult to trap, but they can be caught under a jar or glass and moved outdoors. Pesticides are not recommended to manage Solpugids (or scorpions and centipedes). If Solpugids are regularly found indoors, you should carefully assess the situation and look for pests living indoors and providing solpugids with a steady food source. They can also be accidentally brought indoors with firewood and other materials stored outside or in outbuildings.

A solpugid's access into the home can be greatly reduced by checking caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors as well as sealing areas where utilities (water, electricity, gas, etc.) come into the home. Periodically checking around these areas is a good practice and will limit entry by other nuisance pests such as ants, mice, woodrats, scorpions, centipedes, and kissing bugs.

Source: Backyard Gardener, August 7, 2013, authored by Jeff Schalau, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Yavapai County