

# Oregon Spiders

## Facts and Fiction

Oregon has at least 500 species of spiders. Most spiders are small and rarely encountered, living in forest litter, rock crevices, rotten logs, and similar habitats. There are a dozen or so that are frequently found in or near residences. Although all spiders have fangs and virtually all have venom, very few are either known or thought to have bites harmful to people. The rest are harmless (at least to people), feeding on a wide variety of insects and other invertebrates.

### Spider bites

According to at least one arachnologist, spider bites are not common. You are not likely to receive more than one or two bites in a lifetime. Normally people are not bitten unless they come in very close contact with a spider. People may be bitten when they place a hand on a spider (for instance, upon one sheltering in a wood pile, behind furniture or some boxes), or if they put on clothing or footwear that has a spider sheltering in it. If a spider was not seen biting you then it is most likely from another cause.

The black widow and the hobo spider are of interest in Oregon because they occasionally enter homes. Black widow bites should always be treated as potentially serious. A recent study (McKeown *et al.* 2014) compiled 33 verified spider bites in Oregon, including one hobo spider bite. None of the 33 bites resulted in significant medical symptoms or dermonecrosis. A fairly well known venomous spider that occasionally bites people, the brown recluse, *Loxosceles reclusa*, does not occur in Oregon, despite reports to the contrary. Most spiders in Oregon, even those most likely to be found in homes, are not known to be dangerous.

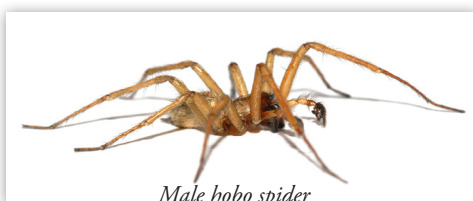
### Tips to reduce the number of spiders in the home

- make sure any small cracks and openings to your home are well sealed and install well-fitted window screens
- remove spider webs from the foundation, eaves, windows, and door frames of your home
- install rubber, plastic or brush gaskets underneath doors that lead outdoors or into garages and basements seal gaps in window frames with weather stripping, wood putty, or sealant; seal gaps around plumbing with construction foam
- watch for spiders if you bring firewood, potted plants, or other objects in from outside
- vacuum regularly and vacuum any visible spiders
- keep bedding several inches above the floor
- shake clothes and shoes before wearing; shake your bath towels before using
- use spider traps (note: If not correctly placed, traps are not normally very effective but will trap and kill at least a few spiders. Traps are most effective when placed on the floor in dark corners and under furniture)

Spraying pesticides is generally not very useful nor is it generally necessary. Most of the time, short-term relief is all that is achieved since most of the available pesticides are effective for relatively brief periods and afterwards new spiders move



*The mouse spider (Scotophaeus blackwalli), a common spider found in Oregon.*



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in to replace those that were killed. Realistically, although it may not be comforting to realize, our homes are “islands in a sea of spiders.” Professional pest control may be helpful in a few circumstances.

## Hobo, giant house, and western black widow spiders



The most common spiders submitted for identification at ODA are hobo (*Eratigena agrestis*) and giant house (*Eratigena atrica*) spiders. Both spiders were accidentally introduced from Europe. They can be found wherever people live in Oregon. In Europe, the hobo spider and all other related species are considered harmless.

Western black widow spiders (*Latrodectus hesperus*) are most common in southwestern and eastern Oregon. They are much less so in northwestern Oregon, although they are present, most often on south facing slopes that are rocky and bare of dense trees. On occasion, they are found in houses in the Willamette Valley. Black widows are likely the most harmful spiders in Oregon. Even so, the amount of venom received from a bite is not usually enough to cause a serious reaction in most people. However, anyone who believes they've been bitten by a black widow should immediately seek medical attention.

## Other Oregon spiders

Some other spiders commonly found in and around Oregon homes include grass spiders (species of *Agelenopsis*), wolf spiders (species of *Pardosa*), the cellar spider (*Pholcus phalangioides*), crab or flower spiders (*Misumena vatia*), the false black widow (*Steadota grossa*), the folding trapdoor spider (*Antrodiaetus pacificus*), jumping or zebra spiders (the *Phidippus* with metallic fangs and *Salticus scenicus*), the writing spider (*Argiope aurantia*), the banded garden spider (*Argiope trifasciata*), and the cross spider (*Araneus diadematus*). Although some of these are quite large and may resemble injurious venomous spiders (for instance, the false black widow resembles the true black widow and the folding trapdoor spider resembles a small tarantula), none are known to have bites harmful to people. A commonly encountered creature that resembles a spider, but is not, is the harvestman or daddy long legs (Phalangidae). Although these can be quite large and appear threatening, they cannot bite people, even though some people are firmly convinced they are harmful.

### References:

N. McKeown, R. S. Vetter, and R. G. Hendrickson. 2014. Verified spider bites in Oregon (USA) with the intent to assess hobo spider venom toxicity. *Toxicon* 84: 51-55.

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