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see how we live

Spiders and scorpions



 Orpheus

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Spiders and scorpions

Spiders, scorpions, mites and ticks—we are Arachnids, *not* insects. We have four pairs of legs, rather than three. We cannot fly, although some of us can jump. We are mostly meat-eaters, and quite a few of us are venomous, too. But don't be frightened. We're really quite fascinating creatures ...

How do spiders spin their webs?

We spiders are great spinners! I am an orb spider. I spin webs of sticky silk to catch my prey. You can find me sitting in the middle of my web, waiting for my victims to land on it. My web usually lasts only for a day, but when I lose one I simply make another. I can even make several webs in one day if I need to.



Did you know that not all spiders make webs? We do all make silk, however. It's an amazingly tough material. Spider silk would actually be stronger than a steel wire of the same size.

We store the silk inside our bodies as a liquid. Tiny organs called spinnerets turn the liquid into fine strands as it is drawn out. When we want to use some silk, we pull the silk strands out through the spinnerets using the claws on our back legs.





Here's how I make a web. First, I cast a single thread to join two twigs.



Next I spin a few diagonal lines to make a basic frame.



Then I drop down to a lower twig, to form a Y-shape.

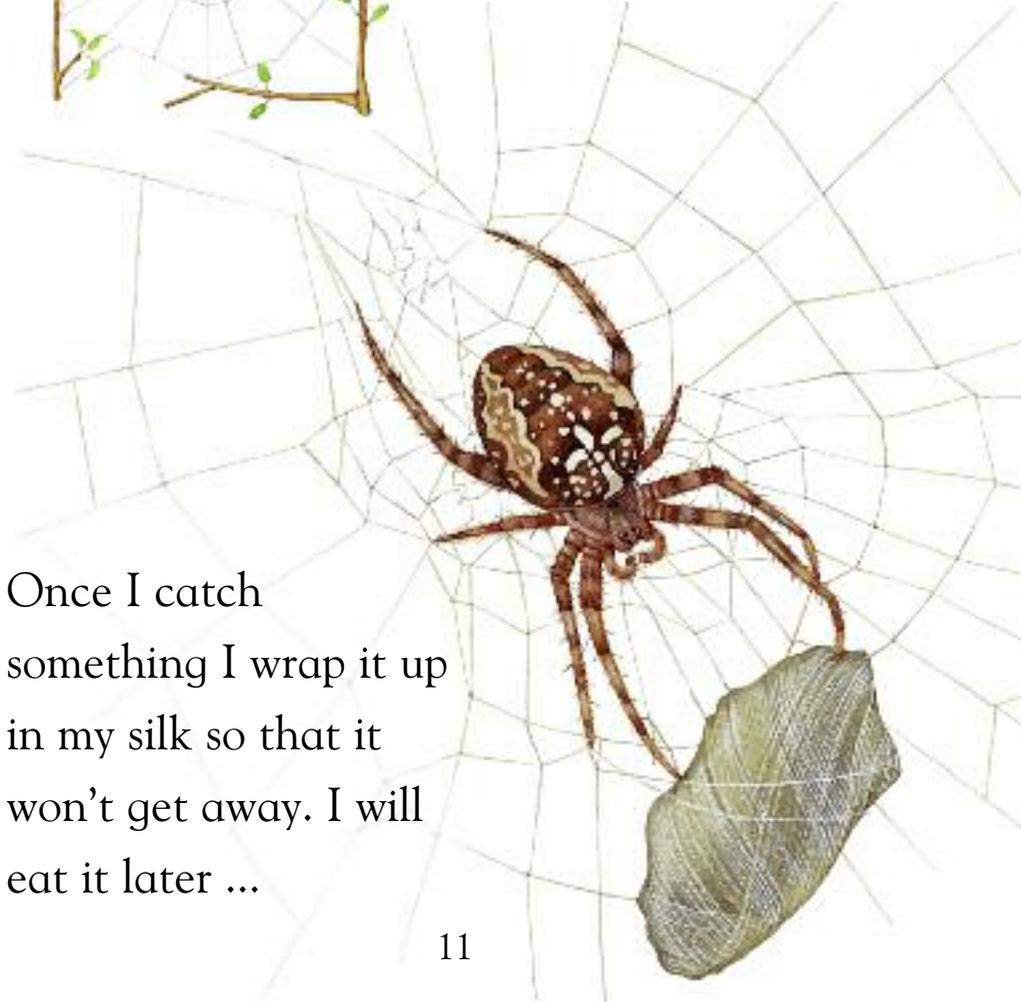


Finally, I create a spiral of sticky silk around the centre.



After all that hard work I sit in the middle and wait for supper!

Once I catch something I wrap it up in my silk so that it won't get away. I will eat it later ...



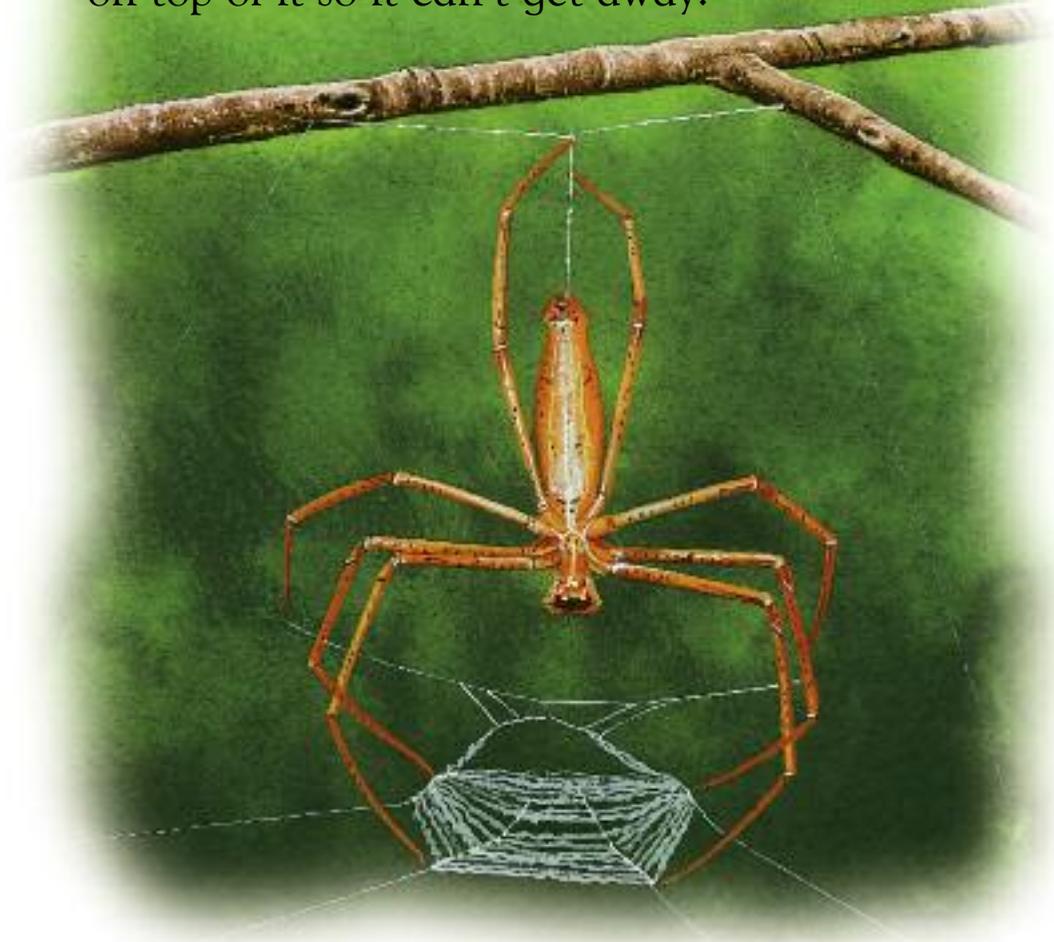
How do spiders catch their prey?

We spiders have different ways of catching our prey. I am called a bird-eating spider, although I rarely hunt birds. I actually prefer lizards or small mammals instead. I grab my prey and inject it with poison with a bite from my sharp fangs. This paralyzes it so it can't escape. This lizard will make a tasty meal ...



An ogre-faced spider like me has very good eyesight. I can see in the pitch black of night as well as by day. This is very useful for spotting prey.

I catch my prey using my web like a net. When I see a tasty insect, I drop my web on top of it so it can't get away.





I am a trapdoor spider. I catch my prey by digging a hole in the ground. It has a special trapdoor made of soil. It's almost impossible to spot. I sit very still underneath my secret door. When I see a tasty-looking insect coming along, I pounce. Then I drag it underground and suck up its juices.

Spitting spiders like me shoot jets of silk at our prey.

This covers the tasty

bug with a

sticky

poisonous glue.

As you can see,

the poor thing

can't get

away!





Tadpoles and small fish are what I, a fishing spider, like to eat. I skate on the surface of the water looking for them. When my legs feel one, I dive under the water to catch it. I inject venom into it with my powerful bite.

I jump from twig to twig to catch my prey. That's why I'm called a jumping spider! Sometimes I can jump up to 80 times the length of my body. Having eight eyes gives me excellent vision as well.



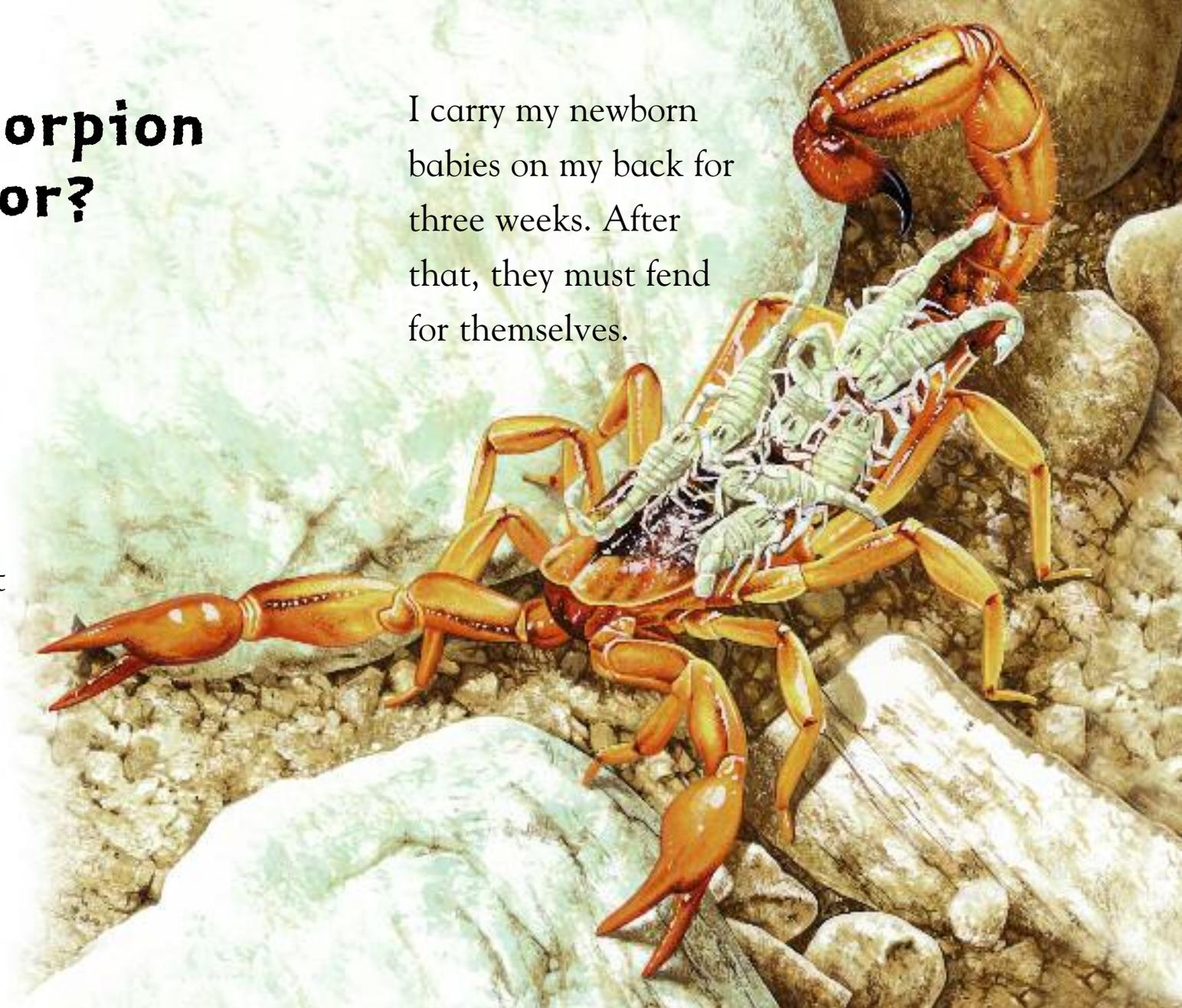


This is me, a black widow spider. I am actually only a tenth of this size, but I am still one of the deadliest spiders in the world. My venom is 15 times more powerful than that of rattlesnakes, so, you humans, beware! I prey on small insects, but a nip from me is sure to be very painful.

What does a scorpion use its sting for?

Desert scorpions like me have a pair of sharp, strong pincers to grab prey, and a poisonous sting in our tail. We use this to paralyze our victims so that they cannot move before we eat them. During the day we keep out of the desert heat in caves or holes in the ground. We come out at night when it's cooler to hunt for insects and lizards.

I carry my newborn babies on my back for three weeks. After that, they must fend for themselves.



How many legs does a centipede have?

We centipedes have at least 30 legs. Some of us have even 100 or more. There is one pair of legs for each segment of my body. Poisonous claws on the sides of my head help me catch my prey. A giant centipede like me can grow up to 30 centimetres long. My tail is actually another pair of legs. I am a pretty fast mover!



I am a giant millipede. I have 200 legs, but some of my relatives have up to 300. My legs move in waves, but I can't move very fast like the centipede. I eat plants—mostly dead, rotting ones. I like to live in dark, damp places where I can crawl about undisturbed.

When danger threatens, I curl up into a tight ball. I tuck in my delicate legs so that they are protected inside my armoured body. Nothing can harm me now!



We red velvet mites are only the size of a pinhead. Our eight legs each have sharp claws. These we use to attach ourselves to bigger insects. We then feed by sucking their blood.



Dust mites like me are so tiny, you'll find it very hard to spot one. Skin flakes that I pick up from you humans are my favourite food. I live in your houses and am perfectly at home in your mattresses, pillows and carpets. Watch out, because I might make you itch or sneeze if you come too close!

