

Although we here at the Society of Biology are looking to track the spider genus *Tegenaria* this Autumn, knowing just what other spiders are scuttling around your house is a great way to begin to understand what they do, where they are found and why they aren't as scary as people think!

What spider do I spy?

House Spiders: *Tegenaria spp.*

Tegenaria species tend to live in our sheds, garages, and wood piles where they produce a sheet web with a funnel-like retreat at the rear. Both sexes remain in their webs until the autumn when the males become nomadic and leave their webs to search for females. Their search for a mate may result in them coming indoors if they weren't already, where we encounter them in our baths or running from beneath our sofas.

Lace Webbed Spider: *Amaurobius similis*

This spider lives in cracks and crevices in walls. It lives in a silken tube that lines the crevice and builds an untidy mass of silken strands across the surface of the wall with its lair close to the centre. This silk often has a bluish tinge when fresh but assumes a dirty white colour when older. *Amaurobius similis* has a characteristic pattern on the upper surface of its abdomen. Abdominal patterns are identical to other common house spider species *Amaurobius fenestralis*.



www.flickr.com/koenvandijken

Tube Web Spider: *Segestria spp.*

These spiders live in holes in external walls, which they line with a silken tube and then lay down a series of single silken trip lines that radiate from the entrance of the retreat. The spider spends the day deep inside the retreat but sits at the entrance after dark waiting for prey to stumble over one of the trip lines. There are two species that occur on buildings. *Segestria senoculata* is the smallest and has a distinctive series of dark diamond shaped marking running along its elongated abdomen. *Segestria florentina* is much larger and lacks the distinctive pattern but has a bright metallic green sheen to its jaws.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

Jumping Spiders: *Salticus spp.*

Jumping spiders of the family Salticidae are easily recognised by the squared off front to their head (properly called the cephalothorax). They possess two very large eyes that almost fill their 'face' and as a result have the best vision of all of the spiders. As they see as well as we do they often look up to examine humans that stop to look at them. A number of jumping spiders can be found on the walls of our houses but the most common is the zebra spider *Salticus senicus*; this species is easily recognised by the distinctive black and white stripes on its abdomen.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

False Widow Spiders: *Steatoda spp.*

These spiders construct a crude, haphazard sheet web which connected to a retreat in a nearby crack or crevice. The spiders resemble the infamous black widow but lack the red markings on the underside of the abdomen. The spiders spend the day in the retreat and move out at night to hang beneath their web and wait for prey. There are three species that vary in colour and abdominal patterns. Distinguishing the species can only be achieved by inspecting the genitalia.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

Pholcus sphalangoides and *Psilochorus simoni*.

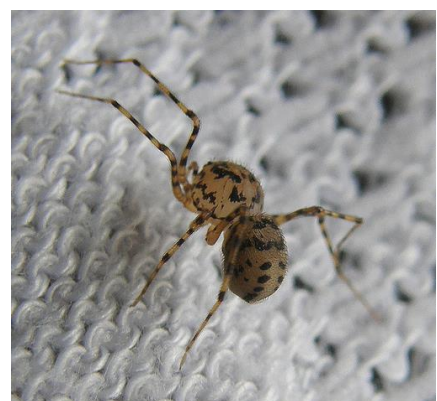
The family Pholcidae has two genera that occur in houses, *Pholcus* (female pictured) and *Psilochorus*. Both of these have small bodies and extremely long legs. They both produce untidy cobwebs in corners of rooms and behind furniture. They can be distinguished by the size and shape of their abdomens. *Pholcus* has a long thin abdomen whilst the abdomen of *Psilochorus* is spherical or globular.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

Spitting Spider: *Scytodes thoracsica*

This spider is now relatively rare and has only been recorded from older houses. It has a distinctive appearance with an extremely large domed head, and the spider is a pale straw yellow with black markings. It is rarely seen in the day unless disturbed as it is active at night. Its method of prey capture is very unusual in that it constructs no web and moves extremely slowly. The enlarged head contains a set of modified poison glands that have evolved to produce a sticky glue. This is fired the spiders prey from its jaws while they vibrate rapidly. This results in a zigzag of glue that lands on the prey pinning it to the ground.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

The Mouse Spider: *Scotophaeus blackwalli*

This spider gets its name from the black sleek furry appearance of its abdomen, resembling that of a mouse. It hides in nooks and crannies in the day time coming out at night to search for potential prey. It has been known to eat dead insects on windowsills when times are hard.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

European Garden Spider: *Araneus diadematus*

The garden cross spider often turns up in conservatories and is easily recognised by the four white lines on its abdomen that loosely form a cross.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07



Walnut Orb-Weaver Spider: *Nuctinia umbratica*

This spider makes a typical orb web on window frames and fences but this one has no missing sectors. The spider is easily recognised as its abdomen is extremely flattened giving it the appearance of a large black Smartie sweet with legs.

The Window Spider: *Zygiella x-notata*

This spider is extremely common on the outside and sometimes the inside of windows (female pictured bottom, male top). It produces a typical orb web in the corners but on close inspection two of the web sectors in the top right or left hand corner have no spiral threads crossing them. This leaves an empty sector with a single silken thread running through it, from the web centre to a tubular retreat at the edge of the web.



www.flickr.com/63075200@N07

Feather-legged lace weaver: *Uloborus plumipes*



This spider has been recently introduced to the UK from Europe. It first appeared in garden centres but has now become common in conservatories across southern England. It is a small mottled spider that sits with its first pair of legs stretching out front of it. These have a patch of long hairs that give it a furry or feathery appearance.