

Fun Facts About Spiders

Basic Spider Facts and Information

1. There are nearly 40,000 species of spiders world-wide and about 3,800 in the US.
2. Spiders rarely bite people and only do so as a means of defense.
3. Spiders range in size from small enough to balance comfortably on the tip of a pencil to almost 14 inches in diameter.
4. The average person will encounter some 50 different kinds of spiders in their lifetime. Of those, only about a dozen are capable of piercing the skin with their fangs.

Spider Silk

5. Spider silk is the strongest natural fiber known. It's exuded as a liquid and hardens when the spider pulls it, thus aligning the molecular structure. It will stretch up to 1/3 of its original length without breaking.
6. Scientists are researching spider silk as a possible replacement for Kevlar, the material used in bulletproof vests.
7. It has been theorized that a spider web with strands the thickness of a pencil could stop a 747 in flight.
8. Spiders are the only creatures that can produce silk essentially from the time they emerge from the egg sac until the day they die.
9. Black widow silk was at one time used in military gun sights because of its strength and uniform thickness.
10. Bridge builders have been known to study spider webs because of the webs' remarkable ability to absorb tension.

Spider Venom

11. Virtually all spiders are venomous but only a few are what we refer to as "medically important."
12. Components of spider venom show promise in medical research, including areas of Alzheimer's and Lou Gehring's disease and even in preventing permanent brain damage in stroke victims.

13. There is no correlation between the size of the spider and the degree of venom potency.

Strange But True...

14. Little Miss Muffet was a real person. Her name was Patience Muffet and she was the daughter of Thomas Muffet - a late 16th and early 17th century entomologist. His book "Insectorum Theatrum" contained the first illustration of an insect, collected in North America on Sir Walter Raleigh's second voyage. Muffet had a particular penchant for spiders and tolerated and even promoted them in his home. As was common at that time, he believed that spiders possessed medicinal qualities and that consuming them could cure a variety of ailments. Consequently, whenever poor Patience was ill, her father would mash spiders and spoon feed her the pulp. No wonder she was afraid of them!
15. The simple act of a spider spinning a web in the mouth of a cave has been credited with saving the lives of the primary figures in three major world religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In many countries, there are tales of a hero or special individual who escaped his pursuers because a spider had built a web across the entrance to his hiding place. For example, David doubted God's wisdom in having created such a useless creature that does nothing but spin a web and has no value. Yet when he was pursued by Saul and took refuge in a cave, God sent a spider to weave its web across the mouth of the cave. Saul and his men did not enter the cave because they felt that no one could have entered without disturbing the web. Similar tales are told of Mohammed when he fled Mecca to escape from the Coreishites and of Jesus being hidden in a cave to escape Herrod's men who searched for him.
16. Aristotle advocated swallowing a spider every day as a means of staying healthy.
17. Contrary to popular belief, the female Black Widow spider seldom devours the male after mating.
18. Spiderlings (young spiders) can travel great distancing by "ballooning" - the process of floating on the breeze using a strand of silk.