

The Spinneret

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Summer 2016

Ok. Spring was officially confusing. I know it's supposed to be rain and sun and rain and wind and rain... I even know the old saw about March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb but six weeks of rain punctuated with 80 degree sunbreaks? Not that I'm complaining. I'm just not used to riding the motorcycle in a t-shirt before July.

So, summer is upon us and it has all the hallmarks of being a toasty one. If you got all your chores done, go play outside! - Ed

Pacific Tree Frogs:

We can all appreciate the hard work and diligent effort our legislators invest in Olympia. So it should come as no surprise that in addition to an official state bird we also have an official state mammal, fish, flower, fruit, grass, oyster, marine mammal, fossil, insect, and last but not least...Amphibian!



Pacific Tree Frog

That's right, the Pacific tree frog or "chorus" frog as some are want to call it. Star of motion picture sound tracks the world over. Though seldom appearing in the credits these hearty little peepers are the stars of ambient noise for outdoor night scenes second only to crickets. Part of this can probably be attributed to the fact that they are found from northern British Columbia all the way to Baja and as far east as the continental divide.

As an adult this tiny frog grows to be about 2 inches long. They range in color from brown to bright green with a distinct black mask or stripe around the eyes. Tree frogs can change color but apparently it is a function of temperature and not something they can control or relative to the color of the surface they are resting on.

Sticky pads on the toes allow tree frogs to climb trees, walls and slippery plants with ease. But while this frog has been found in trees over twenty feet up they spend most of their lives on the ground eating ants, spiders and other small insects. They tend to prefer living in areas that are relatively dry and spend very little time near bodies of water except to mate.

During mating season the males congregate near water and sing to attract females.

Unfortunately, tree frogs have no real defense against predators beyond hiding and camouflage. Virtually everything that isn't vegetarian will eat an adult frog. Its

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Cellar Spiders:

If you are like me, and I know a lot of you are, spring cleaning doesn't actually get under way until the sun starts coming out regularly.

That said, one of the most common critters encountered during spring cleaning or any other time of year for that matter is the cellar spider.

A really big cellar spider is about the size of a small popcorn kernel with long, hair like legs that span about the diameter of a twenty-five cent piece.

Occasionally referred to as Merry Widows or Daddy Longlegs, these are the spiders commonly found hanging upside down from a tangle of web in the upper corners of rooms and garage ceilings. Often the spider can be seen carrying its clutch of fifteen to twenty translucent eggs in its mouth.



Cellar Spider

In the wild they typically inhabit leaf litter, or get under logs, branches and stones on the ground. Just about any horizontal surface where they can build a web and hang upside down to await prey.

This spindly legged wisp of a spider is made from the stuff of legend. It is often endowed with super powers almost too incredible to believe. Myth claims that this is the most poisonous spider on the planet and the only thing standing between us and certain death is that they are endowed with fangs too short to inflict a bite.

In truth this spiders venom is much weaker than most of its cousins.

Unfortunately, the myth distracts us from what is truly amazing about this spider.

Even though its venom is weaker, many species of cellar spider will prey on spiders much larger and more venomous.

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Pacific Tree Frogs:

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short two year life is truly a gauntlet of predators.

Fortunately, females can lay up to 750 eggs per year to help offset this carnage.

Most of the eggs laid don't survive the first two weeks. As an egg, if they don't die in a late spring frost, cadis flies and fish will eat the eggs.

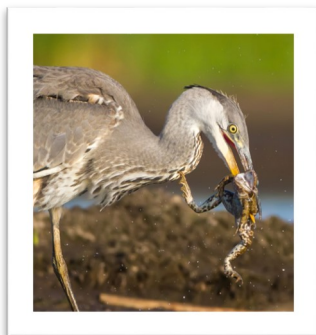
Eggs hatch into tadpoles in about two weeks depending on temperature. They will spend five to six weeks eating algae and scavenging just about anything plant or animal rotting in the water. Predators like dragon fly larvae will eat the tadpoles and so will other frogs, fish, and birds.

If it survives long enough, the maturing frog absorbs its tail and gills and emerges from the water to spend the rest of its adult life on land returning to the water only to mate.

I wonder, what would the frogs think about being the official state amphibian?

Well, who knows? But given a bit more effort it won't be long until we have an official state dirt. No wait! That's already being proposed.

I know! I think I'd like to nominate the "scattered sun break" as the official state weather. ■



Heron eating a frog
(not a tree frog)

Service Targets:



Current applications are focused on ants. Ground level applications are the principal preventive treatment being made at this time.

It's carpenter ant swarming season so it's not unusual for winged forms of this ant to wander into homes with or without their wings attached. Unless they swarm out of a wall these ants are harmless and cannot infest your home directly.



Bare ground weed treatments are performing well this year but we are noticing some re-growth with horse tail. The 30 day automatic follow up services are under way to touch this up but if growth is getting out of hand please call and we can visit early. ■

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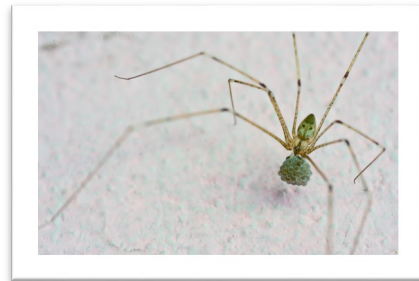
Cellar Spiders:

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Incredibly, they manage these feats with web that isn't even sticky.

Their web consists of disorganized strands that act as part snare, part telegraph.

They prey on a wide range of small insects. An insect attempting to pass through their web will be slowed down as their legs encounter additional strands.



Cellar spider with eggs

Contact with the web sends vibrations through the strands alerting the spider who will start gyrating wildly, shaking the web to further ensnare the prey. When the prey is sufficiently slowed the spider climbs down its web and using its long legs will begin casting numerous strands of silk over its victim. Once encased in silk it will bite its prey injecting its venom. The spider may feed immediately or save the bundled meal for later.

Cellar spider infestations frequently start in the garage where they can be carried in on vehicles and lawn furniture.

Garage doors do not seal tightly and often allow ants, sowbugs, flies, and other insects in to support the spiders.

With a ready supply of food their population can boom in just a few months. Eventually a few will make it into the house where they can survive quite well on the occasional gnat, or other hapless insect.

Inside your home the best way to manage cellar spiders is with the vacuum cleaner. Taking the web down with the vacuum hose doesn't just remove the web but the spider and its eggs as well.

In the garage the shop vac also works well. If you have a large amount of stored items or places that can't be reached with the vacuum hose you may have to resort to treating for them. A "flying" insect spray as opposed to ant and roach killer is preferred because the evaporating mist can reach into voids not accessible otherwise.

Now with that chore behind you, you can sleep peacefully knowing that the most venomous spider on earth really isn't the one that was hanging out in the corner of the bedroom ceiling. ■

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