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Spiders

Spiders have long been credited with a high degree of malevolence. Possessing eight legs, but completely silent and lurking in dark recesses has not helped with the public image challenge.

Hollywood has played on the public's revulsion of these misunderstood creatures. In the 1950's there were giant spiders on the silver screen that were the byproduct of nuclear experiments gone awry. These mega-arachnids always had an appetite for police patrol cars, livestock, and the hapless residents of the town near the atomic experiment.

In recent years there have been films about spiders of a realistic size, but with ability to coordinate a special-ops attack which would be the envy of Osama bin Ladin. Movie trailers scream about the plague of the deadly Hopping Malaysian Vampire Spiders.

Reality is quite different. Wakulla County's native spiders are not aggressive to humans and most pass their lives unseen.

Two local spiders which are large enough to be noticed, several inches toe to toe, are the Wolf Spider and the Golden Orb Spider. While big on the local spider scale, they lead very different lives.

Wolf spiders are ambush predators which are insect excellent hunters. They can be frequently found in burrows which serve both as their home and a base for a surprise attack on unlucky bugs which happened to wonder to close.

While seen during the day, these spiders are primarily nocturnal hunters which are known to spring out and chase their intended victims for short distances. Two of their six eyes are large and will reflect light at night, making them easy to spot with a flashlight.

If provoked, they will bite non-insect molesters. Their venom is mildly toxic and will cause swelling and redness.

These spiders are protective mothers with an egg sac attached at the end of their abdomen. This allows the spider to carry her unborn young with her.



The abdomen is held in a raised position to keep the egg case from dragging on the ground. Despite this unique trait wolf spiders are still capable of effective hunting.

Immediately after the next generation of wolf spiders emerges from their protective silken case, they clamber up their mother's legs and crowd onto her abdomen. She provides them with food and protection until they are able to fend for themselves.



Golden Orb Spiders, sometimes called banana spiders, are noted for their impressive large webs. These large spiders are frequently found on their webs between trees or large shrubs.

The yellow or golden tinted webs are used to trap insects which are attracted to its color and may be over a yard wide. Portion of the webs are sticky, but outer web is not and is used by the spider for quickly reaching a victim.

As with the wolf spider, the golden orb spider's venom is not lethal to humans. It has a neurotoxic effect similar to that of the black widow, but not as potent.

To learn more about spiders in Wakulla County, contact your UF/IFAS Wakulla Extension Office at 850-926-3931 or visit our [Big Bend Bugs!](#) page, and leave your comments and questions about the article.