

The wonders of the Kimberley

A glimpse at its unique environment. *'A web of intrigue'*

(by Brian Kane)



One of the many pleasures of the Kimberley is camping in the bush but there can also be hazards. It can be quite disconcerting to stumble around in the dark and suddenly have a spider web wrap around your face. Of course your immediate thought is a toxic spider.

Many of us have phobias about spiders but is this mainly because they look so creepy and hairy? Take the Huntsman spider for instance which is commonly found in the Kimberley. While



looking quite fierce, they are non aggressive and non toxic to humans. However a large Huntsman, especially the female when guarding her eggs sacs, can give a painful bite. But mostly the Huntsman is a shy timid spider which can be found under house eaves or behind the flaking bark of trees.

(photo – BK)

The St. Andrews Cross Spider can be found in Kimberley garden areas around our homes. It is also harmless, non aggressive and non toxic to humans. This spider sits upside down in the middle of its web forming a



cross ready to snare flies and mosquitoes. (photo – BK)

That is not to say that Australia does not have its fair share of dangerous spiders such as the Red-back, Mouse spider, Black house spider, Wolf spider (all found Australia wide) and the Funnel web (found on the East Coast and one of the world's most deadly spiders).

An effective anti-venom for the Red-backed spider was developed in 1956 and about 250 people receive this in Australia each year. Yet it provides little comfort for the awful thought that a spider might like to share our sleeping bag in the bush.

We tend not to notice just how many spider webs there are in the bush until a heavy fog of tiny water droplets cling to webs highlighting their presence.

Spiders have a vital role to play in nature even though they might not be 'our cup of tea'.

Further information: BK's Kimberley nature web site:

<http://www.stmarysbroome.wa.edu.au/home/nature/aaopen.html>