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Black House Spider, *Badumna insignis*

Black House Spider

Scientific name: *Badumna insignis*

Alternative name/s:

Window Spiders, Grey House Spider



Black House Spider, *Badumna insignis* Image: Mike Gray



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Fast Facts



Classification

Species	<i>insignis</i>
Genus	<i>Badumna</i>
Family	Desidae
Order	Araneae
Class	Arachnida
Phylum	Arthropoda
Kingdom	Animalia



Size Range

18 mm (female); 9 mm (male)



Habitats

peridomestic



Life history mode

arboreal



Feeding Habits

arthropod-feeder, carnivorous, insectivorous, predator



View Bio Regions

NSW North Coast
 NSW South Western Slopes - NSW
 NSW South Western Slopes - VIC
 Sydney Basin
 South East Coastal Plain
 South East Corner - NSW
 South East Corner - VIC
 South Eastern Highlands - ACT
 South Eastern Highlands - NSW
 South Eastern Highlands - VIC
 South Eastern Queensland - NSW
 South Eastern Queensland - QLD

Black House and Grey House Spiders are common in urban areas, and are sometimes called Window Spiders.

Identification

Black House and Grey House Spiders belong to the Family Desidae. Other species of *Badumna* are found throughout Australia.

The Black House Spider (*Badumna insignis*) is a dark robust spider, with the female being larger than the male. The carapace and legs are dark brown to black, and the abdomen is charcoal grey with a dorsal pattern of white markings (sometimes indistinct). The Grey House Spider (*Badumna longinquus*) is a slightly smaller (14mm) species with a greyish carapace and grey-brown banded legs.

The webs of Black House Spiders have a 'funnel-like' shape, which is sometimes misunderstood as a Funnel-web Spider web. However, the two spiders are not at all similar in appearance, size or life history. The retreat of a true Funnel-web Spider is often less funnel-like and is usually a burrow in the ground. Some funnel webs have burrows in tree-trunk crevices but their web entrances are disguised with detritus (eg, bark) particles embedded in the silk, whereas the silk of *Badumna* webs is clean.



Male Black House Spider Image: G Millen



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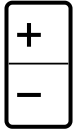
Habitat

Their webs form untidy, lacy silk sheets with funnel-like entrances. Black House Spiders are found on tree trunks, logs, rock walls and buildings (in window frames, wall crevices, etc). Grey House spiders

may be found in similar locations and often builds webs on foliage.

Distribution

Black and Grey House Spiders are widely distributed in southern and eastern Australia.



Feeding and diet

In the bush, *Badumna* species of spiders are found especially upon rough-barked trees which provide good shelter for their retreats amongst the cracks in the bark. Trees that have been attacked by wood-boring insects are particularly attractive, as the sap flowing from the bored holes attracts flies, beetles, butterflies, bees and ants, which the spider can prey upon easily. In the house, they feed upon household pests attracted to the light of windows and lamps, where the spiders tend to build their webs.

 **Black House Spider, *Badumna* sp.**

To aid performance, some images don't load until scrolled into view. To print all images you will need to scroll through the whole page first.



Black House Spider, *Badumna* sp. Image: Mike Gray

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Life history cycle

The female constructs several white silk egg sacs, which are secured within the web retreat. The female stays with the eggs until they hatch. The spiderlings then disperse. The spiders mature during summertime and live for about two years.

Breeding behaviours

The female spider never leaves her web unless forced to, but keeps on repairing it - old webs can look grey and woolly from constant additions of silk. Males, when ready to mate, go in search of females in their webs. The male plucks the web of the female to attract her attention. Once the male has made sure that the female will be receptive, he can safely approach and inseminate her with his palps. They may then stay together for several days and may mate again several times.

Predators

Enemies include the White-tailed Spider, as well as parasitic wasps and flies.

Danger to humans

Black House Spiders are timid animals and bites from them are infrequent. The bite may be quite painful and cause local swelling. Symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, sweating and giddiness are occasionally recorded. In a few cases skin lesions have developed after multiple bites.

A cold pack may relieve local pain. Seek medical attention if symptoms persist.

References

- Brunet, B. 2008. *Spider Watch: A guide to Australian spiders*. Reed New Holland.
- York Main, B. 1976. *Spiders*. Australian Naturalist Library, Sydney.

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