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Cupboard Spiders, *Steatoda* sp.

Cupboard Spiders

Scientific name: *Steatoda* sp.

Alternative name/s:
Brown House Spider

Similar species:
Redback Spider

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A female cupboard spider, *Steatoda* sp. Image: Heather McLennan



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Fast Facts



Classification

Species	sp.
Genus	<i>Steatoda</i>
Family	Theridiidae
Order	Araneae
Class	Arachnida
Phylum	Arthropoda
Kingdom	Animalia



Size Range

Females 1.2 cm, males slightly smaller



Habitats

peridomestic



Life history mode

sedentary, terrestrial



Feeding Habits

arthropod-feeder, carnivorous, insectivorous

Introduction

At a casual glance the female Cupboard Spider could easily be mistaken for a Redback Spider, without that distinctive red stripe on the back.

Identification

Like the majority of members in the Theridiid family, *Steatoda* species have shiny, slender legs, with a small cephalothorax and a larger abdomen, which is somewhat egg-shaped in *Steatoda*. The colour can range from a brown or reddish plum to satiny black. The abdomen often has white or beige spots, a frontal crescent, and sometimes, small red spots or a thin red line (but never a stripe like a Redback Spider).

The female Cupboard Spider could easily be mistaken for a Redback Spider, but lacks the distinctive red stripe on the back. Both spiders are from the same family, Theridiidae (also known as comb-footed spiders), so they are closely related. However, the Cupboard Spider is not considered as dangerous as its Redback relative.



A male cupboard spider, *steatoda* sp. Image: Heather McLennan



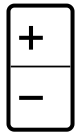
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Habitat

Steatoda spiders build a tangled-looking web with sticky lines (a gum-footed web) under rocks, timber and bark in the bush, so long as a source of prey is available. However, their common name comes from a fondness for building their snare in any dark, sheltered, undisturbed place around the house or garden - among old furniture and junk stored in sheds and garages, under garden benches, around compost bins, in upturned flower pots and the like. Sometimes, the first signs of the Cupboard Spider are the appearance of tiny white spots of spider droppings, like small splashes of paint, on the floor underneath the web.

Distribution

Spiders of the *Steatoda* genus are found throughout the world in temperate and tropical climates.



Life history cycle

The females produce several white to cream egg sacs, suspending them within her tangled web. The female can live for about two years, whereas the male will only live for a few months.

Breeding behaviours

The male spider is small, and inhabits the outer parts of the female's web, awaiting a chance to mate. He will generally be eaten after mating has been completed.

Danger to humans

Bites from *Steatoda* species occur infrequently. In the past they have not been considered particularly dangerous to humans, however in a few recent cases of *Steatoda* bites where the spider has been identified, more serious symptoms have been recorded. In two cases, Redback antivenom has been used successfully to treat these symptoms. Minor skin lesions have been occasionally associated with the bite.

Usually none required. A cold pack can be applied to help reduce any pain or swelling at the site of the bite.

References

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