

Marvelous Animal Adaptions

By Jenn Roe

Photos: Arnold Joe, Jenn Roe

Crab Spiders



Some species of crab spider can change color from white (base color) to yellow.

PHOTO: ARNOLD JOE



Crab spiders are ambush predators that sit and wait for prey to come within striking distance. These petite predators are expert at blending in with the flowers where they hunt.

PHOTO: JENN ROE

Crab Spiders use Flower Power

The crab spider is easy to identify. It's named for its round and wide crab-like body and extra-long front legs held outward like pincers on a crab. It's also able to scramble sideways, another crabby feature.

Mount Diablo is home to the Goldenrod and the White-banded Crab Spiders that are very similar in appearance, habitat, and behavior. The female of both species can change color from white (base color) to yellow and vice versa, a unique ability in the world of spiders. This is a slow process that takes days. It helps her hide from **prey** and **predators** such as birds, lizards, ants, wasps and other spiders.

Also called a flower spider, it does not need a web to catch **prey**. Instead, this tiny **predator** (the female almost half an inch wide) hides on a fresh bloom and uses all eight spider-eyes to scan for the next meal. Her long, strong front legs strike at any pollen or nectar-

seeking insect unlucky enough to land within reach!

The female spider does not stray from her preferred flower while the hunting is good, bees being a favorite high-protein meal. In contrast, the much smaller male wanders about in search of a mate with less time to spend catching insects. Fortunately, he's not a strict **carnivore** and when necessary, will sip sugar-rich nectar for nourishment.



The spider immobilizes its sometimes much bigger prey with a quick, venomous bite and injects it with digestive enzymes that liquify its insides. The spider's fangs suck up the soupy brew.

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