



Presents

Tarantula Takeover

Our first newsletter!

April 2019

First and foremost if you haven't joined Gateway Herpetology and Entomology club, what are you waiting for? We've got a table set up at every show me show and a group on Facebook. Aside from sharing a love for reptiles and insects we work together to educate about our hobby. Club efforts are currently focusing on conservation for both local and worldwide ecosystems.

When many people think of a forest they think of the vast amount of plants and animals that live there. Unfortunately some see land to be industrialized for money. We have been given the opportunity to protect a section by surveying the land and advocating for the conservation of palm pit vipers. Palm pit vipers account for some of the most beautiful and rarest venomous snakes in the neo-tropics. How can you help? These efforts need funding so action can be taken fast. The farmers are already preparing to purchase and clear the land. Please consider donating today or to our go fund me, every dollar counts. All funds raised will go directly to biologists working in Guatemala with Highland species of Pit vipers as well as other rare and endemic reptiles and amphibians. By raising funds for these biologists they will have a better ability to survey these endangered snakes and better understand how we can save them. By donating you are automatically entered to win a variety of prizes including an all expense paid field herping trip to southern Illinois(From St. Louis) with a local guide and show me snakes VIP tickets.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Illinois HB2554- Illinois residents can breathe a sigh of relief. Due to an overwhelming opposition HB2554 was tabled and then pulled by the sponsor. When I confirmed with USARK the response I received was very optimistic. "We have no reason to believe HB2554 will come back again this year" USARK. We have shown strength in numbers and I'm confident if we stay aware and continue to work together private hobbyist in Illinois will remain unbothered.

Reptile education and awareness day- Saturday, April 13th from 10am-4pm. At the tri- county sports center. 41 College Campus Drive Moscow Mills, Missouri 63362

Club meeting in the upstairs conference room at noon. Club sponsored activities can be found at the Gateway Herpetology and entomology table each show.

Now onto the TARANTULAS!!

Talking T's with Dustin from Simply Spiders

Many of you know Dustin Blevins, he's a stand up guy with a true passion for his friends, family and his beloved tarantulas. His heart is huge and his knowledge is widespread. We are incredibly lucky to have someone like him in our local community. Dustin was nice enough to share some information about himself, his collection, and his business. These are his words and I am proud I get to share them with all of you.

It all started 10 years ago in the St. Louis Reptile Community. After a few years of vending local shows selling different reptiles, I became friends with another member of the reptile community whose passion was tarantulas. She knew I was terrified of spiders and wanted me to realize how beautiful and majestic these creatures are. So after many weeks of educating me and teaching me the basics she came up to me at our local reptile show and handed me my first *G. pulchripes* sling. After that day my life really has never been the same.



After having the *G. pulchripes* for 2 weeks I absolutely fell in love with how simple and entertaining it was to watch. So I got on craigslist and found someone who was wanting to sell some of their Ts. The next day I had 18 tarantulas in my collection. At this point I slowly started moving out of reptiles and focusing on tarantulas and vending shows. About 2 to 3 years later after that I started my first business under a different name. Back then the community was very small and there were very few people to get a lot of information from. Eventually, after 5 years, it was very hard to find stock and not being well educated in the hobby was a huge down fall so I shut down that business. I still continued to keep during this time but I took a 2 year break from vending and business to focus on educating myself and learning all I could about different species and their care. I would bug so many people(I still do) on any info I could get and would spend hours at shows picking vendors brains.

After 2 years I decided I was gonna step back into the hobby and do this business right. I decided at that point my business will be a business of integrity, character, and I will focus on making sure that these species stay here for the future generations to enjoy as much as I do.



In August of 2018 Simply Spiders was formed. A few months after that I meet a guy at a petstore I work at part time and he wanted to learn about tarantulas and had just got back from a 4 year deployment. Over the next few months and pretty much everyday at my house I asked Brad Buth to be my business partner.

About our 6mo mark I had a friend who messaged me who has been apart of the local reptile community for as long as I can remember about wanting to learn about tarantulas. So over the next couple of weeks he studied and learned. Came over all the time to see how me and Brad do our business and

eventually Brad and I decided To ask Matt Carlson to be our third and final business partner.



We are brothers....no doubt of that. We fight, we yell, we are there for each other no matter what and most import to me is we keep the spiders number 1. This business has and will always be about doing right for these amazing creatures and making sure we can help people break the negative stigma around tarantulas in general.

Dustin also says with Simply Spiders “Our goal is to acquire, breed, and distribute a variety of different tarantula species throughout the United States in order to ensure future generations are able to establish a successful, self-sustaining breeding program for species which legally exist in or are brought into, the United States.”

One of Dustin's favorite memories with Simply Spiders!!

Once a month I usually have a small group of people over to my house to eat pizza and rehouse tarantulas. This is usually the time we also invite people wanting to learn about tarantulas over so we can teach them some tricks of the trade and help educate them. Well we tend to go live on our facebook page during this time as we rehouse and ask questions. Well we are live on fb and there is 4-6 of us in my kitchen and Brad is rehousing a OBT sling. Well Brad is in his full blown work uniform and the obt bolts up his arm and into his arm pit. Brad had to stand up and have 3 of us guys undress him and get this OBT out of his armpit all while not trying to have Brad not get bit and 26 people on fb watching.

I ended up having to turn off the live feed and we successfully got the obt safely and Brad was fine but that we decided to name that OBT fumunda and that story has been told more times than any other story in our business.....besides Matt losing a 3 inch O. philippinus in my kitchenwhich is still missing to this day.



Dustin also told me Simply Spiders has an estimated combined total of 1000 tarantulas currently in their care for their collection and business. Why do they need so many you ask? To keep up that's why! Simply Spiders has already shipped to 48 states! The exceptions being due to regulations shipping live animals to Alaska and Hawaii. When I asked Dustin what dream T he hasn't been able to add to his collection he said “a bumblebee”.

“Simply Spiders was built from \$100 and paycheck to paycheck. A Lot of people think it's about money in this hobby...to me it's not. Yes I sacrifice daily for my business and yes the money helps me be able to continue to do what I love and get quality stuff for my customers. But I would give up all my tarantulas in a heartbeat if it meant me having to lose the awesome relationships I have developed because of these tarantulas. Nothing makes me happier then the people in our community. And I've never felt satisfaction then knowing my business is helping the community I love.” Dustin Blevins

8 legs... 8 questions



I “interviewed” Bobby Bowman aka T-bob with 8 legged puppies. Bobby was nice enough to answer my questions and during the process his enthusiasm for Tarantulas was contagious. Most people will answer your questions but finding someone so willing to share their entire collection and experiences with you the way he did is rare. I kept it short and sweet but stop by the 8 legged puppies table and find out how helpful he is for yourself..

1. Q: How did you become interested in Tarantulas?

A: My dad kept tarantulas, when I became interested he made me read the Tarantula Keeper's Guide from front to back before he'd let me keep tarantulas of my own.



2. Q: What was your first Tarantula?

A: RobC was so impressed with what I knew about Tarantulas without ever owning one he gave me my first Tarantula. It was a P. Regalis, they've been my favorite since. P. Regalis are gorgeous and hardy.

3. Q: How long have you kept Tarantulas?

A: The picture of my first P. Regalis is dated October 28, 2010. Wow, 9 years, that's crazy.

4. Q: What is your favorite part of keeping Tarantulas?



A: My favorite part is breeding and selling at a price everyone can afford. I love to teach and include others. That's why I've worked Show Me shows since the first show and still do to this day. Even when I don't have inventory, like at the first Springfield show, I still went to support the Show Me team because it's a great team to be part of.

5. Q: What is your moto?

A: If you make a deal, hold up your end. In the hobby your word is all you have.

6. Q: How many Tarantulas do you have in your collection?

A: I currently have well over 100 tarantulas. Some are inventory for shows, others are for various breeding projects and I have about 40 large female tarantulas that are permanent residents in my collection.



7. Q: How much time do you spend caring for all of them?

A: Each night after work I spend about an hour feeding and watering. I also have apprentices that come and learn while helping me. I pay them in Tarantulas. It's nice to have someone to teach you stuff I had to learn the hard way, I get to save them some of the heartache.



8. Q: What keeps you going?

A: The encouragement, the great people I've met. Even when things aren't going your way you have to keep working for what you love.

I wouldn't be where I am today if weren't for a lot of great people. So I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to my apprentices: Glenn, Dustin and Nick for their hard work. I also want to thank Dustin Blevins for being a great friend to work with and an inspiration. Lastly, thank you to Micky Meyer, Tamara Meyer and the Show Me team for all their hard work and dedication.- Bobby Bowman

The following information comes directly for the Missouri Department of Conservation website.

LOTS OF DIFFERENT KINDS, SIZES AND SHAPES

Missouri is home to more than 300 kinds of spiders. Some are the size of a pinhead and are easily overlooked. Others are surprisingly large, with a leg span of 4 or more inches.

CALL THEM ARACHNIDS, NOT INSECTS

Spiders, along with ticks, mites, harvestmen and scorpions, belong to the class Arachnida. Unlike insects, which have six legs, spiders have eight. They have no antennae and two-piece bodies. A spider has silk-spinning structures called spinnerets at the back end of its abdomen, and it usually has eight eyes of various sizes and shapes grace its face.



A spider's mouth parts, too, are different from an insect's. Instead of mandibles capable of chewing, spiders have fang-tipped jaws called chelicerae. With these, they pierce their prey and inject a venomous fluid that immobilizes it. Digestive juices dissolve its internal tissues. The spider's small, tube-like mouth, aided by strong abdominal muscles, pumps and sucks the victim until it is a shriveled husk. A strong-jawed spider, such as the yellow garden spider or the tarantula, often mashes its prey between its chelicerae while ejecting digestive juices over it.

SIZE MATTERS

Size is helpful when determining the two suborders of spiders, although other characteristics are more diagnostic. The Mygalomorphae, which includes the tarantulas

and trapdoor spiders, are generally large, with stout bodies, stout legs and jaws that move vertically. They also tend to be long-lived, some up to 25 years. The Araneomorphae, which includes garden spiders and orb weavers, generally have thinner bodies, spindly legs, and have jaws that move horizontally. The majority of spiders in Missouri belong to this suborder.

THEY'RE EVERYWHERE IN MISSOURI

Spiders live in virtually every type of habitat in Missouri—and in staggering numbers. US arachnologists have estimated populations ranging from 30,000 spiders per acre in Mississippi woodlands to more than 2 1/2 million individuals in a grassland acre.



MOST SPIDERS ARE FARMERS' FRIENDS

All spiders are potential predators on many arthropods, especially the insects. Most prey upon grasshoppers, flies, moths, caterpillars, leafhoppers, some bees and ants, and other spiders. Spiders eat more insects than birds and bats combined. Because of this, spiders are a boon on agricultural lands, destroying huge numbers of crop-damaging insects. Since each spider in a field may consume a least one insect per day, their cumulative effect on insect populations is significant.

SPIDER VERSUS SPIDER

The worst enemies of spiders usually are other spiders, but some insects, like the assassin bug and mud dauber wasp, prey upon them, as do bats, shrews and birds. Some orb weaving spiders construct a zigzag pattern of silk, the stabilimentum, at the hub of their webs which, scientists hypothesize, may deter birds from flying into the silk structure. But it might also help birds locate an orb weaver in order to prey upon it.

LIFE CYCLE

While some Missouri spiders rarely live longer than a year, others can live up to two or three years. Some hibernate in winter under tree bark or rocks, or in cellars and attics. But many die within one warm season, leaving the future to over-wintering spiderlings or a brood of encased eggs. Spiderlings emerge in early spring from their winter hiding places or from egg sacs suspended from vegetation or from flattened silk sacs constructed on leaves or in flower heads. Some spiders leave egg sacs in burrows under rocks, while others, such as wolf spiders, carry the nursery with them.

To disperse most (although not all) young spiders travel by climbing to the tops of grass blades, fence posts or shrubs, elevating their abdomens and throwing out silken threads. Caught by the air currents, the tiny arachnids appear to fly, although spiders never develop wings. This is known as ballooning.

HOW THEY GROW

Spiders grow by molting, or ecdysis. In this process, the spider casts off its tight outer body cover—its exoskeleton—after secreting a new, larger one underneath. Spiderlings gradually develop into adults in this way. Some have peculiar color patterns that change as they

approach adulthood. Few spiders molt after sexual maturity, but some, such as female tarantulas, do.

All spiders exhibit similar premolting behavior. They do not eat, become lethargic and retreat into silken molting quarters in a burrow, under a leaf or in a corner. The outer skeleton splits along the upper body portions and the spider gradually slips its body and legs from the old casing, much like taking off a skin-tight glove. The actual molting process varies among species and can take from less than 15 minutes to a full day. Molting spiders are particularly vulnerable; they are unable to move away or fight back because they must rest until their new exoskeletons harden.

HARD TO ID

Identification of spider species is generally difficult for the novice and expert alike. Spider classification is based on external structures that include eye arrangement, number of hairs and claws on the legs and the complicated structure of reproductive organs.

Understanding the specialized technical vocabulary in many spider keys often requires an arachnologist's help. The field entries listed below will help you identify some of Missouri's more common spiders.

Your next woodland walk offers the opportunity to get acquainted with these interesting creatures, which are so undeserving of their dreadful reputations. After all, a spider acts as a spider would.

SPIDER FACTS

All spiders have silk glands, although not all use silk in spinning webs.

When drawn and stretched from the spinnerets, located at the rear of the abdomen, the liquid silk solidifies into tiny strands that are both strong and elastic.

Spider silk is stronger (greater tensile strength) than a thread of steel of the same weight.

Spiders use silk for web building, for capturing prey, for sperm transfer, for lining hibernating, molting or living chambers and constructing egg cases, for draglines and mating bowers.

Most spiderlings use silk for wind-borne travel.



SPIDER BITES

Many people dread the thought of a spider bite, but few in the United States are bitten by spiders and even fewer die from them. Relatively few spiders are capable of piercing human skin. While it is true that all Missouri spiders have venom, the toxicity varies with the species. Most spider venom is harmless to humans but may cause temporary skin discoloration, irritation or swelling, much like a mosquito bite. Large spiders are capable of

inflicting a painful bite but rarely do so unless consistently provoked. Spiders generally flee upon human approach, contrary to the tales of science-fiction writers.

Of the two potentially harmful spiders found in Missouri, you are more likely to encounter the brown recluse than the black widow. Both can inflict bites that can cause severe pain and infection. Deaths due to black widow bites are extremely rare, and no deaths have been proven to be caused by brown recluse bites. Deaths attributed to spiders usually occur in individuals who have an extreme allergic reaction or immune deficiency to the spider's venom.

Although the chance of being bitten by a venomous spider is extremely slim, you can reduce the likelihood by heeding the following:

Keep away from areas where black widow or brown recluse spiders are known to concentrate. The widow often makes tangled webs around outbuildings, storage units, old tree trunks or cabins not in regular use.

Keep cellars, rooms, and closets as clean and clutter-free as possible. These spiders usually will not remain in a constantly disturbed area. This rule can provide a powerful incentive for children to clean their rooms.

Shake clothing, blankets, towels, and such if they have remained in an area where these spiders may be found.

Take care to look before placing your hands in a lumber pile, window-well, under rocks or in little-used cabinets or drawers.

Professional pest-control agents and sprays can be used, but these are often expensive and generally unsuccessful. The spiders are tenacious and not highly susceptible to insecticides.

Do seek medical attention if you suspect that a brown recluse or black widow spider has bitten you. However, with most spider bites, victims do not even know they have been bitten. If they do notice, they often attribute the spot to a scratch or splinter.

COLLECTING SPIDERS

Collecting spiders is a good way to get to know them better and appreciate them more. If you hunt with a camera, you may capture some splendid photographs of these colorful and unusual creatures.

Many spiders are active at night, and you can find them by shining a flashlight into vegetation. Wolf spider eyes reflect light, causing a night meadow to appear to twinkle.



You can easily capture spiders using a small glass jar. You can also use a pillowcase or canvas net to sweep vegetation, or to place under bushes as you shake them.

Collection for scientific, school or personal research sometimes requires the preservation of specimens in 70-percent ethyl or rubbing alcohol. If you pursue such studies, remember to make careful notes of the spider's location (on plants, rocks, soil, etc.), habits, appearance and coloration prior to capture, and any further information that may help you

to identify your specimen. Remember, although specific spider identification can be difficult, the broad categories are more easily distinguished.

Spiders have been residents of the earth for 400 million years. Primitive spiders found preserved in amber look remarkably similar to our present-day species. Whether the prospect of observing these eight-legged creatures excites you or not, one thing is certain—spiders are here to stay.

For more information and a chance to see a real tarantula molt check out the Gateway Herpetology and Entomology Club table at the Show Me Snakes show April 7th.



All of the information in this newsletter letter came from the Missouri Department of Conservation.