

These Spiders Build Replicas Of Themselves

There are over 40,000 species of spiders in the world. Most spiders are predators. That means that they kill insects and other things for food. Many spiders eat mostly flies and wasps. Some larger spiders eat lizards and toads. Some spiders eat other spiders.



Other types of predators hunt spiders. Two newly discovered species of spider have a unique way to defend against predators: they create replicas of themselves.

These spiders use corpses of dead insects and other things to create these replicas. These replicas look almost exactly like the spiders who build them. There is only one difference: the replicas are a lot bigger than the spiders. The replicas are up to ten times as large as the spiders who built them.

These spiders put the replicas in the middle of a web, then the spiders hide. When the spiders sense that a predator is near, they shake the web. This makes the replica move. When the replica moves, it looks like it is alive. The replicas are almost like puppets!

These replicas scare away smaller predators. When larger predators attack the replicas, all they get is a mouthful of dry, dead insects.

This clever defense system was discovered recently in two separate species of spider. Both species were discovered at about the same time. But they were not discovered in the same place. In fact, the two species were discovered 17,700 kilometers, or about 11,000 miles, apart. One species was discovered in the Amazon Basin in South America. The other species was discovered in the Philippines.

The two species of spider use a slightly different style for their replicas. The South American spider makes replicas with all the legs pointing downward. The species of spider in the Philippines makes replicas with the legs pointed in all directions.

Scientists are studying these spiders. The scientists want to know how the spiders build the replicas. They want to know how long it takes a spider to build a replica. They also want to know if the spider uses the replica only as defense, or if the spiders use the replicas to catch prey, also.

Scientists are also curious about how these two species evolved to be very similar when they were so far apart. Scientists believe the two species come from a common ancestor. They will use genetic tests to see if this is true.

With more research, hopefully all of these questions will be answered.