



## RAIN SPIDER

reënspinnekop (Afrikaans); isicabucabu semvula (isiZulu); sekgo sa pula (seSotho); xipamu xa pfula (Tsonga).

### Sparassidae (*Palystes superciliosus*)

#### DESCRIPTION

**Body size:** female large to very large, leg span up to 100 mm; male slightly smaller and more slender. **Colour:** cream, fawn to dark brown or grey; often with darker stripes and mottled patterns (Fig. 1); a distinct white band present below clypeal edge (Fig. 2); sternum with dark transverse bars between coxae I and II (Fig. 3); abdomen often with dark, median heart mark on top and dark band below booklungs ventrally (Fig. 3); legs banded more distinct ventrally (Figs. 2, 3); **carapace:** round-oval, narrower in eye area, fovea present; **eyes:** 8 in 2 rows (4:4); posterior row evenly spaced; equal in size; **abdomen:** hairy; round to oval; **legs:** long, positioned sideways and held at right-angle to body; tarsi with dense claw tufts.

#### HABITAT

Found in diverse habitats ranging from savanna to coastal and montane forest.

#### BEHAVIOUR

These large rain spiders are free-living plant dwellers, often actively wandering at night in search of prey. The common name is derived from the fact that they frequently enter buildings a day or two before rain. When disturbed they raise their front legs in warning, displaying their strong fangs. The large egg sac is attached to vegetation, and covered with a layer of silk and leaves (Fig. 4). They are often seen on walls at night, preying on insects attracted by the light. They prey on a variety of insects. They have also been observed feeding on other arachnids as well as small reptiles such as geckos.

#### DISTRIBUTION

Commonly found throughout South Africa and frequently occur in gardens (Fig. 5).

#### MEDICAL IMPORTANCE

Very little is known about the effect of their venom on humans as they do not seem to be very aggressive. Venom may increase blood pressure and cause nausea. No reaction at bite site.

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**SANSA**—South African National Survey of Arachnida

