



HERMIT SPIDERS

Hermit spiders (English); kluisenaarspinnekoppe (Afrikaans);
udlayedwana sicabucabu (isiZulu)

NEPHILIDAE (*Nephilengis cruentata*)

DESCRIPTION

Size: total length: female 20-25 mm; male 8-9 mm (Fig. 2).

Female: colour pattern distinct; carapace dark; abdomen yellow in front with darker mottled area posteriorly (Fig. 1), some specimens very dark (Fig. 2); colour ventrally distinct with sternum red to orange and abdomen with yellow spots (Fig. 3); legs banded (Fig. 3). **Carapace:** longer than wide; eyes: 8 in 2 evenly spaced rows. **Abdomen:** large, elongated and slightly pointed behind. **Legs:** long and slender, with distinct dark bands. **Male:** much smaller (Fig. 2), uniform pale colour; juveniles with pattern on abdomen differing from females.

HABITAT

More common in tropical regions. Frequently found under overhang of roofs.

BEHAVIOUR

An asymmetrical white orb-web made, often against tree trunks, walls or large rocks with a funnel-shaped retreat on the side. They are frequently found under the overhangs of roofs. The webs are large (1-1.5m) orb-webs. The viscid spiral of the web is white and this differs from the other nephilas with their golden webs. The supporting lines are very strong and some resistance is felt when one wanders into them. The spiders make use of the same web over a long period of time, replacing only the viscid lines. In the older spiders the web is only half a circle while in the young ones the orb is more complete. The small male is found on the web of the female. The spiders live for about one year and the adults are found during the summer months. They prey on a wide range of flying insects.

DISTRIBUTION

More common in the warmer humid regions of the country, and more commonly found in KwaZulu-Natal Province (Fig. 5).

MEDICAL IMPORTANCE

There is no information available about the effect of their venom on humans.

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SANSA - South African National Survey of Arachnida

