



RED-LEGGED NEPHILA

red-legged golden orb-web spider (English); rooi-poot goue wawielwebspinnekop (Afrikaans); isicabucabu esinemilenze ebomvu sobulwembu obuyindilinga obusagolide (isiZulu); sekgo sa maoto a makgubedu sa tepo esidikadikwe ya mmala wa kgauta (seSotho).

Nephilidae (*Nephila inaurata*)

DESCRIPTION

Size: females large (30-40 mm in size); males much smaller.

Female: Colour: colour pattern distinct; carapace silvery; abdomen in front silvery with dark area in middle with yellow spots posteriorly (Fig. 1); ventrally dark (Fig. 2); legs banded with reddish tint (Fig. 1). **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 red bands. **Male:** much smaller (Fig. 3), uniform pale colour; juveniles with pattern on abdomen differing from females.

HABITAT

More commonly found in forests and open forest.

BEHAVIOUR

These spiders build large (1-1.5m) orb-webs. The viscid spiral of the web is yellowish golden and this is very characteristic of the nephilas. The radii of the web are pulled out of their direct course to give it a notched appearance. 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 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. 4).

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

