

Crab Spiders

Scientific Name: *Family Thomisidae*

Crab spiders in the Family Thomisidae are aptly named for their crab-like appearances and movements.

They stalk or ambush their prey, so they don't rely on silk webs to capture insects.

Some crab spiders, such as the goldenrod crab spider and others in the genera *Misumenoides* and *Misumena*, inhabit flowers and stalk pollinators and have the ability to change color to match the substrate. Other crab spiders, such as those in the genus *Xysticus*, are commonly found in leaf litter, grasses, or other ground cover.

Crab spiders feed on a variety of prey and are known as generalist predators. Unlike most spiders, they can kill prey several times their size (such as bumble bees). Some crab spiders are also known to feed on plant nectar.

Life Cycle: Most crab spiders have a one-year life cycle. Adults are typically active during the summer months. The adults will mate in the fall, and the females will lay an egg sac to overwinter. The spiderlings will hatch the following spring.



Figure 1. Crab spider on a spruce needle. Photo by L. Kerzicnik



Figure 2. Female crab spider guarding her egg sac within the bark of an ash tree. Photo by L. Kerzicnik

Crab spiders are harmless to humans and pets. They are beneficial, feeding on many pest insects.

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