

Trap-door vs. Agelena Spider: Comparing Behavior

Big World of Insects, Spiders & Bugs Series

Subject Areas: Science, Life Science, Biology

Synopsis: Two species of spider are shown in this program: the southern trap-door spider and the agelena spider. Students will see how a group of scavenging wasps are able to steal the prey away from an agelena spider's web. The agelena is forced to eat some stored food. Students will be able to compare and contrast the behaviors and environment of the agelena with those of the southern trap-door spider. This spider does not spin a web and captures prey by stealthily waiting in its lair. Students will see that this species of spider is a caring parent for its young.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to compare and contrast these two species of spider.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe how the agelena spider uses silk thread and a web to capture and subdue prey.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to describe how a southern trap-door spider catches prey.
- Objective 4)** Students will be able to discuss how a southern trap-door spider cares for its young.

Vocabulary: Define and discuss the following key terms:

Agelena, unravel, venomous, poison, merciless, lair, plight, marauding, scavengers, suffice, wasp, negotiate, devour, ravenous, carcass, cicada, carnage, trap-door spider, *Narbonne lycosa*, black-bellied tarantula, endowed, predator, prey, cannibalistic, preying mantis, cocoon, incubate

Pre-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) Are spiders considered insects? How are these creatures different? How are they similar? How are insects and spiders classified?
- 2) How do different spiders capture prey? Do all spiders use webs?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What trouble has the cricket gotten into?
- 2) Describe the agelena spider. What does it look like? Where does it live? How does it catch prey?
- 3) Why does the agelena spider drag the cricket into the center of the web? What does the spider do to the cricket next?
- 4) Describe the agelena spider's lair.
- 5) What animals in the program are called scavengers? Define the term scavenger.

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- 6) Why do the wasps want the cricket?
- 7) Why is the agelena spider afraid of fighting the wasps?
- 8) How are the wasps able to avoid the spider's web?
- 9) What did the agelena spider do to make sure it would have food?
- 10) Describe the trap-door spider. What does it look like? Where does it live? How does it hunt?
- 11) What does the trap-door spider do with a moth that it has caught? Why?
- 12) Describe the trap-door spider's egg sac. What does the mother do with the egg sac (cocoon)?
- 13) How long does it take before the baby spiders hatch? Where do the baby spiders live?
- 14) At the first sign of danger, what do the baby spiders do?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Draw a detailed picture of each species of spider. Label the head, abdomen, eight legs, eyes and mouth.
- 2) Pretend you are either an agelena or a trap-door spider. Describe a typical day as you build a nest or web, capture prey or raise your young.
- 3) Insects and spiders are both classified as arthropods. Find out more about animals in this phylum. How are arthropods further classified? What other species are related to insects and spiders?
- 4) Find out more about these creatures. Research their life cycles. Where do they live? Create a chart that compares and contrasts these two species of spider.
- 5) Find out if trap-door spiders are used as a pest control method for organic farmers. Do you think this spider would be appreciated by gardeners? Why or why not?

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