

Oakley Creek Arachnids – by DJ Court, 24 March, 2011.

ORDER ARANEAE = SPIDERS:







Black house spider (*Badumna longinqua*, Family Desidae). Female. Considered as a species introduced from Australia. An extremely abundant species occupying many habitats, including window frames and crevices in vehicles. The very fine dry silk entangles many insects which the spider then seizes by their legs and pulls back to its retreat.



Large sheet web weaver (*Cambridgea foliata*, an ecribellate species currently in the predominantly cribellate Family Stiphidiidae). Male. Native. The dominant sheet web weaver in forest and other habitats. It runs below the sheet and bites at any prey falling onto the web. The prey is then wrapped. The males have more-strongly developed jaws than the female.





Nursery web spider (*Dolomedes minor*, Family Pisauridae). Female. Native. Roams in undergrowth capturing many kinds of small animals. When its eggsac has matured to a certain point, the female encloses it within a silken 'nursery' on the upper part of a branch and remains on guard against predators and parasites. Two other species on the mainland are more-closely associated with water. The fourth and very large species is confined to the Chatham Islands.



Common orb weaver (*Eriophora pustulosa*, Family Araneidae). Female. Considered to be a species introduced from Australia. It has five small tubercles on its abdomen and is by far the most widespread and abundant in New Zealand, occurring in a remarkable range of habitats. Sometimes preyed upon by wasps. Present all year round.





Auckland banded tunnel-web spider (*Hexathele hochstetteri*, Family Hexathelidae). Female. Native. This species, which behaves like a small tarantula, is related to the dangerous and notorious Sydney funnel web spider, but is not considered a threat to humans. Lives in a bright white silken tube within old insect burrows in tree trunks or in rotted-out tree roots. The abdomen bears attractive chevron-like markings. Preys mainly on ground- or tree-dwelling crawling animals. Its darker New Zealand sister, *Porrhothele*, eats snails and it may sometimes do the same.



Introduced gnaphosid spider (*Intruda signata*, Family Gnaphosidae). Considered to be a species introduced from Australia. Little is known about this species even though it is now very commonly found in crannies around houses and in dead plant material.





Arboreal Trapdoor spider (*Migas* sp., Family Migidae). Native. Establishes camouflaged retreats, with one or two trapdoors, within crevices on the bark of trees. The retreats are difficult to find. Amongst the native trees karaka (*Corynocarpus*) appears to be particularly suitable, but the spider has also been found on introduced plane trees (*Platanus*).



Daddy Long Leg spider (*Pholcus phalangioides*, Family Pholcidae). Considered to be introduced from Europe. Weaves a flimsy web in more or less sheltered places, either indoors or outdoors. With its remarkably long and wispy legs it deals with its prey (often other daddy long leg spiders!) at some distance. When disturbed on its web, it 'whirls' its body until it becomes just a blur.





Large ground spider (*Uliodon* sp., Family Zoropsidae). Native. A powerful nocturnal predator of ground dwelling insects and possibly lizards. Beautifully camouflaged with velvet-like chocolate-brown coloured hairs. Some caution with this spider is needed - there has been a report from the South Island that it may administer a very painful bite to humans.





Common orb weaver *Zealaranea* sp. Female. Native. Unlike the year-round *Eriophora* orb weaver, *Zealaranea* is more seasonal. Spiderlings grow quickly in spring, mature in summer, and have mostly disappeared by winter. Recent research by Prof Tso in Taiwan strongly suggests that the bright white spots and patches in spiders like *Zealaranea* attract prey toward the web at night, the prey mistaking the spotted pattern for some kind of flower.

ORDER OPILIONES = HARVESTMAN
SUBORDER Laniatores:







Shorter-legged harvestman (*Soerensenella* sp?, Family Triaenonychidae). Native. (There are well over 160 native shorter-legged harvestman species in several families.) Not nearly enough is known about this very interesting group and it is possible that this Oakley Creek species is not yet described. Even if it has been described, it might prove to be very localized in distribution and worthy of special study. This would be a good research project for a high school student with an interest in New Zealand wildlife.