

## Distribution, threats and observations on courtship and mating behavior of theraphosid spiders (Araneae : Theraphosidae) in forest covers of Ratnapura district

A.B Kotalawala\*

Department of Zoology, University of Sri Jayewardenapura, Nugegoda

The study of theraphosid spiders in forest covers of Ratnapura district revealed that there are four species of which one is an unrecorded new species. They are *Poecilotheria ornata*, *Poecilotheria subfusca*, *Chilobrachys nitelinus* and a new species of the genus *Chilobrachys*. *Poecilotheria ornata* is adapted to live in forest covers and plantations in both wet and dry areas below 1200 m altitude level while *Poecilotheria subfusca* is restricted to forest covers above 1200 m altitude level in peak wilderness area. The two *Chilobrachys* species were recorded from Singharaja area below 300 m altitude level. Unnecessary killing by local people and habitat loss due to deforestation are the main threats to these spiders.

Study on courtship and mating behavior of laboratory reared *P. ornata* and a new *Chilobrachys* species indicate that there may be some chemical attractants or pheromones involved in movement of males in search of females. Pedipalp and leg drumming revealed that there is a sound signaling system between males and females in courtship and mating behavior. Cannibalism was observed in mating attempt of *Poecilotheria ornata* but it was not observed in *Chilobrachys* species. *Chilobrachys* species produces egg sacs and egg sac caring period is more than two months. One egg sac produced about 100 young ones.

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*Present Address: Museum Curator, Dept. of Zoology, University of Sri Jayewardenapura, Nugegoda*