

ARANEA AVICULARIA.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Pedes octo.

Oculi octo.

Os unguibus, seu retinaculis duobus.

Palpi duo articulati; masculis genitalibus capitati.

Anus papillis textoriis.

Lin. Syst. Nat. p. 1030.

CHARACTER SPECIFICUS.

ARANEA thorace orbiculato convexo; centro transverse excavato.

Lin. Syst. Nat. p. 1034.

Mer. Sur. t. 18.

Fabric. Spec. Inf. p. 545.

Araneam vulgarem et domesticam non possunt non horrescere et averfari incuriosi naturæ observatores. Quam longe tamen distat hæc minuta et imbellis species ab Aranæ Aviculariæ horrenda et ingenti mole! quam non solum alia Insecta sed ipsæ etiam aves reformidant, forcipes habentem unguibus accipitris magnitudine pares, oculosque quibus exactis et more vitri optici paratis pro microscopio uti possunt Philosophi.

Enormis

Enormis hæc Aranea in variis Americæ regionibus sæpe conspecta, frequentior est in America Meridionali. Inter arbores versatur, aviculis insidians, quas prius forcipibus vulneratas sanguinem exfugendo deinde enecat. Forcipes istæ virus inflant in vulnus, ut et aliis plerisque Araneis commune est. Foramen juxta apices forcipum, per quod exit venenum, et de quo, sitne foramen necne, multum diuque inter physicos dubitatum est, in hac specie ab ipso oculo, sine ope microscopii plane potest percipi.

Mirari sane jure possunt illi, qui in microscopice investigationibus versantur, illique præcipue qui microscopio Liberkuniano usi sunt, ullum unquam existisse dubium de hoc foramine in Araneis forcipibus: inesse enim illud Araneæ ipsi vulgari et domesticæ plane demonstrat prima vel secunda lens istius microscopii. Notandum tamen est commune microscopium ad distinctum rei tam minutæ conspectum non satis accommodari. Swammerdamii et Roëselii acumen effugit hoc foramen, et probe notum est Meadum celeberrimum in tractatu suo de venenis Leewenhoekium errasse credere, cum venenum Araneæ per foramen forcipum exprimi asserit: affirmat enim Meadus se variarum specierum forcipes, et speciatim prægrandis hujus speciei sedulo examinasse, nec tamen foramen potuisse detegere. Cum tamen multos post annos rem illi plane ostendit Bakerus, priorem opinionem summo cum candore revocavit vir doctissimus, alteramque substituit; certas tantum species venenosas esse, eas nempe quæ tubulatis forcipibus instructæ sunt; ut in serpentibus evenit; quorum certæ tantum species veneno

veneno imbutæ sunt ; illæ nempe quæ dentes tubulatos gerunt, *e. g.* Crotalus, Vipera, &c.

Ab oculis aliorum Insectorum differunt longe Aranearum oculi, et pro diversitate specierum diversum habent numerum et situm.

Species de qua jam agitur octo habet oculos, in formam pene oblongo-quadratam dispositos. Horum duo intermedii reliquis grandiores sunt, et plane rotundi ; cæteri in formam ovi effinguntur.

BIRD-CATCHING SPIDER.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

Eight *Legs.*

Eight *Eyes*.

Mouth furnished with 2 hooks or holders.

Two jointed *Palpi* or *Feelers*, the tips of which
(in the males) distinguish the sex.

The *Abdomen* terminated by papillæ, or teats, through which the Insect draws its thread.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

SPIDER with orbicular convex thorax with a transverse central excavation.

Lin. Syst. Nat. p. 1034.

Mer. Surin. tab. 18.

The common Spiders of Europe are frequently beheld with horror and aversion by those who have not accustomed themselves to an attentive survey of the works of nature; but what are these when compared with the terrific magnitude of the gigantic species here exhibited! A species which is formidable not only to other insects, but even to birds themselves; whose fangs are equal in size to the talons of a hawk, and whose

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whose eyes are capable of being set in the manner of glasses and used as microscopes. This enormous Spider is not uncommon in many parts of America, but it is principally found in South-America. It resides amongst trees, and frequently seizes on small birds, which it destroys by sucking their blood, after having first wounded them by its fangs, which instil a poisonous fluid into the wound, in the manner of other Spiders. The slit or orifice near the tip of the fangs of Spiders, through which the poisonous fluid is evacuated, and the existence of which has afforded so much matter of doubt amongst Naturalists, is in this species so visible that it may be distinctly perceived without a glass.

To those who are accustomed to microscopical investigations, and make use of the advantageous structure of the opaque microscope, it may seem surprising that any doubt could ever have been entertained of the existence of this foramen in the fangs of Spiders, since even in the common House-Spider it is perfectly visible by the assistance of the first or second magnifier of Liberkun's microscope; but it should be considered that microscopes of the usual structure are not calculated for shewing to advantage so small an object, and which requires so favourable a light. Even Swammerdam and Roësel could not discover it; and it is notorious that Mead in his Account of Poisons, imagines Leewenhoeck to have been mistaken in supposing that the Spider evacuated its venom through a hole in its fangs; and declares that he himself had examined the fangs of several Spiders, and of this large one in particular,

particular, without having been able to discover the foramen. The late Mr. Baker however, several years after, convinced him of its existence. He then retracted his former sentiment, and with great candour and judgment gave it as his opinion, that, as amongst serpents, only some particular species are poisonous, and have teeth that are perforated for the emission of their poison, viz. the Rattle-Snake, the Viper, and others, so amongst Spiders some kinds only may be poisonous, viz. such as are provided with perforated fangs.

The Eyes of Spiders differ very much from those of most other insects; and are different both in number and disposition in the several species. The present species has eight eyes, which are disposed somewhat in the form of an oblong square. Of these the two middle ones are larger than the rest, and perfectly round; the others are of an oval shape.



Shaw, George. 1789. "The Bird-Catching Spider, *Aranea avicularia* [Pl. 12]." *The Naturalist's Miscellany* 1(IV), <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.310665>.

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