

Huntsman Spider

Isopeda, Isopedella



What do they look like?

Huntsman spiders are large, long-legged spiders, measuring up to 15 cm across the legs. They are mostly grey to brown, sometimes with banded legs. Many huntsman spiders, including *Isopeda* and *Isopedella* have rather flattened bodies adapted for living in narrow spaces under loose bark or rock crevices. This is aided by their legs which, instead of bending vertically in relation to the body, have joints twisted so that they spread out forwards and laterally in crab-like fashion.

Where do they live?

The common huntsman spider is found throughout south-eastern Australia. Huntsman spiders are found living under loose bark on trees, in crevices on rock walls and in logs, under rocks and slabs of bark on the ground, and on foliage. It is very common to have huntsman spiders in urban areas, and the spiders will happily live inside your house!

What do they eat?

Food consists of insects and other invertebrates.

Breeding and Lifecycle

In the genus *Isopoda*, the male and female Huntsman spiders have a lengthy courtship, which involves mutual caresses, with the male drumming his palps on the trunk of a tree. He then inserts his palps into the female to fertilise her eggs. A silken retreat is often built for egg laying, as well as for moulting. The female Huntsman produces a flat, oval egg sac of white papery silk, and lays up to 200 eggs. She then places it under bark or a rock, and stands guard over it, without eating, for about three weeks. During this period the female can be quite aggressive and will rear up in a defensive display if provoked. Incubation periods vary and are probably influenced by climatic conditions. In some case, the female may moisten and tear the egg sac open, helping her spiderlings emerge. The mother stays with them for several weeks. Young Huntsman spiders are pale in colour and undergo several moults while still with their mother, hardening to a darker brown, and eventually disperse.

Huntsman spiders like all spiders, moult in order to grow and the lifespan of most Huntsman species is about two years or more.



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