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THE SPIDER AND THE...

Throughout the world a number of species of spider mimic ants in order to fool them and prey on them. This Crab Spider (Xysticus sp) is not one of them, neither is it interested in the ant that is scuttling over its body.

The spider's fangs are already sunk into the body of a Flesh Fly.



in association with



A Crab Spider, stationed on the head of the flower Inula Hookeri. Its colours a perfect match to the petals.

It does not move. It will sit like this for hours, waiting. It just needs one insect to land and move close enough for it to strike.

Strike it does when this hovefly strays too close. Watching the spider, the distance at which it strikes, seems to be defined by the length of its front and middle set of legs.

These grab the fly at lightning speed and the spider injects its venom instantaneously.

The dismembered remains of previous meals are embedded into the sheet web of this Labyrinth Spider (*Agelena labyrinthica*). The spider is currently tucking into the body of a Spotted Crane-fly, although the main food of this spider is grasshoppers and crickets.

Behind the spider the beginnings of a funnel-shaped passage into which the spider can retreat if threatened. Beyond this a series of labyrinth tunnels that give this species its name. At the end of these tunnels in the centre of the construction, the spider keeps its egg sac. This contains the developing young.

A dead hoverfly encased in the silk of a spider, suspended between some flower stems. Just a couple of seconds later, a Common Wasp lands on the body of the hoverfly and begins feeding.

Maybe 10 seconds later a spider appears. Tentative and wary, it wraps itself around the hovefly on the opposite side from the wasp. It befins to feeling around the hoverflywith its front legs. As the tips of its legs touch the wasp, the spider withdrews them. It tries this a few times.

The wasp just carries on feeding and completely ignores the spider.

This goes on for a couple of minutes. Then a handful of tiny fliesj oin the scene scavenging over the body of the hoverfly. Of no interest to spider or wasp.

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The spider starts to wrap both wasp and fly in more silk, looking like being the ultimate victor. Two meals for the price of one. The wasp just chews its way through the silk. The spider tries again. The wasp chews though the silk again.

A sudden movement of the wasp toward the spider, sends the spider back beneath a flower head from whence it came.

Left on its own, the wasp removes the head of the hoverfly and flies off with it.

It returns several minutes later to finish the meal, tucking into the main body of the fly, with some tiny flies still in attendance.

Returning one hour later, there was nothing left to see.

Both the quarterly magazine and its additional photographic supplements try to present situations which some people may recognise if and when they come into contact with insects or have reason to bring them to mind.

We are asking them to think again, to look again at insects, seeking to change many perceptions and attitudes to the tiny wonders of nature that share our world particularly the spaces we use and move through on a daily basis. That includes our own gardens and our homes. This means breaking down some of the taboos that exist and persist around insects.

We are also challenging them to explore the world beneath their own noses, to peel back the layers and see what's hiding inside.

This can encourage a greater curiosity about insects, leading to discovery and increased knowledge. Inspired to explore and armed with more facts,more people may come to appreciate the amazing diversity of insect species, their incredible forms and their critical importance to healthy functioning ecosytems across the planet.

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