

wolf spider

Varacosa avara

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Chelicerata
Order: Araneae
Family: Lycosidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

Wolf spiders have four, large eyes in a trapezoid shape on the top of the carapace. The two median eyes in this group of four are the largest and face forward. The two smaller eyes in this group of four are set behind the two central eyes, facing to the side or backwards. In front of these four eyes is a row of four, smaller eyes. Females of this species range from 0.35 to 0.41 inch in total body length. Males are between 0.30 and 0.32 inch in total body length. The body coloration is brown. The cephalothorax is dark brown with a wide, lighter band in the center that sometimes shows traces of dark lines. The abdomen is gray-brown, and the legs have faint bands.

BEHAVIORS

Wolf spiders have good vision. They perform courtship rituals like waving the legs or palps with making sounds created by vibrating body parts against each other or a surface or object they are near. Wolf spiders generally do not build a web but use a dragline of silk for communication. The female builds an egg sac and attaches it to her spinnerets. She carries it with her as she hunts and may move into or out of sunlight to help control the temperature of the developing eggs. After the eggs hatch, the young climb onto her abdomen, and she carries them for a week or two while they complete their development. Wolf spiders hunt by waiting for prey to appear, then rushing out to capture it. If no prey appears for a while, the spider may move to a new location. Small prey items are bitten immediately. Larger prey may be enclosed in a basket made by the spider's legs and then bitten. The diet consists mainly of insects and other, smaller wolf spiders.

ILLINOIS RANGE





Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge