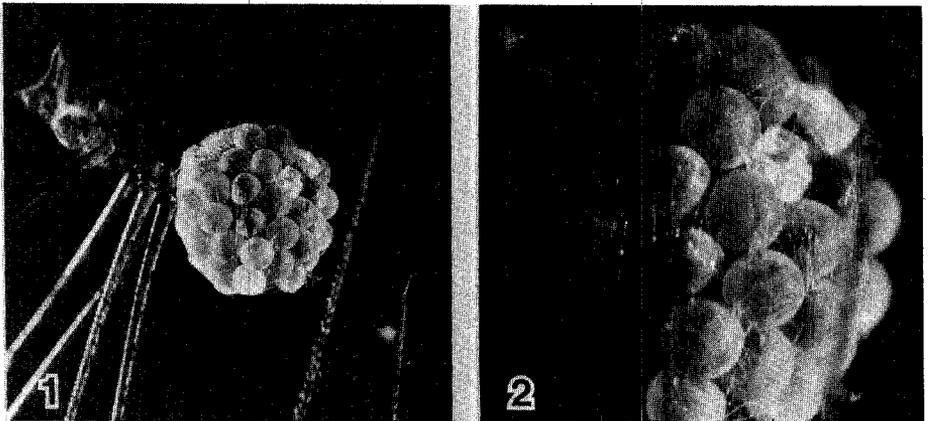


CROSSOPRIZA (LYONI?) (ARANEAE, PHOLCIDAE) EATS HER OWN EGGS

Pholcids are ideal subjects for the study of development from oviposition to emergence from the egg sac, because the eggs can be observed without the need to interfere with the intact sac. In the course of such a study, on *Crossopriza (lyoni?)* (Blackwall 1867), it became apparent that females often ate one or more of their eggs.

The egg sac is normally grasped by the female's chelicerae at a point where the 'string-bag' arrangement of silken threads is replaced by a substantial sheet of silk about three egg-diameters in extent. Not infrequently the female will change the position of her grip.

Most of the females under study would eat one or more of their own eggs at irregular intervals. Figs. 1-2 show the drained chorions of two eggs lying on the periphery of the egg mass of a female *C. (lyoni?)*. Necessarily, the position of the consumed eggs shows the extent to which the female changes the position of her grip. Whether the eggs consumed are infertile and, if so, whether the female can

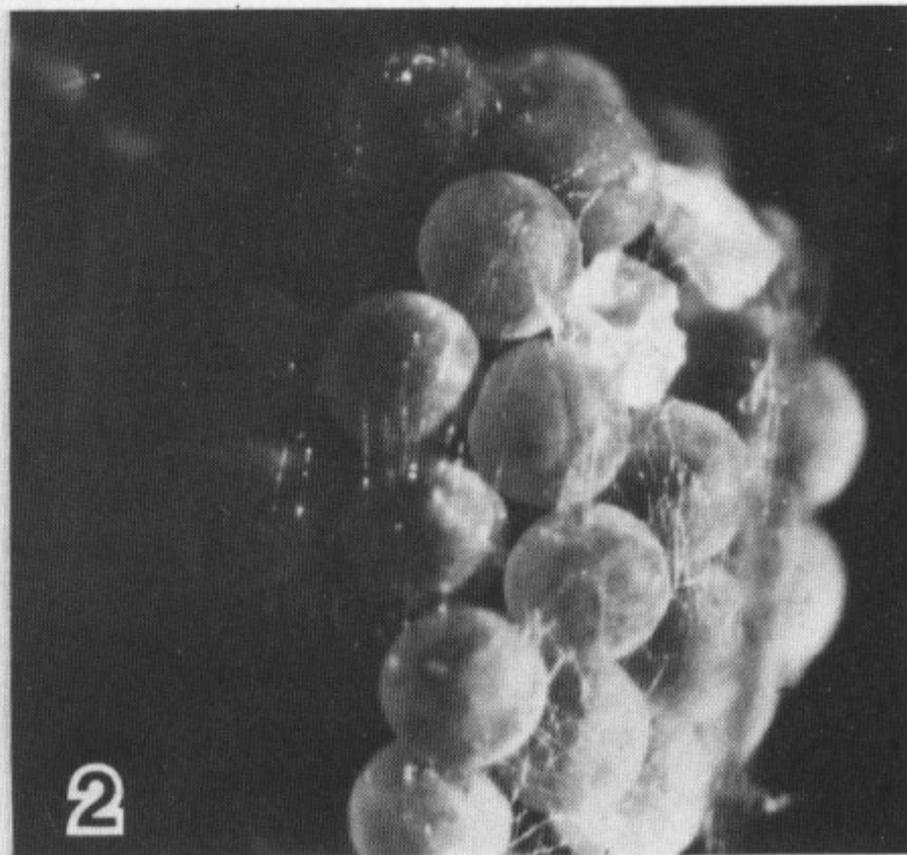
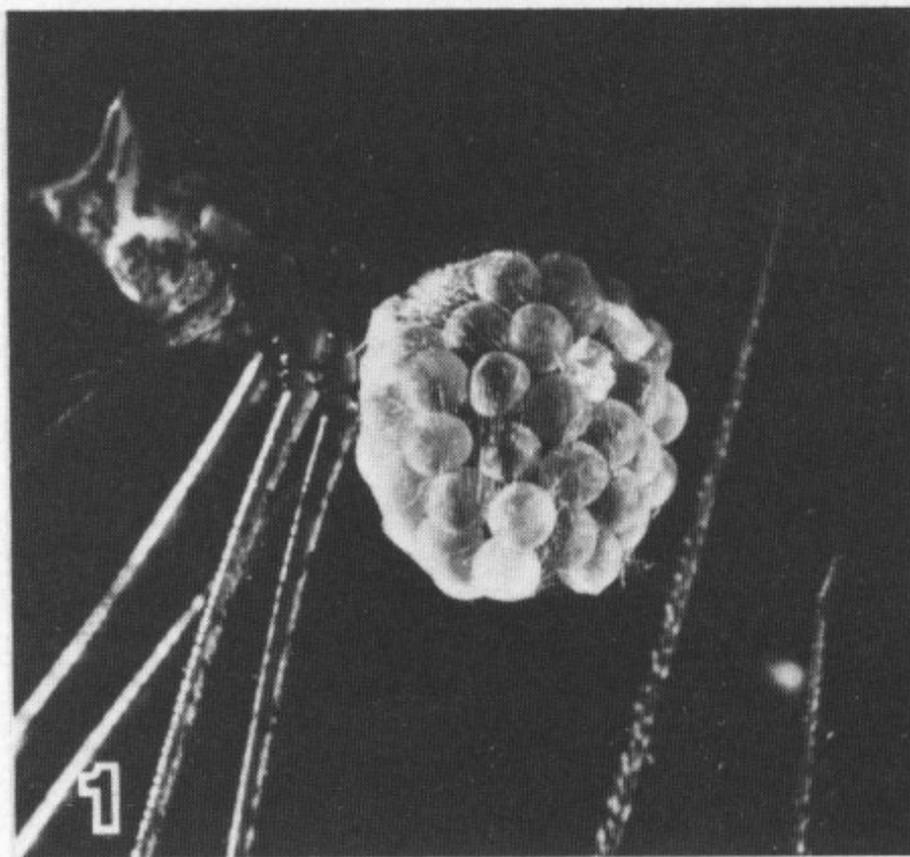


Figs. 1-2.—*Crossopriza (lyoni?)*: 1, female with egg sac; two consumed eggs are visible at the upper right of the egg mass; 2, closeup of the consumed eggs on the periphery of the egg mass.

detect this, is unknown. In a previous paper, the benefits of an infertile egg resource for developing spiderlings of *Theridion rufipes* Lucas was considered (Downes, M. F. 1987. J. Australian Entomol. Soc., in press). As a general observation, the proportion of infertile eggs in egg sacs of *C. (lyoni?)* seems markedly high, but to what extent the spiderlings feed on these, when they are able to do so, is unclear. The female, however, normally eats a few or many before hatching commences.

Robert Raven made the identification, and in doing so noted a discrepancy in a diagnostic character (a lack of thorns on ventral femur I of males) in specimens from Townsville. This explains the question mark after the specific epithet.

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Figs. 1-2.—*Crossopriza (lyoni?)*: 1, female with egg sac; two consumed eggs are visible at the upper right of the egg mass; 2, closeup of the consumed eggs on the periphery of the egg mass.