

**PREDATION OF *ACHAEARANEA TEPIDARIORUM*
(ARANEAE, THERIDIIDAE) UPON
SPHODROS FITCHI (ARANEAE, ATYPIDAE)**

Sphodros fitchi Gertsch and Platnick is a recently described purseweb spider inhabiting the central plains states from Nebraska to Oklahoma and Arkansas (Gertsch and Platnick 1980). Although some aspects of the natural history of members of this genus have been observed (Coyle and Shear 1981; McCook 1888; Morrow 1985; Teeter 1984), little information exists concerning predation. A female *Sphodros rufipes* (Latreille) was taken from the stomach of a frog (Gertsch 1936). Observations in eastern Kansas indicate that males of the same species often fall victim to female conspecifics and females of *Sphodros niger* (Hentz) during the mating season (Morrow 1985). The present note records predation of *Achaeearanea tepidariorum* (C. L. Koch) upon *S. fitchi*.

On 10 July 1987, remains of an adult male *S. fitchi* were discovered in the web of a female house spider, *A. tepidariorum*, located in a metal storage building on the University of Kansas Rockefeller Experimental Tract in Jefferson County, Kansas. The web was situated below a wooden shelf against a wall, and was approximately 0.5 m above the concrete floor. The *Sphodros* was wrapped in silk and suspended in the lower portion of the web.

A. tepidariorum is well known for its ability to overpower and consume relatively large prey, including vertebrates (Gertsch 1979). Due to the shriveled condition of the abdomen, the total length of the victimized *Sphodros* was not measured; however, the length of the carapace was 4.1 mm. Since the male holotype of this species has a carapace length of 4.2 mm and a total length of 12.7 mm (Gertsch and Platnick 1980), the estimated length of the prey item is less than 13 mm. The total length of the female *Achaeearanea* was 7.4 mm.

Upon reaching maturity, *Sphodros* males emerge from their burrows and wander in search of suitable mates (Coyle and Shear 1981). During this period, they are especially vulnerable to predation. Fitch (1963) observed a jumping spider, *Phidippus audax* (Hentz) (Salticidae), attack and quickly kill a male *S. fitchi* that was confined in an open glass jar in his laboratory. In view of an interesting account of a trapdoor spider (*Ummidia* sp.) (Ctenizidae) caught by a *Steatoda triangulosa* (Walckenaer) (Horner and Russell 1986), *S. triangulosa* and other theridiids could conceivably prey upon male *Sphodros*.

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