

Colorado Arachnid of Interest

Dysdera crocata

The “Roly-poly Killer” or Woodlouse Hunter

Scientific Name: *Dysdera crocata*
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Class: Arachnida (Arachnids)

Order: Araneae (Spiders)

Family: Dysderidae



Figure 1. *Dysdera crocata* adult.

Identification and Descriptive Features: *Dysdera crocata* (Figure 1 and 2) is a spider of moderate-size, ranging 9-15 mm in length. The front half of the spider (cephalothorax) and the appendages are orange or reddish orange. The abdomen is grayish white. Perhaps the most striking feature is the very large jaws and associated fangs (Figure 2).

Distribution in Colorado: An introduced species, *Dysdera crocata* can now likely be found in residential areas statewide.

Life History and Habits: *Dysdera crocata* is primarily a predator of the common terrestrial isopods known as “sowbugs” and “pillbugs” (“roly-polies”), and its large fangs help to penetrate these heavily armored prey. Other arthropods may also be taken as food.

The spider is a nocturnal hunter and during the day is usually found under rocks, wood or other covering debris where isopods similarly occur. In homes, *Dysdera crocata* is almost always found in basements and other sites where humidity is high.

Silk is not used for prey capture, but is used to construct retreats when molting and for egg laying. The eggs are suspended on silken threads of the retreat and the newly hatched spiderlings stay with the mother and use the retreat for the first few weeks after egg hatch.



Figure 2. *Dysdera crocata* adult with fangs opened.

The spiders mature in about 18 months and, at least in captivity, may live an additional couple of years. Generations overlap and adults and immature forms can be found year round. Mating has



Figure 3. *Dysdera crocata* with pillbug.

been observed to occur in spring, and may happen at other times given the continuously overlapping generations of this species.

If handled their large fangs may be capable of inflicting a bite but they do not possess venom that poses any danger to humans. These are secretive spiders that are not aggressive and not harmful.

Related Species: *Dysdera crocata* is an introduced species of spider, native to Europe. It is the only representative of the family Dysderidae that occurs in Colorado.