

Colorado Insect of Interest

Yellow-legged Sac Spiders

Scientific Name: *Cheiracanthium inclusum* (Hentz), *C. mildei* C.L. Koch

Class: Arachnida

Order: Aranae (Spiders)

Family: Miturgidae

Identification and Descriptive Features:

Yellow-legged sac spiders of the genus *Cheiracanthium* are generally yellowish but may be pale grayish-tan. There are no conspicuous markings and only fine hairs cover the body. The 8 eyes are arranged in two straight rows.

Legs of yellow-legged sac spiders are long and delicate, with the front pair somewhat longer than the others. Full grown the body is about 3/8 inch long and with legs extended are about 3/4-inch.

Distribution in Colorado:

Cheiracanthium mildei, a native of the Mediterranean, is now widely distributed in North America and is a common both indoors and outdoors throughout Colorado. State records for *C. inclusum*, also an introduced species, are limited to Elbert and Alamosa counties, but it likely is more widespread.

Life History and Habits: Yellow-legged sac spiders can be commonly found among the dense vegetation of shrubs, trees and fields. They hunt at night and do not use webs for prey capture instead locating prey during wandering searches. A wide variety of insects (including eggs) and other spiders may be eaten.

Silk is used to create a tube-like retreat within which they spend the day. Outdoors these are typically located under rocks, leaves or other sheltering debris. Eggs, primarily produced during early summer, are also laid within the retreat. The eggs are produced in a loose mass of about 40 eggs, covered with thin silk and covered. The female remains with the eggs until the spiderlings emerge and will actively defend the eggs.



Figure 1. *Cheiracanthium mildei*. Photograph courtesy of Joseph Berger.



Figure 2. A male yellow-legged sac spider.

Silk is used extensively for subsequent dispersal, both in ballooning and for bridging between plants. The spiders have a one year life cycle with winter is spent in the adult or subadult stage.

Cheiracanthium mildei is also well adapted to indoor life and is one of the most common spiders found breeding in buildings in Colorado. They do have long fangs and are capable of producing a painful bite; this species is sometimes suspected of being the most common cause of spider bites that

occur indoors. If bitten the wound should be disinfected to prevent secondary infection bacteria, which sometimes develops after bites from these species and can produce a larger wound.



Figure 3. Yellow-legged sac spider adjacent to silk tube retreat.

Figure 2. Longtailed tadpole shrimp swimming in pool.