

Colorado Arthropod of Interest

Barn Funnel Weaver

Scientific Name: *Tegenaria domestica*

Order: Araneae (Spiders)

Family: Agelenidae (Funnel Weaver Spiders)

Identification and Descriptive Features:

Tegenaria domestica is generally reddish gray or brown with mottled light patches and, sometimes, dark bands on the abdomen. The shape of the abdomen is blunt, rather than elongated, which distinguishes it from the other genera of funnel weavers found in homes (*Agelenopsis*, *Hololena*). Faint dark bands may also run along the cephalothorax, which is reddish brown with yellowish hairs.

Banding patterns occur on the legs. The four pairs of eyes are arranged in two, slightly curved rows, a more orderly arrangement than found with other genera of funnel weaver spiders.



Figures 1, 2. A barn funnel weaver female (top) and adult male (bottom).

Occurrence in and around Homes: *Tegenaria domestica* is an extremely common resident of homes, although they are also found outdoors and in outbuildings. Within a home they usually form their webs in dark corners near the floor. They also may be trapped in sinks and bath tubs when they wander from the web, a habit that is particularly common with adult males. They breed in buildings and various stages may be encountered year round.

Tegenaria domestica is an introduced species, now widely distributed throughout North America. It is sometimes called the “barn funnel weaver” and in Europe may be known simply as the “house spider” due to its ubiquitous presence in buildings.

Life History and Habits: Like other funnel weaver spiders prey is captured with the aid of a horizontal sheet web that has vertical strands to snag and impede passing insects. In one corner of the web is a narrow funnel “retreat”, which is often out of sight extending into a protective recessed area. The spiders spend much of their time at the entrance of the retreat and rush out when suitable prey encounters the web.

A life cycle that extends over more than one year is common with *Tegenaria domestica*. Both immature and adult stages can be found surviving the winter months. Peak numbers of adult males are present in June and July, indicating mating typically occurs at this time. Egg sacs are may be suspended about the web. In captivity they have been reported to live up to seven years and produce up to nine egg sacs.

Related Species. Two closely related funnel weaver spiders in the genus *Eratigena* are found colonizing homes in Colorado. One is the *Eratigena agrestis*, sometimes called a ‘hobo spider’, that is common inhabitant of homes in Europe and has recently spread into many areas in Colorado. Of very similar appearance, and also a European species, is *Eratigena duellica*, sometimes known as the “giant house spider”. Both of these get quite a bit larger, about 2X that of the domestic house spider, and very difficult to tell apart without microscopic evaluation. Both also are harmless to humans. (Note: There is a lot of information on the Internet suggesting the hobo spider is a spider that has a bite that is potentially dangerous to humans. This claim has been utterly refuted by numerous scientific studies and the overwhelming current scientific consensus is that this is a harmless species.)

Several other species of funnel weaver spiders develop outdoors, but often migrate indoors in late summer and fall. These funnel weaver spiders, all in the genera *Agelenopsis* and *Hololena*., do not breed indoors and are strictly transient nuisance invaders of buildings.

Medical Importance. *Tegenaria domestica* is harmless to humans and bites are unlikely to break the skin even if handled.