

## Golden orb web spider with ectoparasitic biting midges

**Subjects:** Golden orb-web spider, *Nephila pilipes* (Arachnida: Araneae: Nephilidae);  
Biting midge, *Forcipomyia* sp. (Insecta: Diptera: Ceratopogonidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Contributor.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Labrador Nature Reserve; 7 January 2016; around 1500 hrs.

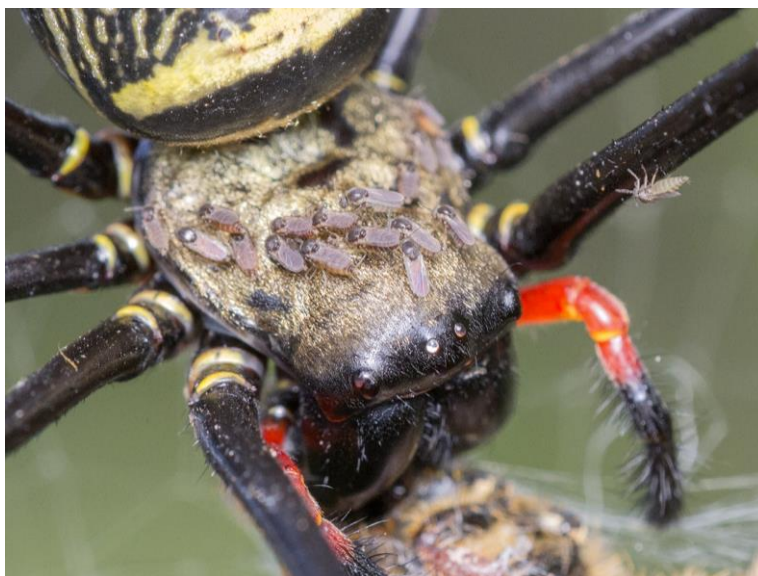
**Habitat:** Secondary vegetation.

**Observer:** Contributor.

**Observation:** A mature (body length about 5 cm) female *Nephila pilipes* was observed feeding on a large scoliid wasp (possibly *Campsomeris* sp.) in a web spanning about a metre in diameter. Other spiders present on the web were a male *Nephila*, and around 8 *Argyrodes* sp. (Theridiidae) of various sizes. Particularly noteworthy were at least 17 small midges congregating on the dorsal surface of the female *Nephila*'s cephalothorax, including one on her left foreleg (see accompanying picture). No flies were observed on or near the prey item.

The observer returned to the site about 2 hours later. The prey item had disappeared, but the midges were still present in similar numbers on the spider.

**Remarks:** While the *Argyrodes* sharing the web with the *Nephila* are kleptoparasitic associates of the larger spiders (Koh & Leong, 2014), the flies featured here are not kleptoparasitic flies that are sometimes observed feeding on the prey of spiders (see Aldrich & Barros, 1995). They are tentatively identified as biting midges in the genus *Forcipomyia*. These flies are known to be ectoparasites of large insects (e.g. dragonflies, moths) and feed on the haemolymph of their victims. *Forcipomyia* associated with spiders was first recorded from Guinea, Africa (Clastrier & Legrand, 1991).



Photograph by Marcus F. C. Ng

### References:

- Aldrich, J. R. & T. M. Barros, 1995. Chemical attraction of male crab spiders (Araneae, Thomisidae) and kleptoparasitic flies (Diptera, Milichiidae and Chloropidae). *The Journal of Arachnology*. 23: 212-214.
- Clastrier, J. & J. Legrand, 1991. *Forcipomyia araneivora* new species ectoparasite of a spider inhabiting the Nimba Mountains in Guinea (Diptera: Ceratopogonidae, Araneae: Araneidae). *Revue française d'Entomologie (nouvelle serie)*. 13 (4): 155-158.
- Koh, J. & T. M. Leong, 2014. *Spiders of Borneo. With special reference to Brunei*. Opus Publications (Kota Kinabalu). 357 pp.

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