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**“TWO-SPINED” AUSTRALIAN SPIDER,  
*Poecilopachys australasia* (Griffith & Pidgeon)  
1833 IN AUCKLAND.**

by D.J. Court\*

SUMMARY

The two-spined spider *Poecilopachys australasia* Griffith & Pidgeon) 1833 (Araneidae : Argiopidae) is newly naturalised to New Zealand in Auckland city. A brief account and illustrations of both sexes are given so that further specimens may be recognised.

INTRODUCTION

Recently several specimens of a brightly coloured two-spined spider from urban Auckland have been forwarded to the author and Mr. D. Cowley of the Zoology Department, University of Auckland. The spider seems to be newly introduced to New Zealand and may be assigned to *Poecilopachys australasia* (Griffith and Pidgeon) 1833<sup>3</sup>. The spider was until lately thought to have been first described by Keyserling in 1865 under the name *Cyrtarachne bispinosa* (which was then changed in 1895 by Simon to the genus *Poecilopachys*). Two popular works on Australian spiders by Clyne<sup>1</sup> and Mascord<sup>4</sup> discuss *P. australasia* under the name *P. bispinosa*. The spider is correctly described as *P. australasia* in McKeown<sup>5</sup> and Staunton<sup>6</sup>. Illustrations of the female are given in all these books but only a single photograph shows the male.<sup>1</sup>

DESCRIPTION AND HABITS

The mature female of *P. australasia* has been found predominantly on *Citrus* trees (Rutaceae), resting on the lower surface of a leaf. This is a small spider 8mm in length, with two dorsal, yellow and cream abdominal spines which characterise the female of the species. (Fig. 1) The anterior of the abdomen has a broad band of cream and yellow; an upward pointing chevron marking against a red/yellow background on the posterior abdomen. Legs and cephalothorax are red-brown. Waves of colour flow with a pulslike motion along the marginal bands of cream and yellow when the animal is disturbed. The bold cryptic colouration together with the chromatophore colour changes may be related to the conspicuous position maintained by the spider during the day.

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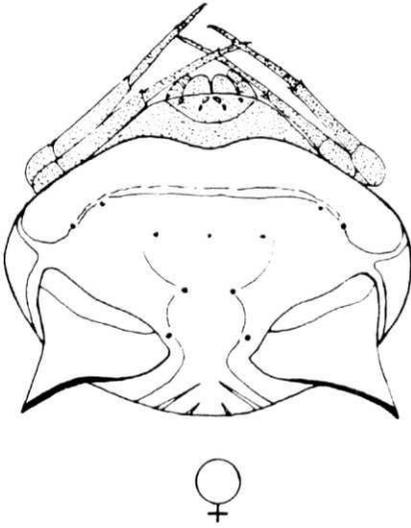


FIG. 1

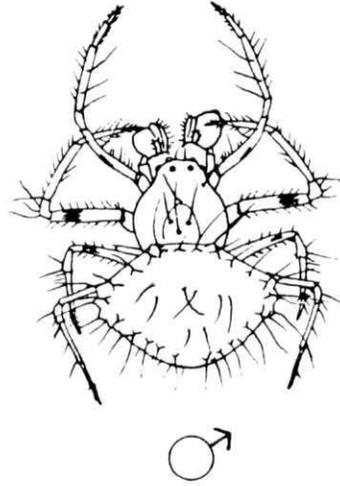


FIG. 2

**Fig. 1:** *Poecilopachys australasia* (Griffith and Pidgeon) Female (8 mm).

**Fig. 2:** *Poecilopachys australasia* (Griffith and Pidgeon) Male (3 mm) [After Goodwin<sup>3</sup>]

**Fig. 3:** Schematic diagram of web of female two-spined spider [After Clyne<sup>2</sup>]

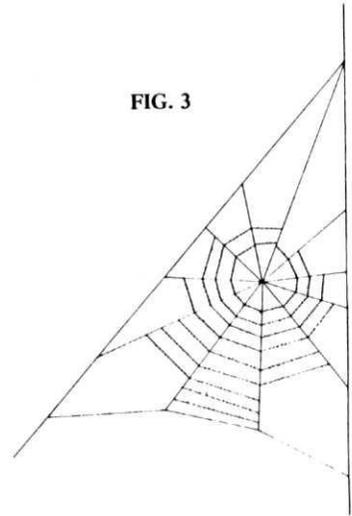


FIG. 3

Web construction occurs on still, humid evenings and is not a strict spiral orb web but a more specialised derivation (Fig. 3). Clyne<sup>2</sup> gives an excellent description of its construction. The plane of the web is angled or horizontal, the viscid strands of silk between radials snaring small moths and other flying insects. By dawn the web is dismantled and the spider has once more moved to the under-side of a leaf.

The species exhibits marked sexual dimorphism resulting in the naming of the male as a separate species, *Cyrtarachne setosa*. The recent recognition of the true relation of "*C. setosa*" to *Poecilopachys* by Goodwin<sup>3</sup> then brought about the change of the specific epithet from *bispinosa* to *australasia*. The male is 3mm in length, spinose (Fig. 2), and builds no distinct web structure. Goodwin<sup>3</sup> found a number of males in proximity to females on *Citrus* trees. No males have yet been observed in Auckland but the species is certainly breeding — a female received recently constructed a yellow-brown spindle-shaped eggsac. Dispersal of young spiders occurred three weeks after the laying of eggs.

## DISCUSSION

The species has been collected throughout urban Auckland from Titirangi (Auckland West) across to Torbay (North Shore) and seems well established. The first spiders appeared in the early summer of 1972 and reports are of increasing frequency. There is a high probability that *Poecilopachys* will become part of the naturalized fauna of New Zealand. A number of other spiders from Australia have already established and these include the black house spiders (*Ixeuticus martius* and *I. robustus*), white tailed spider (*Lampona cylindrata*), huntsman or Avondale spider (*Isopoda insignis*), sombrero spider (*Stiphidium facetum*), large garden spider (*Araneus transmarinus*) and the dorsi-ventrally depressed *Hemicloea rogenhoferi*. No indication is available as to how the spider arrived in New Zealand though there is the possibility that egg-sacs were imported with *Citrus* plants. Other Australian species are distributed throughout warm parts of the North Island and the two-spined spider may be similarly successful in the future.

## REFERENCES

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4. Mascord, R. 1970: "Australian Spiders in Colour" A.H. and A.R. Reed, Sydney. 112pp.
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