

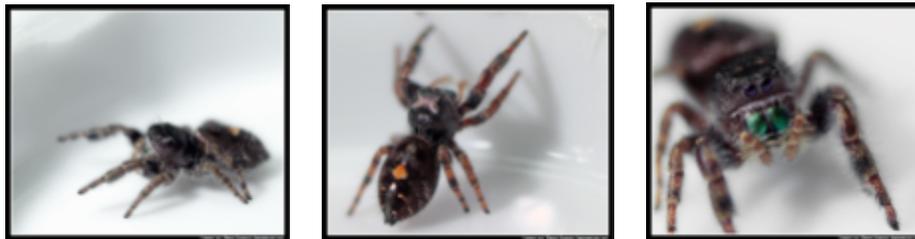


## SPIDER PHOTOGRAPHY FOR INATURALIST: MAKING A SCIENTIFICALLY USEFUL SPIDER OBSERVATION

Spider photographs added to iNaturalist help paint a picture of species biodiversity. As a snapshot of a species at a time and place, these observations can provide useful scientific information, but identifying spiders via photo can be tricky. Capturing some key features can help researchers learn as much as possible from your iNaturalist observations. Here's how:

### 1. Photograph the spider from multiple angles

- Different angles can show varied physical features, patterning, and other clues that can help ID spiders. The closer you can get with your photos, the more likely you are to capture these details.



Bold Jumping Spider *Phidippus audax*  
Madelyn Boudreaux, Spinnerette Photography

### 2. Photograph the eyes

- Not all spider eyes are created equally- and many species, or sub-species can only be identified when observing their eye pattern.

Photographer tip: If you don't have a camera and lenses that allow for close-ups, it is possible to photograph spider eyes using a smartphone. Make sure your camera app allows macro mode, as these apps are much better at closeups. Try to get as close as possible. You can also buy inexpensive macro lens clips that will make it easier, but you have to get very close to use them.



Goldenrod Crab Spider  
Madelyn Boudreaux, Spinnerette Photography

### 3. Photograph the web and web location

- Spider webs and their locations can provide valuable information. If possible, include a photo that shows the web's structure, and another from farther away, to give an idea of the bigger picture of where the spider was found. If there is no web, photographing the location can also provide useful information.

Photographer tip: If your camera is having a hard time focusing on the web, slide a piece of contrasting paper behind it, use a macro camera app to get in close, shine supplementary light, or try taking a photo at sunrise or sunset, so the low sun angle catches the web.



Genus *Metepeira*  
Rebecca Ray

**Additional photography tips:**

- If it is possible to collect the spider, consider putting the spider in the fridge (or on ice) for 10 minutes (being cold slows them down temporarily) to get a photo. Release the spider back where you found it.
- Add as much light as possible - not just a flash, but a bright "model light" in the form of a flashlight, lamp, etc. The more good light on your model, the less your camera has to work to focus. If possible, without hurting the spider, transfer it to a piece of paper or a box lined with white paper, which also allows you to isolate the model and helps the camera to focus. (Be sure to return your model to their location afterwards!) If possible, get photos both in context (the model in their web or near their "home") and out of context.
- Use a light-colored background to better photograph physical details.

**Observation tips and useful tools:**

- Adding your observations in the notes section of an iNaturalist observation can also provide important information. Make note of the spider's behavior, for example, is it hunting or eating, whether its furtive or bold, more apt curl up or rear up, quick moving or slow, etc.
- Place a ruler next to the spider when you take a picture, to show size.
- Consider using a container to hold a spider while photographing it. Examples include clean yogurt containers, tupperware, or containers with flat clear viewing windows - be creative!
- Macro lenses or apps on your phone allow you to get clear and close photographs.

The information stated above is meant to encourage more detailed spider observations, when possible. It may be impossible to get all, or sometimes any of these accomplished in a given observation. If you cannot meet all of these aspects, fear not! Post the best observation you are able to. Note that some genera may still not be fully distinguished with photographic evidence. NHMU recommends practicing ethical nature photography at all times. When possible, please do not cause animals stress, respect webs and territories, and remember that you are a visitor to their world.

This document is a compilation of recommendations from Natural History Museum of Utah scientists, local Utah Arachnologists and photographers. Special thanks to:

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August 1, 2020