



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

An eight-legged wonder

For over 50 years I've been watching for the giant European house spider to show up somewhere close by so I could shoot photos of it and share it with all you wonderful people.

Wouldn't you know, when it did show up, it was right in my very own bathroom here in Eugene. A huge, magnificent, eight-legged giant, right there on the wall in the narrow space between the shower stall and bathroom inner wall. You couldn't miss it — it measured more than 2.5 inches across. What a beautiful beast! It looked like a skinny tarantula.

But the space it was occupying was so small, I couldn't get in to photograph it. "Sue!" I shouted. "Please bring your camera, there's a giant house spider here that I need photos of..."

My wife, Sue, is more than the chief cook and bottle washer in our home; she's my boss, my dietician, helps me cope with my heart and back issues, tells me what I can — and cannot — do, and she is an excellent photographer. Without that beautiful woman and Franny of Hospice, my goose would be cooked.

Sue came running into the bathroom, camera in hand, and with a lot of difficulty, shot the photo you see above. She couldn't get close enough to the beautiful beast to get the close-ups I needed of the spider's eyes for positive ID.

It's the arrangement and makeup of those eyes that



PHOTO BY SUE ANDERSON

They don't come any bigger around here! The giant European house spider.

drives the scientific community nuts. For what it's worth, the giant house spider actually is known by three names because of the eyes.

The World Spider Catalog settled on: *Eratigene atrica*, *Eratigene duelica*, and *Eratigena saeva*. Then, in 2013, the scientific community decided to let it go with just the genus name *Eratigana*. But in 2018 it went back to the three old names. Thank goodness we have a common name that fits its size and description.

So I took what Sue did get of the amazing spider and I immediately sent it on to my dear entomologist pal, Eric Eaton (who has just published a *great* book on wasps), and asked him if my take, or rather, Sue's "take" (pun intended) of the spider was who I thought it was. And he agreed.

Now, before you make up your mind to smash that huge spider to tiny bits — if and when you see one — let me tell you it can't kill you. The venom of the giant European house spider is not harmful to you, me, or your kids.

Sure they have venom; all spiders possess venom. But this one is not harmful to humans, and it's not ambitious about biting big things; it would rather eat small insects and run and hide when spooked by something like a human, dog, or cat.

How did they get here from Europe? I have a hunch they arrived inside someone's trunk that sailed here

way back when.

To make you feel better, there are only two spiders you have to worry about if you find them in your home. One is the infamous and dreaded black widow, who probably has been with us since spiders first began to walk on Planet Earth. It likes quiet, dark places, like basements, crawl spaces, under wood piles, and in old badger holes. All you have to do is stop moving if you run into the widow's web. It's so strong it crackles like glass when you go through it. Look around you and then slowly back out of it and don't go back.

I have been told the silk of the black widow is extremely strong. In fact, it's been said all the cables on the Golden Gate Bridge could be replaced (by weight) with black widow spider silk, if you could arrange it, and they would be stronger than ever. Imagine how beautiful that would be as well!

The other spider to watch out for is a visitor from California and places back East: the little brown recluse, aka violin spider, *Loxosceles reclusa*. There's nothing really different between the violin spider and others except the violin-shaped mark on her cephalothorax (the cover over her middle); it stands out like a sore thumb on most — but unfortunately, not all — of them.

That little gal has a very

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City of Sisters awards community grants

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

The Sisters City Council awarded community grant funds in the amount of \$20,000 to 17 of 23 applicants. The funds are to be used by nonprofits and other entities providing projects or programs in the Sisters area.

Grants were awarded for the purpose of meeting essential needs, educational enrichment, recreational opportunities, and other miscellaneous community needs. Awards were made to:

- Age Friendly Sisters Country, \$900
- Assistance League of Bend, \$1,000
- Circle of Friends, \$750

- Family Access Network, \$2,480 (utility assistance)
- Family Access Network, \$500 (shower tokens)
- Furry Friends, \$1,000
- Heart of Oregon Corps, \$1,400
- Lines for Life, \$960
- Mission 22 (ElderHeart), \$900
- Rotary Club of Sisters, \$300
- Seed to Table Oregon, \$1,300
- Sisters Cold Weather Shelter, \$1,550
- Sisters Farmers Market, \$1,100
- Sisters Skatepark Alliance, \$3,660
- SMART, \$500
- VFW Post 8138, \$500
- Wellhouse Church/Market, \$1,200.

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