



On an unusual spider bite

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IN September of 1977, while walking, at dusk, on a trail in the Forestry Division Pine plantation at Mount St. Benedict, I was bitten on the leg by a spider. Within a minute of the bite, a swelling approximately 1 cm. in diameter and about 2 mm. high, appeared with two prominent punctures in the centre. Within the next fifteen minutes, the central swelling increased and a reddening of the skin moved outwards a distance of about 5 cm. The wound was extremely painful with some general numbing of the peripheral area. I consulted a medical practitioner who administered an anti-histamine treatment. Within twelve hours the swelling was removed but the fang marks persisted for three days.

The specimen, which I managed to collect, was sent to Professor Levi, Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard University, who identified it as *Eriophora fuliginea*. This neotropical spider

is apparently a common nocturnal orb web species which has been known to feed on small bats. Professor Levi has collected many specimens of this species and is sure that he has been bitten on more than one occasion, but has not noticed any response from the bite. Apparently, these spiders make large orb webs across trails each day at dusk, and take them down before first light. In walking along the trail which was slightly overgrown, I may have disturbed the spider in making its web. Possibly also, the reactions to the bite may have been produced owing to my particular sensitivity to arthropod bites generally.

The photograph illustrates the abdomen of the spider on which is found a prominent design in the form of a cross. The body measures approximately 2 cm and the markings are pale yellow. I have not since seen another example of the species.