

Araneidae: *Micrathena*

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Micrathena is a New World araneid genus, which shows high species diversity on the mainland, especially in S America, but also extends some of the diversity and endemism into the Caribbean (Fig. 1). Its taxonomy is revised (Levi, 1985), its monophyly likely if untested, and it can easily be diagnosed from other araneids by somatic characteristics (Fig. 2). *Micrathena* is among the species richest Neotropical araneid genera (Platnick, 2011).



Fig. 1. Distribution of *Micrathena* species (after Levi, 1985; Platnick, 2011).

Monophyly. Likely, though untested.

Amber species. None (Platnick, 2011).

Dispersal. *Micrathena* are thought to be intermediate dispersers.

Search strategy. *Micrathena* species make substantial sized orb webs with a conspicuously open hub in vegetation (Fig. 2), and are easily spotted due to female coloration (often white or brightly colored, even bright orange and red) and sclerotized abdomen usually bearing conspicuous spines (Fig. 2). The males are small and mostly overlooked (Fig. 2). These spiders can easily be found at the hub of their webs day and night.

Similar genera. The other spiny orb web spiders in the Neotropics are *Chaetacis* (10 species on the mainland) and *Gasteracantha* (single widespread species). *Chaetacis* has smaller spines, and *Gasteracantha* is flatter, but they may both be relevant for this study. Best to collect all spiny orb web spiders.

Needed collecting. All areas are in need of new collecting, especially for DNA-ready material.

FROM: Levi, H. W. 1985. The spiny orb-weaver genera *Micrathena* and *Chaetacis* (Araneae: Araneidae). *Bull. Mus. comp. Zool. Harv.* 150: 429-618.

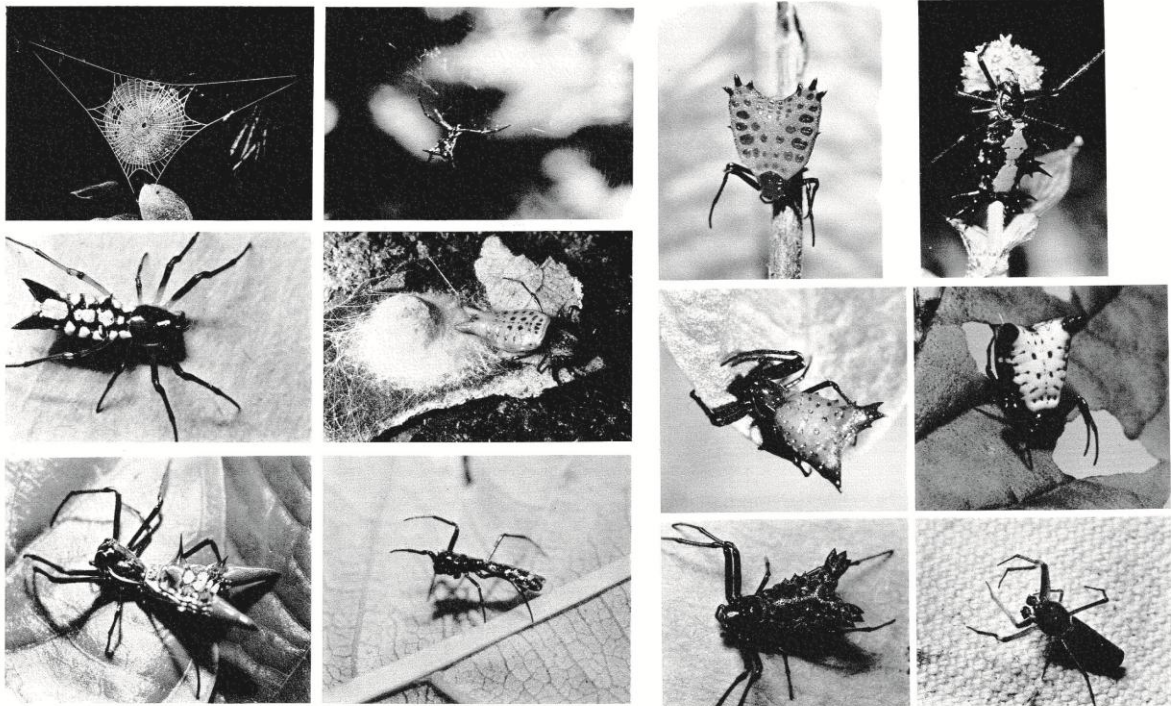


Plate 1. Upper row, left. Web of *Micrathena molesta*; orb about 8 cm diameter. Right. *M. schreibersi* in web. Middle row, left. *M. funebris*. Right. *M. furcula* with egg-sac. Bottom row. *M. sexspinosa*. Left. Female. Right. Male. (Photo credits. upper left and middle row, right: J. Coddington; middle row, left: W. Maddison.)

Plate 2. Upper row, left. *Micrathena clypeata*. Right. *M. lepidoptera*. Middle row, left. *M. molesta* with parasitic mite on right anterior of abdomen. Right. *M. saccata*. Bottom row. *M. triseriata*. Left. Female. Right. Male. (Photo credits. Upper row, right: J. Coddington. Middle row, right: A. Aiello. Bottom row: W. Maddison.)

Fig. 2. *Micrathena* is easily recognized by a symmetric aerial orb web with open hub, the conspicuous sclerotization and spines in females and by extreme sexual size dimorphism. Plates from Levi (1985).

References

Levi, H. W. 1985. The spiny orb-weaver genera *Micrathena* and *Chaetacis* (Araneae: Araneidae). *Bull. Mus. comp. Zool. Harv.* **150**: 429-618.

Platnick, N. I. 2011. The world spider catalog, version 11.5. American Museum of Natural History, online at <http://research.amnh.org/iz/spiders/catalog>. DOI: 10.5531/db.iz.0001.