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The Florida false wolf spider, *Ctenus captiosus* (Araneae: Ctenidae)[1]

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INTRODUCTION: Among the larger spiders that can occur in homes in peninsular Florida is *Ctenus captiosus* Gertsch. Superficially, *C. captiosus* is similar in size and appearance to the sympatric wolf spider *Gladicosa pulchra* (Keyserling) (Brady 1986), and is almost always mistaken for a wolf spider (family Lycosidae). Although it looks like a wolf spider, *C. captiosus* actually belongs to the family Ctenidae. Ctenids can be determined to family by their unique eye arrangement, 8 eyes in 3 rows in a 2-4-2 pattern (fig. 1). Lycosids also have a unique pattern, but in a 4-2-2 arrangement (fig. 2). Kaston (1978) listed "running spiders" as a common name for ctenids. They are fast runners, but so are numerous other spiders. Their size, appearance and habits, as well as the fact that they are related to (Homann 1961) and often mistaken for wolf spiders, would seem to make "false wolf spiders" a much more appropriate common name for them.

Ctenus captiosus is one of only 2 species of Ctenidae occurring in Florida. The second species is *Anahita punctulata* (Hentz), a smaller species found primarily in the Florida panhandle and in other southeastern states. Only Florida localities so far have been reported for *C. captiosus*, although it likely occurs in southern Georgia as well. These records range the entire length of peninsular Florida, excepting the Keys.

The family Ctenidae is primarily tropical and worldwide in distribution. Some species of the genera *Cupiennius* and *Phoneutria* are among the largest non-tarantula spiders known. *Phoneutria fera* Perty of Brasil is known to be dangerous to humans, but rarely causes death (Bucherl 1956). Nothing is known of the bite of *C. captiosus*, but based on its size and knowledge of its relatives, one might expect some pain and perhaps swelling to be associated with the bite. As with any spider bite, all severe or allergic reactions to a bite should receive prompt medical attention.

DESCRIPTION: Male (fig. 4) - The carapace is a medium yellow-brown, with a wide pale median band in the cephalic area which narrows in the thoracic area. Submarginal carapace bands are gray. White recumbent setae cover the median band and are scattered on the submarginal bands. The dorsal surface of the legs is dark like the carapace, but the underside of the legs and the sternum is paler, almost yellow. The abdomen is yellow-gray except for a pale median band consisting of a series of connected triangles edged by brown. Length ranges from 10-14 mm. Female (fig. 3) - Color is similar to the male except generally darker and markings are more distinct. Venter of legs and sternum is as dark as dorsum of legs. Length ranges from 15-20 mm (Peck 1981). Leg span may be as much as 75 mm (3").

HABITS AND HABITAT: Little is known about the biology of this species. Adult females have been collected in every month of the year, while adult males have been collected from December through May. *C. captiosus* is a wandering hunting spider; it does not make a web to catch prey. Individuals are generally found in mesic habitats, on both oak and pine trees, on the leaf litter, and even in caves (Peck 1981). Their color pattern is cryptic, and they can be difficult to see unless disturbed (fig. 5).

SURVEY AND DETECTION: Homes built in moist woodland habitats are most likely to experience *C. captiosus* as a visitor. Most reports of this spider in homes are in the spring, perhaps because spiders are searching for mates as the weather warms and they tend to wander more than normal. The spiders seem to prefer moist habitats, and once they enter a house they most frequently are found in bath tubs, presumably the most readily available source of moisture.

To reduce the likelihood of these spiders entering homes, hiding places such as stacks of firewood should be kept away from houses. Chemical controls are unlikely to be effective as a prevention for keeping the spiders out of homes, although spiders may be killed by direct application of household insecticides. Specimens may be submitted for identification by preserving in 70% isopropyl or ethyl alcohol. Preferably, they can be carefully captured in a jar and set free outside the house.

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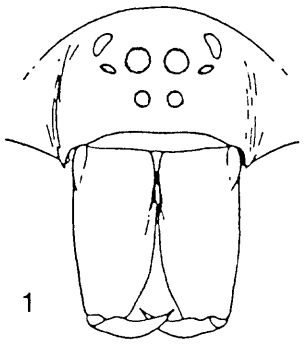

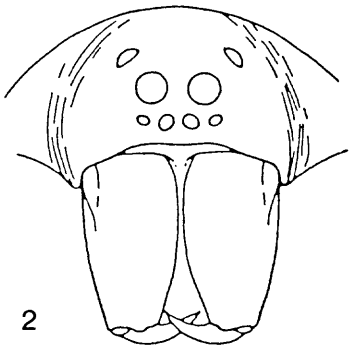

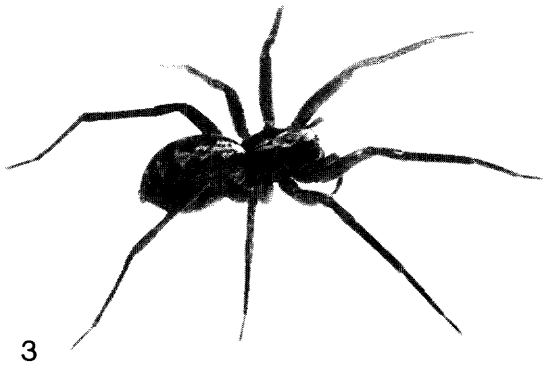

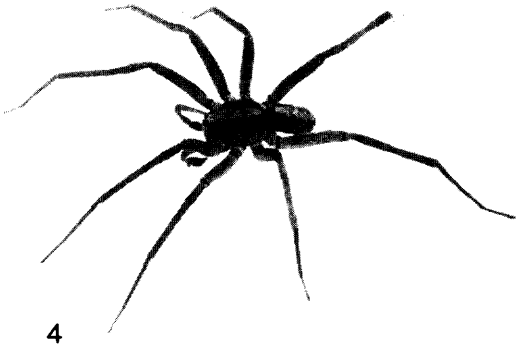

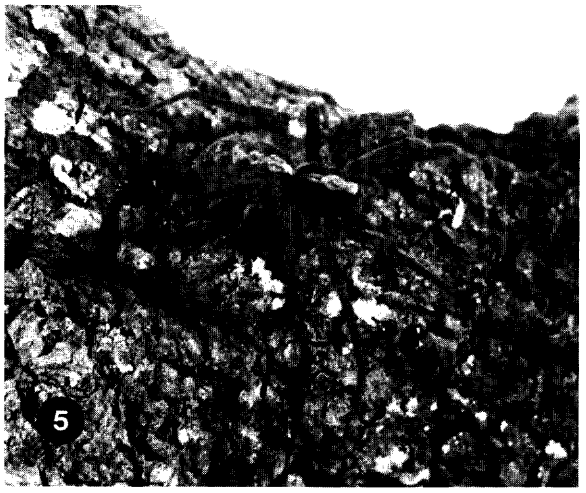

Figure 1 - 5. 1) ctenid eye arrangement; 2) lycosid eye arrangement; 3) female *C. captiosus*, life size; 4) male *C. captiosus*, life size; 5) female *C. captiosus* on oak log.

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