

THE REAL SPIDER MAN & SPIDER FACTS YOU NEVER KNEW!

Steven Kutcher is a real spider man; a world-famous entomologist who has spent his life studying and handling spiders and other insects. And his passion with these multi-legged creatures has led him to Hollywood; working as the official spider consultant on *Spider-Man* and the upcoming *Spider-Man 3*. In addition to his work on the *Spider-Man* films, Steven's other film credits include; *Alien 4*, *Arachnophobia*, *Nightmare on Elm Street Part 3*, *Jurassic Park* (working with mosquitoes) and *James and the Giant Peach*.

Steven's amazing ability to work with these often misunderstood creatures can be seen in a variety of ways in some of your favorite movies. In *Arachnophobia* Steven taught a spider to crawl fourteen feet into a slipper, while in *James and the Giant Peach* he put a costume on a dwarf tarantula to match the spider puppet used in the movie! In *Spider-Man* Steven worked with Steatoda spiders which are often mistaken for the deadly Black Widow spider. The Steatoda spider was featured in the beginning of the film; biting Peter Parker and starting Peter's super hero transformation.

SHOULD WE BE AFRAID?

"Some spiders are better not to handle," Steven says, "but they are always going to be more afraid of you than you are of them because we can run faster than they can and we can squash them!" He cautions against handling grass or jumping spiders if you have them as pets but also says while many tarantula pet owners let them roam free, you should also avoid excessive handling of this playmate. "We all have individual reactions to different spider bites so some people can swell up from the same bite that doesn't affect another person at all."

STEVEN'S FAVORITE MOVIE SPIDERS

Steven sites Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web* and the spider in *James and the Giant Peach* as some of his favorites. But of course the *Spider-Man* films are very dear to his heart. "Tobey Maguire and I got along well because he knew how to do his job well and he let me do my job well," Steven says proudly, "so both Spider men could make the movie *Spider-Man* even better!"

STEVEN'S TOP FIVE MOST VENOMOUS SPIDERS

1. Funnel Web Spider (*Atrax*), Australia
2. Mouse Spider (*Missulena*), Australia
3. Wandering Spider, aka Banana Spider (*Phoneutria*), South America.
4. Black Widow Spider (*Latrodectus*), North America
5. Red Back Spider (*Latrodectus Haasselti*), Australia

HOW DO YOU BECOME AN ENTOMOLOGIST?

Steven Kutcher has a Bachelor of Science in entomology (study of insects) and a Masters in Biology, specializing in entomology, insect behavior and ecology. If you love bugs and want to follow in his footsteps, he suggests kids do the following:

- Read everything you can about spiders.
- If your parents won't let you have one as a pet, make friends with someone who does have a pet spider.
- Visit as many as possible at museums and zoos.
- Make friends with experts and talk to them as much as possible.
- Study entomology when you go to college.

BEST SPIDER PET PICKS

1. **Tarantulas** - Steven's favorites are California Brown and Chilean Rose. "Tarantulas are inexpensive, they live from 20 to 25 years, and you only need to feed them every two weeks," he explains. He adds that a dish of water should be in their spider container at all times and their food should be live crickets or mealworms. "Female crickets are quiet and don't make noise like male crickets, so if you are keeping them as food for a spider, try and buy only female crickets!"
2. **Grass Spiders**. "They make a funnel-shaped web and all you have to do to feed them is drop in flies and crickets and watch them run out into the web to eat them," he says.
3. **Jumping Spiders**. Very common spiders worldwide, they get their name from their ability to leap on their prey, often jumping many times their own body length. Like most spiders, jumping spiders have eight eyes, of which the two middle eyes are particularly large and they have the best vision of all spiders, seeing objects up to 8 inches away "They are fun to watch jumping and don't need much but a little moisture from a mister occasionally," Kutcher adds.

SPIDER FUN FACTS

- There are approximately 50,000 types of spiders worldwide.
- While up to 55,000 people die in auto accidents in America each year, the death toll from snakes, spiders and scorpions was only 10.
- Since 1978 there has not been a single death from a spider bite in Australia, despite three of the top five deadliest spiders coming from that country.
- Spider bites affect people differently; so one person may have slight swelling and another person may have a more life-threatening reaction to a bite from the same spider.
- Children are at the highest risk of a deadly reaction to a spider bite because of their low body weight compared to the amount of venom in their system. "Your eyes are your best protection," Steven suggests. "That means never put your hand in a dark place you cannot see if you are picking up a marble!"
- The Empress of China once demanded a robe made completely out of spider web silk, so she could be superior to everyone else wearing clothes made out of silk worms. It took 8000 spiders to make her coat!
- **Water spider**. Found Europe and Australia, this spider builds a silken bubble under water among plants and fills it with air. It is a good swimmer and will catch its aquatic prey and subdue it with its venomous jaws.
- **Bolas spider** twirls its sticky web in the air like a lasso to catch moths.
- **Kukulcania spider**. Common in southern United States, this spider appeared in *Spider-Man 3*. Steven used this spider in the film to demonstrate a spider's strength by pulling a large grasshopper up into the its web.
- **Steatoda spider**. Most often found in North America, this was the spider Steven trained to bite Peter Parker in the original *Spider-Man* and is often mistaken for a black widow.
- **Giant crab spider**. From New Zealand, this spider can walk backwards, forwards and sideways and changes color to match its background. It catches its prey by disguising itself and remaining motionless until it can ambush insects that pass by.
- **Trap-door Spider**, from America and China. These spiders construct burrows with a cork-like trapdoor made of soil, vegetation and silk which is camouflaged and hinged on one side with silk while the spider waits holding on to the underside of the door until prey falls in. **The Double Trap-Door spider** from South America has a door on the upper and lower side of his burrow.

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