



“Hawaii’s Endangered Happy Face Spider”



Author’s drawing of the “happy face spider”

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| #1 | Meet <i>Theridion Grallator</i> , meaning “happy face spider.” This little <i>arachnid</i> , found in <i>Hawaiian</i> rainforests, is quite small. It measures only 5 millimeters in length, at most! |
| #2 | The happy face spider’s name comes from the <i>unique pattern</i> found on its pale-colored back. The marks resemble two circles that look like eyes. There is a <i>curved shape</i> below, similar to a smile. |
| #3 | Some scientists think the spider may have developed these <i>strange markings</i> as a way to warn <i>predators</i> , such as birds. However, not all scientists agree on this <i>theory</i> . Some believe the features may do nothing to help the spider avoid its enemies. |
| #4 | The happy face spider generally tries to stay out of the <i>limelight</i> . It lives its life on the <i>undersides</i> of leaves, deep in the rainforest. This can make it difficult for scientists to <i>locate</i> and study. |
| #5 | One scientist, Dr. Geoff Oxford, has studied the happy face spider for nearly twenty years. In an interview in 2009, Dr. Oxford said the spider is very <i>difficult</i> to find because it is in danger of <i>extinction</i> . He stated that the species was <i>under threat</i> from <i>non-native</i> animals brought to the islands. |
| #6 | Because of the happy face spider’s <i>endangered</i> status, it has become a <i>symbol</i> for all of Hawaii’s <i>threatened</i> wildlife. In fact, <i>conservationists</i> have placed images of it on T-shirts, baseball hats, and even garbage trucks. They hope to use this as a way to bring <i>attention</i> to the loss of various <i>fauna</i> throughout Hawaii. |

Written by Expeditionary Learning for Instructional Purposes 2012



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Citations

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theridion_grallator “Theridion grallator” last updated 9/19/12

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/5199409/British-scientists-study-Hawaiian-happy-face-spider.html>
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<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/good-bad/spider.html>
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http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photos/pod-best-of-2007/spider-guarding-eggs_pod_image.html
“Photo of the Day: Best of 2007” caption

(All sites last accessed 10/07/12)