

All tarantulas live in burrows, which they dig with their fangs and front legs — unless an abandoned burrow is available. Burrows are about the diameter of a quarter and are lined and sometimes covered with spider silk.

Female tarantulas live as long as 25 years. After mating, a female lays a hundred or so eggs that hatch into spiderlings the following spring.

Tarantulas are nocturnal, spending most of their time underground even while hunting. A hunting tarantula waits in its burrow for an insect to walk by. The spider then rushes out and grabs it.

Tarantula venom is very mild and won't harm you — unless you're the size of a small lizard or cricket.

PHOTOS: JENN ROE, KAREN SHACKLETON

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Tarantulas

Protect these gentle giants.

Late summer and fall is a time when tarantulas are most at risk. That's when the male tarantula, four to seven years of age, leaves the safety of its burrow to wander about in search of a mate. It dies later that same season.



If you are lucky enough to see a tarantula, do not touch it. It may look tough, but a tarantula can be injured if handled. Please observe from a distance.

California State Parks strictly forbids disturbance of all wildlife in the park.

You might see a tarantula with a bald spot which is created in its own defense by flicking abdominal hairs



into the nose and eyes of its predator.