

One defining moment in my life involved transforming fear into fascination. This month, in honor of Halloween, I am going to share my earliest remembered interaction with a large, furry spider and how her life touched mine in a profound and lasting way.

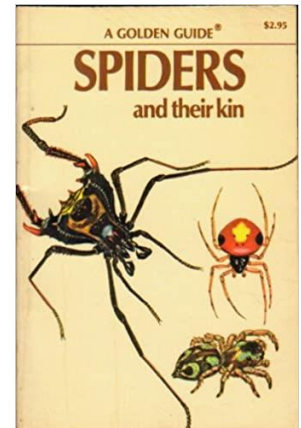


When I was little girl, I was scared of spiders. All those legs, the scuttling movements, the alien look of them! I stepped on them whenever I came across one on the ground. One day, I was walking down some steps outside and came across a very large and hairy spider on the patio. When I stepped on it, it seemed like the spider exploded into HUNDREDS of little spiders!!! It was terrifying as they began to scatter in all directions (many seemingly coming after me!) and I went screaming up the stairs... When my mother returned with me to the "scene of the crime", there was nothing but the large, very dead spider.

Knowing what I had experienced and unsatisfied with whatever explanation followed, I wanted to know more about spiders! I was given a big collection of Golden Guides including one, "Spiders and Their Kin", where I happily discovered my spider species... the Wolf



Spider. But, I unhappily discovered my Wolf Spider was a Mommy spider carrying her babies on her back. I had no idea bugs could be good parents. I felt so bad about killing this beacon of wild parental care (and undoubtedly a number of her children) with my offending shoe, that I never killed a spider on purpose ever again.







Starting with my Golden Guide and through subsequent library trips (keep in mind this is the late Stone Age when Computers Did Not Exist – I sense a collective gasp of horror), I began to develop a love for these many eyed and legged creatures. A love of: tiny hatchlings and colorful Jumping Spiders... huge Tarantulas and Bird-Eating Spiders... fascinating orb weavers, funnel nesters and deadly tangle web Black Widows (I once kept one as a pet for two years)... I can thank a single spider for changing my view of the world forever.

I hope you enjoy this Spider Tale and take some time to learn about some of our 8 legged neighbors and their many amazing behaviors.



While the spiders above were observed in Croatan (all photos but the Momma Wolf Spider, by J.R. Baker of NCSU, are mine), I thought in honor of the Season, I would include two I met in Trinidad... Happy Halloween!!!

