

There Is Always A Spider Within Three Feet Of You

Larry Moffitt
June 24, 2015



I was sitting on the Metro (subway), contentedly reading an article, “Sexual Cannibalism in Orb-Weaving Spiders: An Economic Model,” from *The American Naturalist*. No, seriously: the December 1991 issue.

I turned to a genteel lady next to me, who was discreetly reading over my shoulder, and asked in my most pleasant voice, “Is God important to you?” You have to be careful to use a soft, inquiring tone and a smile when jumping into a stranger’s private space with a complete non-sequitur.

She replied with a sequitur, “Did you know you’re always within three feet of a spider?”

“Spiders that God made?” I asked, seeking some common middle ground.

“Yup, those kind,” she said, accepting the handoff.

Canadian arachnologist, Albert Turnbull, went around laying out square meter grids in pastures, then got down on his hands and knees with a magnifying glass and tweezers, and counted them bad boys. Not all over the world, but in enough places to get an article published (although not the one I was reading.)

In a pasture in England he found the highest density – 842 spiders per meter. The lowest density was in a field in Poland – 0.64 spiders per meter. In addition to delicious bread and nice people, another plus for Poland.

Anyway, Turnbull offers the world’s most useless, inaccurate statistic that the global average is 130 spiders per square meter.

There are huge exceptions, like when you’re surfing (Or serfing, Does one indenture a serf, or are they just born on your land and you acquire them? Never mind.) Also, not so common in heavily manipulated botanical monocultures, such as putting greens. Or in low earth orbit.

But yes, YOU’RE NEARLY ALWAYS WITHIN A FEW FEET OF A SPIDER.

Also, God is important, we agreed, for making spiders, as well as humans (most of you reading this are humans – the rest are spyware bots). Regarding the reason for so many spiders, we weren’t sure. I’m not an anti-spiderist, just wondering. But the conversation did make us keep looking all around and slapping at imaginary itches.