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golden orb spider

by Cyril Brass



I had never really been interested in photographing bugs and insects before I first traveled to Costa Rica. But in this small Central American country, there are bugs and insects everywhere, many big and mostly beautiful. With so many encounters and opportunities with these creatures, I got hooked in searching for them to take some memorable close-up photos.

One of those big bugs is the Golden Orb Spider. Both the spider and its web are large and stunning.

The Golden Orb Spider is not named from the greenish to yellow coloration of its body and legs. Its name comes from the color of the silk threads the female weaves her web with. The bright sun's rays illuminate these yellow fibres into a golden reflective orb.

The silk's vivid color may serve a dual purpose; insects are attracted to the bright yellow sunlit strands, whereas in shady spots the yellow blends in with background foliage to act as a camouflage.

This is a spider you are able to easily see and identify without going deep into the jungles and rainforests. Most of my encounters with these eight legged creatures have been in

more open areas alongside forest trails, remote country roads and in forest clearings.

Your first sighting will be the enormous golden orb web connected to trees, brush and plants. These skillful architects and hunters construct a complex network of silk strings spanning over one to two meters in diameter supported by silk threads extending many more meters away.



Once you approach the web, you will most likely see a large spider; the female, motionless in the center of her web, patiently waiting for something tasty to land on or fly into her sticky maze.

And if you look really closely at the web, a second spider may be

found, one much much smaller than the female. This is the male Golden Orb Spider. He is so tiny; he often goes unnoticed on the web to predators and even to the female.

The female Golden Orb Spider is the largest non-tarantula like spider in North and South America. They do however build the largest and strongest webs of all spider species. The silk used to spin their cylindrical orbs

possesses incredible strength enabling the spider to construct a secure protective barricade as well as an effective trap for unsuspecting insects.

Adjacent to the main web, there may be barrier webs which function as an early warning system for incoming prey, further protection against predators, a shield that deflects wind blown leaves and other debris and warns of unaware hikers passing by.

This arachnid species can be found in the tropical climates of Southern United States through Central America and down to Argentina and Peru.

The Golden Orb Spider . . . a large colorful spider . . . a skillful web designer . . . a fascinating arachnid. **ca**

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