

Giant Golden Orb Weaver (*Nephila pilipes*)



Diet: Feed primarily on large flying invertebrate animals, but are capable of feeding on most animals able to be caught in its web including vertebrates.

Habitat: Found in forests and gardens throughout Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific islands

Predators: Birds and other larger animals.

Behavior: These spiders are known to congregate and form their individual webs close to each other compared to various other species of orb weaving spiders. It has been found that Giant Golden Orb Weaver males that were able to find female spiders first often fertilize a greater percentage of their eggs than other males.

Growth and Development: After mating, rather than egg sacks being hung in the web, a pit is dug which is then covered with plant debris or soil. Females are large and grow to a body size of 1-2 (overall leg span size nearly 8 in), with males growing to less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. Females are able to achieve a large size because they can continue to molt and grow after maturity. This contrasts with most spiders, where growth stops once sexual maturity is reached.

Endangered Status: The status of this species is labeled stable on IUCN.

Fun Fact: Scientist cannot determine the exact reason why this species is so drastically sexually dimorphic, but the two hypotheses are: females exhibit gigantism or that males exhibit dwarfism (and that there were adaptive reasons for either hypothesis).