

Vinegaroon (*Mastigoproctus giganteus*)



Diet: Slugs, worms, insects

Habit: Desert and scrublands in Southern United States

Predators: Mice, shrews, raccoons, armadillos, and feral hogs

Behavior: When threatened a stinging mist is sprayed from an opening under the tail. The mist is composed of acetic acid which is what gives vinegar its taste and smell; hence the animals' name "Vinegaroon". This mist is painful to the eyes of the predator, giving the Vinegaroon a chance to escape. They are nocturnal and have poor vision, using their tail and two front legs as sensory organs. In addition to its painful spray, the Vinegaroon has two heavy pinching mouthparts (modified pedipalps) that can inflict a painful bite.

Lifespan: Males up to 10 years, females up to 20 years.

Growth and Development: Giant Vinegaroon go through incomplete metamorphosis, with egg, nymph, and adult life stages. Once the eggs hatch, the nymphs climb aboard the back of the female, and remain there for about a month, until their first molt. After their first molt, the nymphs leave their mother. Giant Vinegaroon have 4 nymphal stages, with a molt in between each stage where they shed their skin, before reaching adulthood. Molts occur about once a year, usually during the summer.

Endangered Status: This species is undocumented.

Fun Fact: In at least one case, the spray has caused a person's skin to blister. They are commonly referred to as "whip scorpions" due to their appearance, and although they are arachnids they are in a separate order from true scorpions. Like all arachnids they have 8 limbs, their specialized front legs resemble large antennae.