



## BUTTERFLY PAVILION

### Western Black Widow Spider (*Latrodectus hesperus*)



Countries: United States, Canada, Mexico

Habitat: Black widows prefer dark, undisturbed areas close to the ground. In urban and suburban settings, they can be found in crawlspaces and basements.

Diet: Small invertebrates that become tangled in their web.

Predators: Some wasps, mantids and centipedes.

Behavior: They construct a web of irregular, tangled, sticky silken fibers. The spider very frequently hangs upside down near the center of its web and waits for insects to get stuck. Then, before the insect can extricate itself, the spider rushes over to bite it and wrap it in silk. To feed, it uses its fangs to inject digestive enzymes, liquefying the prey's internal organs.

Lifespan: Females can live 1.5 years and males can live up to 4- 7 months.

Growth and Development: After the female and male mate, the female lays several bunches of eggs, which contain about 750 eggs. A female may make between four and nine egg sacs. Incubation lasts about 14 days, and the newly hatched spiders are cannibalistic. They eventually spin silk threads to float out on passing breezes. Most spiderlings survive the winter as immature individuals, and they develop into adults with the arrival of spring.

Endangered Status: The status of this species is undocumented.

Fun Fact: The tensile strength of their silk is comparable to that of steel wire of the same thickness. But the density of steel is about six times that of silk, making this silk stronger than steel wire of the same weight.