# Goliath Bird-eating Spider

*(Theraphosa bloni)*

**Habitat and Distribution:** Rainforests of northern South America

**Size:** Leg span up to 12 in. and weight of 2½ oz.

**Wild Diet:** Frogs, small snakes, beetles, insects and lizards, as well as bats and very young rats. Occasionally they will eat hatchling birds. Goliath spiders inject digestive juices into their prey, which break down their tissues so that the spider can suck them up.

**Predators:** Spider wasps, snakes, birds and other tarantulas.

**Life Span:** 25 years

**Reproduction:** Goliath spiders mature at about 10 years. A male will approach the female's burrow and entice her out. He is equipped with a "mating hook" to restrain her fangs while they mate. He then makes a hasty getaway. Approximately half of males are killed or injured while attempting to mate. The female lays about 50 eggs in an egg sac made of her silk. She then guards the egg sac in her burrow and carries it with her when she leaves. After 6-7 weeks, the eggs hatch, and the young spiders ride on their mother's back until their first molt after which they will go off on their own.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal and solitary, goliath spiders dig or find abandoned burrows deep in the rainforest. They will rarely travel more than a few feet from their silk-lined burrows. With very weak eyesight, the spider relies on sensory hairs that pick up vibrations in the ground. Goliath spiders are considered aggressive, and will stand up in a "fight" position and make a hissing sound by rubbing hairs on their legs together when they feel threatened. They can also release the barbed hairs on their abdomen, which can be irritating to sensitive tissues like the eyes and respiratory tract.

**Conservation Connection:**
Secure

**Interesting Facts:** These spiders produce a neurotoxin which paralyzes their prey. Their venom is not very toxic to humans, but can cause swelling, severe pain and sweating. Tarantulas have an exoskeleton, and therefore must molt to grow larger. Immediately after molting the spider is at greatest risk of predation, since it takes several days for their exoskeleton to fully harden.