

Discover the Fauna of Our Campus

***Myrmarachne plataleoides*, a species of spider**

Order: Araneae (Spiders)

Family: Salticidae (Jumping Spiders)

Genus: *Myrmarachne* (Ant-mimicking jumping spiders)

Species: *Myrmarachne plataleoides* (Kerengga Ant-like Jumper)

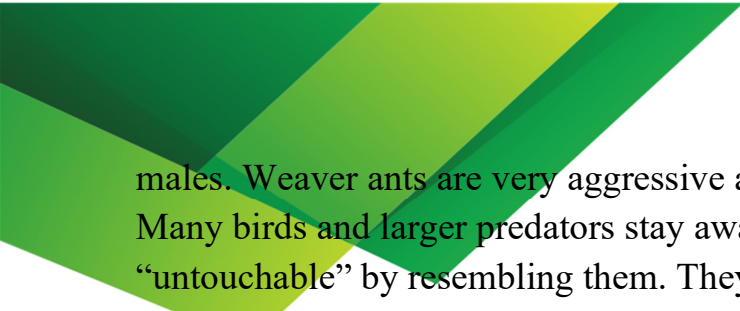
Myrmarachne plataleoides (or sometimes “spider-ant”) is one of nature’s most intriguing and deceptive creatures. This creature belongs to the family of jumping spiders (Salticidae), but outwardly it is almost indistinguishable from an ant. The greatest feature of this spider is Batesian mimicry. It imitates a particularly aggressive species of ants known as “weaver ants” (*Oecophylla smaragdina*).



While other spiders have a two-part body (head-thorax and abdomen), *Myrmarachne plataleoides* has artificial “joints” on its body, which makes it look like an ant with three parts from the outside. As we know, spiders have 8 legs, while ants have 6. This spider raises its two front legs into the air and moves them like an ant’s “antennae.” Being a jumping spider, it has very strong eyesight and large eyes, but these eyes are camouflaged with its body color so that they do not spoil the ant’s appearance.

There is a sharp difference between the males and females of this species. They have very long chelicerae (mouthparts).

These long mandibles look like the jaws of an ant or a load carried in the ant’s mouth. In fact, the males use these long mandibles to fight other rival males. Their chelicerae are short and their ant-like appearance is more perfect than that of the



males. Weaver ants are very aggressive and secrete formic acid when they bite. Many birds and larger predators stay away from these ants. The spider makes itself “untouchable” by resembling them. They usually live in trees near these ant colonies. Interestingly, they do not feed on ants; they simply use their fearsome reputation as a shield. They move erratically and quickly, like ants.

They do not build webs and wait like other spiders. They feed mainly on small insects and flies. They see their prey from afar and jump on it. They build a thin silken web-like nest under leaves to protect their eggs. *Myrmarachne plataleoides* is mainly found in Southeast Asia (India, Sri Lanka, China, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia). They love tropical climates and humid forests. In short, this spider species is one of the most fascinating examples of evolution. It is an “actor” who manages to survive by deceiving its enemies not only with its appearance, but also with its behavior.

