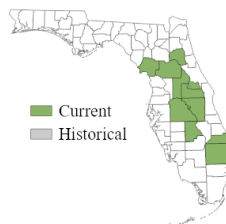


RED WIDOW SPIDER

Latrodectus bishopi

Order: Araneae
Family: Theridiidae
FNAI Ranks: G3/S3
U.S. Status: none
FL Status: none



Description: Cephalothorax and legs reddish orange. Abdomen black with yellow rings around red spots. Underside of female abdomen contains 1 or 2 spots, never displaying a full hourglass shape. Females larger (8 mm) with a bulbous, rounded abdomen. Males smaller (4 mm) with an oblong abdomen.

Similar Species: Female southern black widows (*Latrodectus mactans*) and northern black widows (*L. variolus*) have black legs. Males and juveniles of *L. mactans* and *L. variolus*, as well as both sexes of brown widow (*L. geometricus*) have brownish-yellow legs with black bands. *L. mactans* and *L. variolus* have a black cephalothorax while *L. geometricus* has a brown or tan abdomen and cephalothorax.

Habitat: Scrub habitat. Webs are almost exclusively built in saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) or scrub palmetto (*Sabal etonia*) up to 4 ft. off the ground by rolling a frond into a cone and tying it with silk (McCrone and Levi 1964).

Seasonal Occurrence: Adults have been found throughout the year.

Florida Distribution: Endemic to scrub habitat in Florida from Ocala National Forest to Palm Beach County including an isolated population near Cedar Key, Levy County.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to peninsular Florida.

Conservation Status: While vast amounts of scrub habitat were lost throughout the 20th century, most remaining scrub habitat has been protected and this species is protected on multiple conservation lands throughout its range (Turner et al. 2006). There are no major threats known at this time, although habitat quality degradation due to long-term fire exclusion may be an ongoing threat. Populations appear stable with no evidence of recent declines.

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Protection and Management: Applying prescribed fire in July, as compared to February, was shown to cause greater short-term declines and local extirpations of spiders in the same habitat (Carrel 2008). However, winter burns may not be optimal for management of saw palmettos and scrub habitat (FNAI 2010a).

References: McCrone and Levi 1964, Schraft et al. 2021, Turner et al. 2006



Female. © Robert Gundy

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Female. © Robert Gundy