

Similar wetland spiders

Pirata genus -
Max body length 10 mm



Find this spider

Identifying the Fen raft spider

Think you've seen one?

The fen raft spider is one of the UK's rarest and most spectacular animals. We only know of three sites where it lives. To help safeguard the future of this species in the UK, please tell us about any possible sightings of these spiders or their webs.

What to do

Record the location carefully and photograph the spider if possible. Please send your information to: enquiries@dolomedes.org.uk



Fen raft spider

Dolomedes plantarius
Body length 3 - 23 mm
(70 mm including legs)

0 10 23 mm

Top

Ball of spiderlings surrounded by the nursery web with the female on guard below.

Bottom left

Hunting at water's edge

Bottom right

Carrying its egg sack



How to identify the fen raft spider

• Where to find them

Basking or hunting on stems or leaves of marginal plants around fen pools, grazing marsh ditches and canals.

• When to find them

Warm days between March and October.

• Size

Most are small (from 3 mm body length) but adults are up to 23 mm (70 mm including legs).

• Do they always have white lateral stripes?

No, they may be faint and a minority of the spiders are plain brown or black.

• Can they be confused with other species ?

There is another very similar species of raft spider in the UK. It is commoner and is found on wet acidic heath and moorland.

Other species of aquatic spiders may also have white lateral stripes but their maximum body length is 10 mm.

• Are their webs distinctive?

They build webs only as nurseries for their young. These are big dense tents, almost always in vegetation above water.