



BUG BIZ

Pest Management and Insect Identification Series



Peucetia viridans (Hentz), Green Lynx Spider (Araneae: Oxyopidae)

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Description

Peucetia viridans (Hentz), the green lynx spider, is the largest member of the family Oxyopidae in North America. Females may reach 20 mm in body length, whereas males are slightly smaller, averaging 12 mm. The body is vibrant green, often with red spots or diagonal silver markings on the abdomen. The legs are long, pale green or yellow, with long, black hairs, each with a prominent black base. The green color and general form of the body are usually sufficient to identify green lynx spiders in Louisiana and elsewhere in eastern United States. A similar species, *P. longipalpus*, occurs in the western states where its distribution overlaps with *P. viridans*. Distinguishing these two species requires detailed examination of the male pedipalps. Immature green lynx spiders are similar to adults, except smaller.

Life Cycle

Green lynx spiders undergo a single generation, annually. Overwintering immatures become active in early spring, undergo up to eight molts, and mature into adults during mid-to-late summer in Louisiana. Females lay eggs during late summer or fall a few weeks after mating. Eggs are enclosed in a silken, purse-shaped sac that may contain up to 600 eggs. Females hold the egg sacs between their legs, guarding them against potential predators, until the spiderlings hatch 11 to 16 days later. Spiderlings remain in the egg sac for up to two weeks after hatching, then exit and disperse. Adult green lynx spiders are diurnal and are active hunters on low shrubs and herbaceous vegetation. Silk is not involved in prey capture, but a single silk drag line is used while hunting for navigation. Prey items are subdued by rapidly pouncing on them and biting. Green lynx spiders in Louisiana are commonly encountered on fall blooming flowers, particularly goldenrods (*Salidago* spp.).



Female green lynx spider guarding egg sac on goldenrod
(Chris Carlton, Louisiana State University AgCenter).

Ecological Significance and Pest Status

Green lynx spiders are broadly distributed in the Western Hemisphere from southern Canada south to Argentina. In North America they are abundant members of insect predator complexes in low vegetation. They are common in agricultural systems, where they are generally regarded as beneficial generalist predators of insect pests. In one Arkansas study, green lynx spiders and a second member of the family Oxyopidae, *Oxyopes salticus*, were found to be common in cotton fields, where they served as key predators of corn earworms (*Helicoverpa zea*), cotton leafworm moths (*Alabama agrillacea*) and cabbage looper moths (*Trichoplusia ni*). These beneficial feeding habits may be partially offset by the spiders' generalist habits, which include predation on other beneficial predator and parasitoid species, including paper wasps (*Polistes* spp.) and flies in the families Syrphidae and Tachinidae.

As with almost all spiders, green lynx spiders are venomous and capable of delivering a painful bite when handled. Bites are not considered medically significant but may result in skin lesions that persist for several days. In addition, lynx spiders spit venom defensively, reportedly for distances of up to 20 cm. At least one case of severe chemical conjunctivitis lasting several days is recorded in the literature. Consequently, green lynx spiders should be observed from safe distances.



Green lynx spider feeding on adult moth in hemp (Alejandra Velez, Louisiana State University AgCenter).

References

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- Weems, Jr., H.V., and W.H Whitcomb. 2004. Green Lynx Spider, *Peucetia viridans* (Hentz) (Arachnida: Araneae: Oxyopidae). EENY249/IN521, 11/2001. EDIS, 2004 (11). https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/beneficial/green_lynx_spider.htm (accessed 12 November 2024)
- Whitcomb, W.H., H. Exline, and R.C. Hunter. 1963. Spiders of the Arkansas cotton field. Annals of the Entomological Society of America 56: 653-660.

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