



# The Biology of Camel-Spiders: Arachnida, Solifugae

*Fred Punzo*



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My initial interest in the Solifugae (camel-spiders) stems from an incident that occurred in the summer of 1986. I was studying the behavioral ecology of spider wasps of the genus *Pepsis* and their interactions with their large theraphosid (tarantula) spider hosts, in the Chihuahuan Desert near Big Bend National Park, Texas. I was monitoring a particular tarantula burrow one night when I noticed the resident female crawl up into the burrow entrance. Hoping to take some photographs of prey capture, I placed a cricket near the entrance and waited for the spider to pounce. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye appeared a large, rapidly moving yellowish form which seized the cricket and quickly ran off with it until it disappeared beneath a nearby mesquite bush. So suddenly and quickly had the sequence of events occurred, that I found myself momentarily startled. With the aid of a headlamp I soon located the intruder, a solifuge, who was already busy at work macerating the insect with its large chelicerae (jaws). When I attempted to nudge it with the edge of my forceps, it quickly moved to another location beneath the bush. When I repeated this maneuver, the solifuge dropped the cricket and lunged at the forceps, gripping them tightly in its jaws, refusing to release them until they were forcefully pulled away.



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