

# Newly discovered itty-bitty spider looks like Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*

The creature is one of seven new spiders spotted by an Australian arachnologist and citizen scientists.

Looking for spiders might not be high on everyone's to-do list right now, but thanks to citizen scientists and an Australian arachnologist, seven new colorful species of the teeny-tiny peacock spider have recently been discovered. One spider even resembles a famous Vincent van Gogh painting.



"Meet Australia's seven newest species," Melbourne Museum arachnologist Joseph Schubert tweeted on Thursday. "Last year, I traveled the country collecting specimens of these new peacock spiders (some discovered by citizen scientists) and spent countless hours in the lab studying them. Some welcome news in tough times."

Meet Australia's 7 newest species!

Last year I travelled the country collecting specimens of these new peacock spiders (some discovered by citizen scientists!) and spent countless hours in the lab studying them. The paper was published today!

Some welcome news in tough times. [pic.twitter.com/sV1gURLqAi](https://pic.twitter.com/sV1gURLqAi)  
— Joseph Schubert (@j\_schubert\_\_) March 26, 2020

In his article published in the science journal *Zootaxa* on Friday, Schubert describes the new peacock spiders, including one named *Maratus constellatus* after a well-known work of art.

"The patterns on the abdomen to me look so much like *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh," Schubert said in a video. "Hence the name *constellatus*, which means starry in Latin."

Interestingly, a few of the new peacock spiders in Schubert's study were discovered by citizen scientists who took photos and documented the spiders' locations. The finds are impressive, especially since peacock spiders aren't so easy to spot. The spiders are extremely small, measuring anywhere from 0.05 inches (1.5 millimeters) to a third of an inch (7.62 millimeters).

While peacock spiders normally look like ordinary brown spiders at first glance, under a macro lens or microscope the spiders show off an array of colors including vibrant reds, purples and greens. In some cases, strange shapes of elephants, arrows, skulls and other spiders can be found on their abdomens.

Peacock spiders are also known for their jerky movements, which turn out to be a meme-worthy mating dance by males to impress females. Sadly, even if the males' dancing works to woo their mates, the female spiders may still eat them if they're hungry after sex.

The new spiders are called *Maratus azureus*, *Maratus constellatus*, *Maratus inaquosus*, *Maratus laurenae*, *Maratus noggerup*, *Maratus suae* and *Maratus volpei*.

Including these new spiders, there are currently 86 species of peacock spiders.

"Considering how many peacock spider species have been discovered in the past few years," Schubert said. "I certainly think there are more to be found."

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