

Unique spider species creates perfect clones of itself to hunt prey

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In the Peruvian Amazon, a unique species of spider from the genus *Cyclosa* has been discovered. It has an extraordinary survival tactic. These spiders create elaborate lures from silk and debris, mimicking larger spiders to fool predators. This behavior, observed independently in Peru and the Philippines, highlights the incredible ingenuity of nature and the power of selective advantage in shaping unique adaptations.



Nature is truly amazing. It contains secrets, laws and phenomena that always surprise people, seemingly never to be discovered. For example, recently, a team of scientists discovered another species of beautiful intelligent spider, capable of creating fake "decoys" to create illusions. This spider was discovered at the Tambopata Research Center in the Peruvian Amazon, belonging to the genus *Cyclosa*.

From a distance, it looks like a tiny spider that might be dead and is hanging from its web, but as you get closer, the spider quickly begins to wiggle, letting you know that it is actually still alive.

You might call it a 'decoy spider.' It uses a specialized silk thread called a stabilimenta, which is symmetrical, making it look like a larger spider hanging from a web. *Cyclosa* can make fragments look a bit like spiders, but

not as detailed as the (original) spiders found at this research center. There were nearly 25 of them found in a floodplain around a lodge in the Amazon jungle, suggesting they have a very limited range. The spider was discovered in Peru by entomologist Phil Torres in 2012, and a similar spider was found in the Philippines by researcher Reeves around the same time.

Looking closely at the decoys, both have different shapes, and both discoveries were made independently and then shared. These findings are important, as such detailed decoy behavior has never been documented before; it is amazing to think that such an amazing phenomenon has only just been discovered.



Can evolution explain this phenomenon of spider "cloning"?

Over time, spiders have evolved the ability to create prey that is more likely to survive, especially in the Amazon, where everything preys on everything else. Predators such as birds or wasps may attack the prey instead of the real spider, allowing the real spider to escape. This phenomenon is known as selective advantage. However, there is one caveat: the Peruvian prey spider appears to have a limited habitat, possibly due to special environmental requirements that have shaped this rare behavior.

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