

“Uncommon Invertebrates”

***Rabidosa rabida* by Ceil Rochevot**

The spider species, *Rabidosa rabida*, or Rabid Wolf Spider, is abundant in my garden. I find them under leaf litter in my flowerbeds as well as in the pool skimmers. It belongs to the genus, *Rabidosa*, in the family Lycosidae. Due to their name, they are often confused as rabies carriers. But they get the name “Rabid” due to their fast moving and erratic movements (*I can attest to this!*).



Based on collected data, they are native to North America. The geographic range for *Rabidosa rabida* runs from Maine to Florida, and west to Texas. *Rabidosa rabida* is most often found outdoors (*thankfully*) during the warmer months. The habitat includes grass or farm fields, under piles of firewood, or underground clutter such as leaf litter.

The primary colors are black, brown, gray, or tan. Most often, the ones I see are brown with pale stripes. The females are larger than the males. They do not spin webs. The female carries her egg sack with her attached by a silken cocoon. As the eggs hatch, around 168-365 (*who counts these things!?!*) tiny babies emerge and ride on the mother's back. They stay like this for about 6 months until they start to venture out from their mother (*looks like a horror movie!*).

The rabid Wolf spider is not considered to be poisonous even though it does have venom. It almost never bites (*but I'm not taking any chances!*) humans unless it is placed in a situation where it feels cornered and can't escape. Instead of biting, these spiders prefer to use sheer speed and agility to escape any potential threat. The bite can be painful but is regarded as medically insignificant and the effects are usually gone in a few minutes.

Rabidosa rabida are considered to be active hunters and chance predators. They eat small insects and invertebrates such as ants, crickets, grasshoppers, locusts, other small spiders, and pests. They typically hunt at night in their search for food. Predators include birds, snakes, larger wolf spiders (*yikes!*) and dogs and cats. They can live for up to 2 years in the wild.

Rabidosa rabida plays a limited role in the ecosystem. The main job is as a predator, controlling the insect population.

An interesting fact is that they can swim. No wonder they haunt me by living in the pool skimmers!

PS: *Did I mention that I am terrified of spiders!?!*

References:

1. ukulele.edu
2. bugguide.net (hosted by Iowa State University Department of Entomology (Photo credit))
3. spiderid.com
4. spideridentification.com
5. Wikipedia