

BY GERRY BISHOP

Long, skinny legs and a little football-shaped body: These are the basic features of a *daddy longlegs*. Its other name is *harvestman* because people see it more often during harvest time (in fall).

These creatures—or ones very much like them—have been around for more than 400 million years. Check out the awesome facts and pictures here, and you'll agree that, although it looks fragile, a daddy longlegs has all the tools and tricks it needs to survive!



MULTI-PURPOSE LEGS

Eight very long legs can

- crawl over rough ground,
- climb up and all around plants,
- creep across ceilings, and
- walk on water!

BEADY EYES

One eye looks to the left and the other to the right. Each senses only light and motion.

GRIP & TEAR!

This creature has no fangs or venom to help it make a kill. Two mouthparts called pedipalps (PEH-dih-palps) hold on to food while two claw-like chelicerae (keh-LIH-suh-ree) tear it into bite-sized bits.

chelicera

pedipalp

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Dead insects, rotting fruit, mushrooms, and animal droppings—these are just a few of the things that most daddy longlegs eat. Some catch small insects and other prey.

BODY DOUBLE

A daddy longlegs may look like a spider, but it's not. A spider's two main body parts are divided by a very definite "waist." A daddy longlegs' two main body parts are so close together, they look like one.

CRANE FLY

CELLAR SPIDER



FAST FACT

The body of the tiniest daddy longlegs is about the size of a pinhead. The body of the largest is about the size of a quarter.

CREEPY IMPOSTERS

Two other creepy-crawlies are sometimes called "daddy longlegs," but one's an insect and the other is a spider. A true daddy longlegs is neither. It is more closely related to a scorpion.

DADDY LONGLEGS

Get a leg up on this amazing creature. It could be living in your own backyard!



MITEY PESTS

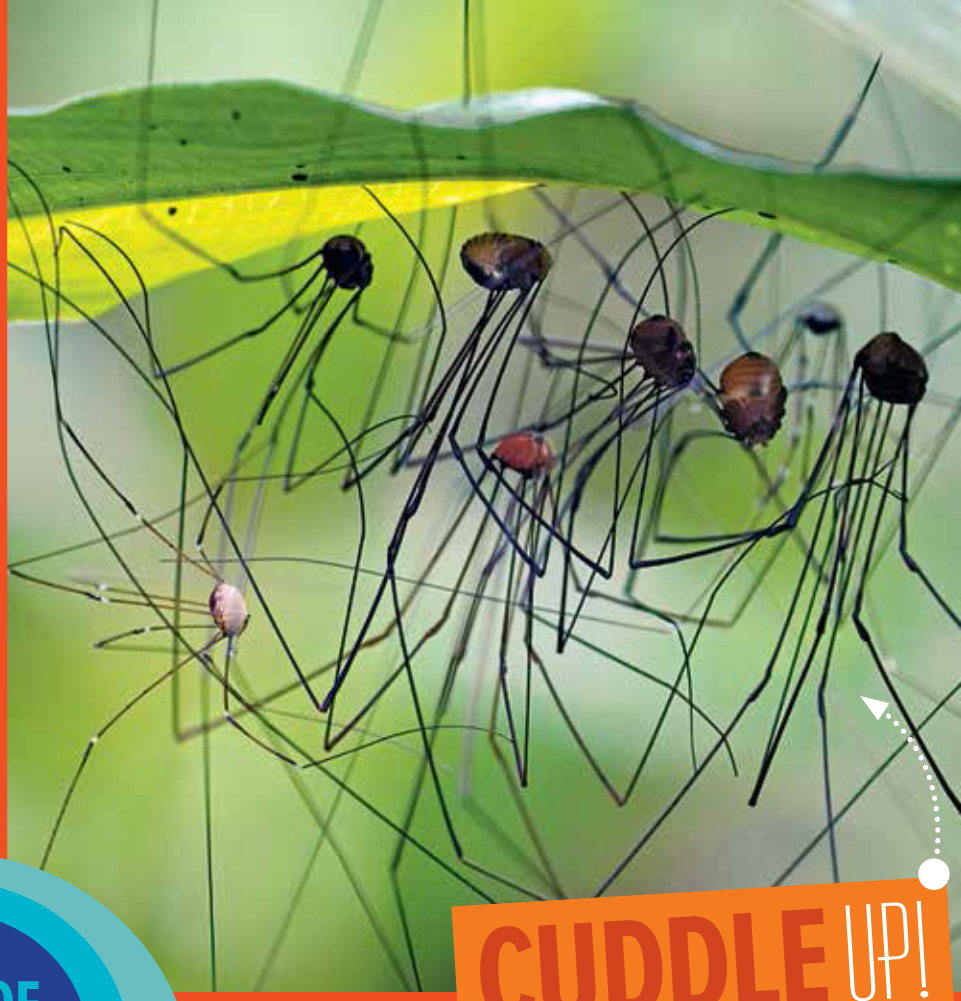
Look closely at the daddy longlegs **above**, and you will see some bright red *mites* clinging to it. These tiny creatures are stealing a meal by sucking the daddy longlegs' blood.

LOTS OF DADDIES



Scientists have discovered more than 6,000 different species of daddy longlegs throughout the world. And they think there are thousands more species to be found. Most daddy longlegs are drab brown and black,

but many others are colorful. And for some species, daddy *not-so-long-legs* would be a better name.



CUDDLE UP!

Daddy longlegs sometimes go into a “cuddle” mode as shown **above**. Hundreds may clump together—usually in sheltered places—for protection from bad weather or predators. Touch one of these clumps and the whole mass might move as a single, large creature!

Daddy longlegs have other clever ways of protecting themselves from hungry birds, lizards, frogs, and spiders. Some kinds disguise themselves by sticking plant bits to their bodies. Others play dead. Some can even drop off a leg, which then twitches and can confuse a predator. And almost all daddy longlegs give off a stinky smell when under attack. Powerful stuff, huh? 🐈