

# Flying jewels spell death for baby spiders

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An adult spider fly (*Panops baudini*) feeds on flowers of a desert pea, photographed during September in Boorabbin National Park, Western Australia. Credit: Photograph by Dan Schoknecht (Western Australian Museum)

[Spider flies](#) are a rarely collected group of insects. Adults are considered important pollinators of flowers, while larvae live as internal parasitoids of juvenile spiders. Eight genera are recorded in Australasia, including four genera in the subfamily *Panopinae*, a group of large, hairy, often metallic coloured adults whose larvae specialize as parasitizing mygalomorph spiders such as tarantulas, trap door and funnel web spiders.

In this study, four new species of the genus *Panops* are described from Australia. These flies typically have large round bodies covered with

dense hairs and black or metallic green to blue colouration, giving a jewel-like appearance. In some species, the mouthparts are greatly elongated to be able to feed at flowers with nectar at the base of long corolla tubes. The study was published in the open access journal [ZooKeys](#).



This is an adult spider fly (*Panops austra*) preserved specimen. Credit: Photograph by Shaun Winterton

All species in *Panops* have [larvae](#) that internally parasitize spiders in Australia, such as the trap door spider and Sydney funnel web spider. In all known cases, only the juvenile spider is parasitized and the maggot may live inside the spider for years, prolonging the life of the spider and preventing it from developing into an adult. Eventually, the spider fly maggot will eat the spider from the inside out, leaving behind only the skin and will itself then pupate to develop into an adult.



This is an adult spider fly (*Panops jade*) preserved specimen. Credit: Photograph by Shaun Winterton

**More information:** Winterton SL (2012) Review of Australasian spider flies (Diptera, Acroceridae) with a revision of *Panops* Lamarck. *ZooKeys* 172: 7-75. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.172.1889](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.172.1889)

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