

Team shows how female spiders play an active role in courtship

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Single women aren't passive when it comes to the world of dating, and neither are female spiders, according to researchers at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa.

While it was once thought that [female spiders](#) were more or less passive when it came to courtship and mating, a new paper titled "Are you Paying Attention? Female Wolf Spiders Increase Dragline Silk Advertisements When Males do not Court" finds that not only do female wolf spiders play an active role in attracting a mate, but they actually increase their efforts when no [males](#) are paying attention to them.

The female spiders do this by producing silk, which is full of pheromones that attract males, says Matthew H. Persons, biology professor at Susquehanna University and co-author of the paper. When the female spiders were with males who were not readily interested, they changed the quantity and type of the silk they were producing.

"It was once thought that these female spiders passively produced these pheromones and are essentially stalked by the males," he says. "We found that instead, females actively participate in their own courtship."

This research, which is the first of its kind, challenges long-held assumptions about passive female roles in [courtship](#) and may have implications across many different species. The paper appears in the April issue of *Ethology* and was co-authored by Jamie A. Havrilak, Kristen M. Shimmel and Ann L. Rypstra.

Provided by Susquehanna University

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