

The Venom spider: New genus named after Marvel character

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Venomius tomhardyi pictured next to an illustration of Tom Hardy's Venom character. Credit: Photo by Rossi et al. Illustration by Zeeshano0 via Pixabay, CC-BY 4.0

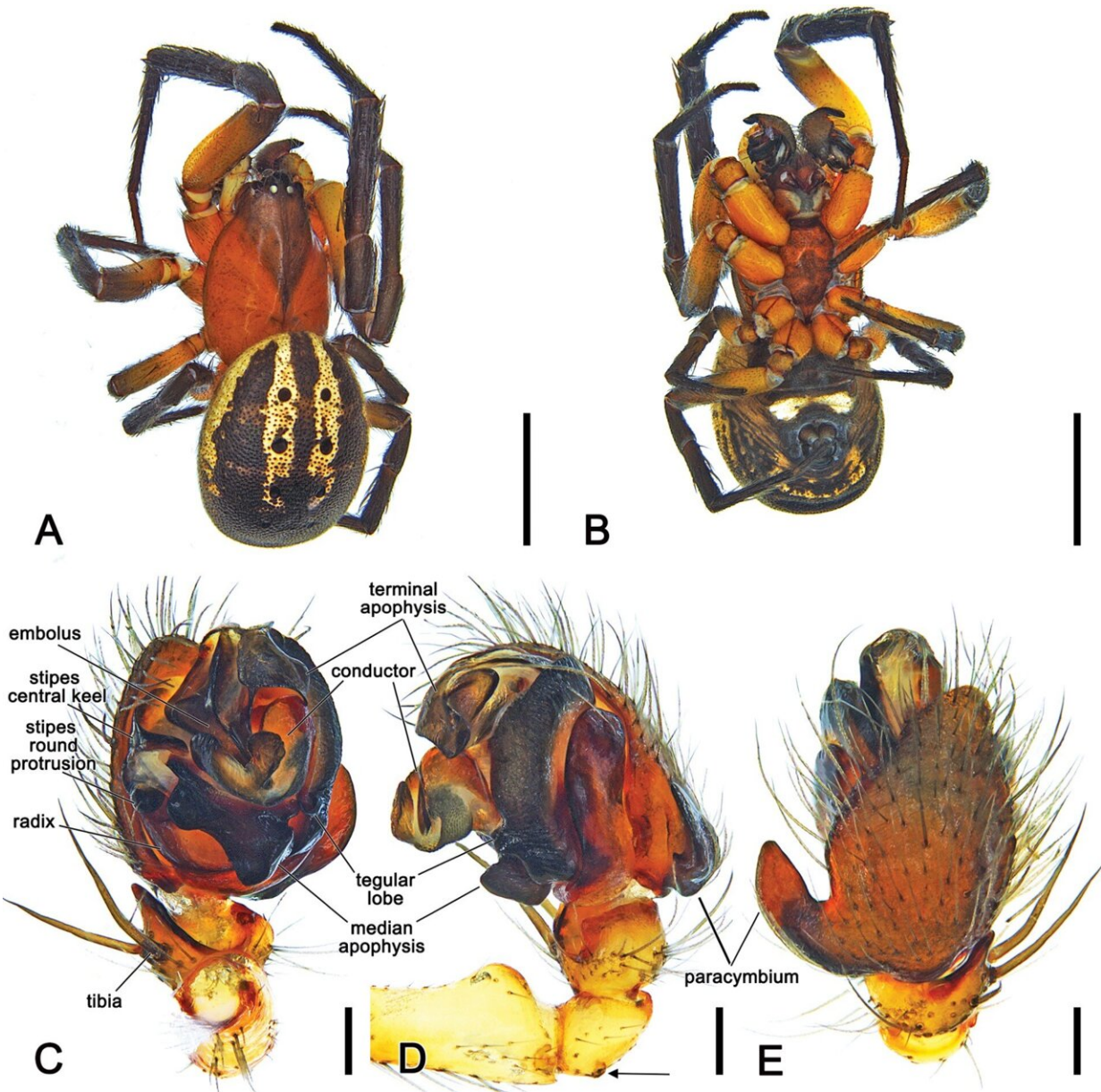
Tom Hardy and his Marvel character Venom have given their names to a newly-discovered Australian spider. The genus Venomius and its only current species Venomius tomhardyi were described following an expedition to Tasmania.

Scientists MSc Giullia Rossi, Dr. Pedro Castanheira and Dr. Volker Framenau from Murdoch University (Perth, Australia) partnered with Dr. Renner Baptista from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) to describe the new genus of orb-weaving spiders [published](#) in the open access journal *Evolutionary Systematics*.

Tom Hardy portrays Eddie Brock and his alter-ego Venom, an antihero closely associated with Spider-Man, across two Marvel films and gives his name to the sole species of the new genus. The distinctive black spots on the spider's abdomen reminded the scientists of Venom's head, inspiring them to select the unusual name.

The genus belongs to the Araneidae family of spiders that build upright circular webs to capture prey. Despite resembling the related [genus](#) Phonognatha as both do not have tubercles on the abdomen, the newly described spiders are distinct in their behavior of creating silk-lined holes in the branches of trees for shelter, as well as their different genitalia.

The holotype of the new species was discovered and subsequently preserved at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery following an expedition to Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.



Venomius tomhardyi male holotype. Scale bars: 2 mm (A, B); 0.2 mm (C–E).
Credit: Rossi et al., CC-BY 4.0

Supplementary specimens were also sourced from scientific collections, with the researchers examining approximately 12,000 records in Australian and overseas institutions.

Regarding the bigger picture of the study, Dr. Pedro Castanheira said, "This is part of a long-term research that aims to document the entire Australian [spider](#) fauna, which will be of extreme importance for conservation management plans and the continuation of the decadal plan for taxonomy and biosystematics in Australia and New Zealand."

"It is really important to keep describing new spiders to assess the total biodiversity of these predators in Australia," added the study's first author MSc Giullia Rossi.

More information: Giullia de F. Rossi et al, *Venomius*, a new monotypic genus of Australian orb-weaving spiders (Araneae, Araneidae), *Evolutionary Systematics* (2023). [DOI: 10.3897/evolsyst.7.110022](#)

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