

SMALL SCORPIONS IN GAUTENG

- Jonathan Leeming

There is a small reddish-brown scorpion that commonly enters houses in Gauteng which has causes a lot of drama for no reason at all.



This scorpion is called *Pseudolychas ochraceus* and is unusual because it thrives in the urban environment. Their natural habitat is riverine valleys and areas of dense vegetation. It prefers damp, moist areas and often shelters under rock, rotting logs and inside leaf litter.

During the warmer times of the year these scorpions become mobile in the environment and often enter houses where they end up trapped in bathtubs, sinks and showers. They have also been found under face clothes, dish cloths and in laundries. They prefer places of increased moisture.

It's not uncommon to have found 8 scorpions in your house over a period of just a few months. It's a very docile scorpion and stings are rare. Contrary to popular belief, this is not a highly venomous scorpion. Stings are similar to a bee sting.

Antivenom is not necessary and you nor your child or cat are going to die from the venom. Once the scorpion is dead, they cannot sting at all.

Because of its small size, up to about 28mm in length, many people think that they have a baby scorpion in their house. If there is one baby scorpion, there must be more. If there are more scorpions there must be a nest and a mother and father. This of course is not true, as it's mostly adult scorpions that enter houses.

Reading all the advice on newsgroups, newspapers and emails, it's evident to see that there is still a lot of confusion, misinformation and ignorance surrounding scorpions and their venomosity. Misinformation spread by social media, people and organisations who should know better is still the main hurdle hampering scorpion conservation.

If you find one of these scorpions in your house, please scoop it up into a jar and release it in the late afternoon in a densely vegetated area at your local nature reserve.

Common Scorpions in Gauteng

Uroplectes triangulifer



Another small scorpion found in Gauteng is *Uroplectes triangulifer*. They can be found under rocks and logs in rocky and grassy areas.

Stings from this scorpion are not common however they have been recorded. Symptoms include sharp localised pain which lasts about an hour, followed by pins and needles for a day or so. These scorpions are nothing to be concerned about.

Opisthophthalmus pugnax



A common medium sized scorpion that often makes burrows under rocks. Females construct

permanent burrows, males are more mobile within the environment.

Often muddy in appearance, these scorpions can produce a hissing sound in response to a threat. Males are sometimes encountered during the warmer months of the year. A very common scorpion in rocky areas in Gauteng. Males have more elongated pincers than the females.

Stings are similar to a bee sting. These scorpions are nothing to be concerned about.



Hadogenes gunningi

This scorpion has a small distribution in southern Africa, restricted to Gautang and adjacent areas. A habitat specialist that require very specific areas in which to live. Protected by law because of its threatened status.

Males have longer tail segments than the females. This is one of the least venomous scorpions in the world! Stings are very rare as they are very docile and reluctant to use their venom for defence.

Stings cause a very minor sharp pain for about 2 minutes then itch for 15 minutes or more. These scorpions are nothing to be concerned about.