



Besties

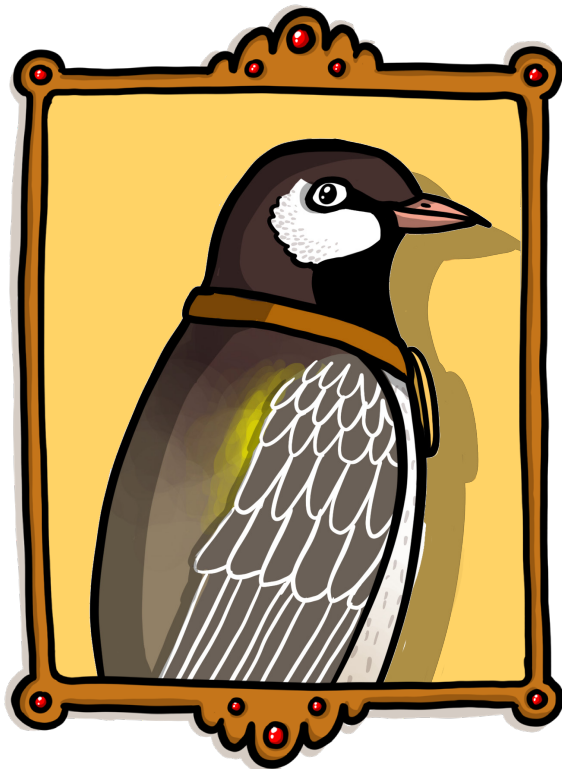
Investigation Underway



Illustrated by
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Kubecová



Honoree GREATER HONEYGUIDE



Indicator indicator

Length: ca 20 cm
Weight: ca 34-62 g
Colour: grey-brown with white, black, and yellow hues
Lifespan: up to 12 years
Nationality: Africa
Active in: savannahs, forest undergrowth, gardens

HONEY?

BEESWAX? GOODY!

The greater honeyguide is one of the few animals that can digest beeswax. It loves to munch not only on wax, but also on bee larvae. Because it's not exactly easy to break into the hives of wild bees, the bird learned to cooperate...



Awarded for:
.....
excellent cooperation
in honey seeking



HONEYGUIDE, HELLOOOOOO!

The honeyguide may attract honey seekers, but so do the seekers try to attract the honeyguide. Well, at least those of the human kinds—honey pickers. There are different ways of going about this—some people hum, others sing songs, and yet other ones use whistles. Both parties help one another.

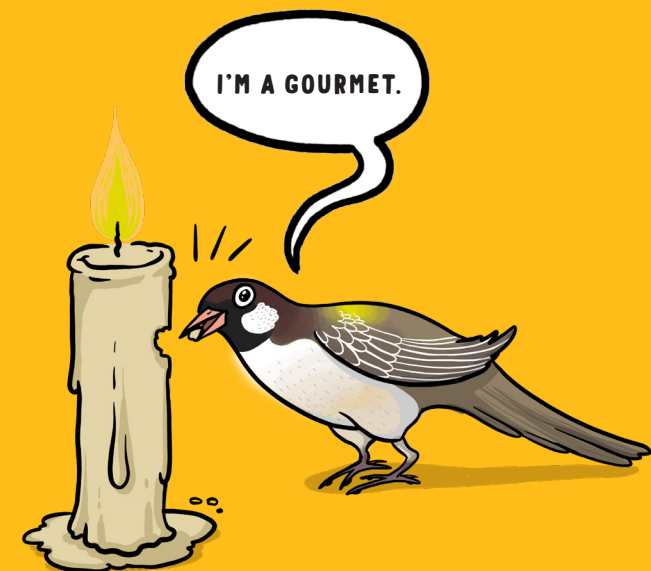
I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY, YOU'LL SHOW ME THE CHOW

Using special moves and trilling, this smart bird lures other gourmets to the beehive, for example the honey badger or a human, both great honey lovers. Such cooperation is mutually beneficial as it saves the seeker's time and the honeyguide's strength.

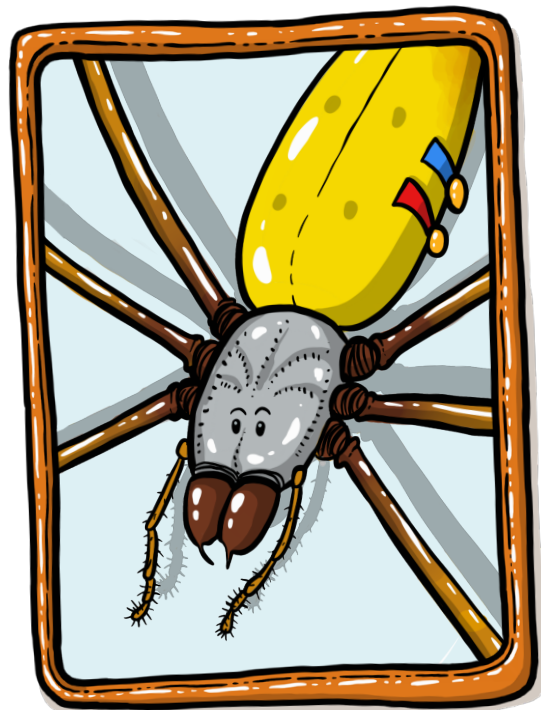


HOW IT WAS, IS AND WILL BE

A long, long time ago—centuries ago—an African missionary noticed a small bird coming into his church to peck on wax. He learned from the locals that this bird species has been helping them find honey for thousands of years! When the missionary spread the news, nobody believed him—until the 20th century when scientists looked into this unique relationship between humans and wild animals deeper.

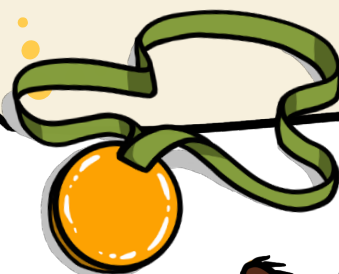


Honoree **BANANA SPIDER**



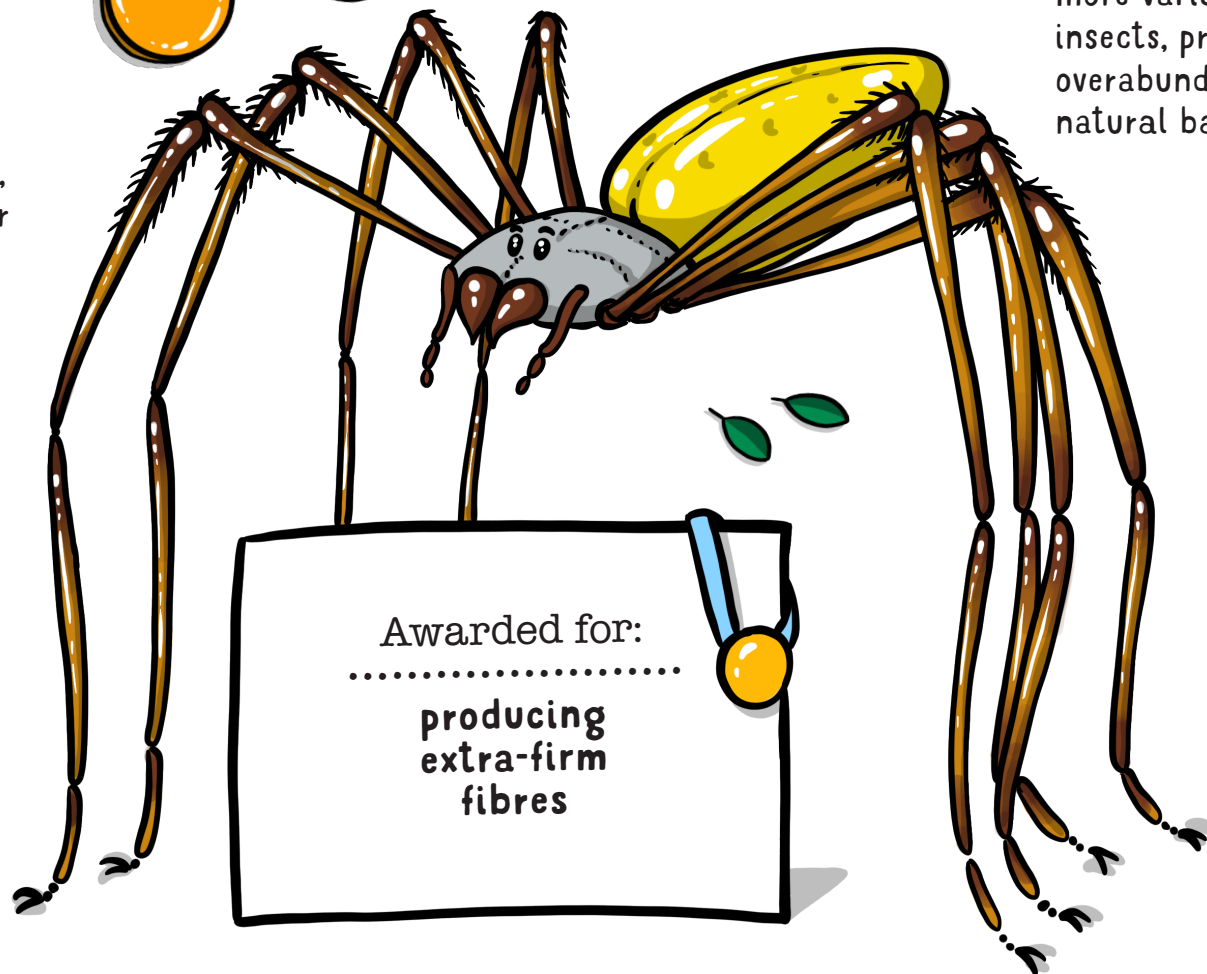
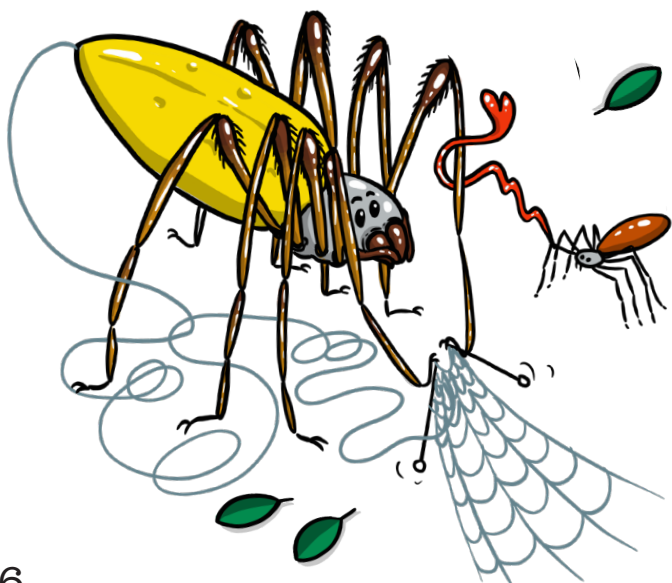
Nephila clavipes

Length: 1 cm and less as a male,
ca 5 cm as a female
Weight: up to 4 g
Colour: yellow
Lifespan: up to 3 years
Nationality: America
Active in: warm regions with high
humidity

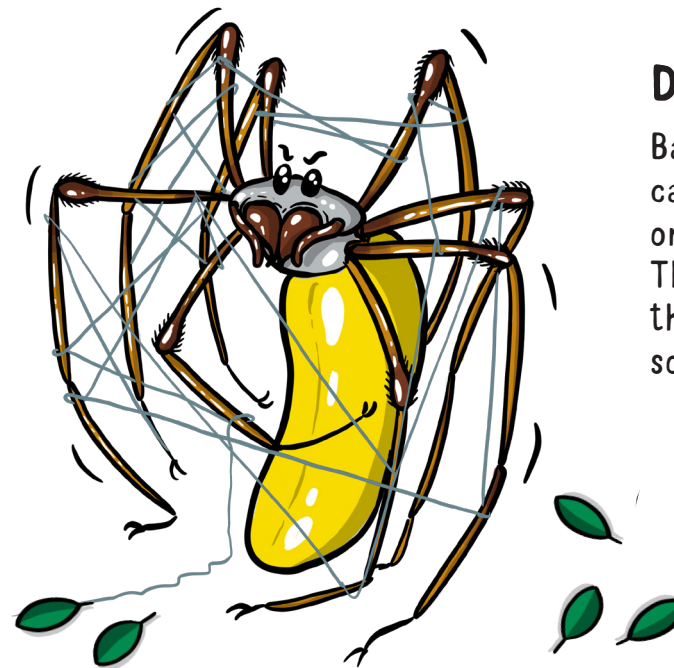


WILL YOU INVITE ME OVER?

Although the home of a banana spider is large, it's relatively free of companions. Usually, a biggish lady lives there, along with one or two gentlemen who are much, much smaller than her. Mr. Banana Spider would never survive without Mrs. Banana Spider because she the one weaving all those webs!



Awarded for:
.....
producing
extra-firm
fibres

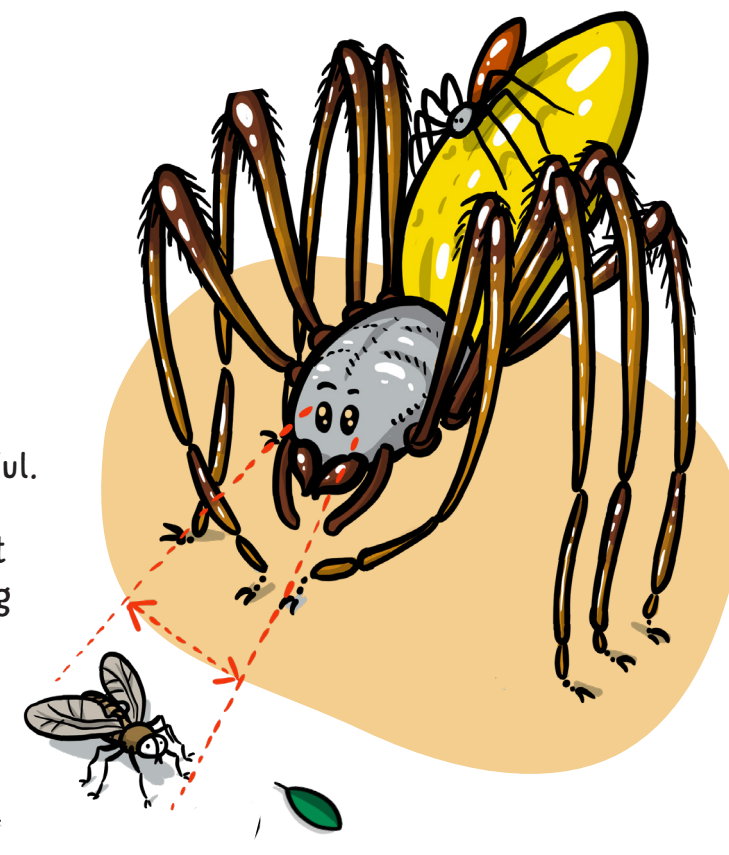


MISS FLY, A WORD?

Everyone has met someone who doesn't like spiders, is squeamish about them, or even fears them. But these eight-legged creatures are actually very useful. Sometimes, they make a bird's diet more varied, but more importantly hunt insects, preventing them from becoming overabundant, and thus maintaining natural balance.

DAMN GOOD WEBBING

Banana spiders, too, are partial to insects. They catch them in webs, and not just any ordinary ones—these are firm, large, and very intricate. The spiders even attach defensive webbing to them! No wonder, then, that they themselves sometimes get caught...

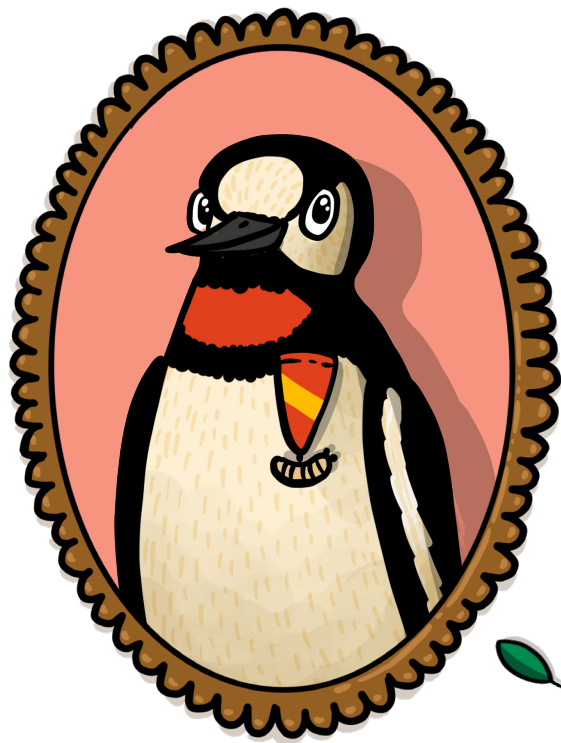


HOW IT WAS, IS AND WILL BE

Spiders make their amazing webs from wonderful fibres—firm and exceptionally hardy. They even caught the eyes of scientists who study ways of using them in the human world: to make parachute ropes, bulletproof vests, or even airplane parts.



Honoree SPOTTED WOODPECKER



HOLLOWS FOR ALL

Woodpeckers are well-adapted to knocking on trees and making holes in them, small and big: they have a strong beak and extraordinarily firm skull which make the process a piece of cake. The birds produce more holes than they need which is good for other animals as well, allowing them to find a shelter in the empty hollows: such as common starling, marsh tit, or Daubenton's bat.



Awarded for:
.....
eliminating wood-destroying insects and reducing their numbers



KNOCK, KNOCK—ARE THE LARVAE HOME?

Can you hear the sound of something knocking on wood? It's a woodpecker, treating trees like a doctor would: by taking larvae out of them. First, it knocks on the tree with its beak and carefully listens for a larva to move in there. If it does, the woodpecker makes a hole in the bark, sticks out its long, sticky, tuft-tipped tongue, fishes the larva out—and eats it. The bird's had a snack and the tree feels better at once.

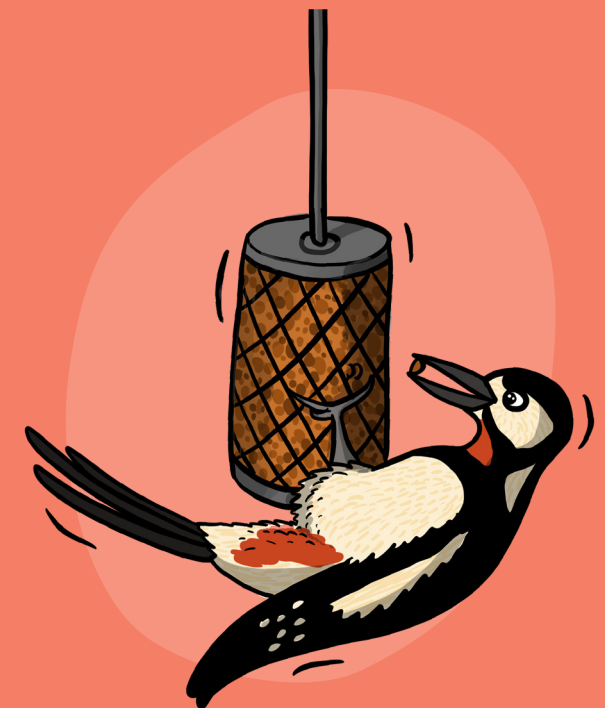
NUTS, CONES, AND AN ANVIL

Apart from insects, woodpeckers are also partial to nuts and cone seeds. To crack them, they use a so-called anvil—a cleft in the bark where the crafty bird sticks a nut or cone gets down to work. If an anvil proves useful, the woodpecker will keep coming back to it. It's pretty easy to spot, too: you can tell by the bits the woodpecker pecked out, piled on the ground.



HOW IT WAS, IS AND WILL BE

Everyone who's fond of gardens and orchards loves woodpeckers because the birds relish eating wood-destroying insects that lives in trees. And that's much better than any spray. In winter where wicked insects are in short supply, you can help these useful birds by building a feeder: they especially love fat balls and sunflower seeds. Yummy!



Investigation Underway

Besties

Can we please have your attention? Sit up and listen carefully—an award ceremony is about to start! The awards go to many different animals from many different parts of the world. They're small and large, hairy, bristly, or feathered, and most importantly very skilful, smart, diligent, willing to cooperate, and relentless in producing high-quality things. Open this book and find out what kind of besties surround us or why people are so happy to be around them.

