

Nephilidae: *Nephila*

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Nephila is a pantropical genus, which is represented in the New World with only two extant species, and in the Caribbean by a single species, *Nephila clavipes*. This species shows an amazing distributional range from USA to Argentina covering all Caribbean islands. The other South American species, *N. sexpunctata*, inhabits a small range in southern South America. The genus is revised worldwide (Kuntner, 2005; Harvey & al., 2007; Kuntner & Coddington, 2009). Although there is lack of literature data on *Nephila* ballooning, authors agree that the genus might be among the best spider dispersers (Kuntner and Agnarsson, 2011; Su et al., 2011). This fact, and the known Dominican Amber fossil fauna, both speak for the inclusion of *Nephila clavipes* populations in this study.

Monophyly. *Nephila* is monophyletic and the two extant Neotropical species form a doublet (Kuntner et al., 2008).

Amber species. Five Dominican amber species (Platnick, 2011).

Dispersal. *Nephila* are thought to be good dispersers (Kuntner and Agnarsson, 2011; Su et al., 2011).

Search strategy. *Nephila* species make large sized orb webs (up to a meter in diameter) with a conspicuous three dimensional addition to the orb (Fig. 1). They are easily spotted due to female size reaching up to 40 mm, and coloration (Fig. 1). The small males live commensally in the webs of subadult and adult females (Fig. 1). Juveniles of all sizes are also easily recognized and should be collected. These spiders can easily be found at the hub of their webs day and night.

Similar genera. None.

Needed collecting. All areas are in need of new collecting, especially for DNA-ready material.



Fig. 1. *Nephila clavipes* is easily recognized by female size and habitus, by extreme sexual size dimorphism and by the asymmetric aerial orb web with additional three dimensional threads termed the barrier web.

References

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