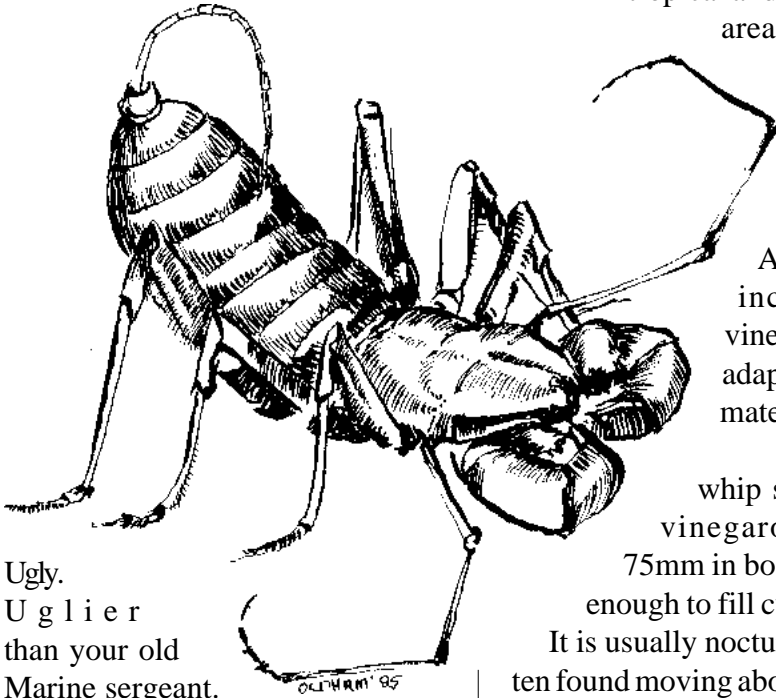




WILDLIFE NOTES

Vinegaroon



Ugly.
Uglier
than your old
Marine sergeant.

This creature crawls out from under a rock and looks like an escapee from a grade-B monster movie. *Mastigoproctus giganteus* is the American whip scorpion, or vinegaroon.

The vinegaroon is an arachnid and is related to spiders and true scorpions. There are about 100 species of whip scorpions occurring in

tropical and semi-tropical areas. Most are very small and live beneath stones, logs or leaf debris. A few species, including the vinegaroon, have adapted to arid climates.

The largest of whip scorpions, the vinegaroon attains 75mm in body length (big enough to fill cupped hands).

It is usually nocturnal and is often found moving about on summer evenings after a rain.

It does not tolerate harassment. Although not deadly, it can use its large anal glands to spray an irritating solution of acetic acid (vinegar). The sour spray can be projected accurately to nearly a meter away. Potential predators often back away quickly, wiping eyes and mouths as they go. The vinegaroon is good for

eight or more shots, so it has ample time to make an escape. It can also pinch vigorously.

The acetic acid solution also contains small amounts of caprylic acid. This works on the outer layer of an insect's skeleton and allows the acetic acid to penetrate. Why isn't the vinegaroon affected by its own poison? We don't know.

Little is known of the vinegaroon's feeding habits, but whip scorpions in captivity readily eat wood lice, centipedes, cockroaches and other insects. So if you can stand his looks, the vinegaroon is handy to have around.

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