

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Thin-legged Wolf Spiders

POST #90—April 17, 2025

After a short hiatus, welcome back to BogDiversity Thursday posts! If you are not familiar with this series, BogDiversity Thursday posts are designed to share more information about biodiversity in the greater Sax-Zim Bog ecosystem. We have already shared 89(!) posts, covering 230 species. To save time, all of these posts have been archived on our website here:

<https://saxzim.org/natural-history/bogdiversity-thursday-post-archive/>

There is no better group of critters to start off a new season than what will soon be a very common sight scurrying along the forest floor or near wetland edges: Thin-legged Wolf Spiders!

The Thin-legged Wolf Spiders are members of the genus *Pardosa*. These spiders are very difficult to ID in the field, as most are various shades of brown, black, and tan. However, multiple species can be very abundant in the right habitat if you are looking closely.

Once regional snow has melted (or sometimes before snow has melted!) this group of spiders is active. If you take a walk along Gray Jay Way during April, you will notice hundreds of these little spiders cruising around. This group overwinters as near-adults, so once temperatures warm up they get ready to molt and then mate! Breeding behaviors of spiders are subtle, but *Pardosa* wolf spiders employ leg waving, palp waving, and even vibrating surrounding plant material to make extra noise. After breeding, female *Pardosa* wolf spiders make egg cases that they carry with them at the tip of their abdomen. They will carry this egg case until the eggs hatch, where the new spiderlings will catch a ride with their mother on her abdomen until they are large enough to be on their own.

Wolf spiders, as a group, are active predators. They don't make webs, but use their large, forward-facing eyes to find and capture small insect prey. If you are brave enough to look closer, all groups of spiders can be identified by the position and arrangement of their eyes! Maybe this is too close for comfort for some of you, but that is ok! Just noticing this group of cryptic spiders is enough to bring some appreciation.

More information about these cool spiders in the photos below!

(Photos below by Head Naturalist Clinton)



If you look closely at the bright yellow/white clumps of dead grass and sedges from last year, you might just see small dark spiders like this gorgeous *Pardosa* species. This photo was from early April.



Pardosa wolf spiders have long legs and come in a variety of brown, gray, black, and tan colors that match the newly exposed understory of forests and wetlands.



Do you notice the eyes on the top of the carapace of this spider? The position, size, and arrangement of eyes can help ID spider groups. Not all spiders have eyes on the back of their heads like this one!



Perhaps one of the prettiest Pardosa wolf spiders I have encountered, this one still remains unidentified. With small spiders, like Pardosa, you often need to dissect them for a proper ID.



This female *Pardosa* is holding on to her egg case. Notice the shape of this case (a sort of squished orb) and where she is holding the case (attached to her spinnerets). Fishing spiders, by contrast have very round egg cases that they hold under their bodies.