

Maloides cavernicola (Forster & Wilton, 1973)

A cave spider

Photos of this species wanted. Send to
info@endangeredspecies.org.nz

Quickfacts

Known from only one cave near Nelson and only one spider has ever been seen.

Lives in almost total darkness.

Living underground

Maloides cavernicola belongs to a family of spiders called the Tangled Nest or Hackled Mesh spiders (Amaurobiidae), and is only known from one specimen (a female) collected from United Creek Cave, near Nelson. Recent searches failed to find any further individuals. Its small eyes show some adaptation to a subterranean lifestyle. It is one of only three New Zealand spiders that have been given the highest conservation status of Nationally Critical. Previously in 2005 it was considered that not enough was known about this spider to assess its conservation status and it was classified as Data Deficient. It shows some taxonomic relationship with Australian hunting spiders in the genus *Amauauropelma*.

Because there is so little information on *Maloides cavernicola*, it is difficult to decide what needs to be done to aid its conservation. It is likely that the conservation measures it needs are similar to those being employed in the conservation of the Nelson Cave Spider *Spelungula cavernicola*, which shares a similar habitat to *M. cavernicola*, although *M. cavernicola* is likely to live deeper in caves because of its smaller eyes. By leg span, *Spelungula cavernicola* is



New Zealand's largest spider and is only found in cave systems in the north-west of the South Island. It has a threat ranking of Range Restricted, and is one of only two New Zealand spiders that are legally protected under the Wildlife Act 1953. *Spelungula* is vulnerable to disturbance by human visitors to their cave habitats, and it may possibly be subject to predation by rats, and the collection of egg sacs by human visitors.

The area where *Maloides cavernicola* has been found is in an area of ultramafic rocks which in the past were mined for minerals and the now disused mine access drifts may provide habitat for the spider.

What next?

Estimating and monitoring the population size of *Maloides cavernicola* in its known location, as well as searching further afield to see if it is found in any other caves in the vicinity are the next conservation steps required and is likely to cost \$35,000.

More information

Scientific paper: Revisions of Australian ground-hunting spiders: I. *Amauropelma* gen. nov. (Araenomorphae: Ctenidae). By Robert Raven, Kylie Stumkat & Michael Gray. Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement No. 64: 187-227, 2001.

[PDF](#)

Webpage: New Zealand Threat Classification Lists 2005. By Rod Hitchmough, Leigh Bull & Pam Cromarty (compilers). Department of Conservation, Wellington. 2007

Scientific paper: The Conservation Status of New Zealand Araneae. By Phil Sirvid, Cor Vink, M Wakelin, B Fitzgerald, Rod Hitchmough & Ian Stringer. New Zealand Entomologist Vol. 35 (2), pages 85-90, 2012. [PDF](#)

Scientific paper: The Spiders of New Zealand Part IV: Agelenidae, Stiphidiidae, Amphinectidae, Amaurobiidae, Neolanidae, Ctenidae, Psechridae. By R.R. Forster and C.L. Wilton. Otago Museum Bulletin No. 4. Otago Museum Trust Board, Dunedin, 1973.

This webpage represents the views of the Endangered Species Foundation of New Zealand and not necessarily those of other individuals or organisations involved in the conservation of this species.

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