

PHOTO ESSAY:

SPIDER PREDATION OF BUTTERFLIES

TORBEN B. LARSEN

Jacobys alle 2, DK-1806 Frederiksberg C, Denmark



Fig. 1. Crab-spider (*Thomisus?* sp., Thomisidae) attacking a butterfly, *Catopsilia pomona* Fabricius (Pieridae) in Bulolo, Papua New Guinea. © T. B. Larsen 1992.

Crab-spiders are among the important predators of adult butterflies. They lie in waiting on flowers that are particularly attractive to butterflies. When a butterfly arrives, they bite and hang on for dear life, till their poison works. That a small crab-spider, like the one figured (*Thomisus?* sp., Thomisidae), can hold

on to prey as large as the Yellow Emigrant, *Catopsilia pomona* Fabricius (Pieridae), is quite amazing! I once kept a dozen crab-spiders under observation for a long period; their prey seems to consist of about 67% butterflies, of all sizes, and 33% bees and wasps.