

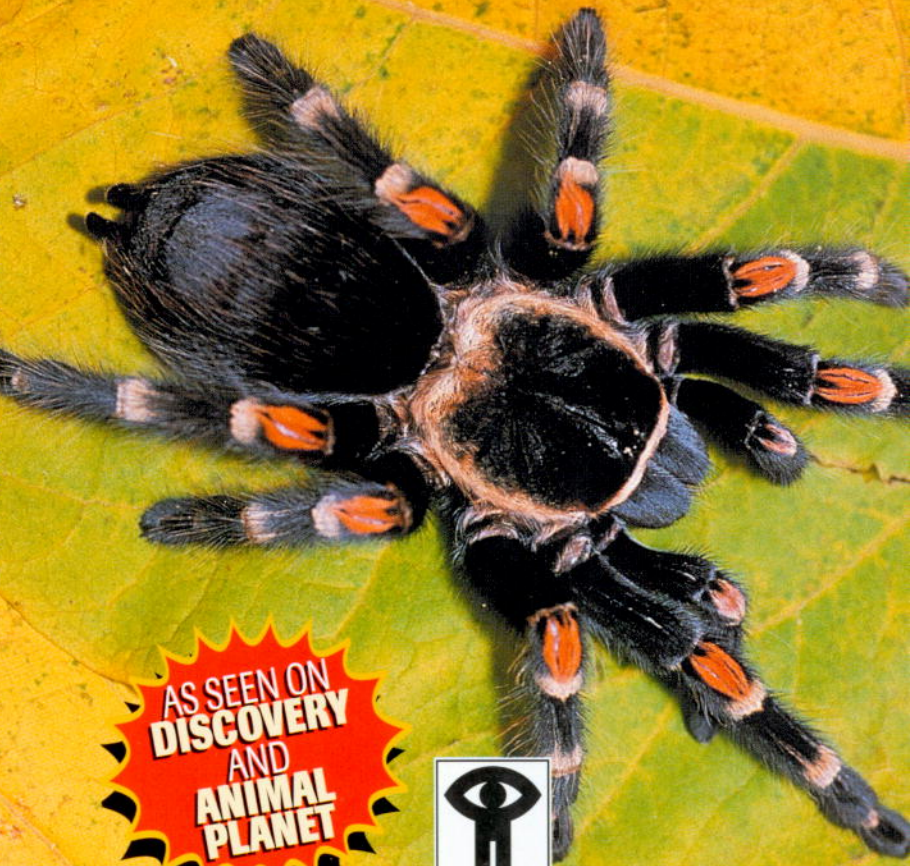


**CHAMPIONS  
OF THE  
WILD**

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OF THE  
WILD**

# TARANTULAS

TARANTULAS



AS SEEN ON  
**DISCOVERY**  
AND  
**ANIMAL  
PLANET**



VHS  
C9198 138

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# TARANTULAS



Rick West saw his first tarantula at age 14, and its size made him compare it to a Pekinese. It's an observation that would make most people turn and run, but for West, the experience was electrifying.

Thirty years later, he is still an amateur, but now recognized as perhaps the world's leading tarantula expert. He travels throughout the Americas, seeking out these giant spiders for study. Tarantulas crawl all over his arms while he speaks to us.

Anyone who looks at a tarantula and just says "yuck" is missing out on learning about an amazing creature. Tarantulas have been on this earth for 40 million years, and they have adapted to life in some of the world's harshest environments – like the Sonora Desert in Arizona, where daytime temperatures can reach 50°C (120°F). Tarantulas' bodies are covered with up to two million hairs per square centimetre (12,900,000 per square inch), and special hairs can fly into the eyes of attackers, irritating or even blinding them.

Although they are lethal predators, sometimes taking on deadly snakes, very few tarantulas bite humans, and nobody has ever died from a tarantula bite.

West argues that arachnophobia (fear of spiders) is learned, not natural.

When he visits daycares and lower-level elementary classes, kids think the spiders are great. Many want to stroke them. At higher levels, though, West says "people break into a sweat."

Tarantulas are growing in popularity as exotic pets. West doesn't think that's right. These are wild, unpredictable creatures. They are venomous; their hairs can cause irritation and bring on asthma attacks. "It's ethically wrong to take these animals out of the environment," he says.



Champion:  
**Rick West**

**Champions of the Wild** takes you around the globe with stories of remarkable endangered species and the dedicated champions determined to save them. Buy the whole collection!

## Pre-Viewing Questions

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1. Do you think tarantulas are scary or disgusting? If not, why do you think other people view them this way?
2. How many people would you guess die every year worldwide from tarantula bites?

## Post-Viewing Questions

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1. Is it ethically acceptable to trap, sell and keep tarantulas as pets?
2. How do tarantulas use hairs to protect themselves?
3. What animals prey on tarantulas? Name two creatures that tarantulas eat.

Produced by  
Omni Film Productions Ltd,  
in association with  
British Columbia Film,  
Europe Images International,  
Discovery Channel Canada  
and Water Street  
Releasing Ltd;

with the participation of  
Telefilm Canada and  
the Canada Television and  
Cable Production Fund;  
with the assistance of the  
Canadian Film or Video  
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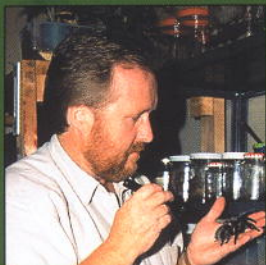
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## TARANTULAS



The tarantula: it's the ultimate creepy-crawly, known and (unjustly) feared throughout the world – and amateur biologist Rick West has 1,500 of them in his basement. West has been fascinated by tarantulas since he saw his first one at age 14. Today, tarantula enthusiasts from around the world seek out his expertise in identifying unusual specimens.

While tarantulas live on all continents except Antarctica, some species are threatened by habitat loss and the pet trade. West has successfully lobbied to have international protection extended to nine species.

Filmed partially in the Sonora Desert in Arizona, this video includes highlights such as tarantulas fighting, mating and shedding their skins – in a dramatic process that looks like a sci-fi film!

Endangered animals – and the champions who have dedicated their lives to saving them – feature in this spectacular series of half-hour videos! Filmed around the world, from the frozen fields of Canada's North to the jungles of Borneo, **Champions of the Wild** combines natural history with personal drama.

Director: **Andrew Gardner**

Producer: **Christian Bruyère**

Executive Producer: **Michael Chechik**

**25 minutes, 30 seconds**

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