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The following may also be of interest to readers:

A discourse upon the usefulness of the silk of spiders. By Monsieur Bon, President of the Court of Accounts, Aydes and Finances, and President of the Royal Society of Sciences at Montpellier. Communicated by the Author Monsieur Bon. *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)*, Vol. 27, (1710–1712): 2–16 (article consists of 19 pages). Published by: The Royal Society. www.jstor.org/pss/103101. The editors would like to thank Eddie Johns for bringing it to our attention.

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Spinning and Weaving

by Paul Selden

No, I'm not talking about political machinations, but the things that all spiders do. With my old, battered, editor's hat on, I want to say a few words about two words which, I believe, are being used indiscriminately, interchangeably, and incorrectly: spinning and weaving.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), to spin means: "*To draw out and twist the fibres of some suitable material, such as wool or flax, so as to form a continuous thread; to be engaged in or to follow this occupation*", and "*Of insects: To produce glutinous threads from the body by means of special organs*". A spinning wheel performs just such a task: to produce a continuous thread from separate fibres.

The spigots on a spider's spinnerets do just that: liquid is drawn from the silk glands through the spigots; it hardens on contact with the atmosphere to produce a silken thread. That is spinning.

Weaving, on the other hand, is defined by the OED as: "*To form or fabricate (a stuff or material) by interlacing yarns or other filaments of a particular substance in a continuous web; to manufacture in a loom by crossing the threads or yarns called respectively the warp and the weft. Also with obj. the web itself, a garment made up of such a stuff or material.*"

Thus, spinning and weaving, as all clothiers know, are quite different processes, and both are performed by the spider differently. The silken thread is first produced from the spigots (it is spun), then it is woven into a web by muscular actions of the spinnerets. Not always, of course – the dragline is simply spun and then left behind as the spider moves about. But most spiders weave silk into a variety of objects: capture webs, retreats, burrow linings, sleeping bags, egg-sacs, and so on.

Ever since arachnologists started writing, there has been confusion between spinning and weaving. More often than not, writers use spinning when they mean weaving. Spiders do not spin webs! They weave them, from silk produced by their silk-spinning organs.

So: here is a plea. Can we use these words correctly in future? The English language is full of subtlety, and distinguishes the details between different activities. After all, we owe it to the spiders, who invented these processes long before Man and other species stumbled upon them!

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BOOK REVIEW: A pictorial guide to the baboon spiders of Southern Africa, by Patrick Gildenhuys

160 pages, full colour images throughout, 28.5 cm x 21.7 cm. Hardback or softback. Published by Cadiz Street Publishing, South Africa, 2009. Cost R475, *c.*£39 (hardback), R350, *c.*£29 (softback); P&P R230, *c.*£19 (hardback), R190, *c.*£16 (softback). Order online at www.baboonspiders.co.za. ISBN 978-0-620-45358-5 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-620-45349-3 (softback).

Just before Christmas I was contacted by friends in South Africa regarding the publication of an exciting new book on Southern African baboon spiders. From what I understand very few people knew the author was working on this project, so it was very much a bolt from the blue. Given my longstanding taxonomic interest in African theraphosid spiders, I contacted the author to obtain my copy. I waited anxiously over the Christmas holidays for its delivery, eagerly unwrapping the book on its arrival in the New Year. To my relief this was not a book addressing the taxonomy of Southern African theraphosids, a project I have been undertaking myself for well over a decade.

The book is professionally typeset in an attractive modern fashion and written in a way that is accessible to both the public and more technically inclined reader. Patrick has logically divided the book into several short chapters: Author's note, Acknowledgements, Classification, Introduction, Morphology, Routes travelled and Glossary. However, the main body of the book is devoted to illustrating the theraphosid diversity found within each of South Africa's provinces: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, North West, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga; there is also a section entitled 'Harpactirinae from Southern African regions', which covers a few species from other African countries.