Does thinking about spiders and their hairy bodies, long legs, and sticky webs make your skin crawl? Many people shiver at the thought of spiders.

That is not the case for Rich Bradley, a real-life Spider-Man. He can't get enough of the creepy crawlers. Bradley is an arachnologist (ah-rak-NAH-luh-jist). That is a scientist who studies spiders. Bradley has spent the last 10 years identifying and studying spiders in his home state of Ohio.

**Spider Seekers**

So far, Bradley has uncovered 583 species, or types, of spiders living in the Buckeye State. He and his team of volunteers have a sharp eye when it comes to collecting the creatures indoors and outdoors. "They move really fast," he told Weekly Reader.

Scientists say about 3,500 species of spiders live in North America, and nearly 35,000 live worldwide. Spiders live in different places, including gardens, water, deserts, and caves.

**Hairy Hunters**

Many people think spiders are insects, but they are actually arachnids (ah-RAK-nidz). Ticks and scorpions are also arachnids.
Along with fangs and eight hairy legs, a spider has two body parts--a head and an abdomen. The abdomen contains spinners, organs that produce silk. A spider uses its silk for many purposes, including weaving webs, protecting its eggs, and catching food.

Spiders are predators, or hunters that eat other animals. They dine mostly on insects. Some larger spiders also eat lizards, frogs, and even snakes.

To capture their food, some spiders spin webs. Other types of spiders chase down their prey. The venom, or poison, from their fangs helps paralyze their food.

Fear Factor

Although the hairy creatures spook many people, there isn't much reason to be afraid of spiders. "Most spiders are not very dangerous," said Bradley.

In fact, most are timid creatures that are unable to give humans more than a harmless bite. Although spider venom is deadly to insects, it often has little effect on humans because of our larger size.

Myth-Conceptions

Spiders may have a bad reputation for being scary, but they are important to us. Bradley hopes his work shatters some myths about spiders. (A myth is a false idea that many people believe is true.)
Spiders eat mosquitoes and other insects that harm farmers' crops and carry diseases. Bradley's research is teaching scientists more about how spiders help control ecosystems, or communities of plants and animals. If spiders didn't exist, there would be a lot more insects!

"Spiders are your friends," Bradley said. "They make our life more pleasant."

**Spider Mania**
Get caught up on some different types of spiders. Spiders come in all shapes and sizes. Crab spiders, jumping spiders, and orb weavers have made Rich Bradley's Ohio count. Find out more about them and other spiders.

**Crab Spider**
Can you guess how this spider got its name? It may not live in the ocean, but it looks like a crab. The crab spider lives on flowers. It can match its body color to the flower's color. That allows it to sneak up on insects.

**Jumping Spider**
What a leap! The jumping spider can jump between 10 and 40 inches. To catch an insect, this hunting spider sneaks up on its prey and pounces.

**Trapdoor Spider**
The trapdoor spider lives in a tunnel. The spider, common in the southwestern United States, lines the tunnel with silk and fashions a door made of silk and dirt. It peeks out of the slightly open door and grabs passing insects.

**Tarantula**
The tarantula is a large, hairy spider found mainly in warm regions, including the southwestern United States. Although the tarantula's bite is painful, it is not very poisonous to humans. Tarantulas hunt insects, lizards, mice, toads, and frogs.

**Orb-Weaving Spider**
E. B. White's famous spider Charlotte was an orb weaver. The orb-weaving spider spins a wheel-shaped web. When an insect flies into the web, the spider races toward its meal.
1. Which action was NOT described in the passage as a spider’s use for its silk?

A weaving webs
B making clothes
C protecting its eggs
D catching food

2. Which of the following describes a type of spider that Rich Bradley has found in Ohio?

A a large, hairy spider with a painful bite that is found in warm regions
B a spider that can jump between 10 and 40 inches
C a spider that lives in a tunnel it lines with silk and grabs passing insects
D a spider that creates the world’s largest and strongest webs

3. According to the passage, spiders have a bad reputation for being scary. Why might people be afraid of spiders?

A They think spiders are soft and furry.
B They know spider silk is good for catching insects.
C They don’t think spiders have enough legs.
D They don’t know how spiders are important to humans.

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question below: ‘‘Most spiders are not very dangerous,’ said Bradley. In fact, most are timid creatures that are unable to give humans more than a harmless bite.”

In this context, what does the word timid mean?

A dangerous
B happy
C shy
D helpful

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to

A inform the reader about different kinds of spiders
B persuade the reader that spiders are scary
C describe the personalities of scientists that study spiders
D list all types of spider species in Ohio
6. According to the passage, why are spiders important to humans?
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

7. Review the photo of the spider weaving a web. How could the web help this spider catch food?
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

People should not be afraid of spiders __________ most spiders are shy and can’t hurt humans.

A because  
B so  
C but  
D although

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

Rich Bradley, an arachnologist, has spent the last ten years studying spiders in Ohio.

Who? Rich Bradley, an arachnologist

(has) What? ____________________________________________________________

Where? ______________________________________________________________
10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** reputation (rep · u · ta · tion): what a person or thing is known for.

10a. Read the five sentences below and underline the word **reputation** in each sentence.

1. The store owner had built a good business reputation because he charged fair prices and was always good to customers.

2. The actor had a reputation for being fun on movie sets after he threw a party for his film crew.

3. The superhero had a reputation for helping people, because every time someone was in trouble, he was there to save the day.

4. The computer company had a reputation for excellence, because its products were always the best in the market.

5. With a reputation for giving surprise quizzes, the teacher made sure that his students studied every night.

10b. Which person has a reputation for being a hero?

![Firefighter and Burglar Images]

11. If a student had a reputation as a bully, how do you think other kids would treat him?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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