

# Mediterranean black widow

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**Mediterranean black widow**, **European black widow**, or **steppe spider**, (binomial name *Latrodectus tredecimguttatus*), is a species of widow spiders in the genus *Latrodectus*. It is commonly found throughout the Mediterranean region, ranging from Portugal to southwest and central Asia, hence the name. Specimens from central Asia are also known by the binomial name *Latrodectus lugubris*; that name, however, is considered obsolete, though it is still commonly found in the literature. *Latrodectus tredecimguttatus* used to be considered a *Latrodectus mactans* subspecies.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## Etymology

*L. tredecimguttatus* bears different names in different regions. For example, in Southern France it is called *Malmignatte*<sup>[2]</sup> and in Italy is called *malmignatta*. Throughout the Central Asia and Eastern Slavic region, the name *karakurt* is most often applied. The words *kara*, meaning "black", and *kurt*, meaning "worm", come from the Turkic languages.

## Description

*L. tredecimguttatus* is black in color, similar to most other widow species, and is identified by the thirteen spots which are found on its dorsal abdomen (the species name is Latin for "with thirteen spots"). These spots are usually red in colour, but may also be yellow or orange. It is otherwise similar to other species in the genus *Latrodectus*. The Mediterranean widow primarily lives in steppes and other grasslands, and can be a significant problem in areas where grain is harvested by hand. The female of the species has a body length of about 7–15 mm (0.28–0.59 in), while the male is smaller and reaches 4–7 mm (0.16–0.28 in) at best. Only the female spider's bite is dangerous (either for humans or cattle) as the male cannot penetrate the relatively thick epidermis.

## Toxicity

Like all *Latrodectus* species, *L. tredecimguttatus* has a painful bite that is fatal in rare cases. They are not in

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Female *L. tredecimguttatus*

#### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Arachnida
Order:	Araneae
Suborder:	Araneomorphae
Family:	Theridiidae
Genus:	<i>Latrodectus</i>
Species:	<i><b>L. tredecimguttatus</b></i>

#### Binomial name

***Latrodectus tredecimguttatus***

Rossi, 1790



Male *L. tredecimguttatus*

close association with humans generally, and epidemics of bites have been reported <sup>[3]</sup>There are many reports of Ukrainian farm workers receiving bites while working in the fields. The LD-50 of *L. tredecimguttatus* venom has been measured as 0.59 mg/kg,<sup>[4]</sup> and separately again as 0.59 mg/kg (with a confidence interval of 0.33–1.06).<sup>[5]</sup>

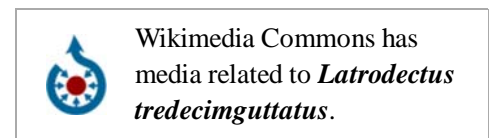
In Kazakhstan, there are reports of this species biting and killing camels.<sup>[6]</sup>

## References

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- La Malmignatte (fr) ([http://ocic.oec.fr/catalog\\_repository/uploads/10/malmignatta.pdf](http://ocic.oec.fr/catalog_repository/uploads/10/malmignatta.pdf))
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- "Spiders plague Kazakh camels" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3857927.stm>). *BBC News*. 2 July 2004.

## External links

- The World Spider Catalog (<http://research.amnh.org/entomology/spiders/catalog/BIB5.html>)
- <http://www.srv.net/~dkv/hobospider/widows.html>
- [http://www.carakurt.org.ua/index\\_uk.html](http://www.carakurt.org.ua/index_uk.html)
- <http://naturdata.com/Latrodectus-tredecimguttatus-13272.htm>



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