

First record of *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849) (Araneae: Sicariidae: Loxoscelinae) for the Iberian Peninsula

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Abstract: *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849) (Araneae: Sicariidae: Loxoscelinae), an exotic recluse spider from South America, is recorded for the first time for Portugal and the Iberian Peninsula, marking the third confirmed record in Europe.

Key words: Araneae, Sicariidae, *Loxosceles laeta*, exotic, Chilean recluse spider, first record, Portugal, Iberian Peninsula.

Resumen: Primer registro de *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849) (Araneae: Sicariidae: Loxoscelinae) para la Península Ibérica. *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849) (Araneae: Sicariidae: Loxoscelinae), una araña reclusa exótica originaria de Sudamérica, se registra por primera vez en Portugal y la Península Ibérica, lo que supone el tercer registro confirmado en Europa.

Palabras clave: Araneae, Sicariidae, *Loxosceles laeta*, exótica, araña reclusa chilena, primer registro, Portugal, Península Ibérica.

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Introduction

The Chilean recluse spider, *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849) (Araneae: Sicariidae: Loxoscelinae), is native to the western area of South America (GERTSCH, 1967; GERTSCH & ENNIK, 1983). It is a shy species and not prone to biting, but its bite can cause considerable damage to the skin, often resulting in necrotic cutaneous lesions (HUHTA, 1972). This spider is widely distributed and appears to be capable of establishing populations far from its original range, mostly through human activities (HUHTA, 1972), having been found in countries such as Brazil and Argentina (GERTSCH, 1967; GERTSCH & ENNIK, 1983), as well as the United States of America, Canada and Australia (GERTSCH & ENNIK, 1983).

Veikko Huhta published the first European record of *L. laeta* in 1972, from specimens that had been found for over nine years in a building of the Departments of Zoology and Genetics of the University of Helsinki, Finland. This species had, most likely, been brought there by human means, and was using the warm, sheltered conditions of the building to survive the frigid Finnish weather, especially during the cold months of winter (HUHTA, 1972).

Finland remained, for a long time, the only European country with published records of *L. laeta*. According to NENTWIG & KOBELT (2010), the spider is also present in Italy, but the reference given by the authors is the now defunct website Fauna Europaea. As such, and in the absence of additional published records or occurrences recorded in online biodiversity platforms such as iNaturalist, the presence of this species in Italy is, for the time being, unconfirmed.

More recently, according to a press release from the Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen, Germany, available on its website (EBERHARD KARLS UNIVERSITY TÜBINGEN, 2025), at least one specimen was caught in a basement of that German university and identified as *L. laeta* by Dr. Hubert Höfer. No pictures of the specimen and no further clarification regarding the identification were provided in the press release.

On the online platform iNaturalist, four records of *Loxosceles* Heineken & Lowe, 1832 found in this University's campus ([Link1](#), [Link2](#), [Link3](#), [Link4](#)) have been identified as *L. laeta*, apparently based on the press release mentioned previously. Other records (with coordinates obscured) were also found in or near this site and identified as *L. laeta*. Although discussing the true identity of these records is beyond the scope of this paper, the logic behind these identifications is probably that, since *L. laeta* was recorded from at least one building on campus, these other reclusive spiders must also be *L. laeta*, especially considering that there are no other sicariid spiders in Germany (BLICK *et al.*, 2016). The photographs provided in the four iNaturalist observations listed are not of the best quality and appear to be of three females (shot up-close) and one male (shot from waist-height). They do, however, appear to be of a species belonging to the genus *Loxosceles*, and, if Dr. Höfer's identification is correct (of which we have no reason to doubt), it is likely that they are *L. laeta*.

As of March 2026, no other published European records of *L. laeta* have been found. In this paper, we present the first records of *L. laeta* for the Iberian Peninsula (Map 1), a major update to its distribution.

Material examined

PORTUGAL

Porto district: Porto municipality: Campo dos Mártires da Pátria (41.146035, -8.615866; MGRS 29TNF3255; 83 m a.s.l.), 10/09/2025, 1 ♂, J.M. Grosso-Silva leg. (MHNCUP/ART/23457) (published on iNaturalist [here](#)) (Fig. 1, 2a); 10/01/2026, 1 ♂ (dead, retrieved from a sticky trap) (Fig. 2b) (MHNCUP/ART/23501).

Both males were identified using the key by GERTSCH & ENNIK (1983). One female *Loxosceles* sp. was captured by JMGS in the same general location on 12/01/2024 (MHNCUP/ART/23504). Furthermore, two dead female *Loxosceles* sp. were also retrieved from sticky traps in this location, one on 10/01/2026 (MHNCUP/ART/23502) (on a different trap than the male that was caught on that same date) and another on 21/01/2026 (MHNCUP/ART/23503). Though none of the females were identified to species-level, it is likely that they are also *L. laeta* as all the *Loxosceles* males collected in the area are *L. laeta*.

Even though it has been officially recorded from only three European countries (four, if we consider Italy, see above), this species is probably more widely distributed throughout Europe. It is likely that *L. laeta* remains unnoticed due to its timid nature, as well as its resemblance to *Loxosceles rufescens* (Dufour, 1820), which was known from eight European countries in 2010 (NENTWIG & KOBELT, 2010) and is currently recorded from 13 European countries (in some cases both from the mainland and from the respective Mediterranean islands), from five countries in Northern Africa and also from the Asian part of Turkey (NENTWIG *et al.*, 2026).

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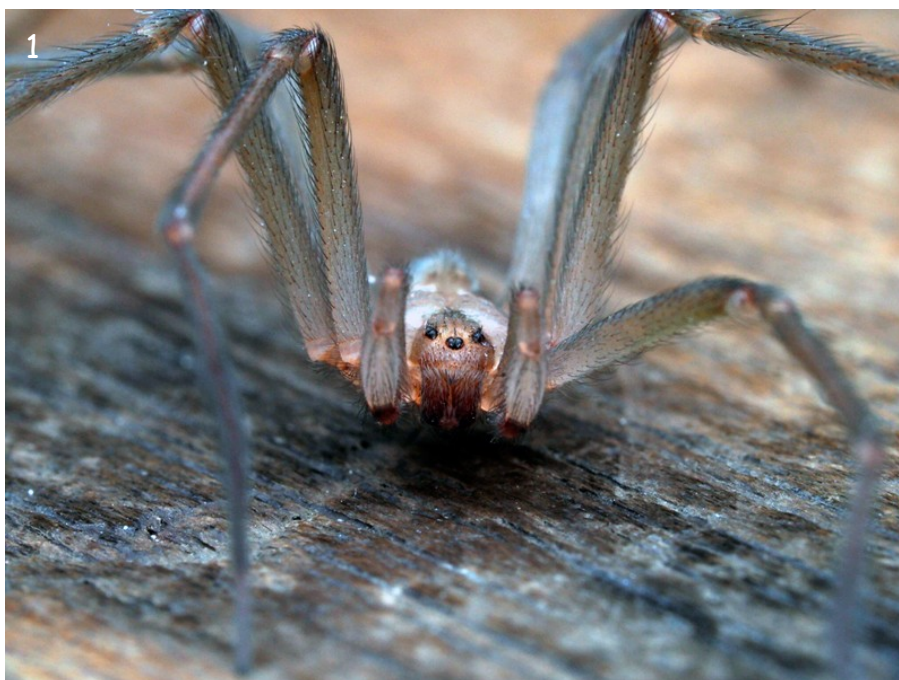


Fig. 1. - *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849). Male specimen caught on 10/09/2025.



Fig. 2.- *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849). 2a.- Pedipalp of male caught on 10/09/2025. 2b.- Pedipalp of male caught on 10/01/2026.

