Joro Spiders in North Carolina

Have you spotted a large spider spinning a golden web in your garden or along a Connestee Falls trail? It could be a Joro spider, a non-native species that has spread across the Southeast since its discovery in Georgia in 2014. These large, colorful spiders may be spreading through Western North Carolina, but there's no need to panic.

Native to East Asia, the Joro spider (Trichonephila clavata) is most noticeable in late summer and fall. Females have striking yellow, black, and blue-green markings and long, banded legs. Their large, golden webs can stretch between trees, shrubs, and other structures.
Joro spiders pose little risk to people or pets. They are generally timid and rarely bite unless handled or threatened. Although they have venom to subdue insect prey, bites are uncommon and typically cause mild effects.



Not every large spider is a Joro. A spider's size or bright coloring alone is not enough to identify it. North Carolina is home to many native orb-weaving spiders that can be mistaken for Joros, including black-and-yellow garden spiders and other colorful web-builders. These native species are valuable members of our ecosystem, helping control insect populations.

What should you do if you spot a suspected Joro?

- Document your sighting. Submit photographs and location information using a free iNaturalist account (https://www.inaturalist.org/) to help track species distributions. If you don't have an iNaturalist account, you can send your sightings to the Natural Resources Stewardship Committee here: https://www.connesteefallsnrs.com/contact
- Remove webs when necessary. If a web blocks a frequently used walkway or doorway, carefully remove it with a broom or long-handled tool.
- Avoid unnecessary pesticides. Spraying can harm native spiders, pollinators, and other beneficial insects.

Scientists are still studying how Joro spiders affect native insects and ecosystems. Although their spread raises questions about potential ecological impacts, the long-term effects in North Carolina remain uncertain. The next time you see a large, golden web glistening in the autumn sunshine, take a closer look, from a respectful distance. You may have spotted a Joro spider, or one of the fascinating native species that have long called our Blue Ridge forests home.

Learn more:
- NC State Extension: Joro Spiders in North Carolina https://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/news/joro-spiders-in-north-carolina-everything-you-need-to-know/
- NC State Extension: Similar but Different—These Are NOT Joro Spiders (https://pdic.ces.ncsu.edu/news/similar-but-different-these-are-not-joro-spiders/)
- Farmers' Almanac: Joro Spider Invasion Map and Guide (https://www.farmersalmanac.com/joro-spider-invasion-map-guide)

Using iNaturalist

By Mary Freudenberg for the NRSC

MEMBER GUIDE & GETTING STARTED

Explore & Identify Nature with iNaturalist

Welcome to Connestee Falls' community biodiversity initiative! Whether you are a seasoned naturalist or just beginning to explore the outdoors, using the iNaturalist app allows you to record your observations, learn about local species, and contribute real data to global conservation science.

> **JOIN THE CONNESTEE FALLS BIODIVERSITY EXPLORATION PROJECT:** Joining our group project on iNaturalist ensures all your local observations automatically aggregate into our community dashboard! As of this writing, we have 987 different species recorded and photographed in Connestee with over 3,000 observations in total. **Please help us get to 1,000!**

Why Join Our iNaturalist Community?

- **Contribute to Real Science:** Every photo you record becomes a data point used by scientists, conservationists, and biodiversity researchers worldwide.
- **AI & Community Identification:** Not sure what plant or insect you found? iNaturalist's computer vision gives suggestions, and expert naturalists refine and verify your finds.
- **Track Your Outdoor Discoveries:** Build a personal digital journal of every wildlife encounter, mapped with dates, locations, and photo logs.

> **BEGINNER FRIENDLY:** You don't need to know the species name to post an observation! Even recording 'Plant' or 'Insect' allows the community to jump in and identify it for you.

Getting Started in 5 Simple Steps

Step 1: Download iNaturalist

Download the 'iNaturalist' app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store, and create your free account.

Step 2: Capture Clear Photos

Spot wild plants, animals, fungi, or insects. Take clear, well-lit photos showing key identification features (leaves, flowers, bark, wings, etc.).

Step 3: Upload an Observation

Tap the camera icon in the app. Attach your photos, set the date and location (GPS handles this automatically), and view species suggestions.

Step 4: Confirm and Share

Select the best match or type in your best guess, then tap Save/Upload to share your finding with the network.

Step 5: Engage with Feedback

Check back as naturalists comment on your observation. Once two or more experts agree on a species, it reaches 'Research Grade' status!

Best Practices for Great Observations

Category	Recommended Best Practice
Focus on Wild Organisms	Focus on wild plants and animals. If photographing garden flowers or pets, mark them as 'Captive / Cultivated' in app options.
Multiple Angles	Take several photos of a single specimen—e.g., top view of a mushroom cap, stem, and gill underside; or tree leaf, bark, and fruit.
Location & Privacy	Keep location services enabled for accuracy. If observing sensitive species near your home, use the 'Obscured' geoprivacy setting.
Quality over Quantity	A crisp, centered photo of a key feature is much easier for experts to identify than a blurry distant shot.

Ready to explore? Download iNaturalist today and start documenting or Contact | Connestee Falls Natural Resources for assistance.