

## BUSH DETECTIVE

### Who built this?



Photo: Heather Adamson

In the central, northern and eastern Wheatbelt you may spot this strange structure built up against the trunk of a shrub or small tree. A silk-lined burrow extends upwards against the trunk and is closed by a hinged lid. A fan of twigs is attached to the rim, and hang down to the ground.

Ideas? Well, the hinged lid is a giveaway, isn't it!



Ans: It's a trap-door spider, in this case the Tree-stem Trapdoor Spider, *Aganippe castellum*.

This is a relatively small spider, 12 mm long. The fan shape of the twigs leads prey up to the burrow entrance, which is built up

off the ground to avoid flooding. Like most other trapdoor spiders, the females spend all of their remarkably long lives - 20 years or more - in the same burrow. Males leave their burrows after autumn rains to search for mates and this is when they are most likely to be seen. Not much is known about the survival of the young spiderlings, but it is unlikely they could disperse very far, certainly not across paddocks. The spiders can survive in quite small remnants, but they cannot survive clearing, so now they are listed as Threatened. However, there may be more out there than we realise, as they tend to live in fairly dense broombush and tamma thickets, and might not be noticed - Heather has spotted a few on LFW visits. If you have the right sort of bushland, have a look - you might just have this extraordinary and unusual animal. There could be other interesting trap door spiders too!

If you think you have found a Tree-stem Trapdoor Spider, please let your LFW Officer know.