

TROMBIDIFORMES

(Trombid Mites)

Trombid Mites



(151 Families Worldwide)

Family **TROMBIDIIDAE** (Velvet Mites)

Giant Velvet Mite (*Dinothrombium magnificum*)



Dolan Springs, AZ



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Dolan Springs, AZ



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Measurements:

Ave. Length: .5" Leg Span: .75"

Distinguishing field characteristics:

large size; **bright red body** covered entirely with fine, silky hairs (thus the name "velvet" mite); slightly tapered "waist"; 8 legs, short (except front tactile pair); tiny eyes; very large chelicerae

Notes:

common, but subterranean, thus seldom encountered; solitary; inhabits desert scrublands of sw US and nw MEX (Mojave and Sonoran deserts); aka **Red Velvet Mite**, **Rain Bug**; complex lifecycle: egg - pre-larva (inactive) - larva (**ectoparasitic** on other arthropods) - protonymph - deutonymph - tritonymph - free-living adult; female lays large mass of eggs in soil (one generation per year); color is **aposematic** (unpleasant to toxic taste, smell, etc.),

thus a warning to predators; harmless to humans; slow methodical hunter; larva consume small arthropods and their eggs, while adult diet consists mainly of termites and ants

Mojave presence: native

Comments

Though technically not rare in a general sense, these very large mites (among the largest of all mites) spend most of their lives underground and out of view, emerging only after heavy rains. Thus, one can easily spend an entire lifetime without ever seeing a giant velvet mite! Even a good drenching is no guarantee of an encounter; you just have to be in the right place at the right time, as I was on August 2, 2023 near Dolan Springs, Arizona. It rained the previous day, so I went out just to explore and see what Nature would offer me when I spotted my first ever specimen of this genus. And a few minutes later...my second! As for exact species, only an entomologist (which I am not) with extensive experience studying velvet mites can make a precise determination. However, **D. magnificum** is a verified Arizona species.

