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# MYSTERY PHOTO

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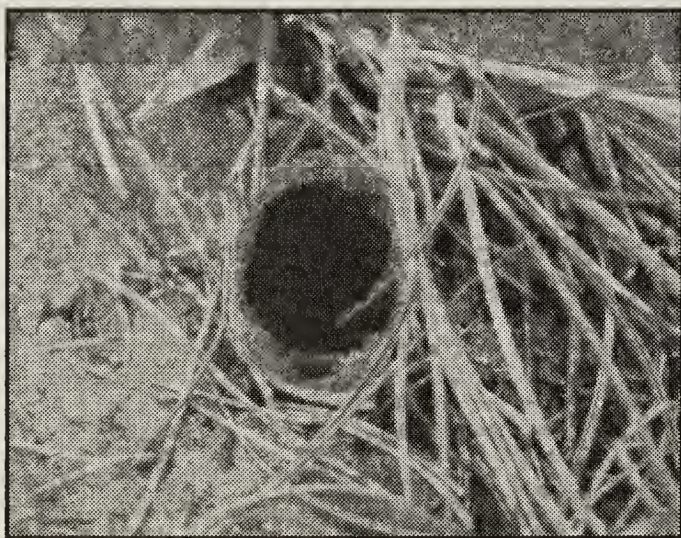
## MARCH 2002 MYSTERY PHOTO



I came across several of these curious “worms” on a dirt road in west-central Alberta in late July. Each “worm” was pencil-thick and about 10-20 cm long, moving at about 2 cm per minute. On encountering an obstacle, the “head” would divide and parts of the “body” flow around the object, as shown in the photograph, to coalesce again on the other side. What are they?

Photo and text submitted by Teresa Dolman

## ANSWER to the December 2001 MYSTERY PHOTO



The maker of the mystery hole is a Burrowing Wolf Spider (*Geolycosa missouriensis*) shown on page 59. This robust spider digs a hole with its jaws and removes the sand in packets held together with spider web. A distinctive feature of the hole is the raised lip, or “turret” made from plant material.

The spider is nocturnally active, watching from its turret by night for passing prey and hiding down in the burrow during the day.

Each adult spider lives in a separate hole; the larger holes - up to 2.5 cm in diameter - house females. A slim, lithe female has a body about 2 cm long; a gravid one could measure 2.5 cm. Young spiders dig their own small hole on leaving the nest. Although widely distributed in North America, this species is confined to sandy habitats where it tends to be locally common.

The editors would like to thank subscribers to AlbertaNaturalist, especially Robin Leech, for conversations that first led to identifying these holes as spider holes, and Don Buckle for identifying and photographing an inhabitant, and providing information for the mystery photo answer.