

## WILDLIFE

# 11-year-old spots rare tarantula in Rancho Palos Verdes

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Rancho Palos Verdes City Councilman Brian Campbell came across a tarantula crawling down a street near the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve when he was riding bikes with his family Wednesday night. (Photo courtesy Brian Campbell)



Ian Campbell was riding bikes with his family to the McBride Trail in Rancho Palos Verdes when he spotted something dark on the ground, moving down the middle of Santa Catalina Drive.

“At first I thought it was one of those remote control cars,” the 11-year-old said.

On closer inspection, it looked like a furry, black tarantula.

“Then I saw it’s legs and said, ‘Wait dad, what’s that?’”

• [Video: 11-year-old spots rare tarantula](#)

### A COUNCILMAN TAKES ACTION

Ian’s father, Rancho Palos Verdes City Councilman Brian Campbell, crouched down next to the creature and quickly realized it was the real thing.

“I was more excited and my mom was kind of freaked out,” Ian said of the encounter early Wednesday evening in the Island View neighborhood near the Filiorum Reserve.

“We all stopped, my wife jumped back and circled back around and we just marveled at that thing,” Brian Campbell said.

They snapped photos and a video, using Brian's size 13 shoe and a 23-ounce water bottle to add perspective, sharing them on Facebook the next day.

The Campbells used the water bottle to gently guide the tarantula out of harm's way off the road into some bushes.

"It reared up on its legs and started to jump a little," Ian said.

#### BIG SPIDERS ON THE PENINSULA

While there are indeed species of tarantulas in Southern California, they are rarely seen on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, according to Emile Fiesler, a Torrance-based biologist who surveys insects and arachnids.

He spends about three days a week conducting research on the Hill and has only seen four tarantulas there since 2006.

"Our tarantulas on the Hill are usually a uniform, very dull, grayish black. I've only seen them in the open space on the south side," said Fiesler, who is on the [Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's](#) scientific advisory committee.

All were males in search of mates in the summer months.

Fiesler said there have only been a handful of sightings of tarantulas on the Hill among about a dozen colleagues and nature preserve hikers.

#### MYSTERIOUS ORIGINS

It is very unlikely that the tarantula could have been an escaped pet because most pet stores sell tarantulas from Mexico and Central America, Fiesler said. The county animal shelter in Carson has received no recent reports of missing tarantulas.

He said he could not identify the specific species of the Campbells' find because there hasn't been enough research conducted on tarantulas in the state to accurately define species boundaries.

In any event, the spiders are harmless.

"They are very docile and friendly creatures and they are highly misrepresented and misunderstood," Fiesler said. "They really pose no threat whatsoever, and there's so few that you're really lucky to find one."

Asked how it felt to have made such a rare sighting on the Hill, Ian said he was "pretty excited."

It was kind of cool to see it, especially how big it was."