

Why should I love spiders?

Video transcript for 'Why should I love spiders' video presented by Alice Roberts

A spider is roughly a quarter of a million times smaller than a human being, and yet spiders are feared and reviled by many children and adults alike.

I've been a little bit nervous around spiders for as long as I can remember, but psychologists say that we are not born with this fear, that we learn it, so it should be possible to unlearn it.

One way of doing that might be to start looking at spiders in a different light to find out what fascinating creatures they really are, and what they can do for us.

In terms of numbers, one third of all creatures on the planet are spiders, with over 40,000 recorded species.

Roaming the earth for more than 350 million years, several spiders in the UK have adapted to exist in our homes alongside us.

And it's a good job too. They play an important role in controlling many of the pests in our homes, some with the potential to spread disease.

If they didn't, our homes would be abuzz with bottle flies, carpet beetles, silverfish, bed bugs, dust mites and more, overrunning our living spaces.

On average, a single spider can eat about 2,000 insects a year, so that means the British population of spiders consumes almost 2 million tonnes of insects and other creatures every year.

While there are some highly venomous spiders in the world that can seriously harm people, our native UK species are relatively harmless.

And contrary to popular belief, spiders are quite shy and tend to run away from people. Some cultures love and respect them, and some even release them at weddings as a gift of good luck.

So while you might not like spiders, if you remember all the important jobs that they do in your home, you might learn to appreciate them as I've done - and to leave a little corner for them in your house.