

Flat-bellied ground spiders in an alpine glacier foreland.

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This study analyses the microhabitat of nocturnal flat-bellied ground spiders (Gnaphosidae) in an alpine glacier retreat zone at about 2000 m above sea level. Based on previously work in the Hornkees glacier foreland (Zillertaler Alpen), the hypothesis is proposed that flat stones which form a shallow space beneath are important habitat structures to rest during the day and to build cocoons for reproduction. The sampling design included comparative sampling in 4 areas where Gnaphosidea were collected and the vegetation, gravel and stone-cover was categorized according to dimensions and ground embedment. Stone and air temperature was measured in all 4 areas at least once using the sampling design. During three sampling days 64 individuals of Gnaphodes (*Gnaphosa badia* and *Drassodes lapidosus*) could be found. It could be shown that the preferred stones are medium sized and flat, they are embedded about 0-1.5 cm in the ground and form a space under the stones where the spiders built they webs and/or cocoons. Stone temperature was not related to the occurrence of spiders under the stones.