Babies on Board

Animals without backbones—insects, spiders, crabs, and lobsters, for example—almost always lay eggs. But scorpions are different: they give birth to live babies, called *scorplings*.

As soon as a baby scorpion is born, it crawls up onto its mother's back. Pretty soon, Mom is loaded down with as many as 100 little ones. She carries them wherever she goes, protecting them from harm.

A few days to a couple of weeks later, the babies **molt**, or shed, their outer skins. They were born defenseless, but after molting they're ready to face the world. They soon crawl down from Mom's back and go off to try and survive on their own.

Small wood scorpion

▲ This Arizona bark scorpion is in the middle of giving birth.

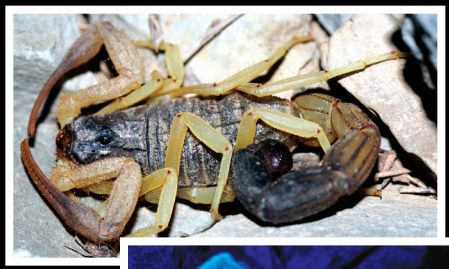
▼ These *pugnacious burrowing scorplings* are getting so big they're about to fall off their mother's back!

Glow-in-the-Dark Creatures

Scientists who study scorpions have a tricky way of finding them. They go out at night with an **ultraviolet (UV)** lamp, called a "black light." When the light shines on a scorpion, the scorpion glows with a weird, neon blue-green color. What's going on?

Scorpions have a special chemical in the outer layer of their hard skins. Under a black light, this chemical glows so brightly that you can spot a scorpion from 60 feet away.

All scorpions glow, even ones that have been dead for a long time. No one knows for sure why scorpions glow the way they do, but scientists are trying to find out.



under normal light

under black light

A World of Danger

Survival for a young scorpion isn't easy. Scorpions molt up to seven times as they grow to full size. Each time they shed their protective layer, they are vulnerable to predators until their new, tough **exoskeleton** hardens.

But even older and bigger scorpions face all kinds of dangers. They may try to defend themselves with their stingers, but often they're no match for large spiders, centipedes, birds, shrews, bats, and lizards like the *California whiptail*, shown below.

The scorpion's body has adapted to help it survive in some of the planet's toughest environments. If a scorpion is struggling to find food, it can slow its metabolism. This allows them to survive for an entire year on just a single meal! Not tough enough for you? Researchers have even put scorpions in a freezer overnight to test the limits of their strength. After spending some time in the warm sun the following day, the frozen scorpions thawed out and walked away! Amazing!

So next time you hear someone say how dangerous scorpions are, you can tell them how dangerous it is just *being* a scorpion!