

Rare spiders found

THE RESEARCH team from the Arachnology Division of the Department of Zoology at the Sacred Heart College, Kochi, has found some rare and new spider species in and around the Wagamon grasslands, hills and shola forests.



A new find by the team, yet to be named, has been identified as a species of the Linyphidae family. According to the team leader, P.A. Sebastian, the spider constructs a retreat made up of small soil particles in the centre of the web and hides itself in this retreat.



Among the rare species, *Rhene flavigera*, a jumping spider was collected from a Shola forest, near Kurisumala, by the research team. It was only once reported to be seen in Indonesia in 1848.



Argyodes flavesens, a member

of the black widow spider family, was spotted by the team members at Kolahalamedu. This particular species, with characteristic black spots on its rear, was reported to have been seen earlier in Sri Lanka in 1880, explains Dr. Sebastian.

Another rare species called *Rhene candida* was also collected for the first time in India, claim the scientists. This species found in the Wagamon grasslands was earlier reported to be found in China in 1937.

The researchers, Samson Davis, John Joseph, A.V. Sudhikumar and M.J. Mathew along with Dr. Sebastian, found and collected 44 species of spiders during a short period from the identified area. The scientists believe that the fragile ecosystem should be conserved and the rich biodiversity protected.

The scientists plan to take up further studies on the biodiversity of Wagamon and its surrounding areas.

By Shyama Rajagopal