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THE DIVING SPIDER

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

"Dad, come quick! There's a humongous spider in the bathroom!" squealed Billy.

"Well, it is a pretty big spider, Billy, but it's only a Daddy Long Legs. I don't think you need to worry about him," said Mr. Jones.

"Kids, do you know that the Bible sometimes uses animals like the spider to teach us things?" asked Mr. Jones as the family returned to the living room. "Let's see ... here it is, Proverbs 30:28. **'The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.'**"

"So, because we have a spider in our bathroom, it means that we live in a palace and are kings, right Dad?" Mary giggled.

"Well not quite, Mary," smiled Mr. Jones. "Just before this verse, God was talking about other animals such as ants, conies, and locusts. Even though these animals are not very big, they are wise and use the gifts God gave them very well."

"Tell the children about that amazing underwater spider you were telling me about the other day," suggested Mrs. Jones.

"Mom is talking about the diving water spider (*Argyroneta aquatica*) of Europe. He looks just like a regular spider and must breathe air just like other spiders, but the diving spiders live most of their lives underwater."

"How can that be? If they need air to breathe like us, where do they get it underwater? I've tried, and all I got was a mouth full of water," exclaimed Mary.

"You are right Mary, but just like a scuba diver, the diving spider takes along his own air to breathe. He swims to the surface of the water and turns his body upside down. With its back legs it grabs a bubble of air and holds it to his body, which is covered by special hair that helps trap the air against his breathing tubes. Then he dives underwater to hunt."

"Now you might think he only dives under the water once in a while to get food, but he actually builds a home underwater," continued Mr. Jones.

"You mean he lives in a house like us?" asked Billy.

"Not quite like ours Billy. Like most spiders, the diving spider is a good weaver. He dives underwater, and using his silk, he weaves an airtight sack with a small opening on the bottom. He anchors this 'diving bell' to underwater plants so it won't float

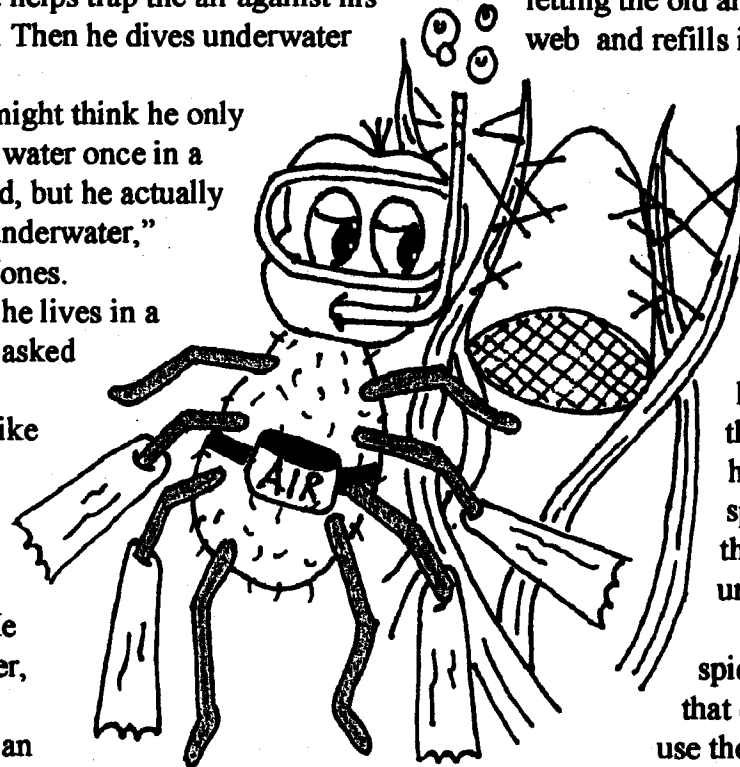
away. Once the sack is finished, he then carries air bubbles down and releases the air under the web. After about ten trips to the surface, the air fills the bell."

"God made the spider with his breathing tubes on his stomach (abdomen), so by backing into the bell he is able to have his head outside to hunt and yet breathe at the same time! When water insects, tadpoles or fish get close, the diving spider dashes out, grabs them, and pulls them inside the bell to eat them."

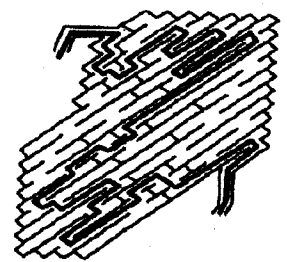
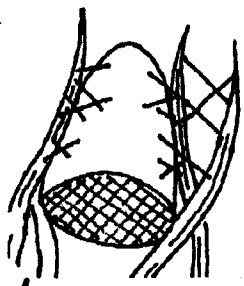
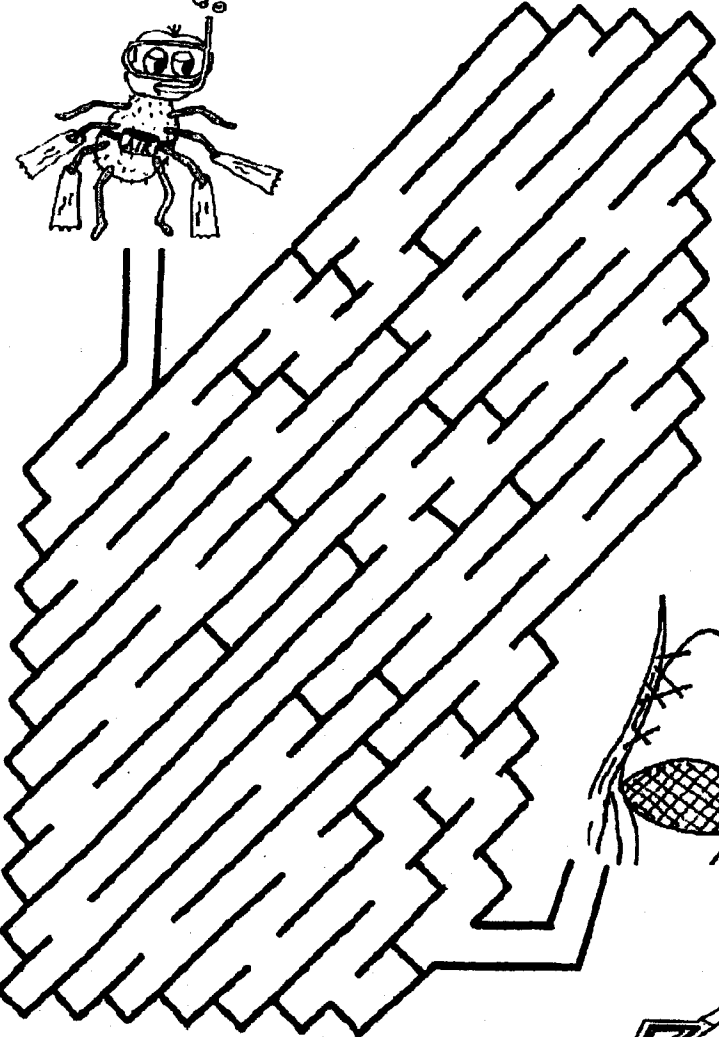
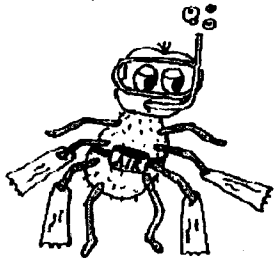
"And there is more," continued Mr. Jones. "When the air in the bell gets stale, the spider tears the top off of the web, letting the old air out. Then he patches the web and refills it with fresh air."

"The mother diving spider makes a special bell, split in two chambers," added Mrs. Jones. "In the upper room, with the tip outside the water, she lays eggs. She lives in the lower chamber guarding the eggs. Five days after hatching, the baby diving spiders are able to make their own diving bells underwater."

"And kids, the diving spiders are the only spiders that do all this! They wisely use the gifts God created in them, and they do it very well," concluded Mr. Jones.



Help the Diving Spider find his way to his home.



The Diving Spider is well hidden underwater. See if you can find the hidden objects in the picture below:

- BELL, BUTTON, CANDLE, CANE, CARROT,
- CUP CAKE, DOG BONE, DRUM, HOT DOG, LIGHT BULB, MAILBOX,
- PENCIL, PINEAPPLE, PRETZEL, SAW, STAR, TEA CUP, UMBRELLA.

(see answers in lower left corner)

