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INTRODUCTION

At present, we recognise 101 species of stick insect and three species of leaf insect in Australia, but there are likely to be more species awaiting discovery. Worldwide, there are about 3000 species of phasmids, mainly from the tropics. These scrub-dwelling or tree-inhabiting, nocturnal insects have fascinated generations of people. Their ability to remain motionless, resembling sticks or leaves, as a primary mechanism of defence can make them difficult to find. At times, some species are plentiful and become much more conspicuous by resting on doors, windows and walls of houses, and on cars at popular nature reserves.

Stick insects are by far the longest insects in the world, several species measuring close to, or over, half a metre when their outstretched legs are included. Stick and leaf insects are easily recognised, being generally thin and stick-like, sometimes with leaf-like legs, but usually not. On the other hand, true leaf insects have a broad, leaf-like, almost flat body. Some stick insect species, including 70 of the Australian species, have wings, although these may be very small and quite useless for flight. Many species are completely wingless.

Phasmids belong to the insect order Phasmida (or Phasmatodea), generally



Stick insects are plant feeders – this Goliath Stick-insect, *Eurycnema goliath*, is feeding on a eucalyptus leaf.