

INSECT FACT SHEET 3

Spiny Leaf Stick Insect

Scientific name: *Extatasoma tiaratum*

Common names: Spiny Leaf stick insect

Macleay's Spectre

Order: Phasmida

Family: *Phasmatidae*

Distribution: from New South Wales through to Northern Queensland

Life span: Nymph to Adult- a year round cycle

Description: This insect is a specialist when it comes to camouflage, coming in a wide variety of colours such as green, brown, orange, mottled black/dark green. The male is slender and will develop wings the full length of its body. The female is very broad bodied, with only rudimentary wings. Males are generally smaller than the female reaching up to 12cm and females are larger reaching 16cm. As the name suggests, spiny leaf stick insect, these insects have soft fleshy spikes on their body and legs.

Diet: like other stick insects, the Spiny Leaf feeds on leaves of their preferred food plant (tree, shrub).

Habitat: living on live trees, shrubs. Adult males fly during the night.

Ecological role: as the stick insect feed on the leaves they make droppings (insect poo) which are full of nutrients for soil health and plant growth. Eating the leaves on the tree or shrub acts like a pruning for the plant and encourages more leaf growth.

Picture: 2 females

