

# INSECT FACT SHEET 4

## Hercules moth

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Scientific name: *Coscinocera hercules*

Common name: Hercules moth

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Saturnidae

Distribution: northern Queensland from Iron Range to Ingham

Life span: Nymph to Adult- a year round cycle



Description: This is a most interesting moth. A large moth with rich rusty brown colouration. The female is larger than the male, a bit paler in colour and has short broad wing tails. The male has long slender wing tails.

Diet: grubs living on live food plants such as *Omalanthus populifolius* also known as the bleeding heart tree. From egg to pupa, the grub lives for around 3 months, after which time it retreats into a cocoon. When the adult emerges it does not feed, they have no mouth parts.

Adults: The main goal of the adult moth is to mate and reproduce. To assist in this process, females emit a scent called a pheromone which attracts males from over 2 km. Males will locate females and mating takes place. The adults only live for 10 to 14 days and have no mouth parts.

Habitat: rainforest. Adult males do most of the flying activity which takes place during the night. Females can also fly.

Ecological role: as the grub feeds on the leaves of the tree 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: a male with long wing tails