

# STRANGE-LOOKING BUGS

All bugs may look strange to human eyes, but some bugs definitely look stranger than others. And what a group of odd-looking creatures are gathered on the next few pages! Whether they have extreme versions of familiar body parts or their own unique appendages, all ten look like they came straight out of the pages of a twisted sci-fi magazine!

#10

## Hickory Horned Devil

Like many caterpillars, this larva of the regal moth sheds its skin several times as it grows. The hickory horned devil changes color each of the five times it molts, and the spiny projections along its body change shape and size as well as color. By the time the caterpillar is fully grown and ready to burrow into the ground on its way to becoming a moth, it's about 5 inches long. Though colorful and fierce-looking, this caterpillar is harmless.



#9

## Hummingbird Hawk Moth

Like the hummingbird, this hawk moth is a fast flyer with a rapid wingbeat and hovers in front of a flower to dine. However, the hawk moth doesn't have a beak. Instead, it unfurls its extra-long proboscis to sip nectar. This "tongue" can measure up to 13 inches in length. When not feeding, the hawk moth rolls the tongue up to get it out of the way.



#8

## Stalk-eyed Fly

With eyes at the tips of long, slender stalks, these male flies look like something out of a horror movie. The females of the species, however, find them "beautiful," for the longer the stalks, the better the genes. Males with extra-long stalks have been found to produce more male offspring, and since female stalk-eyed flies outnumber males two to one, these eye-popping males are much in demand.



#7

## Giraffe-necked Weevil

This is one beetle that really sticks its neck out—far out! The aptly named giraffe-necked weevil, a plant-eater from Madagascar, is the longest of all the weevils. The male grows to 3 inches in length and most of that length is neck. He uses his long neck to roll up leaves for his mate, who then deposits a single egg in each leaf tube.



I need a REALLY long scarf.

#6

## Stag Beetle

With hooked mandibles (the insect equivalent of jaws) making up almost one-third of its body length, the male stag beetle is a fierce warrior—with other male stag beetles, that is. The creature's jaws are too weak to cause humans any real pain, although the females, with smaller yet stronger jaws, have a bite that can be painful. Males defend their territory by battling other males. Each beetle tries to lock the other in his jaws and throw his competitor to the ground. The winner gets to keep his turf.



Long ago in Europe, people used stag beetles as kites, flying them on a piece of string.

THAT'S WILD!





#5

### Assassin Spider

This fearsome arachnid certainly lives up to its name. It goes after its own kind, stabbing prey with the large fangs at the end of its extra-long jaws. The assassin spider has also evolved a very long neck, making it look something like a tiny crane (the kind used for building) and allowing it to strike from a distance. Of course, size and distance are relative, since the entire spider is only .8 of an inch long! This new species of assassin spider was recently discovered in Madagascar, though a few other types are found in Australia and South Africa.

Last name, Did. First name, Katy.



#4

### Spiny Devil Katydid

This Central and South American rain forest dweller is covered with prickly spines sharp enough to draw blood. Only 2.5 to 3 inches long, the spiny devil katydid has even been known to use its front legs to fight off predators as large as small monkeys! During the night, males sing a high-pitched song to attract females, who put out their front legs to listen. Why? Because that's where their ears are located. Should a bat looking for a meal happen to hone in on a spiny devil katydid's song, it's in for a nasty surprise!

#3

### Flatid Leaf Bug

Madagascar is home to many weird creatures, and flatid leaf bugs are no exception. Their distinction is that they look unusual both as young insects and adults. As nymphs, these spooky creatures might have just crawled out of a UFO. To deter predators, the nymphs form long strands of a waxlike substance that covers their bodies and turns them into ghostly spider-like creatures. Adult flatid leaf bugs look completely different, ugly ducklings turned into swans. With their broad, brightly colored wings, these bugs are excellent flyers.

It's really pretty when we dance.





#2

## Treehoppers

These insects are known for the wild shapes taken by the pronotum (a part of the thorax just in back of an insect's head) in some species. Tropical treehoppers in Central and South America are particularly strange-looking. The pronotum of one species looks something like a bizarre TV antenna with bulging tips and a long tail, while another looks like a somewhat misshapen horseshoe. Some of the less elaborately decorated treehoppers take the shape of bird droppings or the buds of the trees on which they live.

Like aphids, some species of treehoppers exude honeydew, a sweet substance produced from excess sap. Ants particularly like honeydew and to get it, will care for and protect the treehoppers that provide it. The ants will even use their antennae to stroke the treehoppers to encourage its production.

Give me  
a "C!"



#1

## Planthoppers

Tropical planthoppers are among the most bizarre-looking creatures on Earth. These bugs are sometimes called lantern bugs from an unfounded belief that their heads glow in the dark. Lantern bugs from Indonesia and Asia usually have brightly patterned wings and long heads with short antennae beneath their eyes.

Of all the strange-looking planthoppers, the peanut-head bug takes the prize. Also called the alligator bug for its resemblance to the reptile, the peanut-head bug grows up to 4 inches long. Well camouflaged in color to blend in with the bark of trees in its home in Central and South American rain forests, this bug has plenty of other defenses. When it opens its wings, two big eyespots appear to scare away predators. And when camouflage and eyespots don't work, the peanut-head bug releases a stinky skunk-like spray to discourage predators.



The peanut-head bug's hollow head contains a sac, which the insect uses to store sucked-up tree sap.

THAT'S  
WILD!



### SPECIAL REPORT: Underground Monster

In 1976, a bizarre relative of crickets and grasshoppers was discovered in Queensland, Australia. Male Cooloola monsters sometimes come out at night, usually after heavy rain. About 1 inch long, they have stout bodies,

short wings, and legs designed for shoveling the sandy soil in which they burrow. With their small feet, females can barely walk and spend their lives underground. •