

Name: _____

Stick Insects

By Guy Belleranti

Some insects have bodies that look just like the twigs on the plants they eat. These creatures are called stick insects. Often called walking sticks or stick bugs, they live on every continent except Antarctica.

While most stick insects are brown, some are green, gray, black, blue, or even multi-colored. They can be smaller than an inch or longer than a 12 inch ruler. One species in Asia is more than 20 inches long with its legs stretched out!

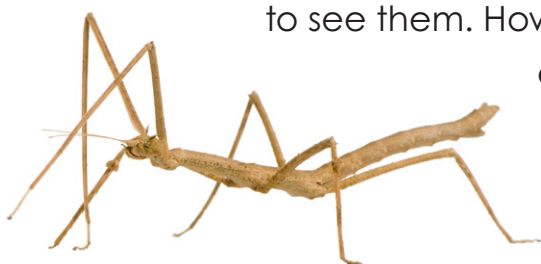
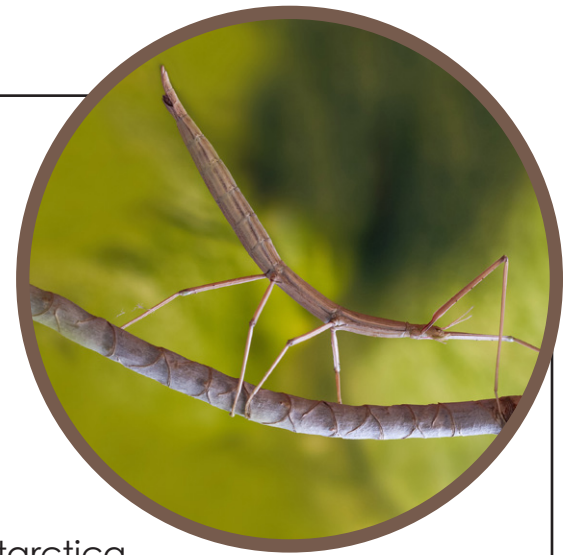
During the day, stick insects rest among the twigs and leaves of plants, blending right in. When they need to move, they camouflage their motion by swaying like a twig in the breeze.

However, despite this camouflage, sometimes a hungry bird, reptile, spider, or monkey will spot and eat the insect. But a stick insect does have a few methods to protect itself. First, the stick insect can escape by losing a leg to the predator. Later it grows a new leg! Second, the stick insect can defend itself. How? Check out some of the following tactics stick bugs use to defend themselves:

Some stick insects can pinch or hit attackers with their spiny legs. Others spray substances that burn an attacker's eyes. And some just taste bad. The Peruvian firestick is one of the bad-tasting ones. This stick insect is easier to see than others because it has red, yellow, and black markings. These bright colors are a warning to predators, who know the Peruvian firestick discharges a stinky white substance when attacked.

Stick insects are mostly nocturnal. This means they are active at night, when they spend their time eating leaves. Darkness makes it harder for most predators to see them. However, darkness doesn't protect stick insects from

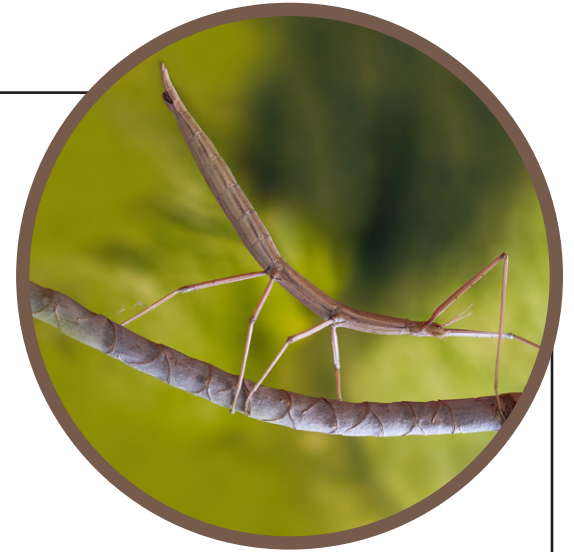
one super set of bug hunters, insect-eating bats. These bats use echolocation to find yummy bug dinners. And stick insects are definitely on the menu as something these bats want to eat!



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1. What do stick insects eat?

- a. aphids
- b. sticks
- c. spiders
- d. leaves

2. According to the information in the article, why are insect-eating bats a major predator of stick bugs?

- a. Bats don't need to see well in order to hunt stick insects.
- b. Bats can taste the scent of stick insects in the air when they fly.
- c. Bats use echolocation to find stick insects in the dark.
- d. Both a and c.

3. What adaptation do stick insects use to blend in with their surroundings when they move around?

4. Using the information from the article, write a sentence to describe how Peruvian firesticks and skunks are similar in the way they defend themselves from predators.

5. Which of the following choices would **not** be an accurate description of a stick insect?

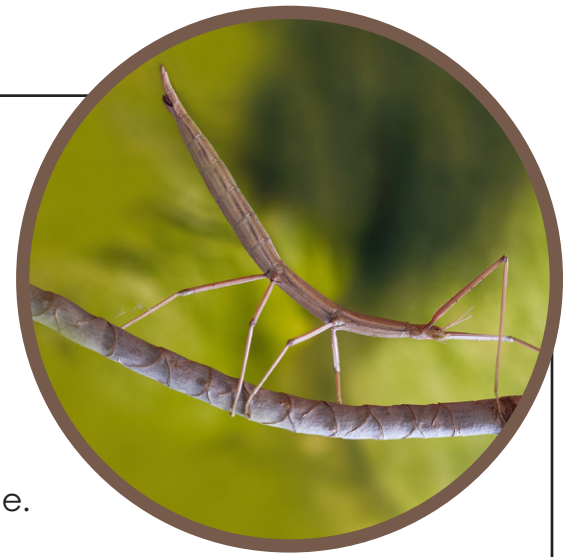
- a. A stick insect can be as long as 20 inches (50.8 cm).
- b. A stick insect can be found near the South Pole.
- c. A stick insect can be blue.
- d. A stick insect can stay awake all night.

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

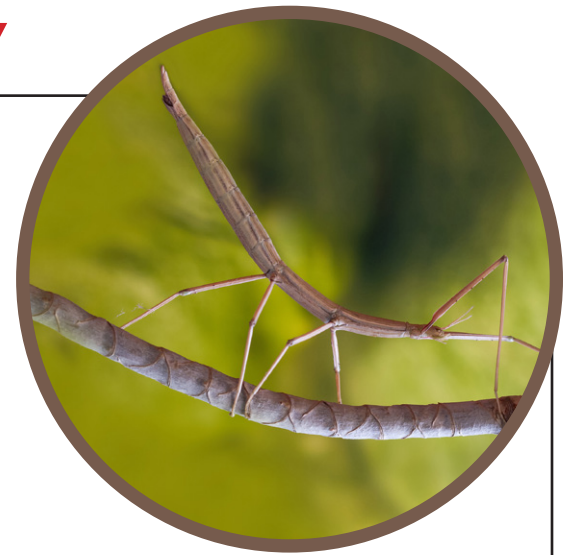


1. _____ echolocation
 2. _____ camouflage
 3. _____ Peruvian
 4. _____ predator
 5. _____ markings
 6. _____ nocturnal
 7. _____ twigs
 8. _____ swaying
 9. _____ continent
 10. _____ motion
- a. small woody shoots that grow out of branches on trees and shrubs
 - b. unique identification marks on an animal's body
 - c. one of Earth's seven great landmasses
 - d. a method of finding objects by using reflected sound
 - e. originating from the country of Peru
 - f. moving rhythmically back and forth
 - g. movement
 - h. an animal's natural markings or shape that enables it to blend in with its surroundings
 - i. active at night
 - j. an animal that hunts other animals for food

ANSWER KEY

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1. What do stick insects eat?

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3. What adaptation do stick insects use to blend in with their surroundings when they move around?

Stick insects camouflage their movement by swaying like a twig in the breeze.

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Peruvian firesticks and skunks spray smelly substances when they are attacked.

5. Which of the following choices would **not** be an accurate description of a stick insect?

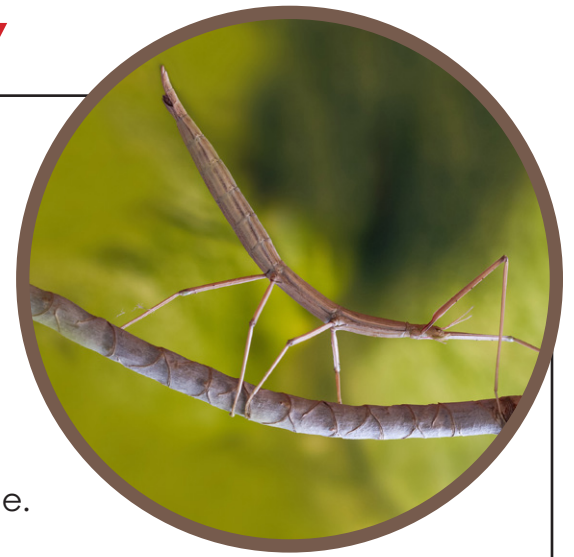
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