



Factsheet: Collecting bugs

Insects of all types occupy nearly every type of habitat imaginable. They can be found, with a bit of searching, in and around houses and sheds, in flower and vegetable gardens (that haven't been drowned with insecticide), under outside lights at night, near creeks and water holes and in areas of bush. Keep in mind it is illegal to collect anything in National Park Reserves.

Look closely at the leaves of plants. Insects feed on all parts of plants, grazing damage is easily recognisable, leaves may have pieces missing along their edges or there may be things growing on the leaf. These are signs of insect presence. Small pieces missing from the edges of leaves probably means beetles while large pieces would tend to mean caterpillars. Whole leaves and twigs missing would suggest possums.

There are many places to find bugs on plants. Hard growths on the leaf are probably galls while soft lumps are likely to be lerp or scale. Holes in the trunk or branches could be moth or beetle larvae. Ants are usually active on all parts of plants as they search for food (some are nocturnal so look at night too). Some plants are species specific and have insects that will only feed on them. Under the bark of trees is also a good place to look as various creatures will hide during the day where it is safe from predators. Spiders, centipedes and geckos may also live under bark so don't strip too much bark from trees as this will destroy bug habitat.

There are many other places to find bugs. Under and around dead animals is a good place to search for carrion beetles and the larvae of flies. Dung beetles may be found under animal droppings. A variety of arthropods can be found beneath logs and rocks, but make sure to replace the log or rock after you have searched beneath it. Baiting on tree trunks is a good way to attract ants and various other insects. Baits can be made of food stuffs like honey or mince meat.

Be careful! Some bugs (insects, spiders, centipedes etc.) can bite or sting so take care when trying to catch or handle them. Some arthropods are easily caught with the aid of a pair of tweezers but others can fly so a butterfly net is a good piece of equipment which will make collecting easier. Supplies of jars and other closable containers are necessary to store specimens in.

find out more at: www.unisa.edu.au/barbarahardy

South Australian Museum



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Santos