

A master of disguise: A new stick insect species from China

2 June 2014



This image shows a male (top) and a female (bottom) representative of the new stick insect species *Sinophasma damingshanensis*. Credit: Ho Wai-chun George

Many representatives of the fauna possess unique masking abilities but stick insects are among the masters of disguise within the animal world. During a field trip in Guangxi, China Mr. Ho Wai-chun George from the Hong Kong Entomological Society discovers a new species from this enigmatic insect group, which he describes in a recent research paper published in the open access journal *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift*.

Like the name suggests the new [stick insect](#) *Sinophasma damingshanensis* is distinguished by peculiarly elongated body and green-brownish coloration, which bear an astonishing resemblance to a plant stem. This natural camouflage can make stick insects extremely difficult to spot, and to make it even harder for the observer many also show rocking behavior, where they move from side to side to resemble plant movements in the wind.

The [new species](#) was discovered hiding in the thick evergreen forests of Damingshan, located at the south-central Guangxi, China during a collecting trip. To make the work of scientists harder this insects had to be collected at night when it is active. Luckily with the help of a torch used to spot them on the leaves of plants a number of specimens were collected, which later turned out to belong to a new species.

Guangxi is one of the Chinese provinces having high diversity of stick- and leaf insects. Sometimes new species can still be discovered from the undisturbed primitive forests in the province and the newly described *Sinophasma damingshanensis* is the one of the new taxa from this fascinating group of insects found in China.

"In order to find this new species, I had to use torch to spot it on leaves of trees at night because almost all stick- and leaf insects are nocturnal insects. If you know the insects' food plant, you can find the corresponding [species](#). *Sinophasma damingshanensis* favours to eat the leaves of Fagaceae and this is the tactic we used to find it in the wild. Hence, if you are a Phasmatologist you may have to not only study the taxonomy of the stick- and leaf insects, but also the taxonomy of the plants." comments the author of the study Mr. Ho Wai-chun George.

More information: Wai Chun George H (2014) A new species of *Sinophasma* Günther, 1940 from Guangxi, China (Phasmida: Diapheromeridae: Necroschiinae). *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* 61(1): 23-25. [DOI: 10.3897/dez.61.7129](https://doi.org/10.3897/dez.61.7129)

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