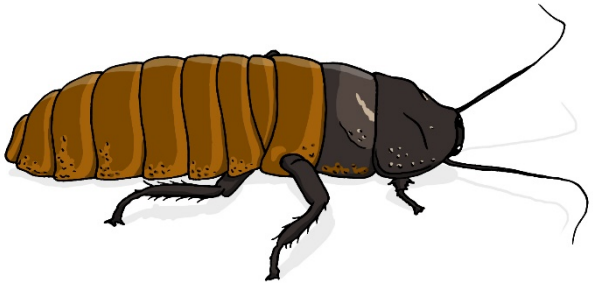
Rainforest Minibeasts

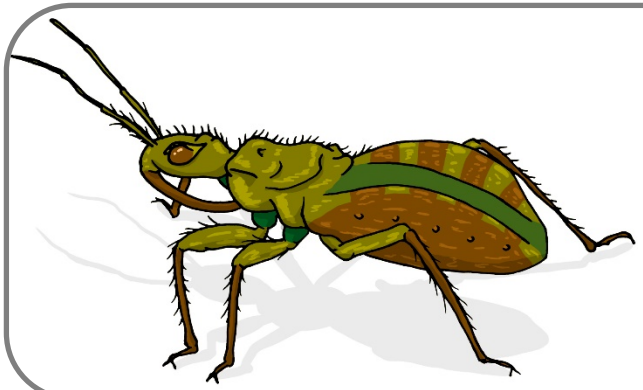
Rainforests are also called jungles. The weather is very hot. It rains nearly every day so it is also very wet. Most of the world's insect species live in the rainforest. Rainforests are found in a belt around the Equator between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. In these tropical areas, temperatures are high and rainfall is more than 2000mm each year. Rainforests are found mainly in the Amazon region of South America, along with parts of Central America, Africa, S.E Asia and Australasia.

Over many years, insects and spiders have adapted to life in the rainforest, evolving into many shapes, sizes and colours. Some spiders are now so large that they can feed on birds while some wasps are so tiny that they could land on a pinhead.

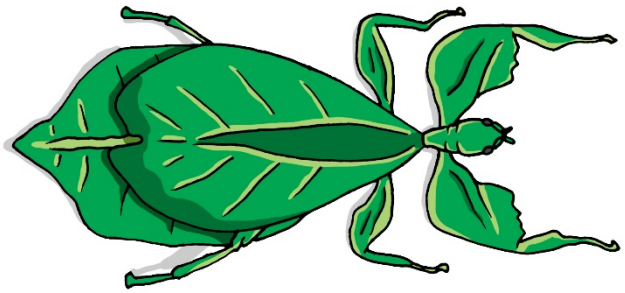
Many species of moths and butterflies found in the rainforest are very large too, having a wingspan of 30cm, the length of a school ruler!



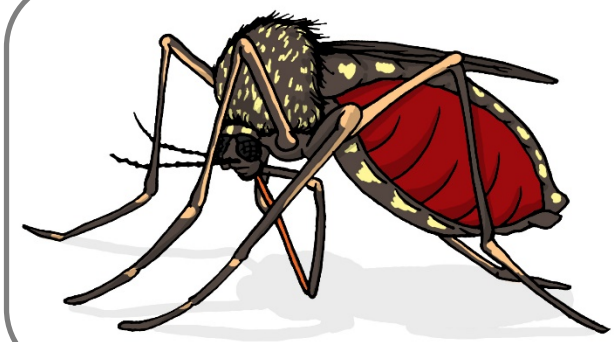
This is a hissing cockroach which lives on the forest floor in Madagascar. It can grow to 8cm in length. They make a loud hissing sound when they are threatened or trying to attract a mate. They feed on dead leaves and rotten fruit.



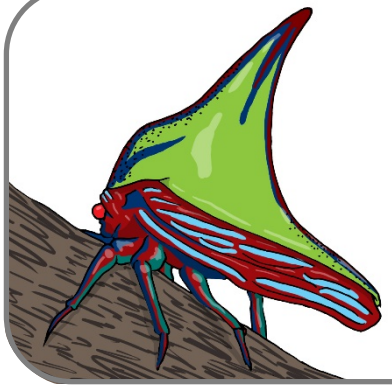
This is an assassin bug that lives in the rainforests of South America. It is a successful predator which is able to inject saliva into its victim. It is then able to suck out the internal parts of the victim.



This is a leaf insect. Like a stick insect the leaf insect has really effective camouflage. It has a flattened body which closely resembles a leaf. It lives in the forests of parts of Africa, South Pacific islands, Sri Lanka and N. Australia.

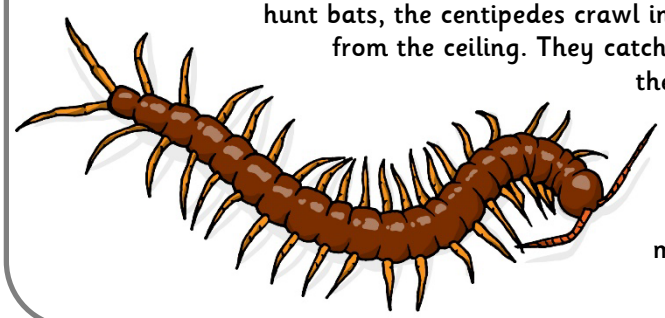


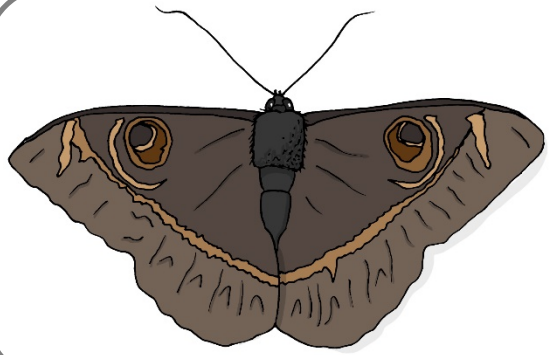
This is a mosquito. There are several thousand different species of these in the rainforest. They suck blood from many types of animal and may also prey on humans. Some mosquitoes carry the disease malaria and each year many people die from it.



This is a spine bug. It is a type of hopper that can fold its wings up on its back into a shape like a tent. This helps it to look like the spine on a plant. It is therefore really well camouflaged on spiny bushes.

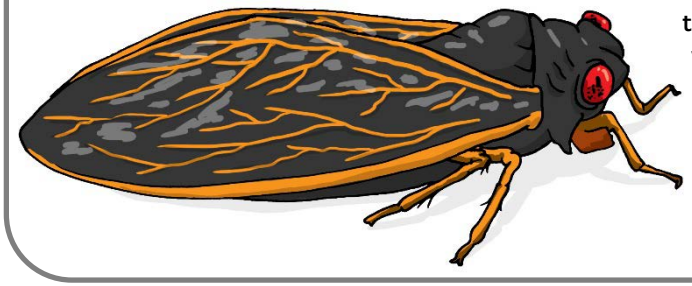
This is a giant centipede. It can grow up to 33cm in length. To hunt bats, the centipedes crawl into caves and hang from the ceiling. They catch bats as they fly by and then poison them with venom so they cannot escape. Giant centipedes also eat birds, frogs, lizards and mice.

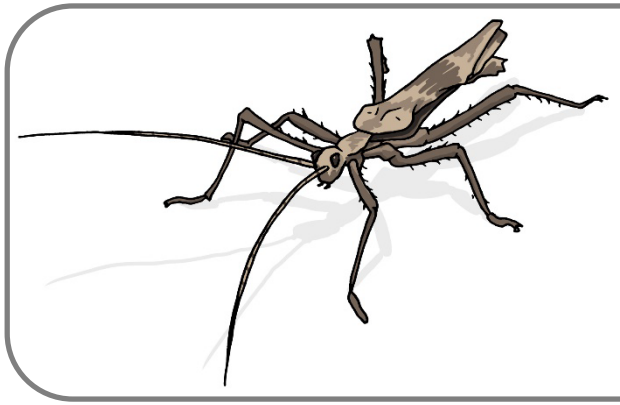




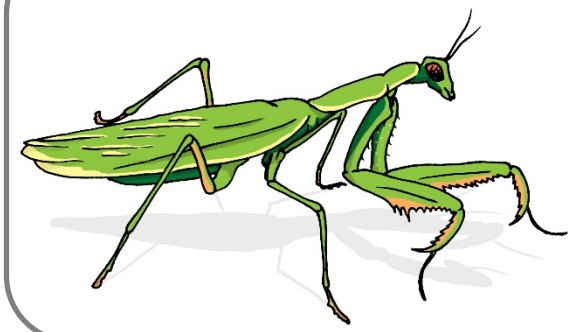
This is an owlet moth. It defends itself by startling predators for a moment by revealing the markings under its wings which look like the eyes of a snake or small cat. Predators often strike at the moth's wings rather than its body, allowing it to escape.

This is a cicada. It looks similar to a locust and can grow to over 20cm in length. Although they are difficult to see because they live high up among the rainforest trees, cicadas make a very loud sound. They have mouths adapted to enable them to feed by sucking plant juices.





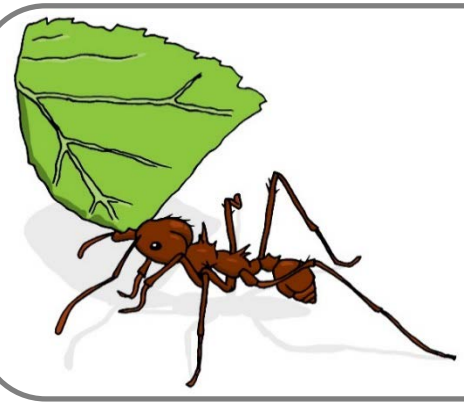
This is a stick insect. It has a long body that looks just like a stick so it provides very effective camouflage. It feeds in the branches of trees and bushes, eating leaves. Because it moves slowly, the stick insect prefers to be a nocturnal feeder.



This is a praying mantis. Its size and shape helps it to blend in with its background. It waits in the foliage for a victim to approach. When a bee or butterfly comes along it is grabbed with lightning speed and speared using spines on the legs. A praying mantis even sways gently to mimic foliage moving in the breeze!

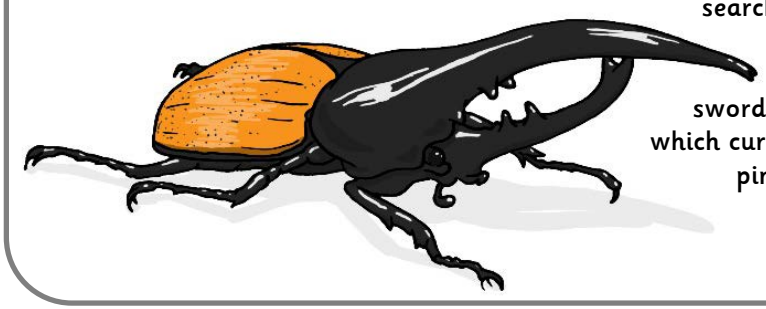
This is a citrus swallowtail butterfly. It is found in tropical forests in Africa and Madagascar. It feeds on the flowers of citrus trees such as lemons, limes and oranges. They live in forests in mountain areas where it is cooler than other rainforests.

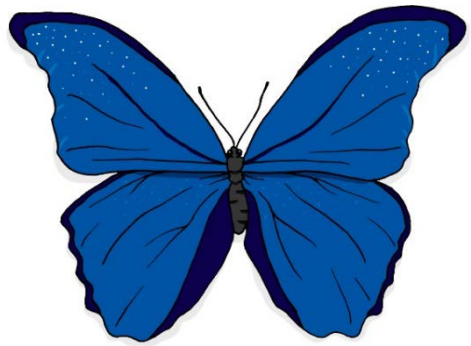
This is a trapdoor spider. It is a large, hairy, bird-eating spider which lives in the rainforest of Australia. It also eats insect prey. It hides in a burrow, setting a silk trap above it to catch any insects that land.



This is a leaf-cutter ant. These ants carry fragments of leaf to their underground nests, not to eat, but to grow fungi on. The ants eat the fungi. Leaf-cutter ants may travel up to 200m away from their nests to collect leaves.

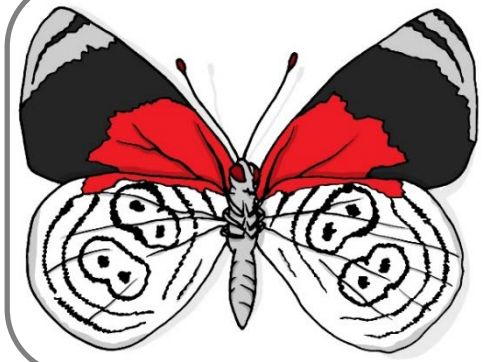
This is a Hercules beetle. It is the longest beetle in the world, measuring 190mm. It lives in South and Central America. It eats rotting fruit and searches for it on the forest floor. It has long sword-shaped horns which curve together like pincers.





This is a morpho butterfly. It is one of the world's largest butterflies and has pretty metallic blue wings which catch the light when it flies. The underside of the wings are a dull brown. It lives in South America. The adult feeds on dead animals and rotting fruit.

This is a tarantula spider, one of the world's largest spiders with a leg span of up to 25cm. Tarantulas live in the Amazon rainforest and are very hairy. Hairs on their legs help them to climb on smooth surfaces. The biggest tarantulas may eat lizards, mice and birds.



This is Anna's eighty eight butterfly. It is called this because the pattern on its wings looks like the number 88. The pattern is in red, black and white on the underside of the wings while the top is brown with flashes of green. It lives near the River Amazon.

Rainforest Minibeasts

Join up the name of each creature with the correct fact. The first has been done for you. (AF2)

Hercules beetle	pattern on its wings is like a number
assassin bug	makes a loud sound when threatened
praying mantis	feeds on orange and lemon trees
morpho butterfly	large ones can eat birds
tarantula spider	has shiny metallic wings
trapdoor spider	grows fungi to feed on
cicada	sways pretending to be foliage moving in the breeze
hissing cockroach	injects saliva into its victim
Anna's eighty-eight butterfly	has long sword-shaped horns
leaf-cutter ant	makes a silk trap for its prey
citrus swallowtail butterfly	makes a very loud sound
giant centipede	camouflaged to look like twigs
stick insect	catches bats in caves
owlet moth	startles victims with its wing pattern
mosquito	camouflaged to look like a leaf
leaf insect	camouflaged to look like a spike or thorn
spine bug	sucks blood to feed

Why has the writer put the information in boxes? (AF4)

What does the adult morpho butterfly feed on? (AF2)

What do you think that the Hercules beetle may use its horns for? (AF3)

Why do you think that the underside of a morpho butterfly's wings are brown? (AF2/AF3)

How does a trapdoor spider catch its prey? (AF2)

Why has the author used illustrations of each creature? (AF4/AF5)

What do you notice about the size of many of the rainforest creatures? (AF3)

Can you name a continent with no tropical rainforest? (AF3/AF7)

Explain how a giant centipede manages to catch flying bats to eat. (AF2)

How do you think the stick insect got its name? (AF3)

Which creature is able to trick its predators to enable it to escape? (AF2)

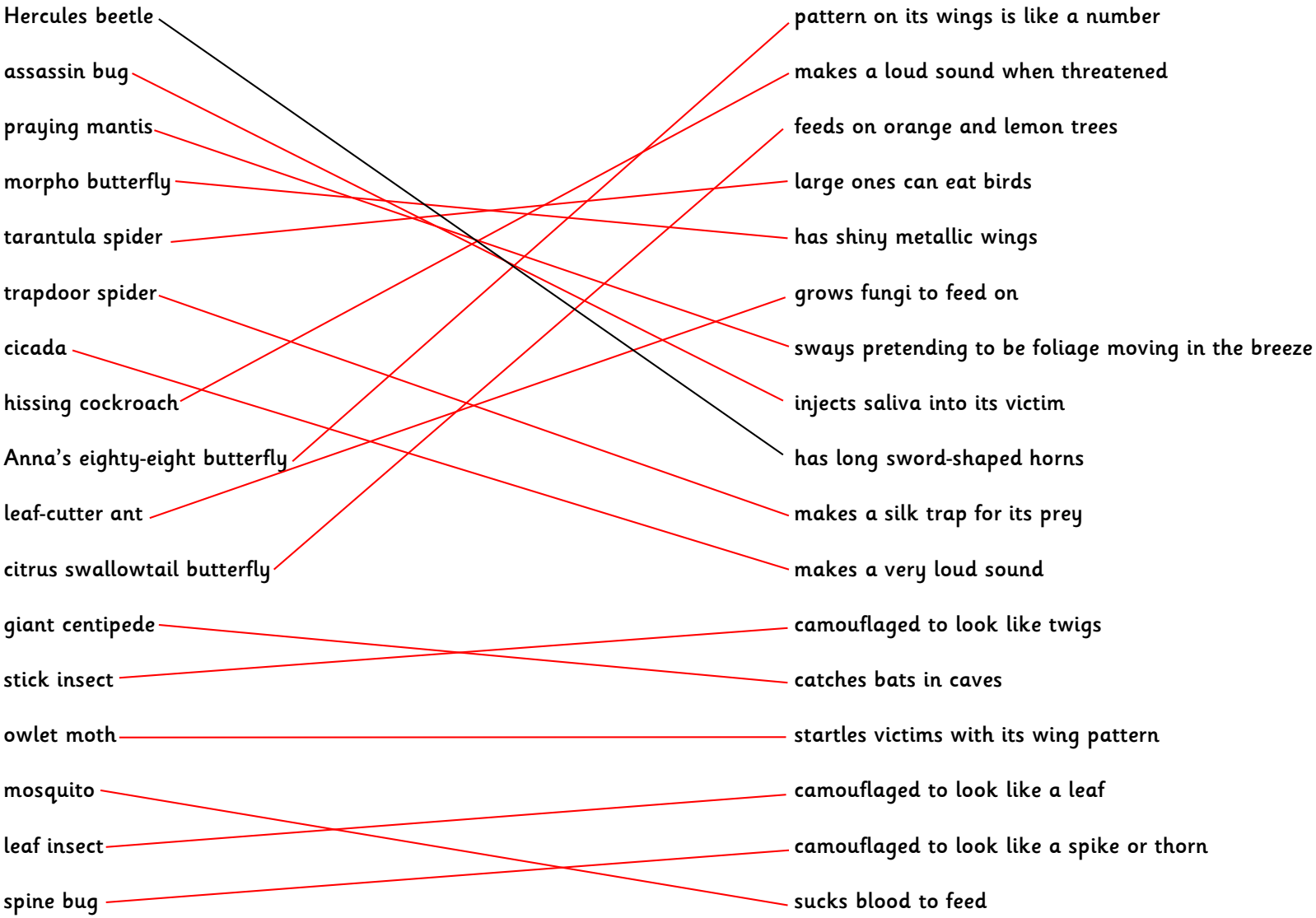
Name two creatures that you would be able to hear in the rainforest. (AF2/AF3)

Which creature in the text would you most like to see in real life? Why? (AF7)

What is unusual about what a mosquito feeds on? (AF2)

Rainforest Minibeasts

Join up the name of each creature with the correct fact. The first has been done for you. (AF2)



Why has the writer put the information in boxes? (AF4) To make the information clearer.

What does the adult morpho butterfly feed on? (AF2) Dead animals and rotting fruit.

What do you think that the Hercules beetle may use its horns for? (AF3) Fighting with rivals.

Why do you think that the underside of a morpho butterfly's wings are brown? (AF2/AF3) To provide camouflage.

How does a trapdoor spider catch its prey? (AF2) Spins a silk trap above its burrow.

Why has the author used illustrations of each creature? (AF4/AF5) To help reader to visualise what the creature looks like and make the text more interesting.

What do you notice about the size of many of the rainforest creatures? (AF3) Many are larger than in other parts of the world.

Can you name a continent with no tropical rainforest? (AF3/AF7) Europe, Antarctica, N. America.

Explain how a giant centipede manages to catch flying bats to eat. (AF2) It hangs from the roof of a cave and catches the bat as it flies by. The bat is disabled by poisonous venom.

How do you think the stick insect got its name? (AF3) From its appearance. Looking like a twig, it is well camouflaged.

Name two creatures that you would be able to hear in the rainforest? (AF2/AF3) Cicadas and hissing cockroaches.

Which creature in the text would you most like to see in real life? Why? (AF7)

What is unusual about what a mosquito feeds on? (AF2) Feeds on blood.