

Nature Notes



Water Striders

Water Striders are a very interesting bug. They are a true bug, meaning they have leathery forewings and a piercing beak rather than a biting mouthpart. These aquatic predators belong to the Gerridae family of which there are over 1700 species. In the Kimberley Nature

Park you will see the striders walking on the water of the quiet ponds, like Eimers Lk from May through to September/October.



The striders have six specialized legs. The front two are short and are held in front of the insect usually resting on the water. These legs are used to detect ripples in the surface film from struggling insects, to hold and handle prey and to detect messages from other striders. The longer middle legs are used for rowing and the back or hind pair is used for steering. These bugs can walk on water due to a combination of several factors. The legs are covered with

Photo: Peter J. Bryant

fine hydrophobic hair so that the surface tension is greater between the ends of the legs and the water.

Their long slender legs help them stay above the water and distribute their weight over a large surface area.

During the mating season striders become territorial and make this known by their vibration patterns. The male gerrides will emit warning vibrations through the water and will defend both the territory and the female in it; otherwise they live in cooperative groups and will openly share large kills

Mating Striders, Photo: Wikipedia Commons

In addition to insects stuck in surface film, striders kindly consume mosquito larvae.



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