

Naskrecki's Bush Katydid – *Ozphyllum naskreckii*

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Katydid's belong to the order Orthoptera and are therefore related to Crickets, Grasshoppers, and Locusts.

Naskrecki's Bush Katydid inhabits rainforest and wet sclerophyll forests, and is towards the northern end of its range here. This insect was photographed on the frond of a mangrove fern at the sanctuary. Although it is a nocturnal insect, it may be spied at rest during the day, depending on its shape and colouring for camouflage. It utilises its strong mandibles to consume vegetation and insects at night, but may also take nectar and pollen. The enlarged hind legs are designed for leaping to escape predation by birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs, or spiders. The wings are unsuitable for long flights. The hind wings are membranous, folded under the fore wings when not in use, but are the main method of locomotion. The fore wings are slightly leathery, opaque, and mimic a leaf, but do little work in flight.

With the warm nights, we hear those intriguing evening songs. The male serenades the female, but the song is not vocal, it is stridulation. Each fore wing has a special compensatory modification which, when rubbed together, creates the sound recognized by a partner of the same species. The hearing organ of the katydid is visible at the top of the fore leg tibia in the photograph. Touching and stroking of the long antennae is an important prelude to mating. After impregnation, the female uses her long strong ovipositor to insert her ova into plant tissue. Upon hatching, the nymphs are somewhat similar to the adults and feed on the same foods, but lack wings and have a disproportionately large head. Each nymph moults 5 or 6 times over 2 or 3 months, and at each ecdysis, the wing buds enlarge, until at the final shedding, the full-sized wings of the adult are released and expanded.

Naskrecki's Bush Katydid (Male) (*Ozphyllum naskreckii*) Photo: Robyn Howard

