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Invertebrate of the Month

June 2007



Psychidae (case moths)

Case moths (family Psychidae) are renowned for their larvae's ability to build elaborate portable cases or bags of silk; which are decorated with fragments of leaves, twigs or general detritus. Some of these cases can be very distinctive and apparently built with precision architecture. For example one species builds a helical design like a spiral stair-case with thin slivers of wood. The above pictured larval case is of an undetermined species. Larvae live in these cases and feed by protruding their head from one end. Often this anterior end is attached to the feeding site with silk. Larvae carry their cases with them when moving to a new site. The moth pictured left is a male *Lomara pantosemna* (18mm) and is found in the southern forests of WA from Walpole to the Fitzgerald River. The female is unknown but likely to be wingless, and nothing is known of the larval stage. The moth with the punky hair do (top right) is *Iphierga* sp (12mm), which was caught at a FORESTCHECK site near Collie. Larvae of this genus are case-bearing and live in meat ant nests as scavengers.