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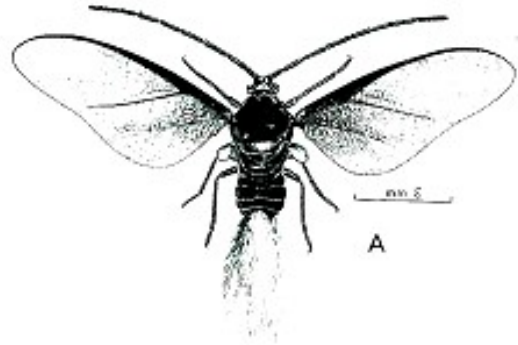
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Invertebrate of the Month

June 2011



photo by P. Williams



[picture from "Insects of Australia" CSIRO 1991]

Bird of paradise fly: *Callipappus* sp

In the invertebrate world males and females can look very different. The bird of paradise fly is actually a bug in the insect order Hemiptera. It belongs to the family Margarodidae which contains some of the largest mealy bugs or coccoids in the world. The female is large and flightless; the specimen pictured here was 4 cm long. Males are much smaller (scale bar in above picture represents 3 mm) and are distinguished by a distinctive fibrous tail which is reminiscent of one of those fibre optic lamps popular a decade or so ago. I witnessed both males and females in the jarrah forest in May 2011 whilst walking the Bibbulmun track near Collie, suggesting May-June is their peak mating period. These insects are sap suckers and the group contains some significant crop pests.

More information on the bird of paradise fly can be found at http://www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_softbugs/BirdOfParadise.htm