

# Camouflage

*Shannon and Ian Jacobs*

Soldiers wear uniforms with patches of brown, black and dark green. They think it makes them harder to see. That can't be right. I see them in shops and on the street and I can see them just fine.

That is not how it works. *Camouflage* is the ability to blend into a background. If a soldier stayed perfectly still, you weren't looking for him, he was a hundred metres away, standing under trees in sunlight and shade you would miss him completely.

The military got the idea from insects and animals that blend with their surroundings. They didn't have to go far to find examples. We don't have to leave our yard: but there is one little problem. The better the camouflage the more difficult they are to find.



Do you see a bug in this image? Well done. You and the bug have something in common. Neither of you saw the spider waiting to pounce.

Caterpillars are slow, weak, fat, tasty and good food value. Birds love them when they can find them. Can you find the caterpillar in this image?



That wasn't too hard, it pretty much fills the frame, but in a tree it's not so easy.

Another caterpillar in the boxwood bush right outside our window.



Can it have enough brains to lie along a stem of the same diameter? What about the little bumps that look like growth rings on a stem and the head that looks like a bud? Evolution is amazing.

One more caterpillar. This one on a mango leaf high in a tree that we were pruning. It's the caterpillar of the Brown Baron butterfly. Mango trees are their host plant.



Not easy to see in a screen of extensions that look like feathers.

We find other insects that are just as well protected. They are hard to find but easy to photograph because they trust their camouflage and don't move when we bring the camera close.



Do you see the bark mantis?

And there is nothing of interest here ....



... except perhaps a lunch.

A big soft pupating bag worm all wrapped up in dead leaves.

If you were a passing bird you might miss this one.



A green long-nosed grasshopper looking like a blade of grass.

So far we have looked at things that don't benefit from being eaten. What about the eaters? They would benefit from hiding.



A two tailed spider on a tree trunk standing perfectly still in full view. It is not easy to see.



This fly has good eyesight but didn't see this green crab spider lurking in full view on a leaf.



It isn't just insects and spiders that we find well camouflaged: frogs and birds can do the same.



There is a small frog in this image somewhere ....



... and this is a Lapwing chick.