

Australian plague locust identification field guide

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This Gardennote describes the main distinguishing features between Australian plague locusts (*Chortoicetes terminifera*) and Australian wingless grasshoppers.

The Australian plague locust has three stages in its life-cycle – egg, hopper and adult.

In the south-west of Western Australia the locust can complete two generations each year; the first generation occurring through winter, spring and summer and the second generation through summer and autumn.

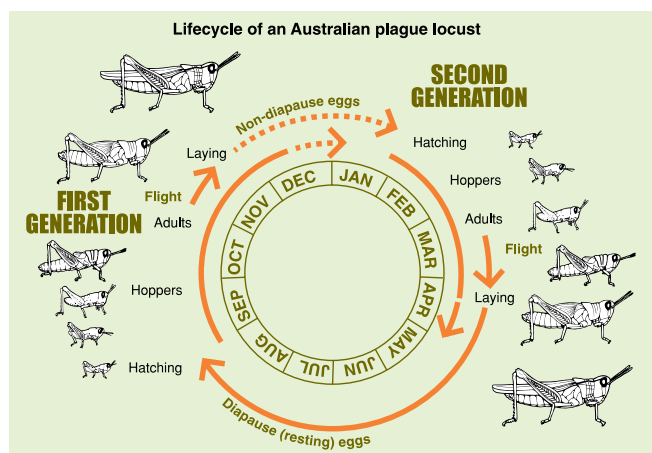
To prevent major locust infestation, department staff, landholders, as well as home gardeners are frequently monitoring and controlling the hoppers.

However, Australian plague locusts are sometimes found with a range of other, similar looking species of non-winged grasshoppers. The most common Australian wingless grasshopper is *Phaulacridium vittatum*, which is often confused with the Australian plague locust, especially at the immature stage.

Australian wingless grasshoppers are quite variable. Not only do they strongly vary in colour from dark grey to almost black (never green), but 40% of the population have wings and can fly.

At the hopper stage, locusts as well as wingless grasshoppers are only 15 - 20 mm long and distinguishing features such as shape, colour and wing veins are very variable and hard to see.

The best field identification of locusts at this stage of development is the x-shaped marking on the back of their thorax. This can be faded or prominent, and becomes more visible with maturity, but it is always present, while wingless grasshoppers have sometimes no patterns on their thorax at all.



Australian plague locust (hopper stage)



Australian plague locust hopper showing typically saddle-shaped body profile.

Australian wingless grasshopper



Australian wingless grasshopper body profile is more straight

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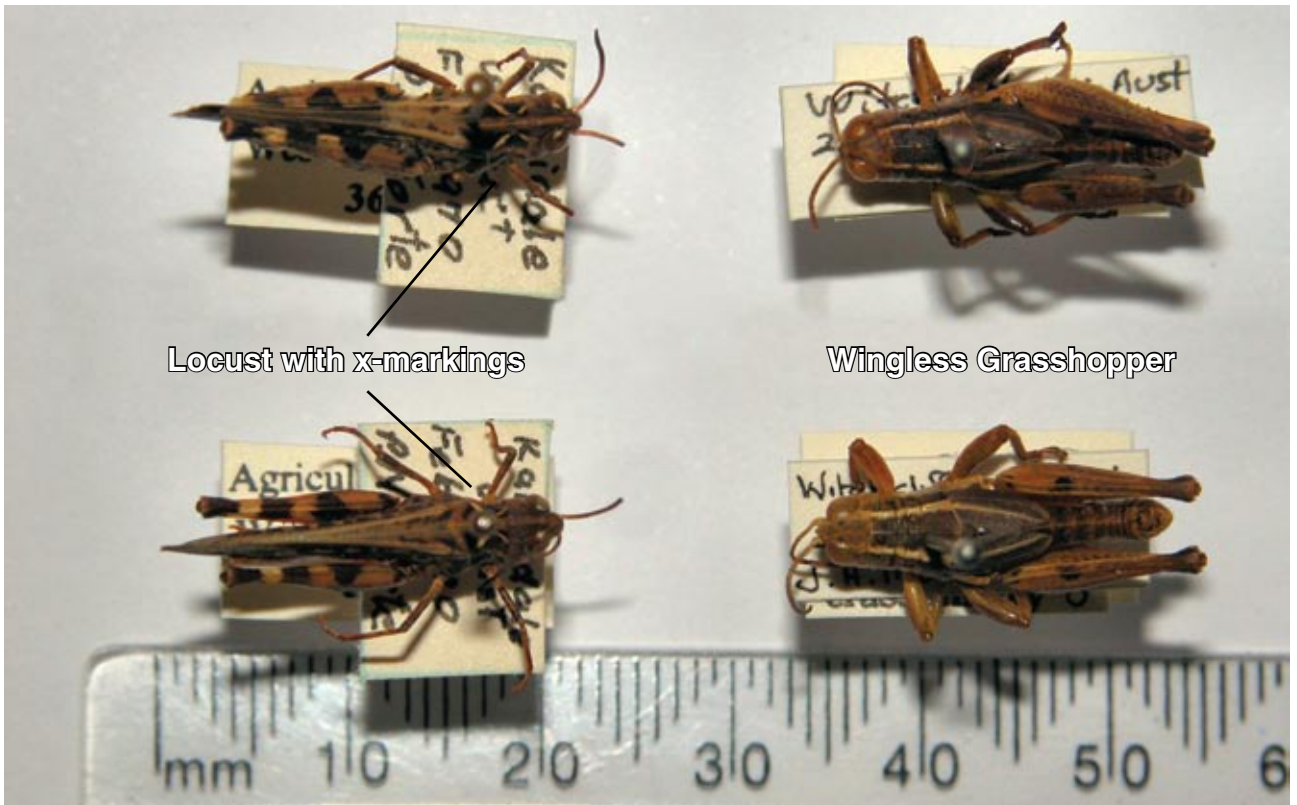
X - Shaped Marking

White X-shaped marking is main identifier



Parallel Markings

Marking is more parallel



Locust with x-markings

Wingless Grasshopper

Australian plague locusts at hopper stage are best distinguished from Australian wingless grasshoppers by their x shaped marking on top of the thorax.

Reference:

Key, K.H.L. Taxonomy of the Genus *Phaulacridium* and a Related New Genus (Orthoptera:Acridae). *Invertebr. Taxon.*, 1992, **6**, 197-243.

When sending or delivering samples include the following information:

Collector's name, location (where the specimen was found), full address, description of the damage, and date collected.

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