



Wildlife Window: The Two-Striped Walking Stick. Masters of Camouflage. Nocturnal. Caution: Don't Touch.

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What looks like a stick, but is actual an insect? Meet the Walking Stick, a master of camouflage. While North America has six species; only two are found in Florida, the common walking stick and the two-striped walking stick. Both are difficult to find as they are nocturnal, only moving about at night. They spend most of the day immobile and visually blending to whatever plant they are on, or perhaps your lanai screen or house wall. Although their camouflage is good, it is not perfect, and they are usually preyed upon by birds, rodents, and praying mantises.

Let's learn more about the **Two-striped Walking Stick** (*Anisomorpha buprestoides*), the most abundant Walking Stick species in Florida.

Appearance. Slow-moving and wingless, the two-striped walking stick is smaller and stockier than the common walking stick. Females are 2.6" long while males are 1.6" and often seen riding on the backs of the female. Typically, they have three longitudinal black stripes with two longitudinal yellow stripes.

Feeding. Walking sticks feed on leaves of trees (oak, ligustrum, crepe myrtle) and tall shrubs (rosemary and roses), eating between the leaf veins, but causing only minor damage.

Mating. Fall is the mating season for walking sticks. A mature male walking stick will attach himself to a female to ensure finding a mate. They will stay attached until one of them dies. After mating, the two-striped female comes down to the ground to deposit her eggs in several different locations. When the weather warms, the eggs hatch and the nymphs climb into the trees and shrubs where they complete their immature stages to become adults.

Caution. The two-striped walking stick has an unusual defense mechanism that is lacking in the common. It has the ability to accurately spray (up to 2 feet) a smelly acidic compound on any would-be attacker. The spray comes from a gland just behind the head on the thorax. The compound is very painful if it contacts the eye and may require medical attention, but no permanent damage has been reported. **Obviously, observe from a distance and do not handle**



**Two-striped Walking Stick.
Male is catching a ride on the Female's back.**
(Bob Frank photo)