

# STRANGLER FIG

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*Christmas Island, Indian Ocean, Australia.*This

huge banyan tree no longer exists. It's been slowly strangled to death for up to a century. Seeds of fig vines were deposited by bird droppings in the upper branches of the tree, which sprouted and began to grow downward along the tree trunk, sucking nutrients from the tree along the way. Slowly year after year, they coil and wrap around the entire trunk to the ground, literally strangling the tree out of existence until all that's left are the huge enveloping fig vines. It's hollow inside – look carefully above the ground roots and you'll see a shaft of vertical light.

I've seen a good many Strangler Figs in the rain forests of Central Africa and the Amazon – but the ones here on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean are the most spectacular. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World* #280 photo ©Jack Wheeler)

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