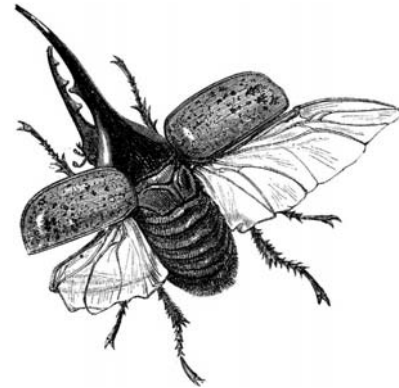


BEETLES / DARKLING BEETLES

BEETLES are insects. Insects are small animals that have six legs, three main body parts (head, thorax, abdomen), and an exoskeleton. *Two facts together* set beetles apart from all other insects. They have both (1) a pair of hard forewings, called *elytra*, that protect a pair of soft, fragile hind wings; and (2) a complete metamorphosis, including egg, larva, pupa, and adult.



Rhinoceros Beetle



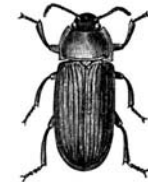
Root Borer
Beetle Pupa

Beetles live in all ecosystems and are distributed throughout the world's continents except Antarctica. They eat smaller insects, bugs, snails, slugs, fungus, or plants. Many kinds of beetle are scavengers or decomposers. They eat dead and decaying animals and plants or dung and other waste material.

Beetles are extremely important to human beings and other living things. Without them, Earth would soon be overrun with insect pests or buried in dung and rotting dead materials.

Darkling Beetles

Darkling larvae are called *mealworms*. They do look a bit like worms, but they have two antennae and six small legs. The adult beetles are called *darklings* because they are nocturnal (active at night).



Darkling Beetle



Mealworm
(darkling larva)

Darklings live in most parts of the world, under rocks and leaf litter in meadows, forests, and fields. They eat grass, grass seed, decaying wood and leaves, dead insects, and dung. Darklings also inhabit all of the places where humans store grain and flour, including barns and kitchens. Like cockroaches and other pests, they are well-adapted to the human environment. Rats, mice and other rodents, birds, lizards, spiders, and other beetles prey on darklings.

There are between 1,300 and 1,400 different species of darkling beetle in the United States, mostly in the hot and dry southwestern states. In their native ecosystems, they help decompose dead plant materials into rich soil and provide food for other animals.

Darkling Life Cycle

Stage	Days
Egg	14
Larva	30-90
Pupa	14
Adult	30-60