

Dung Beetles: Nature's Recyclers

Dung beetles are part of nature's clean-up crew. By eating and burying other animals' waste, these beetles recycle nutrients into the soil.

They also bury waste that might otherwise attract pests such as flies.



Source: National Geographic Kids
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/dung-beetle/>

What does a dung beetle look like?

- They are insects.
- Have three main parts to a beetle's body: the head, the thorax (the middle part), and the abdomen (the back part).
- On the head, beetles have antennae (feelers), eyes, and a mouth.
- The legs and wings of the beetle are attached to the thorax.



How many types of dung beetles exist?

- There are approximately 37,000 species of dung beetles.
- They belong to the order *Coleoptera* - the largest order in the entire animal kingdom.
- There may be many more dung beetles because thousands of species have not yet been found!



Where does the dung beetle live?

Dung beetles live on every continent except Antarctica!!



What does a dung beetle eat?

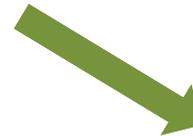


- Dung beetles eat poo!
- Beetles eat many different things: living plants, rotting plants, animals that may be dead or alive, and animal feces
- Some beetles can eat both plants and animals, while others eat just one type of food.

What is great about the dung beetle?

Dung beetles help new trees grow!

When a rain forest animal, such as a Howler monkey, eats fruit, some seeds pass through undigested. The dung beetle comes along, it rolls away a ball of dung, seeds and all, and buries it. Soon, up sprouts a new tree!



Did you know about these dung beetle facts?



- The female dung beetle lays a single egg into each ball of dung.
- When the eggs hatch, the larvae will feed on the dung.
- Some of the larger dung beetles can move balls of dung up to 50 times their own weight.
- Australia imported 45 species of dung beetle from to get rid of cattle dung.
- One dung beetle can bury 250 times its own weight in a night.
- A dung beetle can live up to 3 years.
- Most dung beetles are dark colored, or have shiny metallic colors or bright patterns.
- Dung beetles have wings and can fly.
- Their six legs are made for rolling dung and digging holes.