

Order: *Coleoptera*

CLASSIFICATION
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Coleoptera
Family:
Subfamily:
Genus:
Species:

The insect order Coleoptera includes only beetles. It is the largest order of insects, with well over 350,000 species world-wide and approximately 30,000 + species in Australia.

The name Coleoptera means “sheath wings”.

Most beetles have hard rigid bodies except for beetles such as Staphylinids which have soft bodies. Mouthparts are mostly for chewing while some have soft brush-like mouthparts that are made for lapping up nectar.

Adult beetle diets vary from insect, nectar, leaves, wood, fruit, dead animals, plants and fungi.

Beetles have two pairs of wings. The outer pair is really a set of wing covers called elytra. These meet in a straight line down the middle of the beetle’s back and form a hard cover over the back when the beetle is not flying. Some flightless beetles such as ground beetles have fused elytra. The inner pair of wings is used for flying.

Beetles lay eggs, depending on the species will determine how many eggs are laid. Once a beetle larva has grown full term, the larva will turn into a pupa and undergo a complete metamorphosis. The larvae diet varies from organic mulch, fallen logs, living timber, dead standing trees.



↑ Beetle pupa, take a close look, you can see the legs folded up and even the wings wrapped around the body. Head is left side of the image

↓ Beetle just emerging from its pupa skin, the elytra are soft and non coloured at this stage. Over a couple of days the beetle will go hard and the elytra will become a black colour.



ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF BEETLES

PREDATORS

assist in maintaining the balance of insects and spiders; control insects pests like aphids

RECYCLERS

process dead matter back into the ecosystem; assist in recycling fallen and other plant matter

POLLINATE

assist in pollinating many plant species

FOOD SOURCE

forming an abundant food source for other insects and animals

SCAVENGERS

help to keep the forest floor healthy and clean; recycle nutrients

HERBIVORES

assist in maintaining the balance of plant species; assist in weed control