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The wonderful world of the beetle on Fresh Air

POSTED BY [MARK FRAUENFELDER](#), MAY 6, 2009 8:29 AM | [PERMALINK](#)



(An Oxysternon conspicillatum, a kind of scarab beetle. Photo by D. Emlen and J. M. Rowland)

Douglas Emlen, a professor of biology at the University of Montana, is one of the foremost authorities on dung beetles. Terry Gross interviewed him earlier this week on Fresh Air, and it's a terrific, fascinating interview. Emlen's passion and curiosity about dung beetle anatomy and behavior shine through.

Underneath the cow patties in the pasture — and the monkey dung in the jungle — there is a miniature world of sex and violence.

Here, ornately decorated beetles armed with horns fight for survival and sexual dominance. Douglas Emlen, a professor of biology at the University of Montana, studies them.

Emlen is an expert on the evolution and development of bizarre or extreme shapes in insects, and he is particularly interested in insect weaponry.

Much of his work takes place in a lab, but he has also had some wild adventures collecting different families of dung beetles from around the world.

[The Fascinating World Of The Dung Beetle](#)

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Discussion

#1 POSTED BY [NADRECK](#), [MAY 6, 2009 10:27 AM](#)

"If you attempt to study God through his works you will discover that he has an unhealthy fascination with beetles."

#2 POSTED BY [ROY TRUMBULL](#), [MAY 6, 2009 11:27 AM](#)

In terms of species, beetles pretty much out number all other creatures.

#3 POSTED BY ANONYMOUS, [MAY 6, 2009 1:02 PM](#)

Ah yes - beetles. I love making new ones - whenever I feel a bit down, I just make a [new beetle](#). You should see my latest creation, though - I think it's going to be a big hit; it's so versatile and [almost indestructible...](#)

#4 POSTED BY ANONYMOUS, [MAY 6, 2009 2:12 PM](#)

The beetle stuff was great, but Note To Terry: don't let entomologists wander into cockroach territory. I'll say no more, but if you're a chocolate or coffee lover, skip this interview.

Oh, and if anyone knows how to delete specific memories, please leave a note. Sometimes ignorance really is bliss.

#5 POSTED BY [NIDSQUID](#), [MAY 6, 2009 3:41 PM](#)

Wonderful and utterly fascinating! Thank you for the post.

#6 POSTED BY [YODER](#), [MAY 6, 2009 5:04 PM](#)

What struck me is Terry's tone throughout most of the interview -- she sounds like she can't believe she's devoting a whole episode to dung beetles.

#7 POSTED BY [YODER](#), [MAY 6, 2009 7:36 PM](#)

Although I should add, I'm very glad she did.

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BUDDY66 SAID: "I think that was one of them. ..."

MICHAEL CANFIELD SAID: "Of course the photos can be of recruitment use to terrorists. Too bad. So can a cover-up be used. W ..."

SPIKELES SAID: "So... where the patent? Also, the others are also really cool, especially the corn one. ..."

JINGWEN SAID: "Looks great, but i have see lots spy camera at <a href='\"http://www.epathchina.com/electronic-gadgets- ...\"

ANTINOUS / MODERATOR SAID: "In that case, let's just progress to cow-porker. ..."

ANONYMOUS SAID: "Hello foreigners - check the MySpace page - they've got episodes up - not sure if they're geo-blocke ..."

BUDDY66 SAID: "Somebody here misspelled coworkers a couple years ago and it spun out into a typical thread of rudel ..."

MARRZ SAID: "looks cute, but as a product of the internet 'what what in the butt' kept playing in my head XD ..."

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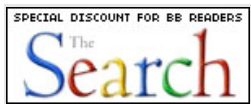


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