

Dung Beetles: Nature's Cleaners

Big World of Insects, Spiders & Bugs Series

Subject Areas: Science, Life Science, Biology

Synopsis: The importance of dung beetles is seen in this program. Students will watch as a dung beetle works to build its brood ball out of fresh manure and then rolls it away. Once a suitable location has been found, the dung beetle buries the ball of dung and lays her eggs.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to describe and identify the characteristics of an insect, including the three body parts and six legs.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe the life cycle of a dung beetle.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the importance of this insect.

Vocabulary: Define and discuss the following key terms:

Dung, docile, industrious, forelegs, malleable, compost, brood ball, the elements, predator

Pre-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What characteristics do all insects have in common? How are these creatures classified?
- 2) What role do you think dung beetles play in nature? Do you think this is important? Why or why not?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) Describe the dung beetle. What does it look like? What does it eat? What words characterize this insect? How does it travel?
- 2) What other creatures are found at the dung heap?
- 3) Why does the dung beetle need to get to the dung heap quickly? How does it prefer its food?
- 4) Where can you find dung beetles? Is there anywhere that dung beetles don't live?
- 5) Describe why dung beetles are useful.
- 6) After eating, what does the dung beetle do?
- 7) How does the dung beetle move the ball of dung?
- 8) What does the dung beetle do to protect its ball of dung from another beetle?
- 9) Describe the ideal location for the brood ball.

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- 10) What does the dung beetle do once it has found the ideal location?
- 11) What is the brood ball used for?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Draw a detailed picture of a dung beetle. Label the head, thorax, abdomen, six legs, wings and antenna.
- 2) Write a fictional story about the life of a dung beetle. Include information about how the beetle finds food, what it eats and how it provides for its offspring. Provide illustrations for your story.
- 3) Create a poster that shows in pictures or drawings the entire life cycle of a dung beetle.
- 4) Research dung beetles and other insects that feed on manure. Are these insects useful to humans? What do you think would happen if these insects did not exist? Present your findings in a report.

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