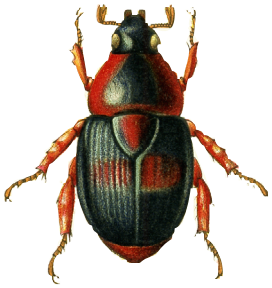
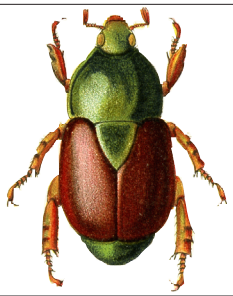


SCARABS



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WITHIN THIS ISSUE

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Paracotalpa leonina in Arizona

by Paul O. Kaufman

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Charlie O'Brien (*Scarabs* #18, page 8) and I had been watching Bill "Usain" Warner play with human feces and decomposing pocket gophers for what seemed like hours. Not that trapping aphodiines in pocket gopher runs isn't fun, but we didn't have any stake in it. This was my second trip with Bill to Antares Road near Kingman. It was February and it was pretty cold. If I had known I was coming back, I would have set my own traps (with dehydrated deer dung bait!) and been having some real fun of my own.

Charlie had been beating *Prosopis*, grass and forbs for weevils while I sifted dirt from the openings of kangaroo rat burrows. Neither of us was having any luck at all. I had ridden up with Bill but Charlie had driven up by himself. We were thinking we might have to leave Bill here, but really didn't want to desert him. If only he would finish picking up all his toys we could head into Kingman, get a bite to eat, and head over to the Colorado River to do some hunting in more profitable habitat. Bill came walking over to his truck (great!) to load up his booty (and hopefully wash his hands!). He had launched into another story about some very rare and very desirable species, when suddenly he interrupted his rather windy story to belt out as only Bill can "THERE GOES ONE!!!" I looked down and right in front of me was a little blur that reminded me of a bumblebee, or the *Paracotalpa granicollis* I used to catch in the four corners area! I don't remember what I had in my hands, but whatever it was went sailing into the ditch as I dove onto that little blur. I was not taking any chances! Did I get it? I carefully started to move my fingers apart to see if there was a very rare and very desirable beetle smashed into the sand where I landed on it…

Antares Road has slightly more flora and fauna than the moon (see *Scarabs* #25, page 2 and Photo 1), but not much. Bill likes to talk about these winter-active scarabs

Photo 1: Could a great scarab possibly exist here?

Photo 2: Dorsal view of a male.

that someone supposedly found sometime in the past in this area. They are all very rare and very desirable species, which is why I came with him last time. Barney Streit came along on the first trip too. We both got to watch Bill play with his feces and traps for several hours on that trip. Barney must have had more brains because he cancelled out this time! As we watched Bill plant his toys on that first trip, we kept a watchful eye (and nets at the ready) for anything that might be flying around. To make a very long days story short, we didn't see or get anything.

One of the beetles that Bill always likes to talk about is *Paracotalpa leonina* (Photos 2, 3 and 4). The females of the species are flightless and very rare. He discovered it for the first time (see sidebar) in Arizona here along Antares Road completely by accident (surprise, surprise…). How many times had we heard the story? Bill and Paul Skelley were looking for winter-active aphodiines here on Antares Road when along comes buzzing a large insect – with elytra! Formerly, I could only imagine the most grandiose editor sprinting like a member of the Jamaican Olympic track team over uneven terrain pursuing a little bug on the wing, waiving his net ahead of him like a madman (hard to imagine! – see *Scarabs* #23, page 4). No wonder the things take off like crazy when you try to net them!

As I carefully lifted my hand, there was indeed a beautiful *P. leonina* pressed into the soft earth. I got one! Now the search was on! I don't know how many Bill has at home, waiting in old kill jars until he has time to pin them. Dozens? Hundreds? At any rate, IT IS NOT ENOUGH! Bill, Charlie and I spread out over the moonscape watching for flying insects – with elytra (it turns out this was the ONLY insect around…). As they were spotted, Bill or I would take pursuit. Now I had seen Bill "Usain" Warner with my own eyes! We probably caught around half of the ones we pursued, definitely not more than half. Meanwhile Charlie ("Deadeye" O'Brien) was sweeping them up right and left. For a weevil guy this fellow can really net 'em!

"How many you have Bill?"
"Oh, 3, I think."
"How about you Paul?"
"I have 2."
"Charlie?"
"Ten including this last one I'm just getting out of the net…"

So it continued for a while. Suddenly Bill was yelling "Get over here with your camera Paul!" I ran to the truck, got my camera and ran to where Deadeye and Bill were studying the ground. It seems that Deadeye was about ready to snap up another *P. leonina* which happened to be landed on the ground. Too easy for the master, he was probably going to wait for it to take off before collecting it… What

Photo 3: Side view of the male.

Photo 4: Three-quarter view of the male.

Photo 5: A male has located a female.

Photo 6: After disappearing beneath the soil, the male and female were dug out.

Photo 7: The male (top) and the melanistic female (bottom).

should he see, but the hind end of another beetle sticking out of the ground! Deadeye O'Brien had just discovered the first female of the species in Arizona! After snapping some pictures (Photos 5-7), Bill collected it too, to join all the males waiting in old kill jars at home until he has time to pin them.

The action finally slowed down. I had started watching and following the males as they flew around, hoping to find another female. I already had enough males (5) and would have liked to get the second female. This went pretty well, as long the beetle didn't fly by Usain, who kept netting them after these long, wild sprints accompanied by screams of pain and ill-mannered words about his 50-plus-year-old knees…

We never did find another female. We got to the Colorado River in time to sift a little sand and collect some *Diplotaxis* and a new weevil species (Deadeye was in heaven!). Then it was time for the long drive back to central Arizona with Usain. He was telling me about some very rare and very desirable species that had been found…

Editors' Note: Bill's discovery of this female-flightless scarab east of the Colorado River and south of the Grand Canyon is remarkable. The specimens pictured here agree with those collected by buprestid great George Walters. George was on the north side of California's San Gabriel Mountains, where he observed males flying into patches of snow. Under the snow, and buried in the wet soil, he found females, which were melanistic.

The nomenclature of this species is a bit muddled at present. Officially, "leonina" is synonomized under ""ursina." Given its morphological differences, plus the fact that it flies two months earlier than "ursina," we propose that "leonina" is a distinct species.

The Genera *Melolontha* and *Anoxia* in France (Coleoptera Melolonthidae)

by Olivier Décobert

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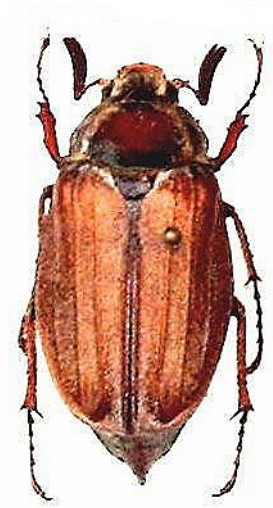
In France, the genera *Melolontha* and *Anoxia* contain more remarkable cockchafers, plus the impressive *Polyphylla fullo* L. which I discussed in *Scarabs* #39, page 5.

It is not usual to trap these scarabs, but to find them, one must wait until they have emerged. I can spend some years without observing even one of these insects, and yet sometimes they appear in great numbers. In May 2007, there was a big emergence of *Melolontha hippocastani* F. (Photo 1) in the forest of Fontainebleau, about 60 kilometers South of Paris. After parking, I observed hundreds of these scarabs dead around my car (crushed by people or cars), or flying in the forest. There were also many specimens resting in the grass or in the trees. It was the first time in more than 30 years of collecting that I had observed this insect. So, for the first time, this was really incredible! I saw another specimen of this species one year later, in May 2008, in the forest of Raismes, not far from my home.



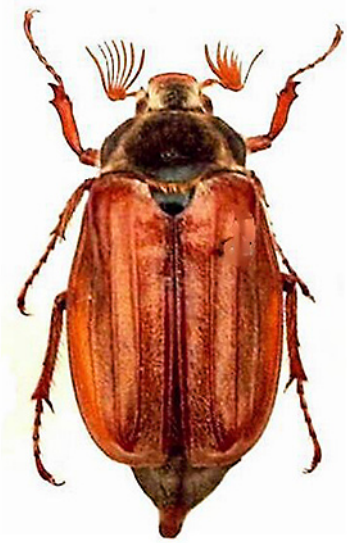


Photo 1: *Melolontha hippocastani* F. **Photo 2: *Melolontha melolontha* F.**

Melolontha melolontha F., also called "common cockchafer"- (Photo 2) was once very easy to see in the Spring but it is no longer common. Could this scarcity be the result of pesticides used for agriculture? I observed my first specimen in June 1980 at Wingles, in the North of France, and the second one was seen in May 2004 in Belgium, not far from the frontier with France. So I can say that it seems not to be common. Nevertheless, an entomologist of my region gave me a couple specimens he found in May 2007 near the town of Bourges, and explained that there was a preponderance of this insect at this locality. So if one is at the right place and at the right time, one can easily find *Melolontha* species.

Another species can be found in the East of France but is rare: *Melolontha pectoralis* Germar (close to *M. melolontha*).

To observe the genus *Anoxia*, one must go to a sandy region, essentially to the coastal dunes in the southern part of France. I found *Anoxia australis* (Schönh.) (Photo 3) many years ago in July (exact year not noted) at Argelès, on the Mediterranean coast, near the town of Perpignan. For *Anoxia villosa* F. (Photo 4), the best place for me was the southwestern coast of France, where I remembered seeing many specimens of this species in the dunes in July 1994, at several places between the regions of Bordeaux and Bayonne. *Anoxia villosa* can also be found in many other places, and I discovered the figured one when I was still a very young entomologist of 12 years of age. That was near the town of Lélex (July 1977), in the mountains of Jura (East of France). Two other species of *Anoxia* exist in France, but I have not yet seen them: *Anoxia scutellaris* (Mulsant), close to *Anoxia villosa*, and *Anoxia matutinalis* (Cast.) which inhabits in the island of Corsica.

Photo 3: *Anoxia australis* (Schönh.).

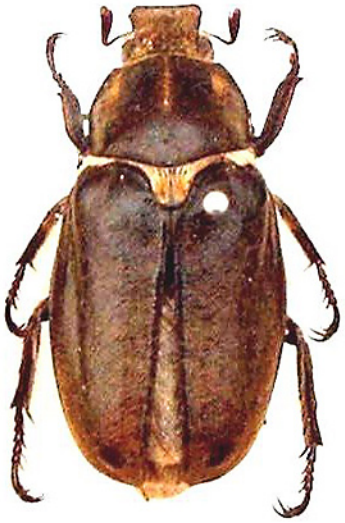


Photo 4: *Anoxia villosa* F.

Dunes of southwestern of France, a good habitat for *Anoxia villosa*.

Forest of Raismes (North of France) – *Melolontha hippocastani* was found here. *Melolontha melolontha* also exists in the region but habitually outside of the forest, in the open areas.

To improve the chances of collecting these scarabs, it could be interesting to use traps. I recently read an article about *Melolontha* trapping. This is the first time I have read something about this method and have never tried it. It seems that baits of damaged leaves of both host tree species (*Carpinus betulus* L. and *Quercus rubra* L.) can attract *Melolontha hippocastani* and *M. melolontha* in traps (see bibliography).

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Most Beautiful Scarab Story/Picture Festival

by The Editors

Our fifth call for stories and/or photographs is now on. This time, we are calling for your comments and/or photographs of what you believe is the most beautiful scarab. This can be beautiful to your eyes only; others need not agree.

As an incentive to contribute, everyone who does so will receive a large, glossy, inscribed print of this portrait of our other proofreader: the diminutive and ever-popular Jennifer, shown below.

Please submit your photos and/or comments by November 15. We look forward to your submissions.

In Past Years - XXVII - 1984

by Henry F. Howden

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After several months of freezing temperatures and snow, Anne and I decided that it was time to take advantage of our week off at the end of February, 1984, and head south. Gary Manley, who was working for United Fruit Company in Costa Rica at that time, had invited us to spend the week collecting with him, so we had a fine reason to escape our winter. We left Ottawa on February 14, took a bus to the Dorval, Quebec airport, where we overnighted. The next morning we flew directly to San Jose where we were met by Gary.

After a much needed good night's sleep at Gary's house, he took us to a freshly cut, old coffee plantation with many downed *Inga* trees. A number of odd cerambycids were collected, but no scarabs. We then went about 2 km south of Colon to a ridge that was forested near the top at 1,100 meters. It was nice and warm, in the mid-nineties F, and having come from below freezing temperatures two days before, Anne and I nearly didn't make it up the ridge! When we finally reached the forest, which was dry, collecting was slow. One *Onthophagus* was collected perching on a leaf, but the most common arthropod was an unwanted species of first and second instar seed ticks! After a short time we returned to our cut *Inga* trees. That night there was a full moon and we didn't try to collect; we were too tired anyway!

The next morning we were up at 4:30 AM (an awfully early hour for us) and took a Piper Apache III plane (Photo 1) to the Estrella Valley on the north coast adjacent to Panama. To reach the coast, we had to fly over the Talamanca Range (Photo 2) with its large areas of uncut forest and no roads. In the valley, the banana company had a small town called Pandora (Photo 3) which was built for the workers, plus a guest house and a lab for research on banana pests. Thanks to Gary, we were comfortably housed and fed in the common dining room.

The level valley floor (Photo 4) was entirely planted with bananas while the slopes on either side

Photo 1: United Fruit Apache plane that served as transport to and from Pandora, Costa Rica. At 5 AM it was unusual for me to be able to take a picture!

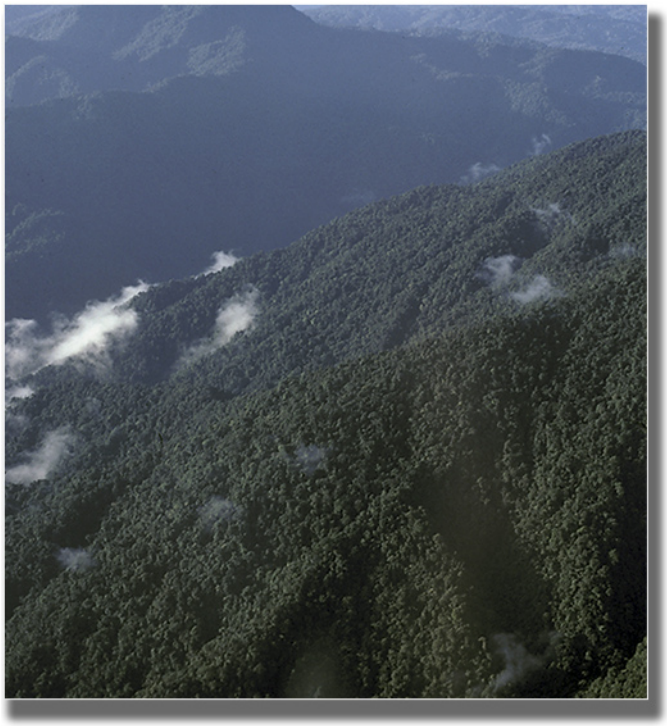

Photo 2: Flying over the Talamanca Range on the way to Pandora.

were largely uncut tropical forest at the base of the Talamanca Range. The forest started on a nearby hillside (Photo 5) near the guest house; the afternoon was spent in the forest setting dung and

Photo 3: What could be seen of Pandora from the airstrip.

carrion traps (bits of chicken), a flight interception trap (FIT) and a Malaise trap. In the evening we set out our black light, but shortly after dusk it rained heavily.

The next morning all of the traps contained a variety of scarabs and other beetles except for the carrion traps which some large animal had excavated and eaten the bait. I suspected that a large dog was the culprit. One lived in a nearby house and was very friendly when not tied up. When chained beside his house he was the most vicious sounding animal we saw that trip. I strongly suspected him of eating our bait, but didn't test his DNA. I obtained some more chicken parts and hung then from small branches well above the ground on either side of the FIT. The result was that several species of *Deltochilum*, and a number of other scarabaeines were caught in the FIT. The bait lasted for the three remaining days of our stay at Pandora.

Near the edge of the forest I noticed a dead, ten foot high, tree stump with several old shelf fungi. When pulled off, along with some bark and rotten wood, two *Termitodius* sp. (Photo 6) were found in the rotten wood. Gary had several Berlese funnels set up in the lab at Pandora, so we gathered several bags full of the rotten wood and Gary put them in the funnels with a jar of alcohol below each. We left them with instructions for one of the local workers. Gary returned after we had left Costa Rica and found a few more specimens. Over three months Gary processed

the rest of the stump through the funnels and obtained several more *Termitodius*. It was one of our more interesting finds for that trip.

At 6 AM Tuesday morning, the 21st of February, we flew back to San Jose. We collected on the cut *Inga* trees in the afternoon and collected more of the odd cerambycid. Lighting that night was not very good, but we did get *Cyclocephala*, *Anomala*, *Ataenius*, some other aphodiines and a passalid. The next morning we obtained a car and drove over the Talamanca Range to San Isidro General, setting a few dung traps at several high points near the road. We found a good motel just beyond the city. The valley near the motel and the city seemed to be entirely agricultural, so we asked some locals where we might find some forest. No one seemed to know what we were talking about, although Gary spoke excellent Spanish. We ended up driving around exploring dirt roads and after several hours found a small fragment of forest at the base of the escarpment. There was a dirt road headed toward the Pacific that branched off of the main road as it entered the valley. We set out the usual traps and found an Inga tree in bloom. The flowers yielded *Calomacrapsis haroldi* and *Cnemida* sp. and the traps produced the expected *Onthophagus* and a *Canthon* that I didn't recognize; a pleasant surprise. Lights set at the edge of the forest attracted the usual *Cyclocephala*, *Anomala* and one *Phyllophaga* before it started to rain.

Photo 4: The bottom of the Estrella Valley; entirely bananas except for the airstrip. Heavy rains in the mountains occasionally flooded the entire valley; the bananas didn't mind, but people hoping to fly out certainly did!

Photo 5: The forest near our lodging at Pandora; great collecting.

Photo 6: *Termitodius* sp. collected in a rotting tree stump at Pandora; Gary Manley later ran the entire rotting stump through his Berlese funnels, getting a small series of this beetle. Photo by F. Genier.

One of the problems with recounting trips, is that the commonplace does not make interesting reading. While we did collect several undescribed species of *Onthophagus*, only a specialist might find that fact interesting. The only unusual event that occurred during our stay in San Isidro happened about 3 AM of the second night there. I woke up with the worst cramp in the calf of my right leg that I can remember (why is it called a "Charlie horse"? - poor Charlie). I hopped around for a while and didn't sleep much the rest of the night; the next day I limped for most of the day, getting very little sympathy! Things get slow when I bring up this type of memory; I was the only one thinking it memorable!

We left San Isidro about 6 AM a day later and headed back toward San Jose, picking up our traps along the way. Out of the two lots of traps set at high elevations, I collected two specimens of a common *Deltochilum* and a few miscellaneous beetles that were stupid enough to fall into the traps. As we picked up the last of the traps, it started to rain. Returning to Gary's house, we spent the evening packing.

Early the next morning we left for the airport and found a crowd of people already at the counter where we were due to check in. We were then told that the plane was full and that we were not on the passenger list. We explained that we had reconfirmed at the downtown office, and showed that we had paid the departure fee, which had been stamped on our tickets. We were told too bad, the computer was down and we were not on the passenger list, but wait awhile. There seemed to be about thirty extra people, all expecting to get on the plane to Miami, some being very rude (to put it mildly). Finally they started to board the plane, oddly almost all Costa Ricans from the names called, then there were English names. But that didn't help much, a man's name was called but not his very pregnant wife's name. The ensuing argument lasted for some time; the result being that the pair did not get on the plane. Then our names were called and we found we had the last two seats on the plane. Twenty or more people were left, most swearing that they would never come to Costa Rica again. It was not good public relations; but it was the most exciting part of the trip! We arrived back in Ottawa that evening to find little snow and the temperature at about -6 C.

A Interesting Population of *Paracotalpa ursina*

by Barney D. Streit

In central California there is a population of the widespread *Paracotalpa ursina* (Scarabaeidae: Rutelinae) that exhibits a mix of typically-colored specimens (as seen here) and melanistic specimens (below).

The day these photographs were taken was intermittently cloudy. When the sun was shining, these scarabs could be commonly seen in flight. Once the sun went behind a cloud, they were nowhere to be seen.

A melanistic specimen feeding on a small annual plant.

Often, specimens were seen in pairs. While quite hairy, they are not nearly as hairy as *P. leonina*. The data are: U.S.A.: California, San Luis Obispo County, 9.2 road miles southwest of Shandon, April 9, 1993.

A mating pair.

Bug People I

from the Secret Files of Henry Howden

Can you identify this entomologist and discern what he is doing? The answer is at the bottom of this page. The answer is **not** Indiana Jones digging for the Lost Treasure of the Aztecs.

Answer: Henry Howden, digging for *Peltotrupes*.

License Plates

by Bill Warner
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Can you match the scarab collector to his license plate? One "high-end" scarab enthusiast on the list has two custom plates. The answers are at the bottom of this page. Good luck!

Bill Warner

Ron McPeak

Delbert LaRue

Rich Cunningham

Bruce Gill

Pat Sullivan

Frank Hovore

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Grading Scale

0/8 Apply for an editorial position at *Scarabs*-you will be among your kind
1/8 You should have become a dentist
2/8 Definitely tertiary syphilis
3/8 A dead grub has more gray matter than you
4/8 Go for a Ph.D. unless you already have one
5/8 You are smarter than you look
6/8 Good for a 1 day expedition with the *Scarabs* employee of your choice
7/8 Good for a 1 week expedition with the *Scarabs* employee of your choice
8/8 Who's your daddy?

Key: 1. Delbert LaRue 2. Frank Hovore 3. Bruce Gill
4. Ron McPeak 5. Pat Sullivan 6. Rich Cunningham
7. Bill Warner 8. Bruce Gill