

Name _____



What's on the Beetle Menu?

Beetles are some of the most versatile eaters in the insect world! With over 400,000 species, their diets vary widely depending on the type of beetle and where it lives. Some beetles are herbivores, others are carnivores, and many are omnivores, eating a mix of plants and animals.

Herbivorous beetles are plant lovers. They enjoy munching on leaves, stems, and flowers. Leaf beetles, for

example, eat crops like lettuce and spinach, while weevils bore into seeds and nuts. These beetles often live near their food sources, like gardens or forests, where plants are abundant.

Carnivorous beetles are hunters. Ground beetles and tiger beetles are speedy predators, chasing after small insects or worms. These beetles have strong jaws, called mandibles, that help them catch and eat their prey. Some carnivorous beetles even feed on the eggs of other insects, making them helpful for farmers by controlling pest populations.

Omnivorous beetles, like dung beetles, have the most interesting diets of all. Dung beetles eat animal waste and help clean up the environment. Other omnivorous beetles eat a mix of plants, fungi, and small insects. Their ability to eat many kinds of food helps them survive in a variety of habitats, from forests to deserts.

Beetles have many ways of finding and obtaining food. Some, like bark beetles, dig into tree trunks to reach their meals. Others use their sense of smell to locate food from far away. Dung beetles, for example, roll balls of dung to their underground burrows to eat later. This behavior makes them nature's recyclers!

No matter what they eat, beetles play an important role in ecosystems. They keep plant and insect populations balanced and help recycle nutrients. The next time you see a beetle, think about how it might be helping its environment with its unique diet.