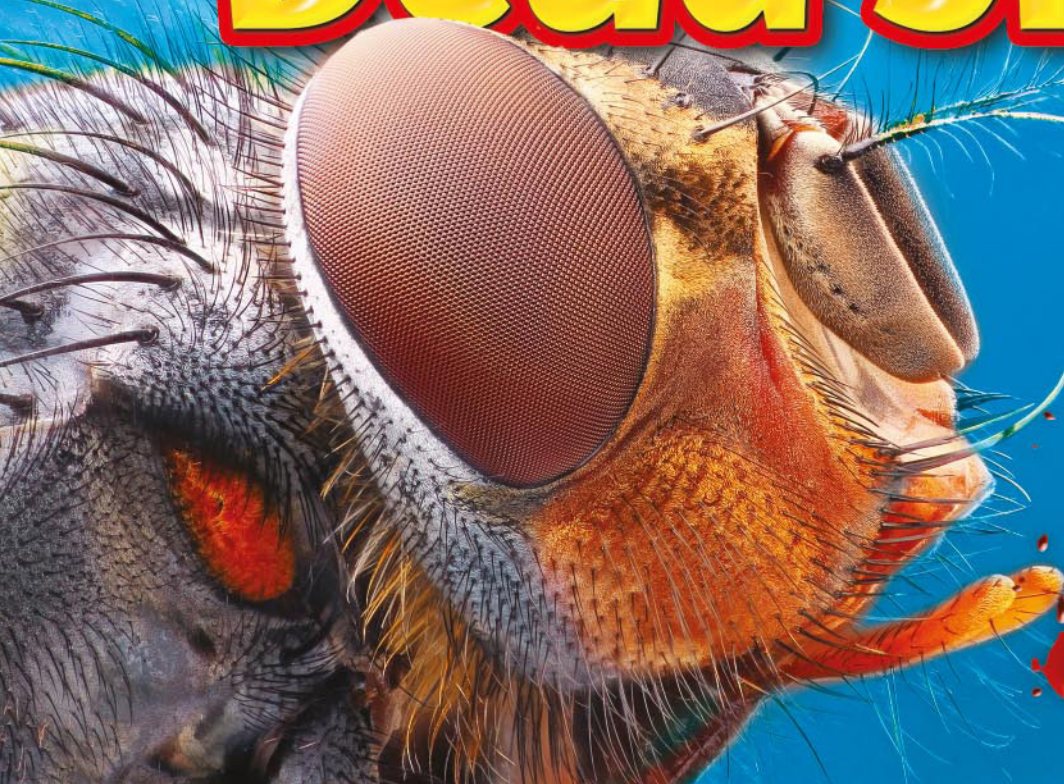


THE SECRET LIVES OF INSECTS



Blood, Poop, & Dead Skin



The Things
Insects Eat

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Blood, Poop, & Dead Skin



**The Things
Insects Eat**

by Ruth Owen and Ross Piper

Ruby Tuesday Books

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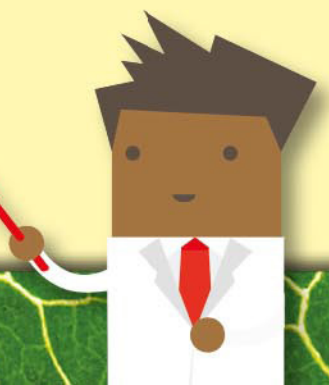
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Words shown in **bold** in the text are explained in the glossary.



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The Things Insects Eat

Crunch, munch, slurp, gotcha! Every second of the day, billions of tiny insects are hunting, foraging, and eating.

Some insects feed on plants. Others are **predators** that must catch and kill their meals. Many insects are **parasites** that satisfy their hunger by feeding on other living things.

Some **species** of insects are **scavengers**. These mini clean-up crews eat poop or dead bodies. They help dispose of all the yucky stuff that could cause disease or make our world very smelly.

Inside this book, we'll see up-close what happens when some of Earth's tiniest creatures get hungry.

Let's discover what insects eat!

Feeding on Blood

Before she can produce eggs, a female horsefly needs a meal of blood from a large mammal, such as a horse, cow, or human. She cuts a hole in her victim's skin with two saw-like **mandibles**. Once blood starts flowing from the wound, she licks it up.

A horsefly

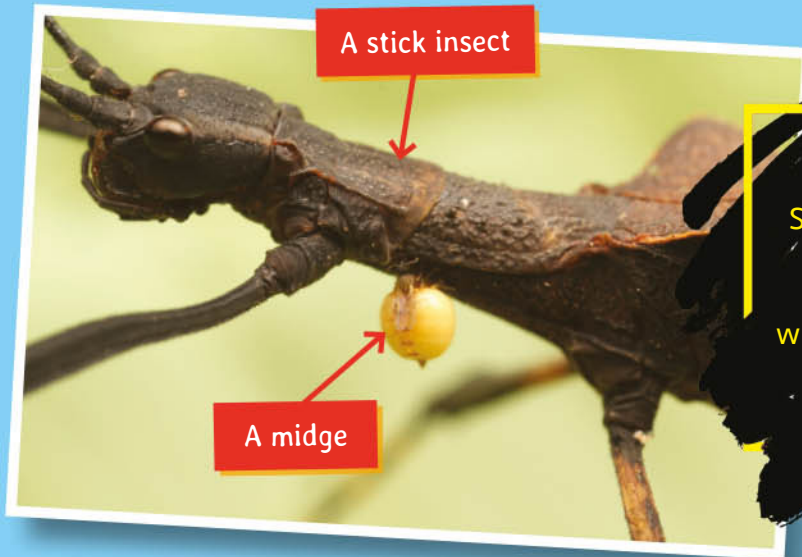
Mandibles

Nature's Trash Cans

Cockroaches have a very varied diet. If they live in sewers, they feed on urine, dirty diapers, and poop. If they move into your home, they will snack on garbage, your food, books, plants—even hair and toenail clippings.



A cockroach



A stick insect

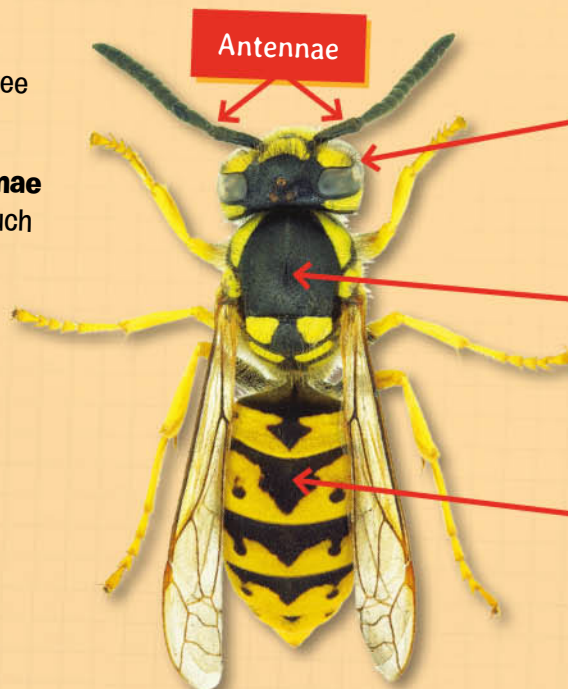
A midge

A Tiny Parasite

Some parasitic insects feed on other insects. The tiny fly, or midge, in this photo is filled with blood that it's sucked from the stick insect.

The Science Stuff—What Is an Insect?

- Insects are tiny animals with a body made of three main parts.
- Insects use their **antennae** to do different things, such as touching, smelling, or detecting sounds.
- An insect has a tough outer covering called an **exoskeleton**.



Antennae

The head contains an insect's brain, eyes, mouthparts, and a pair of antennae.

The thorax has six jointed legs and the insect's wings.

The abdomen contains an insect's digestive system and reproductive parts.

Living Larders

Life in a hot, dry desert is tough. So when times are good and there's plenty of food around, it makes sense to store some.

That's exactly what a honeypot ant **colony** does. When desert plants are in bloom, worker ants feed on **nectar** from flowers. They return to the colony's underground nest and feed the nectar to special workers called repletes. The repletes act like living **larders**. Their abdomens grow bigger and bigger as they fill with nectar.

During times when there is no food around, the repletes **regurgitate** the nectar for the whole colony to eat.



Honey-pot ants

Nectar-filled abdomen

A honeypot ant's abdomen can swell to the size of a grape!

Too Big To Move

The repletes become so bloated they cannot move. They hang from the ceiling of the nest.

The Science Stuff

When some of the stored nectar is needed, a worker ant strokes a replete's antennae. This signals to the storage ant that it must regurgitate some nectar.

Worker ants also catch and kill other insects, such as wasps. The ants feed on fats from the bodies of their **prey**. Then the fatty liquid is fed to the repletes to be stored for later use.

The honeypot ant in this photo is being kidnapped from its nest by rival ants who want its store of nectar!

Rival ant

Replete ant filled with honey

Honeypot ants live in deserts in Africa, Australia, the United States, and Mexico.