



# Information

Bohart Museum of Entomology

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## Darkling Beetles

Stink Beetles or Darkling Beetles belong to the genus *Eleodes* of the family Tenebrionidae. Adults are among the largest commonly encountered beetles in California. They are black and slow moving, and cannot fly as the wing covers (elytra) are fused over the back. They are commonly seen along roads, in open areas or under boards or rocks. They generally range from 1 to 2 inches in length.

Darkling beetles are ground dwelling and both adults and larvae feed on dead or decaying vegetable matter. They are particularly common in coastal or desert areas. Where there is considerable debris on the ground they may be found beneath every board or piece of decaying wood. In desert areas some species actually migrate in large numbers during certain times of the year. These beetles overwinter as either adults or larvae. Adults are

known to live several years and make interesting pets.

The name "stink beetle" comes from the adult habit of standing on their head with the abdomen pointing in the air, and emitting an offensive smelling, reddish black fluid. They use this posture, and the odor they emit, to defend themselves against predators, particularly birds, rodents and raccoons.

Larvae (grubs) are brown to yellowish in color, and are cylindrical and shiny. They closely resemble mealworms sold in pet stores, and in fact are closely related to that species. Larval darkling beetles are most often found under the bark of dead trees, in stumps, or under rocks, boards, or logs on the ground. Adults and larvae can be easily kept in captivity. They can be fed rolled oats, pieces of apple and dried, low fat dog food (kibbles).

