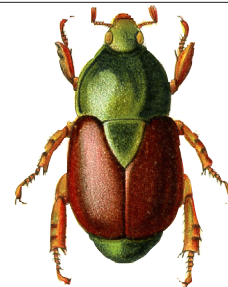


SCARABS



Если он воняет, они воля приходить

Occasional Issue Number 21

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www.coleopsoc.org/nwslttrs.shtml

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www-museum.unl.edu/research/entomology/Scarabs-Newsletter.htm

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A Trip to Panama

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Julien in Brazil, stretching and doing one-leg deep knee bends before setting out his banana traps.

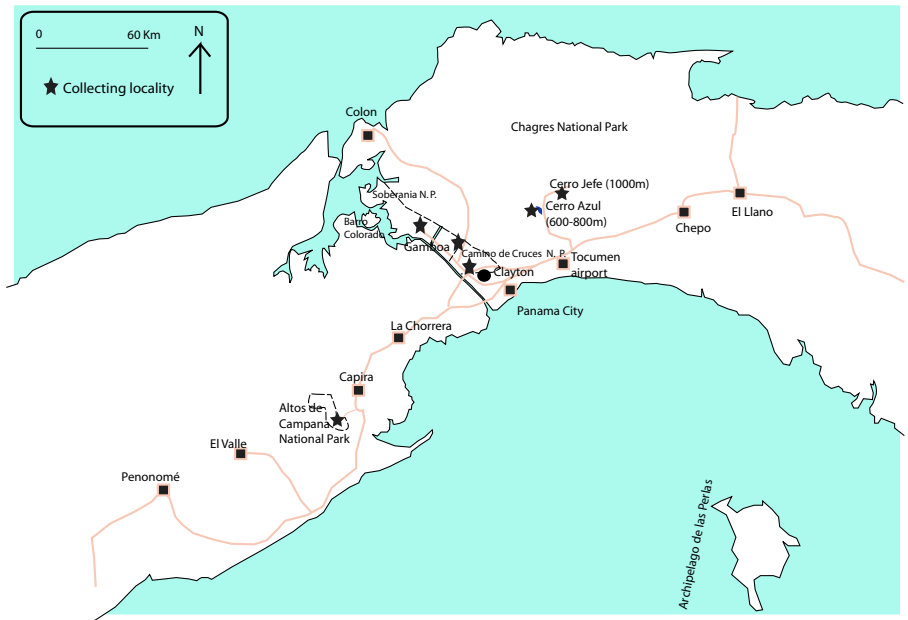
In January of this year, I decided to take a three-week (April 30 to May 16) holiday. I had no real idea of where I was going to collect, but May is a good month for an entomological trip in many parts of the world. I once thought of going to Guinea to trap cetonids, but I heard rumors of imminent war, so I looked more carefully

at South or Central America. Panama appeared to be a quiet country, with a huge fauna, and easy for collecting beetles. Editor's Note: We suggest contacting the Panamanian authorities for the latest requirements regarding permits.

After discovering the *Scarabs* newsletter on the web, I asked Editor Streit some advice about Panama. He replied quickly:

"Thank you for the information. I have not been to Panama since about 1993, but I went over some old notes I had taken.

After getting your vehicle at the Panama City Airport, a good place to stay is the Riande Continental. It can be used as a base for much collecting in this area. Leaving the airport, there will be a road to the right which goes along the coast. Do not take it. Instead, go left and the hotel will come up very quickly on the right. We checked in, then checked the lights at Cerro Azul



Map showing the collecting localities near the Canal Zone

and Cerro Jefe.

To get to these localities, turn right out of the hotel. Look for a Texaco gas station and a store on your right. Turn left onto the road across from them. At some point (I am not sure how far) you will need to take another left turn. From this turn it is 20 km to Cerro Azul, also called Altos Cerro Azul. 10.8 km from this turn is the road to Goofy Lake, which is a good place to blacklight. After checking the lights in Cerro Azul, you can drive up the the radio tower at Cerro Jefe. The tower is at the top of a hill. The road can be slippery, so a 4-wheel drive vehicle would be nice. You will have to scale a fence to check the lights. *Dynastes hercules* can be found at the lights on the far side of the buildings. At the base of this steep hill, there is a steep dirt road that you can walk down in the daytime. Look for beetles on the *Psycotria* blooms in the morning. By noon they will be gone. I remember

collecting beautiful iridescent-blue cerambycids with red legs on the blooms. Good scarabs are here too, such as *Dialithus* and *Trigonopeltastes*. A long-handled net will be needed.

The El Llano-Carti Road is a famous collecting area. I do not know if there is any forest left or not. The Pan American Highway leading to it was full of terrible holes, so here caution is advised. The road is past the 4th Bailey Bridge, on the left. Be careful on those bridges! My notes indicate the distance from the hotel to El Llano is 55 km.

If you want to go to Colon, the turn is 12.4 km, at a bridge. On the way to Colon, there is a guard house on the road to Madden Dam. You need a permit to collect in Madden Forest beyond the dam, but the lights on the dam are said to be good for beetles.

El Valle is another interesting spot. We stayed at Hotel Campestre. To get to it, as you enter El Valle, the road will go over a little bridge. Take the next right turn. This road will split, so stay on the left.

The little town of Sajalices has a little, cheap hotel you can stay in. This is just past (north of) the turn for Cerro Campana, another fantastic area.”



Cotinis lebasi, a common cetonid found at all the collecting sites, but most common at Cerro Jefe.



Flight interception trap called “cryldé” in France. This method copies spiders webs. You can use the cheap spider webs sold for Halloween! This trap did not work very well in the rainy conditions of Panama and in this trap; I only got one *Coprophanaeus* and a *Euphoria*.



A Phileurini dynastid caught on my spider web, *Soberania* N. P. That trap was placed on the branches of a fallen tree.



The Panama Canal, view from the top of a hill in the Camino de Cruces N. P. on the “sendero del Guardaparque.” Note the banana trap on the left, which worked well (hilltops are often good spots).



Cerro Azul, private forest near the lake. It is possible to look for insects and place traps on the trails along the private properties. See my banana trap in the center-right of the picture.



Gymnetis vandepolli, a nice and rather common species at the traps at Cerro Azul; just one specimen was caught at Alto de Campana



Gymnetis wollastoni, a small species, found mostly at Alto de Campana N. P.

My collecting philosophy is the opposite of some friends, especially lepidopterists, who are always looking to cover the entire country from north to south in one trip. I always prefer staying in one or two places and searching around. This way, you can set traps, collect more intensively at the good spots, and you don't lose a lot of time driving your car. Moreover, there are so many species—even in a single region.

During this trip, I was looking for both Cerambycidae (my main interest) and Scarabeidae, especially large and bright ones. I also had to collect some moths to exchange with some friends, and I put all the beetles crossing my way into a separate box, for other friends.



Cyclocephala boucheri (or a close species), a very common species at banana traps, especially in old rotten traps, in all the localities.



Nymphalidae butterflies are also attracted by the banana-beer smell.

Arrival and accomodations:

I took a flight from Paris to Panama City on Iberia with stops in Madrid and Costa Rica. I was told by some friends to avoid all flights via United States or on U.S. airlines, as there is a lot of fuss with security. On the return flight, it proved to be true as the passengers from a famous U.S. airline were all individually checked whereas the passengers from Iberia had no luggage searches before check-in.

I rented a small Suzuki 4x4 and drove by night to my hotel, crossing Panama City and its traffic jams and roads without any street signs identifying them. Contrary to the advice of Barney, I avoided the Riande Airport hotel. It was expensive with a very



Cerro Jefe forest (near Chagres N. P., 1000 m), on a sunny morning. Usually it is full of fog, a strange elfin forest with many palm trees, very wet and windy. Good place for banana trapping, light trapping and day collecting on small flowering trees.



A fast method for setting the blacklight on my car's battery.



The light trap on Cerro Jefe, at 8:30 PM



Alto de Campana N. P., small piece of remaining forest on the pacific slope. The edge between forest and grassland was rich in cetonids and longhorns.



Canthon septemmaculatus exhibiting perching behavior, on grass in the understory in Soberania N. P.



Mating *Bolax magnus*, Alto de Campana N. P.

international style. Instead, I stayed at the Hostal de Clayton, in the northern suburb of Panama City. It was inexpensive, (\$13 U.S. per night), comfortable, with a freezer, and near the Canal Zone national parks.

I stayed more than 10 days in this hotel, exploring the Canal Zone and mountains on both sides: PN Alto de Campana and Cerro Azul. At the end, I decided that driving to Cerro Azul from that hotel was too far because I would have to cross Panama City. For the last days of my trip, I moved to a hotel in Cerro Azul, near the lake, (altitude 650 m): Cabana Turismaru, a bit more expensive at \$35 U.S. for a room for up to 5 persons, but comfortable and close to very good spots.

Collecting methods used:

Banana trap (see my paper on trapping with bananas following this article).

I set a lot of “banana traps” in order to catch cetonids, rutelids and longhorns.

I thought that low-altitude dry forest would produce more results than mountain rain forest, due to better attraction.

I tried to setting traps in the Canal Zone with red wine and with banana/beer, but after 3 days, there were not many beetles. Next I set four traps at Cerro Azul (650 m), in private forests near the lake, just beyond the fences. Just 2 days later there were some cetonids! So I put many traps there, and also

on the rainy, windy and misty elfin forest at the top of Cerro Jefe (1000 m). These traps also work pretty well with ripe banana and beer, especially on sunny mornings.

At Alto de Campana, trapping was also productive on the sunny edge between the forest and deforested lands. These sites—separated by 100 km—provided different species.

At the beginning, I put five traps at each site. After three days, I put more traps near the traps that had attracted the most specimens. This way you can put your traps at the best place, and traps placed near the first good ones often do not attract just the same species already captured. It proved to be true again in Panama.

Carrion and dung beetle traps:

Looking for Phanaeini, I used my “personal bait” in the Canal Zone, with simple but dirty traps: the bait directly inside the pitfall!* By placing traps inside the forest near small streams, I caught a few *Coprophanaeus telamon* and *Sulcophanaeus noctis*. Using fish as bait attracted *Coprophanaeus* which was present at all the localities.

I used also a mixture of crevette, fish, pouple and moule, bought frozen at the supermarket.** It works pretty well for *Phanaeus hermes*, in open areas near Alto de Campana. In Cerro Jefe the bait was eaten by a nocturnal mammal.



A carrion beetle trap set for 2 days with a frozen mixture of crevette, fish, and calamari, on the grassland near Alto de Campana N. P. It worked pretty well for *Phanaeus hermes*, *Coprophanaeus*, a *Deltochilum*, and also a few of the cicindelid *Megacephala*!

Flight interception traps:

I used some Halloween false spider web, placed on the understorey in drier places. It did not work as well as usual (as in French Guyana) but I managed to snare some small *Euphoria* sp. (a species more easily caught flying close to the ground), a Phileurini and some Passalidae.

Light trap:

Light trapping is not my favorite technique. For longhorn beetles I prefer more active collecting methods such as beating and exploring logs at night. This time, I decided to do some light trapping to get some moths for friends and to

**Editor Rich's Note Through Close Personal Endangerment: This method of placing the “personal bait” directly in the trap should not be attempted with “Barney Bait™” as it could not only be hazardous to one's health, but also make the specimens all but untouchable since a solvent has not been developed strong enough to counteract the embedded aroma that could probably awake the comatose and/or put the awake into a comatose state. There is a reason that we always use a small cup or my plastic spoons to keep the good stuff away from the good stuff. More work—but the outcome is more affable.*

***Editors Note: We know that “crevette” means “shrimp.” We suspect that “pouple” and “moule” have something to do with “moldy personal bait.” The French are the epitome of culinary sophistication and wizardry; they no doubt use baits that are far beyond the understanding of the average American scarabaeologist.*



A view from the road between Cerro Azul and Cerro Jefe, showing the deforested landscape of the mountain with Panama City in the background.



A nice rutulid, *Phalangogonia sperata*, found on the swimming pool of my hotel in Cerro Azul!


see what beetles I could get. I used an 18-watt blacklight, run from the battery of my car, with the white sheet put on the car (see the photos on page 5).

For 12 nights, I ran the light from 7 until 9 in the evening. In one place near the Soberania NP in the Canal Zone, I had bad results: hot, hundreds of mosquitoes and very few beetles, even less than at the lights of the hotel parking lot!

On Cerro Jefe, near the Chagres NP, it was better, especially when the fog was on the mountain. I caught a female *Megasoma*, lots of Cyclocephalini and some Prioninae.

Unfortunately the lights of the towns did not attract anything. The bulbs have probably been replaced since 1993 and the trip of Barney, Frank Hovore and Robert Turnbow, which yielded many nice species at these same lights. I did not get any *Chrysina*, which was my main regret from this trip.

I also collected by observing dead trees, beating dead branches, and looking at them at night. These methods are good for longhorns and others, but do not produce many scarabs.

Now, please continue reading for my thoughts on trapping using fermenting bananas. 

Trapping with Bananas

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Many designs exist and a lot has been written on trapping with bananas. After collecting in Europe, Africa (the continent of the Cetoniids) and neotropical countries, I use the design and technique presented below, and usually get good results.

The container:

All sizes of plastic bottles can be used, up to 5 liters. The 1 liter is a good compromise, having enough room for bait to attract beetles, but not too big.

Small bottles are useful when you have to carry many of them, and they can work very well, as I experienced in Africa and Panama. I often used discarded bottles found along the roadsides—this is environmentally-friendly collecting at its best!

The hole:

It is important that it is large enough so the beetles can enter easily. Lateral windows are best when it is rainy, and since it is often rainy, I always use this design. To avoid having the trap



Editors Note: These articles from Julien mark the first submissions from Europe. We encourage other scarabaeologists from Europe, and also Latin America, Asia and Africa to follow Julien's footsteps and submit material for inclusion in future issues.



full of water, it is efficient to make a roof by turning up the partially-cut plastic to make an awning over the hole.

The bait:

This is very important stuff and you have different schools of thought:

1) Red wine (cheap) with sugar and salt can be used in Europe, French Guyana and the West Indies when the weather is rather dry. It can perform very well, notably for Cerambycidae, but sometimes it does not work at all.

2) Fruit and beer. I use banana and beer with sugar. The stage of the ripeness of the banana is important: they have to be ripe but not totally putrid (good when you can break big pieces with your fingers). If they are not ripe enough, wait a few days.

Actually, I don't mix banana and beer before putting the bait into the trap. I use a bag with banana, and a bottle with sugar added to beer. Usually I put into the trap two big portions of banana with its skin (cut and pressed with the fingers), and then add two cm of beer, then shake the bottle a little and set the trap.

Where to set the traps:

The best places are sunny places like forest edges, especially isolated trees near the edges of forest clearings. In shady areas in the understory, you can also get some interesting and different species. Here in the photograph, one good

spot was the edge of the forest

How to hang the trap:

1) By making a hole in the bottle and cutting a twig so that I can put the bottle directly on the tree (simple) or

2) Using a string or wire

How high do you hang the trap?
Big question. Usually it works well at a human-reachable height, 1.5 to 2.5 m. More importantly, place it in a sunny place. To put it higher, which can sometimes attract more cetonids, you can find a small flexible tree, flex it, hang the trap and let it slowly redress, as I am doing in the photo to the right.



The beetles:

Here are some Cetoniinae, including *Amithao albopictum* van de Poll, 1886, (as far as I can remember).

You can also catch some Rutelinae and some longhorns. Good luck!



In Past Years - III - The Australian “Out-Back” by Henry F. Howden

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Artwork Courtesy
Delbert LaRue.



Between 1972 and 2004 we spent considerable time in the Australian “out-back”. Much of it was fun, but collecting weevils or scarabs does not often make great stories (see 2007 “Digging Down Under; -” in *Zootaxa*). A few things did happen that seem worthy of retelling, particularly those from Western Australia.

In driving to WA (which we frequently did) we had to cross the Nullarbor (=no trees) along the south edge of Australia. Leaving South Australia there were several signs of interest: one reads “Bring your own water, no potable water

for 1800 km”. A series of large, green signs then tell you how far it is to the next place to get gas: 300 km or more. On the back of one sign, someone had painted “300 km to the next Kentucky Fried Wombat”. We still laugh over that!

On one occasion we were coming down a fairly steep hill into a small town in northern WA when we hit a rare “speed bump”. As both some scarabs and a few weevils were collected in pit fall traps, we saved our old tin cans and kept them in a large box in the back of our Land Cruiser. When we hit the bump at a fairly high speed, it slowed us down;

it also caused the back door of the Cruiser to come open and our box of cans to spill out on the road. Cans noisily took off down the road, much to our horror and to the amusement of some locals. We quickly gathered as many cans as we could easily find and left town.

Usually after camping for 4 or 5 days we headed for a caravan (= trailer) park to do our laundry and for showers and more water (which we sometimes had to pay for in WA). The woman running the small park at Coral Bay, WA, was very nice and helpful. As we were leaving for more time in the field we bought several cans of Coke. When we paid for them, she said they were not very cold, so substituted others from her freezer. As we drove away, we decided that a cold Coke would be nice as it was already a hot day. You may guess what happened. The water in the Coke froze while in the freezer, leaving the liquid syrup under greater pressure. When the tab was pulled on the can, sticky, cold syrup went all over the inside of the cruiser, including our clean laundry! For the next 5 days we put up with a sticky car and not too clean clothes. So much for helpful people; just take care if you are a naive foreigner.

One night we were camped near the Arrow Smith River in a fairly open area. We drove a short distance from camp and set up our black light in a small clearing. About 9 PM it sounded like a war had broken out. Anyone who has seen the first *Crocodile Dundee* movie can guess what was

happening. Roo shooters! Needless to say, we picked up our light and left in a hurry.

Since it was an interesting area, we decided to stay at our camp site for a few more days. Anne was dismayed when another car full of campers pulled into our clearing and asked if it was a good place to spend the night. After some contemplation, Anne said it was OK, but they should be warned that we would be operating special UV lights to attract insects that night and it could be bad for their eyes. Shortly thereafter, they left - either because of the "dangerous" lights (18 watts) - or the crazy bug collectors?

Then there was Artsy (not his real name) who was a friend of friends we were camping with. We all stopped by to say hello and were invited to stay the night and to have "tea" (= dinner). Since we had been camping for a few days, the invitation was welcome, and we went into a typical WA farm house. There resemblances ended! Artsy was the world champion kitch (=junk) saver. We entered through the kitchen; in it was a gas stove, a high end microwave and a wood stove, the latter being the one in use. There was also an upright refrigerator and a large, low freezer. Except for the wood stove, all were piled high with old news papers and magazines. To get something out of the freezer, several stacks of papers had to be moved to the dinner table in the center of the room or on to the floor. In order for us to sit down, the chairs had to be cleared of boxes or paper. Our bedroom consisted of a double bed with about

ten mattresses piled beside it that we worried might fall on us during the night. On the wall was a large nail with 21 years of calendars, the last one being only one year old. The clutter continued throughout the house. After “tea” Artsy wanted to show us his pride and joy - an old pump organ. He took us to the living room, which was jammed with old TV sets, mostly in pieces. He cleared a narrow walkway to the back wall where the organ resided and was horrified to find one end of his prize organ covered in hardened mud: the termites liked the organ too!



Julodimorpha bakewelli White

Editors Note: We always suspected that bups were a little “fruity.”

Then there was the outhouse. It consisted of a modern flush toilet boxed in by two-by-fours with plywood covering the outside and connected to the outer edge of the covered porch. The interesting part was on the inside between the exposed two-by-fours; all the spaces were full of the empty cardboard tubes that had held toilet paper. We finally got up enough courage to ask what use could the holders possibly have? The answer was that they MIGHT be useful to hold small gifts for the

children at parties or at Christmas! So far they had not used them.

This kitch collecting continued outside in the barn and yard. The barn contained, among many other items, 18 electric grinders, all in a row along a large work bench; only the last grinder worked. Outside were about eight non-functional cars. We were told by our friend that Artsy intended to use their parts to build a hover craft; we were glad we didn’t stay long enough to see that!

To change the subject somewhat, parts of Australia are noted for being hot and dry for much of the year. This is true for much of the outback including the northern part of WA. To offset the heat and dryness, a fair amount of beer is consumed by many of the local inhabitants. On the main northern coastal highway north of Geraldton, a road scraper is used on the shoulders of the road twice a year just to get rid of empty bottles. This may be of only passing interest except that the beer bottles are upsetting the ecology of one of Australia’s rarer buprestids, *Julodimorpha bakewelli* White, that occurs in the coastal heath. The buprestid is over 2 inches long and has flightless females with a very rough orange-brown colored dorsum. Males have very large eyes and fly over the coastal heath looking for females walking on the ground. Unfortunately, the male eye sight is not very good and anything rough and orange-brown is attractive. Near Yuna, WA, we have seen males trying to mate with

the outer side of an orange peel (see photo on the previous page). Unfortunately, Australian beer bottles have a band of pebbly glass near the bottom which, to the male buprestid, appears similar to the dorsum of a female. As many as 14 beetles have been seen trying to mate with one beer bottle! Not

only does this disrupt the mating of these beetles, with so many bottles along the roadside, many beetles are flattened by traffic. These beetles are now protected by law from collectors, but not from beer bottles or from land clearing which is destroying their habitat. Isn't bureaucracy great?

The Energizer Folding Lantern

Energizer has a 2 x 4-watt fluorescent lantern that may be of interest to scarab collectors. Looking like a giant flip-phone, it is very compact and easy to transport in luggage. The unit is powered by 4 D-cell batteries (not included) which are inexpensive and readily available. It has a claimed battery life of 20 hours with two tubes burning, or 40 hours with one tube burning. It takes two F4T5 tubes which come in both BL and BLB. Try web sites such as: <http://www.lightbulbsrus.com/user/productdetail.php?pid=50> (\$4.50), <http://www.like.com/home-f4t5-bl--c90fbe1d28eb91f8322219ff678c8925b50f23c6-0577b9572b85f22f--details.html> (\$3.95) or <http://www.microlamp.com/fluortubes.htm> (\$2.45). The "flip" feature gives it its own "stand" when plopping it in the middle of a blacklight sheet, or even a white trash can liner. The base (i.e. inside surface when closed) is mirrored for better light reflection (and you can adjust your make-up in case you want to "look pretty" for the bugs). There is a lifetime warranty, and the cost is only \$12.97 at Home Depot.



The lantern in the folded configuration, with the tubes just in front of the mirror. It stands on 7.5" (20 cm) high, and is 4.5" (12 cm) wide.



The lantern partially unfolded. If luggage weight is a concern, it weighs very little with no batteries.



The lantern with the tubes inverted, allowing them to attract scarabs from both sides.

Editors Note: After Bill informed Rich of the new lantern, Rich brought one to field test in an excursion with Guillermo Nogueira in southern Baja California. The success of this lantern was quite remarkable for being so small. The number and diversity of nocturnal insects appeared to be just as good as with most larger lights. Scarab notables were: many Diplotaxis spp. (that will make Scott McCleve smile), Acoma prava, Acoma incognita, Anomala peninsularis, and Anomala centralis, just to name a few. One could easily carry 6+ lanterns in the bottom of a suitcase with no problem at all.



The lantern with the tubes facing up to attract those high-flying scarabs.

Our Latin-American Liaisons

The editors receive many inquiries asking how we maintain such good rapport with scarab workers in Spanish-speaking countries. We are finally revealing our secret: **Valerie** and **Yvette**, who do a wonderful job of handling our correspondence to scarabaeologists in those areas.



In the Staff Lounge at Scarabs headquarters, Valerie (seated) and Yvette (standing) are in a futile attempt to teach the editors Spanish. The girls know that Editor Barney is much too dense to learn a new language; they don't waste their time on him. Editor Rich seems to have something else, something sinister perhaps, on his mind. Editor Bill is confused about how to pronounce "No!" in Spanish.