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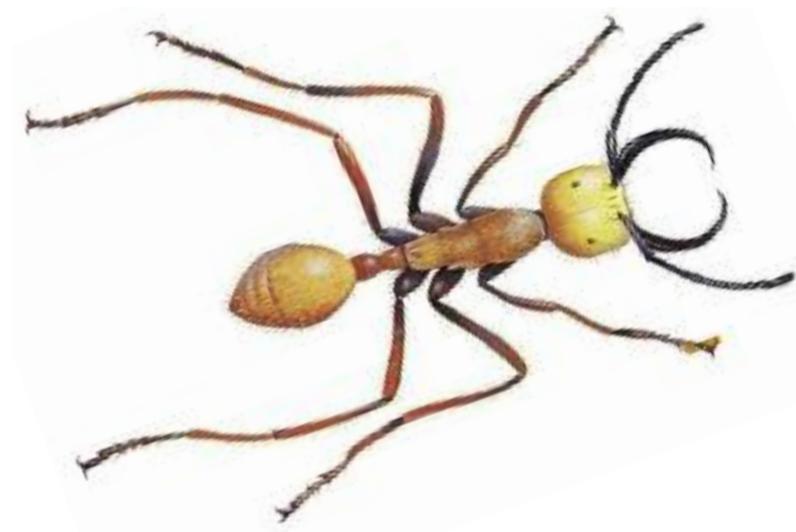
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see how we live

Ants

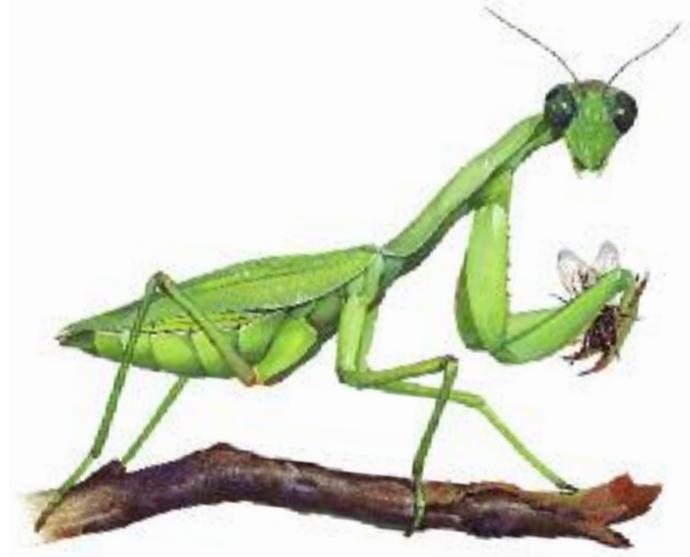
and other insects



 Orpheus

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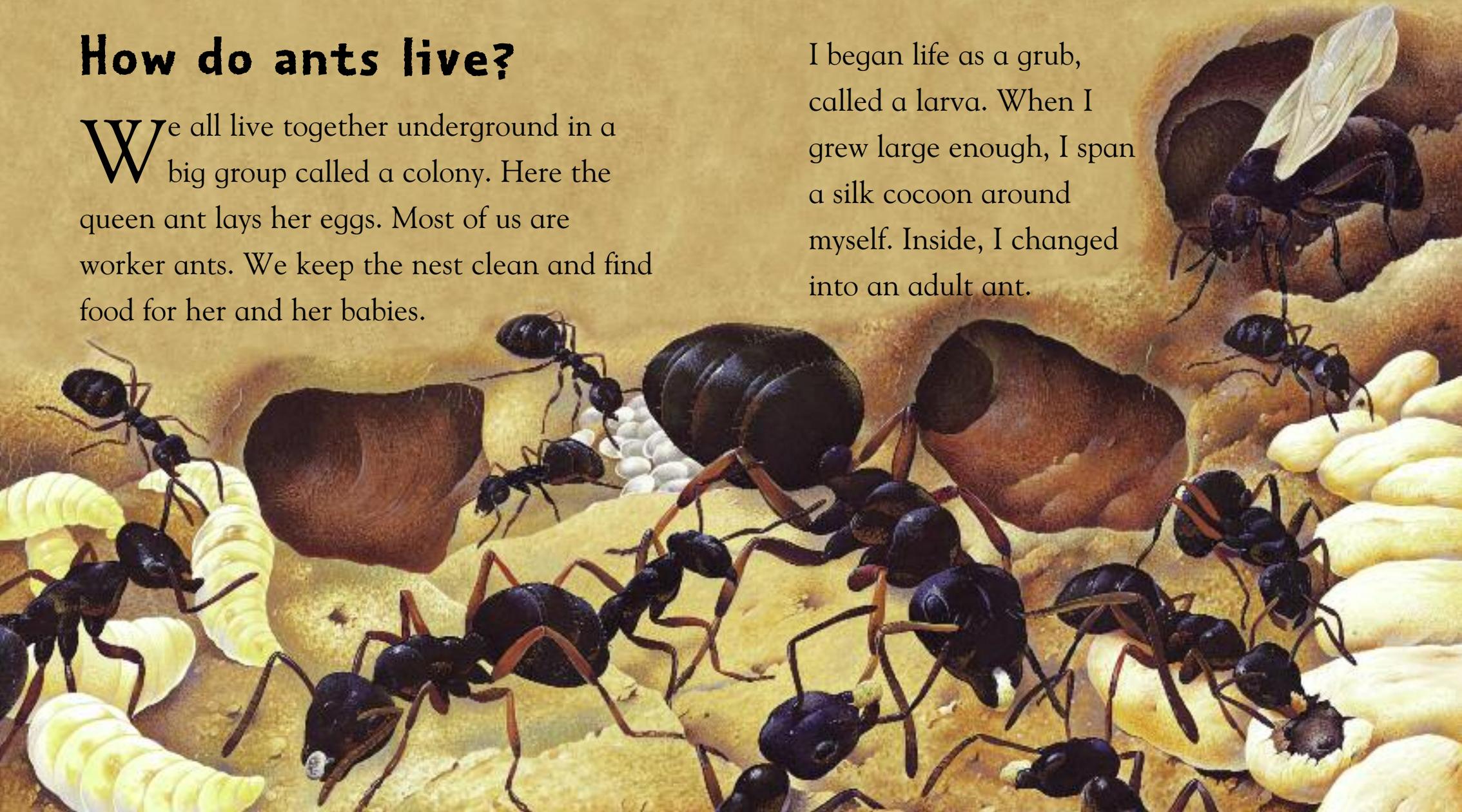
Insects

Did you know there are more kinds of insect than all the other kinds of animals put together? You'll know an insect when you see one. We've each got six legs and a body divided into three parts: a head, a thorax and an abdomen. Most of us can fly. All of us have stories to tell about our amazing lives ...

How do ants live?

We all live together underground in a big group called a colony. Here the queen ant lays her eggs. Most of us are worker ants. We keep the nest clean and find food for her and her babies.

I began life as a grub, called a larva. When I grew large enough, I spun a silk cocoon around myself. Inside, I changed into an adult ant.



We leafcutter ants live in Central and South America. We cut out pieces of leaf with our jaws and carry them back to our nest. There we chew the leaves into a pulp so that a special fungus can grow on it. We then feed this fungus to the larvae.

We have extremely powerful jaws for cutting up leaves. We are also very strong little animals. We can carry pieces of leaf that are 20 times heavier than our own weight. That's the same as you lifting a load weighing a ton! Distance is no problem for us. We will happily travel hundreds of metres from our nest in our search for new leaves.

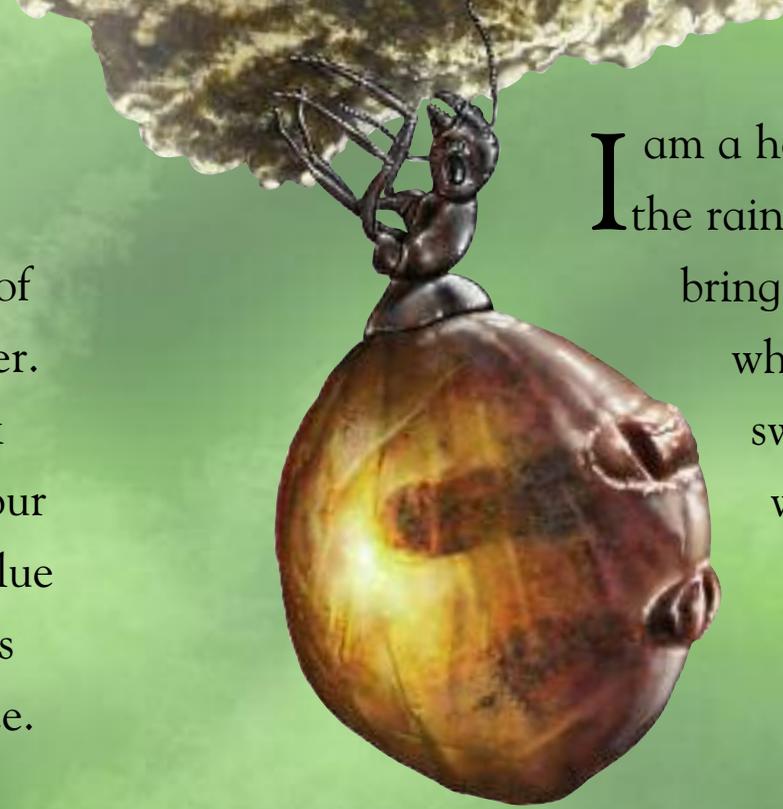
We are weaver ants. Here we are busy making our nest.

First we pull the edges of a large leaf together.

Then we use silk produced by our larvae to glue the edges in place.



I am a honeypot ant. During the rainy season the workers bring me water and nectar which I store in my swollen abdomen. The workers can then feed from me when food and water is scarce.



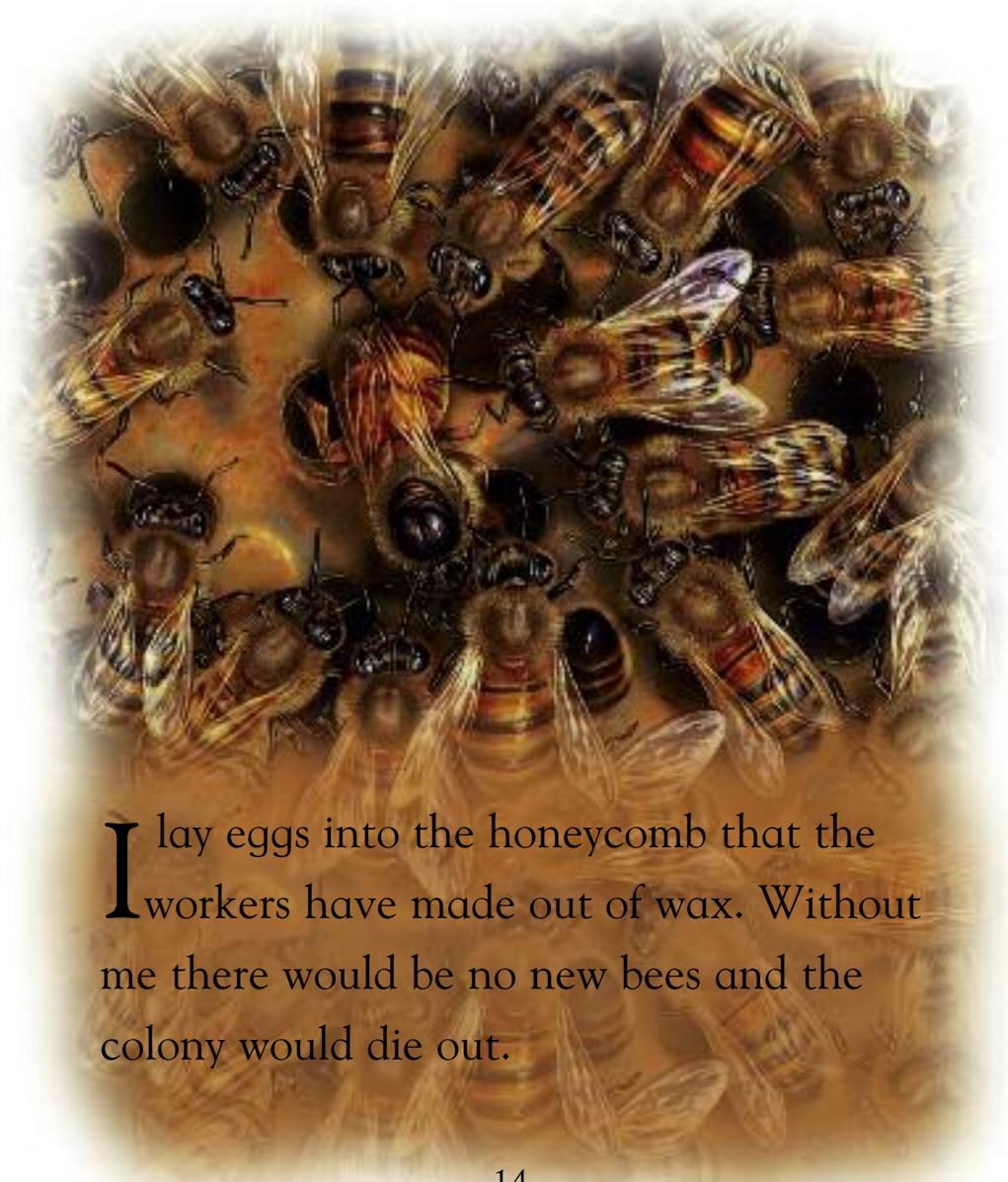
Look at my spiky jaws! I use them to attack intruders to the nest, and to catch small insects for food. My fierce looks give me my name: bulldog ant.



What is it like to be a queen bee?

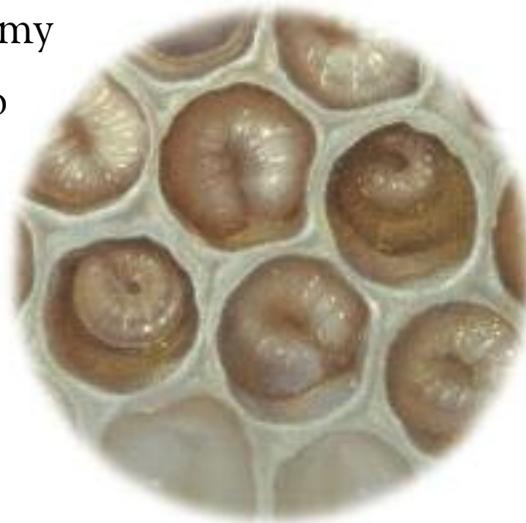


I'm the queen bee, the most important bee in the hive. I lay all the eggs and have worker bees to look after me. They feed me pollen, or honey when it is cold. They also feed my babies and keep the hive clean. The workers are all female. Males are known as drones. There are not many drones in the hive. Their only job is to mate with me.



I lay eggs into the honeycomb that the workers have made out of wax. Without me there would be no new bees and the colony would die out.

After three days my eggs hatch into small, white larvae. The workers feed them beebread, a mixture of pollen and nectar.



Six days later my workers close up the honeycomb with wax. Inside, the larvae gradually turn into adult bees.



When the bees eventually come out of the honeycomb, their bodies are very soft. To begin with, they cannot fly. So they stay in the hive until their bodies harden and they are ready to work.



What a huge hive! This hive has grown too big. So I take a number of workers and go in search of somewhere else to start a new colony. When I get too old, I will give birth to a new queen to take over from me.

How do flies feed?

I'm sure you have come across me before! I am a bluebottle fly. I like to feed on things I find in your kitchens and in your waste bins.



I lay my eggs on something tasty for my young to feed on when they hatch out—some meat, for example, or some rotting vegetation.

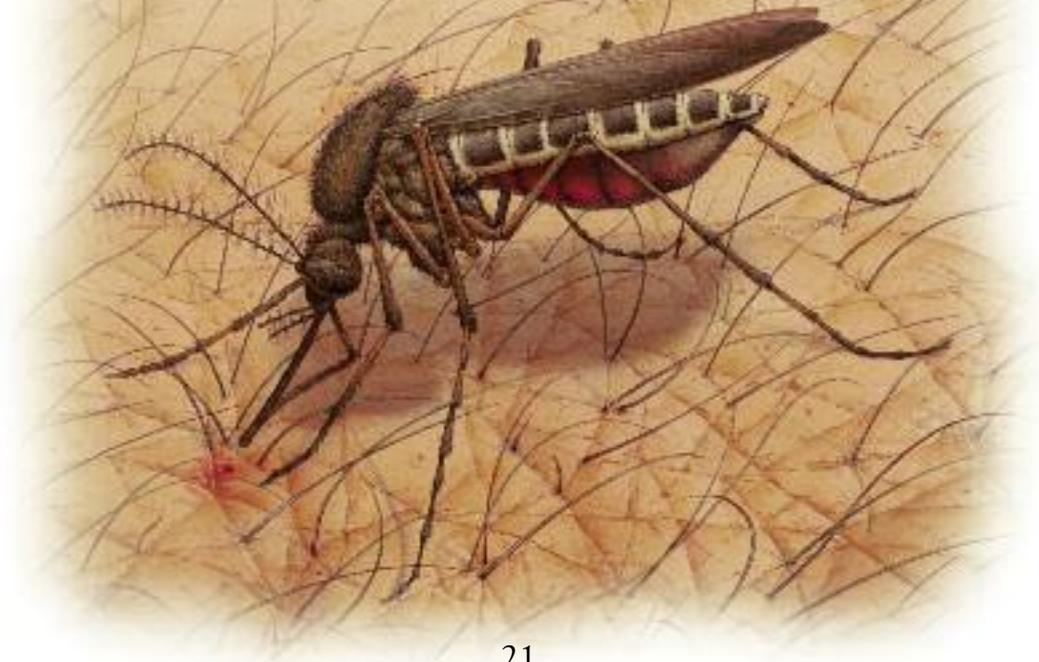


The bristly hairs on my body can detect the slightest of air movements (that's why I fly away before you can catch me). They also help me to taste anything good to eat. I pour juices on to food to turn it into a liquid. Then I suck it up with my spongy mouth.



You know me as a daddy longlegs, but my real name is a crane fly. Claws and sticky hairs on my feet allow me to hang upside down from your ceiling.

We mosquitoes need fresh blood to feed on. Fur-less, warm-blooded animals are best. You humans are ideal! I pierce your skin with my sharp, pointed mouthparts and squirt in a chemical to stop the blood from clotting. Then I gorge on your blood until I am full.



Why do termites live in mounds?

The tall mounds of earth we termites build are our nests. They protect us and our young from predators. The cool earth also shelters us from the hot sun.

I am the queen, the most important termite in the nest. Here, my body is swollen with thousands of eggs. My workers carry them away to hatch out.

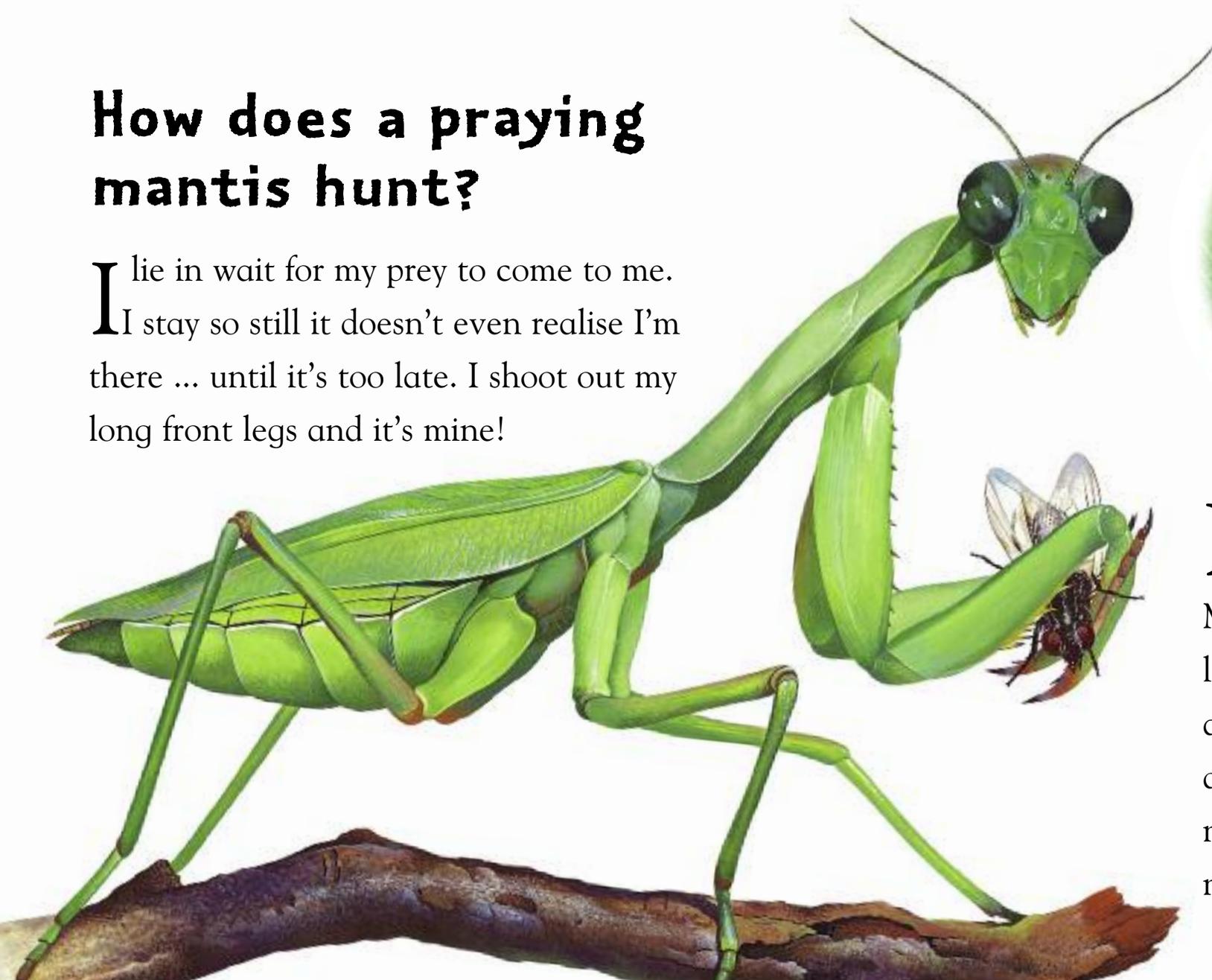


We are the greatest builders in the animal kingdom. Our mounds can be four metres high! Millions of us live in them.



How does a praying mantis hunt?

I lie in wait for my prey to come to me. I stay so still it doesn't even realise I'm there ... until it's too late. I shoot out my long front legs and it's mine!



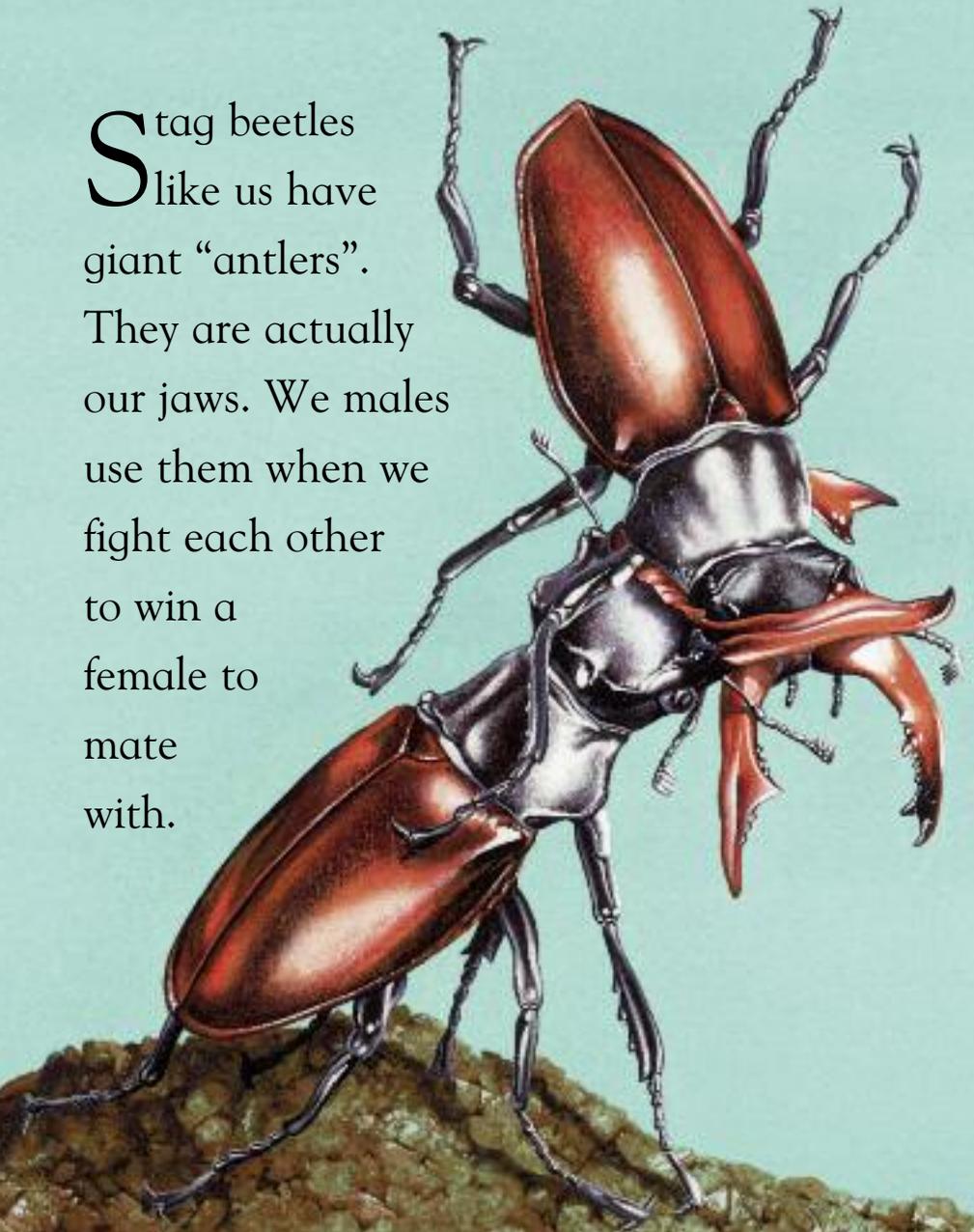
I rely on my sharp eyesight to find my prey. My eyes are made up of lots of smaller lenses. They allow me to see in all directions—even behind me. I can spot something moving 20 metres away.

How do beetles live?

Did you know there are more than 350,000 different types of beetle in the world? Tiger beetles like me are fast-running predators. We grab our prey in our spiky jaws. Very few get away ...



Stag beetles like us have giant “antlers”. They are actually our jaws. We males use them when we fight each other to win a female to mate with.



Why do ladybirds have spots?

We ladybirds come in a variety of colours and patterns.



They all have the same purpose: to scare off likely predators. Spots and bright colours signal that we are unpleasant to eat.

