

RAINBOW SCARAB

(*Phanaeus vindex*)

Bug of the Month



The bright, festive coloration of the rainbow scarab easily evokes thoughts of the holidays. Also commonly known as the rainbow dung beetle, the rainbow scarab is found extensively throughout the eastern United States. Throughout their range, they serve an important ecological role in pasture ecosystems by removing waste.

Dung beetles can be divided into three main groups based on their nest construction behavior: tunnelers,

dwellers, and rollers. The rainbow scarab is an example of a tunneler. Both the male and female beetles work together to excavate a tunnel under a dung pat. They continue to work together to pull pieces off the pat to form brood or feeding balls that are stored in below-ground chambers. If a brood ball is formed, a single egg is laid at the tip of the ball. Multiple brood balls can be stored in their burrow and all tunnels leading to the brood balls are backfilled with dirt to protect the brood. The

adults will also excavate additional chambers to fill with feeding balls for their future emerging offspring and any overwintering adults. It takes between two to six months for eggs to hatch and reach adulthood. Adults have been documented as living upwards of a year.

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