

# TIGER BEETLES

By CLIFF SHAW, Yorkton, Saskatchewan



**T**IGER BEETLES ARE THE MOST agile of all our beetles and although common in most areas of Saskatchewan they are not as well known as many of the slower moving insects. The fastest fliers and swiftest runners are to be found in this family.

Their scientific name is Cicindelidae. They have been nicknamed Tiger beetles because of their predacious habits and the wing cover markings on some species.

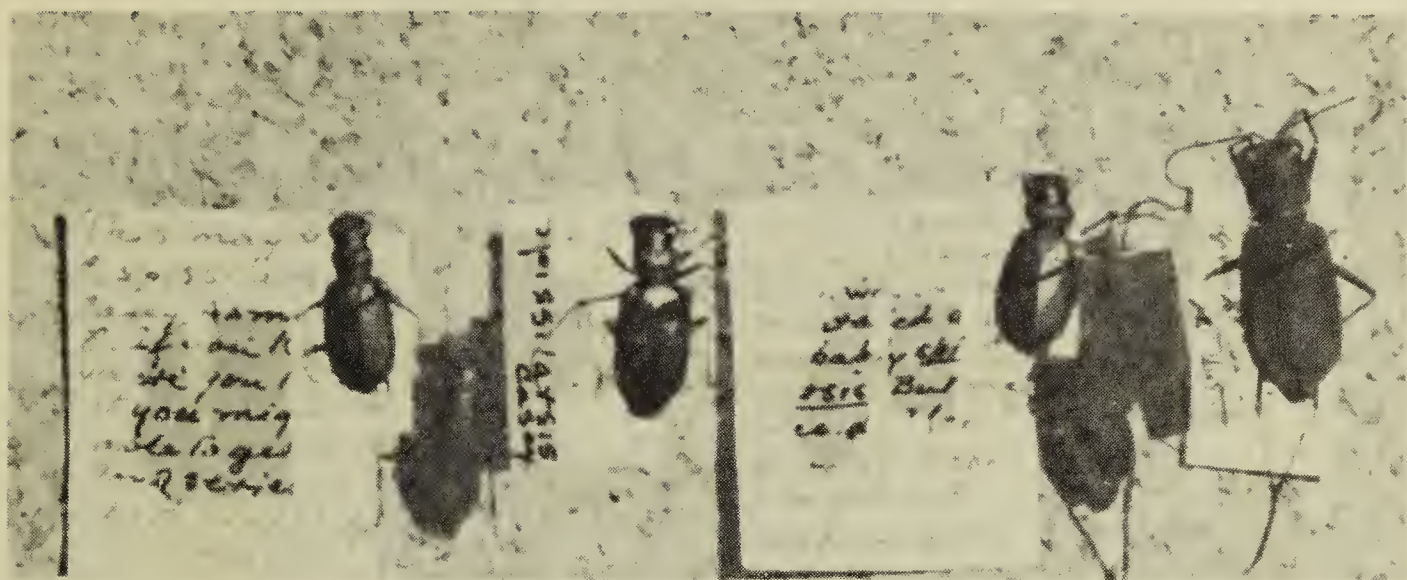
The larvae live in vertical burrows in the ground watching at the mouth of the hole ready to seize unwary victims who are dragged into the burrow and eaten at leisure. On the fifth segment of the larvae are two little hooks curved forward on a hump so that larger insects have difficulty pulling it out of its burrow.

Some species are said to hunt by night. The Larvae's head, which it uses to plug the burrow, is similar in color to the ground hence they are difficult to find. The burrows are usually on dry hard soil or sand. Very little is known of the habits of any of them.

Their favorite haunts vary from sand blows and beaten paths to drying mud flats and the sandy shores of our ponds and lakes. While the most common Saskatchewan species is a sandy buff color with markings similar to those of musical notes their color patterns range from vivid metallic greens to coal black.

With the exception of a black species found among the short prairie grass the adult insects are difficult to catch. Usually they remain ab-





*Method of mounting and recording data*

solutely still until you are within a few feet of them, then flying upwards two or three feet and landing a few yards away most times facing you as though defying the collector to catch them.

Sometimes you can catch them with an old hat but once you lift the brim ever so little they are off like a flash and you are right back where you started. The best method is to use a long handled net. We have found that the most sure way is to put the specimen including a corner of the net into the killing jar and hold the lid on until the insect has stopped struggling. For beetles we use a small stubby vial about an inch in diameter. Place some cotton batten in the bottom of the vial and cover with two or three crumpled cigarette papers and add a few drops of ether. Ether is obtainable at any drug store and is much safer than the deadly cyanide poisons. The photo above shows the species collected by the writer in Saskatchewan.

If you plan to make a collection of insects special pins of various sizes can be obtained from firms handling scientific equipment. Most schools have such catalogues.

With beetles the pin is inserted through the back on the right side so that it comes out between the first and middle leg. Tiny specimens can be mounted with shellac on small cardboard points cut "V" shape. Always make a small label giving the date, place of collection and the name of the collector, otherwise your specimen is of little scientific value. Example:—Yorkton, Sask.

21 VI 1953

B. Jay.

Below this on a separate label you might also list such information as host, if any, or the type of locality, sand, fungi, bark, etc. With some leaf beetles the person making identifications desires to know the name of the plant on which the insect is feeding. The identification label is placed below the others.

Locality labels can be bought ready made if you so wish. One method we have used is to type a large sheet of them leaving out the date. Have this photographed on an 8 x 10 negative. Contact prints on a dull finish paper will supply you with many neat uniform labels. Remember that if a specimen is worth collecting it is worthy of an easily read explanatory label.