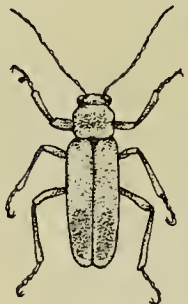


SASKATCHEWAN BEETLES

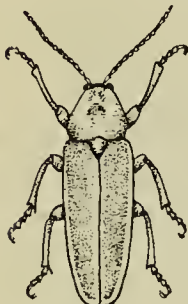
Cliff Shaw, Yorkton

(We are pleased to announce that the next issue of the "Blue Jay" will carry the first of a series of articles on Saskatchewan beetles—how to recognize the more common families and something of their habits.

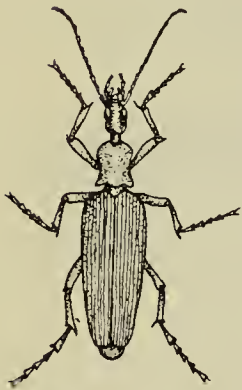
For some time the editor has felt that this phase of nature study should find a corner in the "Blue Jay," and at his suggestion, Cliff Shaw, of Yorkton, who has collected beetles for many years as a hobby has agreed to write the series. As a precautionary measure for his mailman, Mr. Shaw has suggested that if the reader desires to have specimens identified, they should be forwarded to: The Dominion Entomological Laboratory at Indian Head or Saskatoon, or to the Division of Entomology, Department of Agriculture; Ottawa. Ed.)



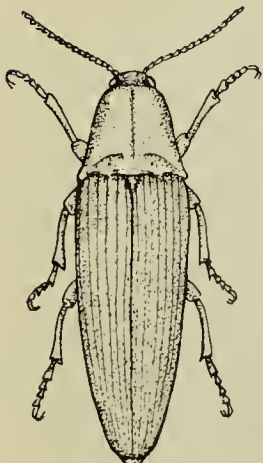
SOLDIER BEETLE



FIRE-FLY



GROUND BEETLE



CLICK BEETLE

The hopeless task of learning the names of the vast numbers of insects to be found within one's own area has perhaps been the main reason why so few amateur naturalists are not better acquainted with this interesting field of nature. To recognize all the insects within even a limited district has been compared to being able to identify all the birds in the world, approximately 9,000. Hence little wonder that the amateur naturalist has turned to narrower fields of study. Another problem is that of a text book applicable to one particular section of the country. One we can highly recommend is of the Putman pocket book series entitled "Field Guide to Insects," by the late F. E. Lutz.

The purpose of this series of articles will therefore be an attempt to assist the reader, not so much as to learn the specific name but rather to learn the general group to which the insect belongs and something of its habits. Of necessity, scientific names will in many cases have to be used for it must be remembered that while many insects have been scientifically named only a few have been nicknamed.

To get away to a proper start it might be as well to describe how beetles differ from other insects. When entomologists refer to beetles they class them as Coleoptera, a word taken from two Greek words meaning a sheath, and a wing. The reference is to the usually hard wing covers. These modified wings meet in a straight line down the back, do not overlap and with few exceptions completely cover the abdomen. The underneath or hind wings are the flight organs.

The next time you catch a beetle lift the wing covers and examine the underneath or true wings. Notice how they are folded when not in use. If you should have picked up one of the ground beetle family do not be surprised if the wing covers are grown together. They sometimes are in this family. Often these chaps are very fast runners and no longer need their wings to escape.

And here a word of warning. Make sure it is a beetle you are picking up. We have a vivid memory of the time we here hunting beetles in the sand dunes South of Shilo, Manitoba and made a grab at a colorful insect digging in the sand. We fast learned its method of protection. Never did find out whether it was a wasp or an ant. Grasp the beetle firmly on either side of the back as some can deliver quite sharp bites but they can't nip you if held properly and they don't sting.

The larvae of beetles are commonly called grubs. They have six legs on the thorax but none on the abdomen except often a single proleg at the end. If this is kept in mind then you will have no trouble distinguishing the difference between the larvae of beetles and those of other insects.