

BUGS

Bugs are everywhere. In fact, of all the animals on earth, 75% of them are bugs! That means that for every human, there are more than 200 million bugs! Yikes! But bugs are not just creepy crawlies. Some are very helpful, others can be deadly & some are just down-right scary!

Most bugs are arthropods. This means they have a hard outer skeleton (called an exoskeleton) and jointed legs. Their tough armour-like covering is actually very light and flexible. This is one of the reasons that bugs were around 200 million years before dinosaurs ever walked the earth, and why they are still with us today. These bugs can be divided into four groups:

INSECTS: such as bees, beetles and cicadas

ARACHNIDS: which includes spiders, scorpions, ticks and mites

MYRIAPODS: which are centipedes and millipedes

CRUSTACEANS: including krill, crabs and crayfish



Many bugs are harmful, poisonous and even deadly. Flies can transmit diseases such as typhoid, dysentery and cholera. Some spiders and scorpions could kill you with a sting. But you might be surprised to hear that the most dangerous of all bugs is the mosquito. Each year, mozzies kill more than 2.7 million people all over the world by spreading malaria, dengue fever, West Nile virus and other terrible diseases. It is believed that of all the humans that have ever been on earth, about half died because of a mosquito bite.



Bugs can be seen in very ancient fossils, like cool alien-looking bugs called Trilobites, and also caught in amber (clear solid tree sap) that is millions of years old. So why have bugs been so successful in hanging around, when most things around them have become extinct? Well, to begin with, they come with their own set of protective armour. They are also small so they need less food and less space. Bugs can also survive extreme weather conditions, from -30°C up to 50°C! They can live on land, in fresh water or in the ocean.

Because many bugs can fly, they are able to escape from predators, find new food sources, migrate to new areas and find new mates.

Bugs also have an incredible rate of development and reproduction. A queen bee will lay 600,000 eggs in her lifetime. And a single female fly and her offspring can produce 56 TRILLION more flies in a single summer!



Bugs are also essential to human life. Bugs such as bees pollinate crops of fruit, vegetables and grains. If it weren't for bugs, we'd starve to death! Other bugs, such as dung-beetles are the garbage disposal units of the world, and help keep decomposing waste to a minimum, helping to reduce the fly population.

No matter what you think of bugs, you had better get used to them... after all, they out-number us humans 200 million to one, they have been around a lot longer than us & will probably be around long after we have gone!