

Clown beetles

COLEOPTERA: HISTERIDAE

Did you know? Members of this family are small but fearsome predators, using strong jaws to tear into other insects' larvae.

Did you know? Histerid beetles get spooked easily, and pull in their head and legs like little turtles when they're worried about being attacked themselves.

Did you know? Hundreds of histerid beetles live in the nests of ants, smelling like ants and accepted as members of the colonies. Meanwhile, they're raiding the ants nurseries and eating their young!

Did you know? As predators, many histerids are beneficial. Species associated with dead wood eat pestiferous bark beetles, and histerids found in cow poop keep populations of dung-breeding flies in check.



The underside of a histerid in 'turtle mode', with head and legs hidden.



Electron microscope picture of an ant-guest histerid.



A predator of bark beetles, perfectly cylindrical to enter their galleries.



Credits:

Photos: Michael S. Caterino (<https://sites.google.com/site/caterinolab/people/caterino>). Photo 1 (upper right): *Operclipygus ecitonis*. Photo 2 (middle right): *Haeterius californicus*, a guest of ants. Photo 3 (middle left): the underside of a South American ant guest. Photo 4 (bottom left): *Xylonaeus*, an ambrosia beetle predator from Ecuador.

Facts: Kovarik, P.W. and M.S. Caterino. 2016. Histeridae, pp. 275–314, in: Beutel, R.G. and R.A.B. Leschen, eds., Handbook of Zoology Part 38, Coleoptera, Vol. 1: Morphology and Systematics (2nd. ed.) Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

Sheet created by: Michael S. Caterino, November, 2023