

# Blue Death Feigning Beetle

*Asbolus verrecosus*



ANIMAL FACTS



## Physical Characteristics

- Physical description: Beetles, like most insects, have a head, thorax, abdomen, and six legs. Beetles often have a very tough exoskeleton.
- Coloration: Most beetles are found to be black or brown. However, blue death feigning beetles are a dark blue color when it is dry. When this beetle becomes too wet it will become a dark black.
- This beetle has many bumps scattered all along its back. Blue death feigning beetles are a blue color because of a wax that is secreted that helps this beetle become heat resistant and avoid dehydration.

## Size

- Length: ¾-1 inch

## Lifespan

- Wild: Up to 8 years.
- Zoos: Up to 8 years.

## Behaviors

- Activity Cycle: Crepuscular. This is most likely to avoid the coldest and hottest times in the desert area.
- Terrestrial
- Social Structure: Will often live in colonies, however; spends a lot of time isolated from the group scavenging for food
- Most darkling beetles will secrete a smelly substance out of their exoskeleton when threatened. The blue death feigning beetles cannot do this. Instead, it will roll over and play dead to avoid detection by predators. Tarantulas are this species biggest threat and hunt by sensing vibration, so they will not sense this beetle.

## Diet

- Wild: Rotting vegetation and animals
- Zoo: Fresh produce

## Reproduction

- Incubation/Gestation Period: Beetle eggs will often take several days to hatch
- Fledging/Parenting: Beetles will often not take care of their young and will move on after the eggs are laid.
- Clutch/Litter Size: Hundreds of eggs, laid in the ground.
- Breeding Behaviors: Beetles have a complete metamorphosis process. They begin as eggs and then hatch into larvae. The larvae will molt several times. After several molts the larvae will spin a cocoon and begin to pupate. During pupation the larvae will transform into the adult form by obtaining antennae, legs, and wings.

## Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Southwestern United States & Mexico
- Range: Dry and hot places, such as the Mojave Desert



### **Conservation**

- IUCN Status: Not assessed
- Contributing factors: While there is no threat to this species specifically, all species are affected by climate change as well as predation

### **Classification**

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Arthropoda
- Class: Insecta
- Order: Coleoptera
- Family: Tenebrionidae
- Genus: *Asbolus*
- Species: *A. verrecosus*

### **Interesting Facts**

- These beetles will often play dead; they have been seen playing dead for hours
- The bumps on the back of their body are used to secrete the wax that is used to cover itself and prevent dehydration and heat exhaustion
- Older beetles will often have darker black spots on their body because those are the spots that have stopped secreting the wax