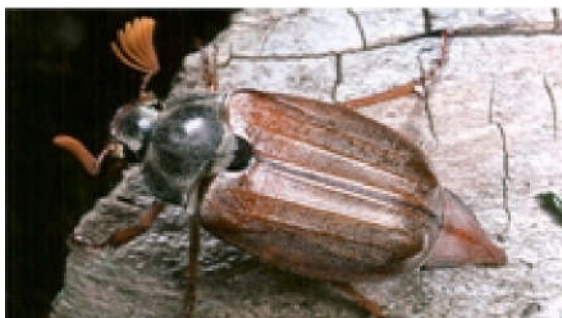




[www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk](http://www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk)

### Cockchafer (May-Bug) – *Melolontha melolontha*



Worldwide, beetles are the most diverse group of animals, with almost 400,000 known species. In the UK there are about 4000 species. Beetles are robust and typically have thick wing-cases that usually cover most of the upper surface of the abdomen and conceal the hind wings. Scarab beetles (including the chafers and dung beetles) have characteristic antennae in which the final segments have fan-like extensions. The largest and most conspicuous of the almost 90 species of scarabs found in the British Isles is the Cockchafer (or May-Bug).



#### What do they look like?

The adult Cockchafer is up to 35 mm long. It has a black thorax, rusty brown wing cases and brown legs, and the tail end of the abdomen is narrowly pointed. In side view, the abdomen has saw-tooth shaped patches of white under the edges of the wing cases. The fan-like tips of the antennae are particularly obvious in this species.



#### Where do they live?

Adult Cockchafers are found on and around trees and shrubs in gardens, parks, field hedgerows and woodland margins, feeding on leaves and flowers. The larvae, sometimes called rookworms, live in the soil and eat the roots of vegetables and grasses.



#### Where can they be found?

The Cockchafer is widespread in Europe as far north as the centre of Sweden. It is widely distributed in the UK, wherever there are deciduous trees and shrubs for the adults and nearby meadows, fields or gardens for the larvae.



### **When can you see them?**

The adult Cockchafer can be seen (and heard) flying on warm evenings from May to July.



### **Life cycle**

The larvae – fat creamish-white grubs with brown heads – live in the soil feeding on plant roots for about three years, eventually reaching a length of 40-45 mm, before they pupate deeper in the soil, later emerging from the ground as adults in the spring.



### **What do they do?**

In spite of its slightly frightening size and noisy flight, the adult Cockchafer is harmless. Although the adults eat the leaves of trees and shrubs, they rarely cause any significant damage in the UK. However, cherry and plum orchards in southern Europe sometimes suffer economic losses from Cockchafer feeding.

The larvae, if present in large numbers, can occasionally be pests of commercial vegetable crops, pastures, and grassed amenity areas such as lawns and grass-sports facilities (e.g. golf, cricket and bowling).



### **Did you know...?**

When they are flying, in the evening, Cockchafers are often heard before they are seen: their flight itself makes a strong whirring noise, but they also sometimes make a clatter when they accidentally fly into the windows of lighted rooms.