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Tracking God's Imagination

A famous entomologist was once asked what he had learned from his lifelong study of

insects. He replied, "God has an inordinate fondness for beetles."

That would seem to be true, because at last count, scientists have named over 400,000 species of them. To give you an idea of how many that is, there are about 15,000 species of birds in the world. In fact, if you lined up all species of life including bacteria, plants, animals, worms and insects every fifth one would be a beetle!

If we were to try to come up with designs for different types of beetles, most of us could come up with 25 different designs. Some of us could probably figure out a few hundred. But, can you imagine the type of intelligence that it takes to design over 400,000 variations on a theme? And each of them is perfect. They have all their parts working.

No matter how great our imagination, we would probably never think about creating a beetle with a flame thrower in it, but that is what God did! There is a small group of beetles called bombardier beetles. They are nothing special to look at, but God put a very special protective mechanism in them. They have a built in flame thrower in the back end of these beetles. They can aim it in any direction and fire it at will. It shoots caustic chemicals at any attacker that are boiling temperature. It can shoot 20 bursts a second.

The mechanism that shoots these hot chemicals is a marvel of design. There is a small chamber that holds the chemicals that will eventually explode. When the beetle feels threatened, that chamber will contract causing a small amount of these chemicals to enter a second chamber. In that chamber, there are chemicals which cause an explosion.

At the tip of the abdomen, there is a small turret which can be pointed in any direction. When the chemicals explode the burst through this small turret.

Once, many years ago, when people still traveled by wood burning trains, there were two entomologists traveling in the southern United States. When the train stopped to take on water, these men went out into a field to collect insects. When the train whistle blew, one of the men had an insect clutched tightly in each hand. By the time he got back to the train, it was moving. With his hands full, he could not grab onto the hand rail and pull himself onto the train. So, without thinking, he popped one of the insects into his mouth. It happened to be a bombardier beetle. He later wrote in his journal that he could sympathize with any predator that tried to eat this small insect because he immediately had a very hot burning sensation in his mouth!

It is amazing to me that God would expend the effort and planning necessary to create

these tiny creatures. They are perfect examples of miniaturization. Their tiny parts all fitted together to make them not only survive, but thrive. It is evident that there was a lot of loving attention given to them.

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God's imagination in the Bible

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It has been said that man's extremity is God's opportunity. That can clearly be seen in the many ways that God delivered people in the Bible. It is a good exercise to count the ways that God has saved people.

Some examples include parting the Red Sea with wind, providing a big fish to swallow a drowning prophet, making 3 men fireproof and making a stone altar flammable. Is there anything that God cannot do?

As an exercise today, make a list of all the things that God did to save His people. This is a great faith builder. When you have a problem, you can be sure that God has enough imagination and power to provide the answer.

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Ron McCluskey

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Ron McCluskey is an emergency room physician and amateur naturalist. Growing up, he studied insects and birds. While he continues to enjoy studying these natural subjects, his interest has grown to include the rest of creation as well. He has spent over a year doing volunteer work in tropical countries. While there he enjoyed seeing how God's creation gives ample evidence of His intimate knowledge and care for His nature.

## 5 Ways to Deal With Lady Bug Infestations

By LeAnn R. Ralph

Every fall, millions of lady bugs (or what seems like millions) swarm around my house here in west central Wisconsin, looking for a place to spend the winter.

Actually, they are not "true" lady bugs. They are "Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetles." The beetles are beneficial to the environment because they control aphids. And from what I've read, the multicolored lady beetles are much better at controlling aphids than the 'real' lady bugs.

How can you tell the difference between native lady bugs and the multicolored beetles? Lady bugs are bright red. The multicolored lady beetles come in shades of orange, from light to dark. They also have many variations of patterns of spots. Some have almost no spots at all, and some have many spots. When you look closely at the multicolored lady beetles, it doesn't seem much of a stretch to say that no two are alike.

Unfortunately, on warm, sunny fall days, the swarms of lady beetles are so thick around my house that in the afternoon, I hesitate to even go outside to get the mail. The beetles land in my hair, crawl behind my glasses and work their way down the collar of my shirt.

Thousands of the bugs also find ways into my walk-out basement. I have swept them up by the snow-shovel-full (literally). My basement faces south, and the insects are attracted to light-colored structures with southern, sunny exposures that are on a hillside.

The beetles come in around the screen door upstairs, too, and the next thing you know,

I've got hundreds of them crawling on the walls and across the ceiling.

In the spring, when it warms up, the beetles emerge from their winter hiding places. Beginning in March, dozens of beetles crawl around my home office, the kitchen, the dining room, the basement and in other parts of the house, looking for a way to get outside.

Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetles are not harmful when they are inside the house, although they can be annoying if present in significant numbers. It's a little disconcerting to pick up your coffee cup and almost swallow a beetle that has landed in your coffee or is crawling around the rim of the cup. And two or three lady beetles landing in your bowl of soup can definitely make you lose your appetite. If you have company coming, you also don't want guests to find lady beetles in their food or beverages.

Although the beetles are not necessarily harmful if they're inside the house, when they swarm in the fall, they can create problems if they crawl into furnace vent pipes and plug them up. I have heard of them plugging attic vents, as well. And one woman reported to my husband (he is an Internet technician), that a lady bug crawled inside of her computer and shorted it out.

When the beetles are present in large numbers, you can also smell them. The odor is a little like

## God has a GREAT Imagination – Beetles

burned rubber or hot asphalt. When the beetles are threatened, the odor is particularly strong. They apparently view being swept off the walls (or vacuumed off) as a threatening situation. Sometimes when threatened, the beetles ooze an orange liquid, as well. I have read that the liquid can stain walls and fabrics, although I have not yet seen any evidence of that around my own house.

Here are five ways that I've found to deal with lady bug infestations:

- Vacuum up the beetles with the vacuum cleaner attachment.

This may be somewhat time-consuming but it is a non-toxic and safe method to remove the bugs. As far as I'm concerned, time-consuming doesn't seem so important when thousands of lady beetles are invading my house.

When vacuuming up large numbers of Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetles, be sure that you don't leave the attachment hose draped across the vacuum cleaner in preparation for the next vacuuming session, otherwise the beetles will soon find their way out of the vacuum bag and will be crawling around the house again. One woman from my hometown says she solves this problem by stuffing a paper towel into the end of the vacuum hose.

- Seal up cracks or spaces around doors and windows, if possible.

Sealing up cracks and spaces will make it more difficult for the beetles to get into the house in the first place. The beetles do not need much space to crawl through. Even a door that fits the frame quite well may still leave enough space to allow the beetles access to your house.

- Spray around door frames and window frames with a bug spray containing pyrethrins or permethrin.

I have discovered that the beetles will avoid crawling across bug spray with pyrethrins or permethrin, or if they do crawl across it, they die in a short while. I don't particularly like to spray bug spray inside my house, but when it's a matter of spraying or letting thousands of lady bugs into the house, spraying seems like the lesser of the two evils. I don't like killing the beetles, either, and would just as soon "live and let live," but I draw the line at a house-full of beetles.

- Use the garden hose to spray the beetles off the side of the house.

In the fall, when the beetles are crawling on the outside of my house by the hundreds of thousands (sometimes it's almost difficult to see what color the house is because there are so many beetles), I take the garden hose and use the sprayer attachment to spray them off the side of the house. To make an impact, this must be done two or three times a day on days when the swarms are active. I have also used an attachment for the garden hose that allows me to spray a soap-and-water mixture on the house. I haven't noticed that a soap solution is really any more effective at knocking the beetles off the house, although the exterior walls are cleaner when I'm finished!

- Learn to tolerate the Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetles.

I keep telling myself that the Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetles are swarming around my house

## God has a GREAT Imagination – Beetles

because they are only trying to survive the winter — just like all living things try to survive.

In the insect world, the beetles are known as predators because they eat aphids and other plant pests.

A few years from now, the beetles may be in a low cycle, and then, perhaps, I will wish there were more of them when the aphids begin attacking crops, gardens and flowering plants. (I still don't want the beetles invading my house by the thousands, though.)

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LeAnn R. Ralph is the author of the book, \*Christmas in Dairyland (True Stories from a Wisconsin Farm)\* (trade paperback; August 2003). For more information, visit

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