

# Discover the Fauna of Our Campus

## **Brown May beetle (*Melolontha afflicta*)**

Family: Scarabaeidae

Genus: *Melolontha*


Species: Brown scarab beetle (*Melolontha melolontha*)

The brown mayfly (*Melolontha melolontha*) is one of the most well-known pests



among gardeners and agricultural workers. They were given this name because they appear en masse with the arrival of spring, especially in May. It is a large and narrow insect, 20–30 mm long. The head and thorax are black, and the hard wing covers (elytra) are brownish-brown. There are 5 convex longitudinal lines on its wings. The most interesting feature is that the tips of its antennae (mustache) consist of fan-like plates. In males, this fan is larger. The life

of the mayfly is an interesting and long process. The development of one generation takes 3-5 years, depending on the climate. In late April or early May, adult insects emerge from the soil. They begin to fly after sunset and feed on the leaves of trees. The female lays her eggs 10-30 cm deep in the soil, in soft places, and dies after a while. The larvae ("white worms") that hatch from the eggs live underground. In the first year, they feed on decaying plant remains, and in subsequent years on plant roots. After 3-4 years, the larva turns into a pupa, and then into a beetle. The brown May beetle is considered a "double pest". It massively eats young leaves and shoots of fruit trees (plum, apple, cherry), as well as forest trees such as oak and birch. This is where the main danger lies. Large, arcuate larvae cut the roots of vegetables



(potatoes, beets), berries (strawberries) and young seedlings underground. One large larva can completely destroy the root system of a young tree in a few days.

The fight against the May beetle is carried out both underground and on the tree. Early in the morning, when the weather is still cool and the beetles are dormant, shake the trees and collect them. Destroy the larvae ("white worms") found when digging the soil. Starlings and crows are natural enemies of these insects. Placing bird nests in the area reduces the population. Hedgehogs also love the larvae. During the mass flight of insects, spray trees with insecticides or add anti-larval preparations to the soil during planting. The May beetle should not fly according to the laws of aerodynamics (its weight is too heavy compared to the lifting power of its wings), but despite this, it can fly at a speed of about 8-10 km per hour.

