

YZC Animal of the Month, June 2010

Hercules Beetle

Dynastes hercules



At the top of the stairs is a giant amongst the insect world – *Dynastes hercules*: the Hercules Beetle. This beetle is the largest of the rhinoceros beetles – can you see where this group got its name? To give you an idea of their size, the largest male Hercules beetles can reach lengths of 170mm! This makes them one of the longest, but not quite the

longest, species of beetles in the world. But take off the long horn at the front and they fall way back in the beetle length rankings.

Hercules beetles are native to the rainforests of Central and South America. The males have two horns – one curving up from the lower side of the head and one curving down from the upper side of the head. These horns are used in fighting. Hercules beetle fights can be pretty violent, and the victor can be seen marching around the losing beetle. The strength and ferocity of these beetles

has even led some people to believe that they would become strong if they ate the horn. Female Hercules beetles have no horns at all.

Hercules beetles spend most of their time as a larva (570-630 days) feeding on rotting wood. They live as adults for around 75 days, feeding on rotting fruit on the forest floor.