



# BEETLE GEMS

WHERE THE REST OF US SEE LOWLY BUGS, POUL BECKMANN FINDS LIVING JEWELS. BY RUSSELL HART

**P**oul Beckmann captures the kind of beauty that can be seen only by looking very closely. "Ever since I started doing photography as a kid, I've been interested in macro work," says Beckmann, who pronounces his first name *Paul*. "It's a way of seeing what people can't ordinarily see."

For Beckmann, who was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and now lives in Los Angeles, no subject has presented such unexpected beauty as the common beetle. "There are plenty of good photos of beetles in the wild," he says. "But their amazing patterns and colors actually serve as camouflage in their natural habitat—a way of blending in with bark and leaf litter, or sunlight and shadow." Beckmann decided the only way to capture beetles' beauty was to show them out of context, by isolating them against a plain white background in a studio.

Working with his wife Ruth Kaspin, herself a painter, Beckmann set about collecting the types of beetles he wanted to photograph. "We contacted insect dealers around the world," says Beckmann. "Some-

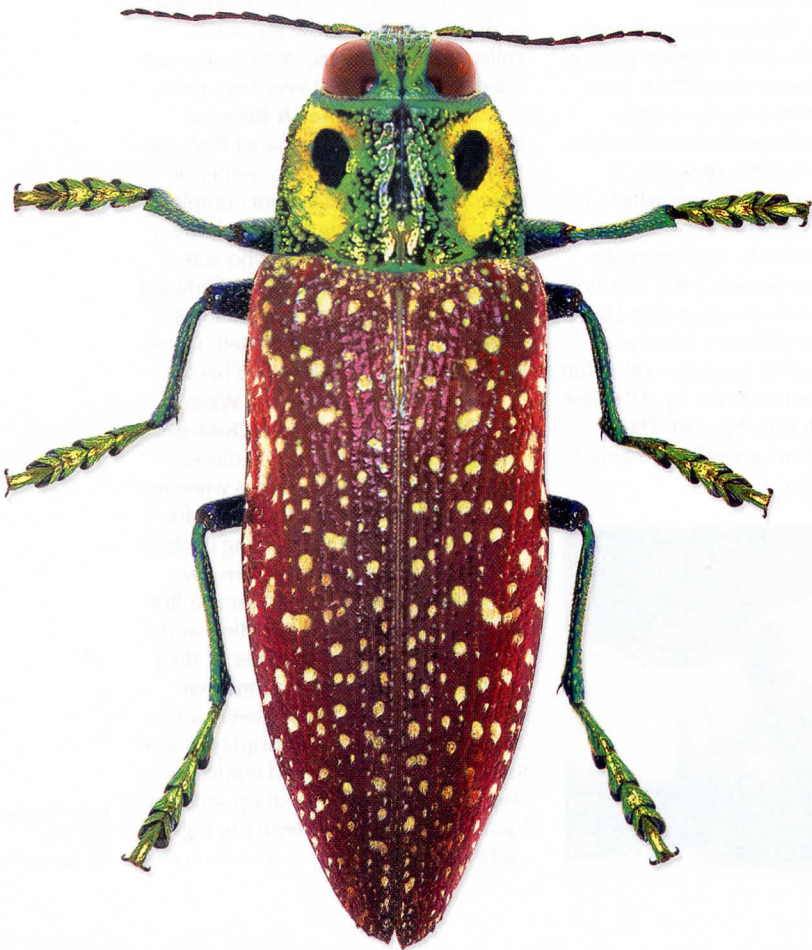
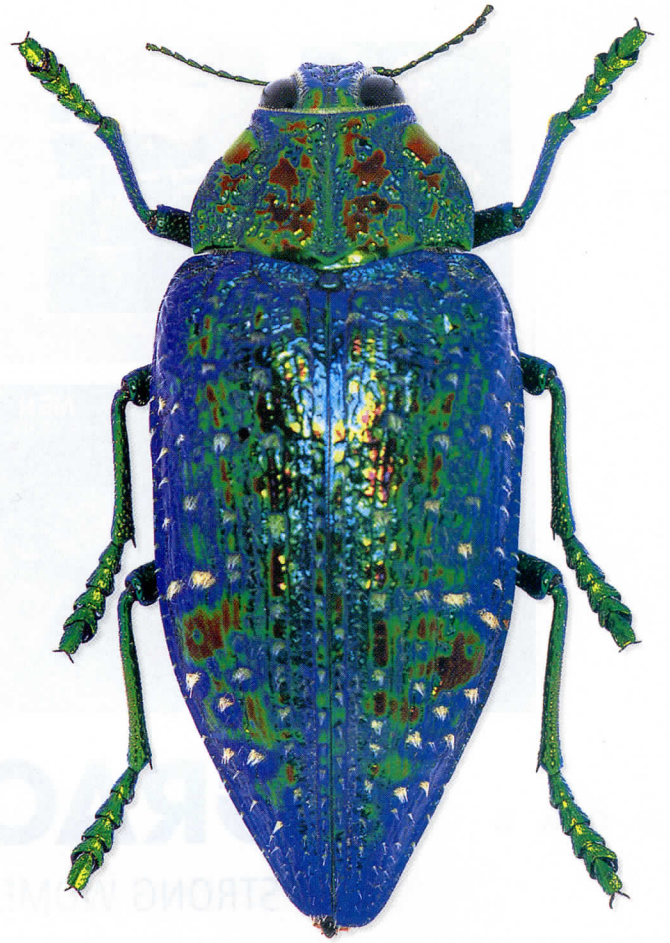
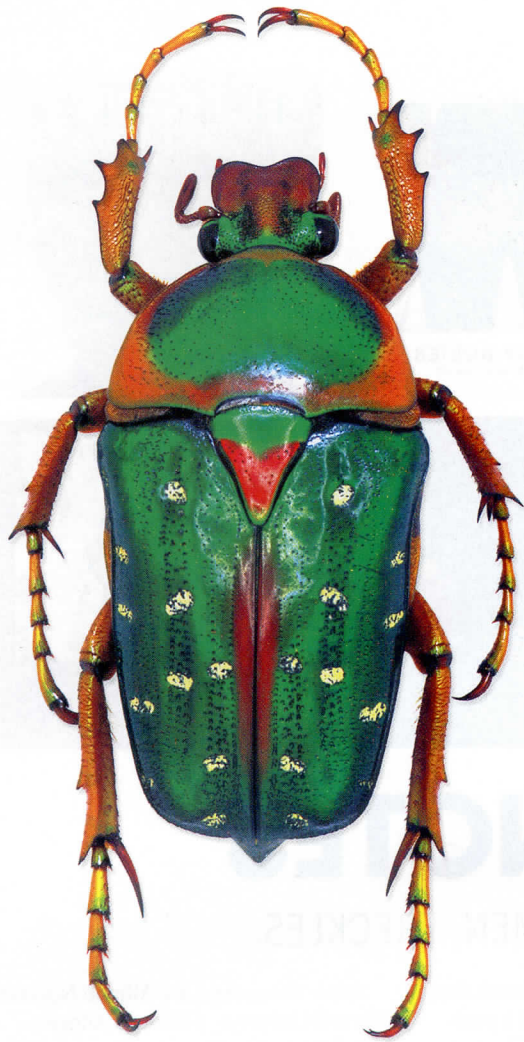
times we had to pay several hundred dollars for one beetle, but fortunately the price is more a matter of rarity than visual appeal." After meticulously photographing the bugs in medium format, he scanned his film and "cleaned up" the pictures in Photoshop. Beckmann was well-trained for that part of the process: He works the night shift at a printing company, doing computer prepress work. (For more about Beckmann's photographic technique, see page 82.)

Some of Beckmann's best beetles are gathered in *Living Jewels* (Prestel, \$40), a new coffee-table book of dazzling color and sumptuous production values. Between Kaspin's design background and Beckmann's prepress expertise, the couple was able to handle the book's production from soup to nuts—from layout to preparing its digital files for reproduction. "We were trying to create something like a modern version of *Art Forms in Nature*," says Beckmann, citing Karl Blossfeldt's classic 1929 study of plants against plain backgrounds. "We were going for a certain simplicity and elegance." ■

Clockwise from top left: *Phanaeus igneus floridanus*, *Stephanorrhina guttata*, *Polybothris sumptuosa gemma*, *Gymnetis stellata*, *Lampropepla rothschildi*, and *Chrysinia victorina*.









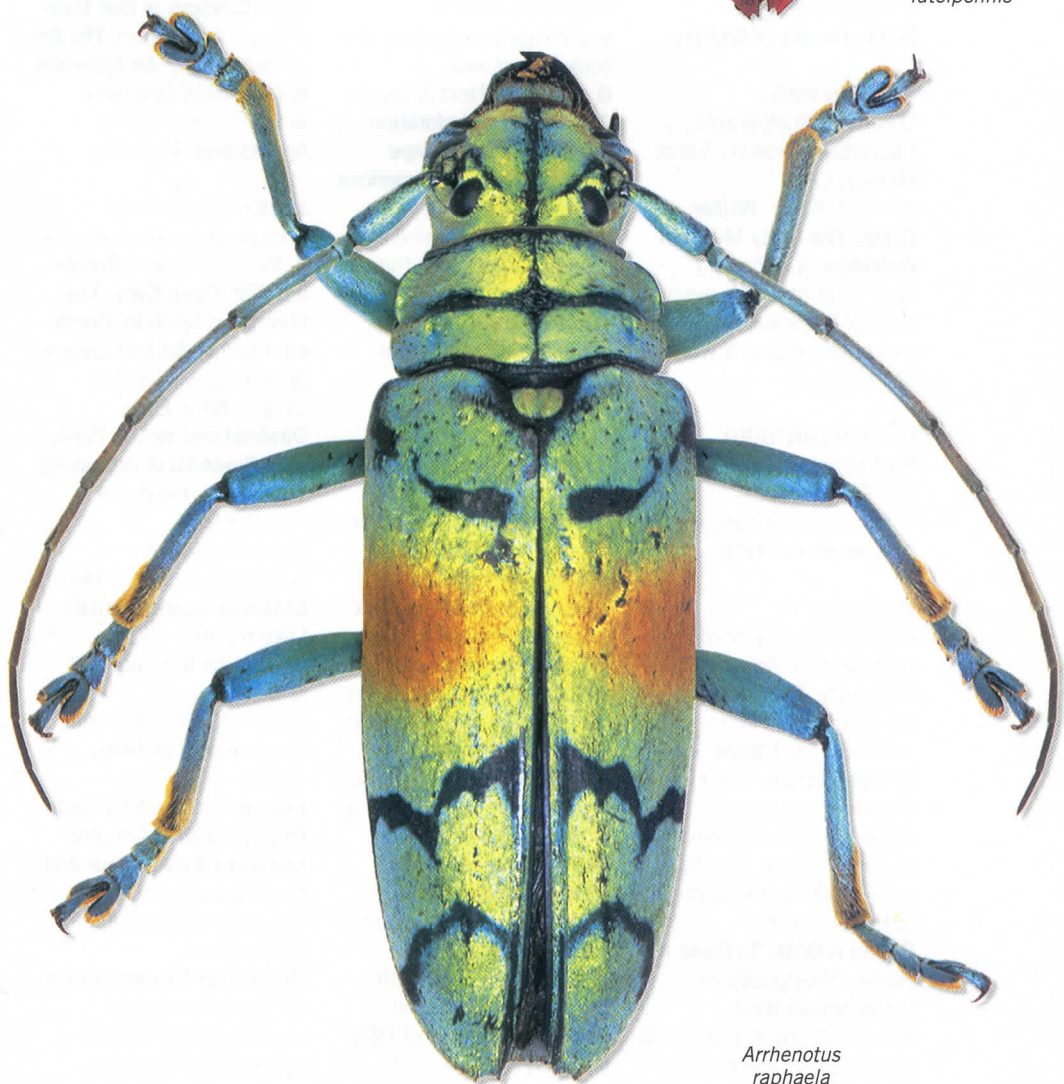
O N S E T

POUL BECKMANN'S  
CLOSE ENCOUNTER  
WITH THE  
INVERTEBRATE WORLD.  
BY RUSSELL HART

# MEET THE BEETLES



*Semiotus  
luteipennis*



*Arrhenotus  
raphaela*

# JACK LIVES HERE.



**HOW FAR WILL YOU GO FOR JACK?**

**TRY LYNCHBURG • LONDON • PRAGUE**

You could win a trip to party in three of the great places around the world where Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey is loved and enjoyed. All you have to do is: Share a story. Snap a shot. Make a movie. Say it any crazy way you want — just tell us how Jack Daniel's lives in your life when you enter the Jack Lives Here contest. We'll select nine grand prizewinners to take part in a worldwide celebration of Jack, traveling from Lynchburg, Tennessee, home of the Jack Daniel Distillery, to London, England, and on to Prague, Czech Republic. But, if you want to travel with Jack, you better get moving — all entries must be received or postmarked by June 14, 2002. For more contest information, visit us online at [www.jackdaniel.com](http://www.jackdaniel.com).

**You Can Ask For JACK... anywhere.**

# JACK DANIEL'S





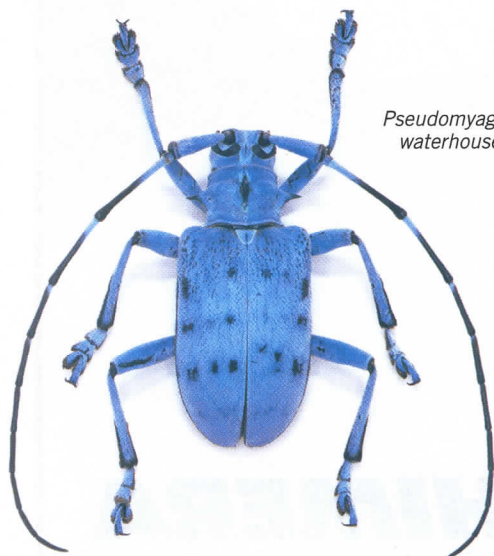
**W**hen Poul Beckmann set out to do his exhaustive photographic study of beetles (see page 20), he had a seemingly simple ambition. "I wanted to make them look the way they really look," he says, denying that he resorted to digital trickery for his eye-popping results. "The reason they look so surreal is that we're not used to seeing them just by themselves. This is the way they really look." But because beetles vary so widely in their colors, shapes, and textures, there was "no set formula" for Beckmann's lighting. "The insects with a metallic sheen were usually the hardest to light," says Beckmann, who shot with a Pentax 67. "Sometimes it would take 10 rolls of film before we got what we wanted."

Beckmann's lighting began with a Sunpak DX-12 Ringlight, which has a circular flash tube that mounts around the end of the lens barrel. Though frontal, its "axis" light helped model the beetles' curved surfaces and kept the lighting technique transparent. The photographer sometimes masked off parts of the ringflash tube to control the light's distribution. Depending on the specimen, he placed up to four smaller, heavily diffused Sunpak flashes to its sides. A larger unit bounced in extra light when needed.

Mounting his camera on an old copy stand, Beckmann shot with a Pentax 135mm f/4 macro lens, locking up the mirror to lessen vibrations. He used one or two extension tubes for closer focusing, depending on the specimen's size. (Beetles range in length from a quarter of a millimeter to nearly 10 inches.) He rarely set an aperture wider than f/32; the small f-stop maximized depth of field, which is extremely shallow at such close working distances.

Beckmann scanned his 6x7cm Fujichrome Velvia transparencies on a Crossfield drum scanner, "cleaning up" and color correcting the resulting 50- to 80Mb files in Photoshop. How is it that Beckmann, who's never done photography professionally, has access to such a high-end scanner? Because to make a living, he works the night shift in the pre-press department of a printing company.

To see the hundreds of Beckmann's beetle photographs that didn't make it into *Living Jewels* (Prestel, \$40), visit [living-jewels.com](http://living-jewels.com).

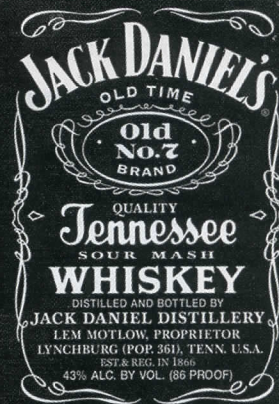


*Pseudomyagrus waterhousei*

© POUL AND RUTH BECKMANN (3)



Every Jack Daniel's barrelhouse  
has **20,000** barrels inside.  
And one serious padlock outside.



Your friends at Jack Daniel's remind you to drink responsibly.  
JACK DANIEL'S and OLD NO. 7 are registered trademarks of Jack Daniel's. Please visit us at [www.jackdaniels.com](http://www.jackdaniels.com).