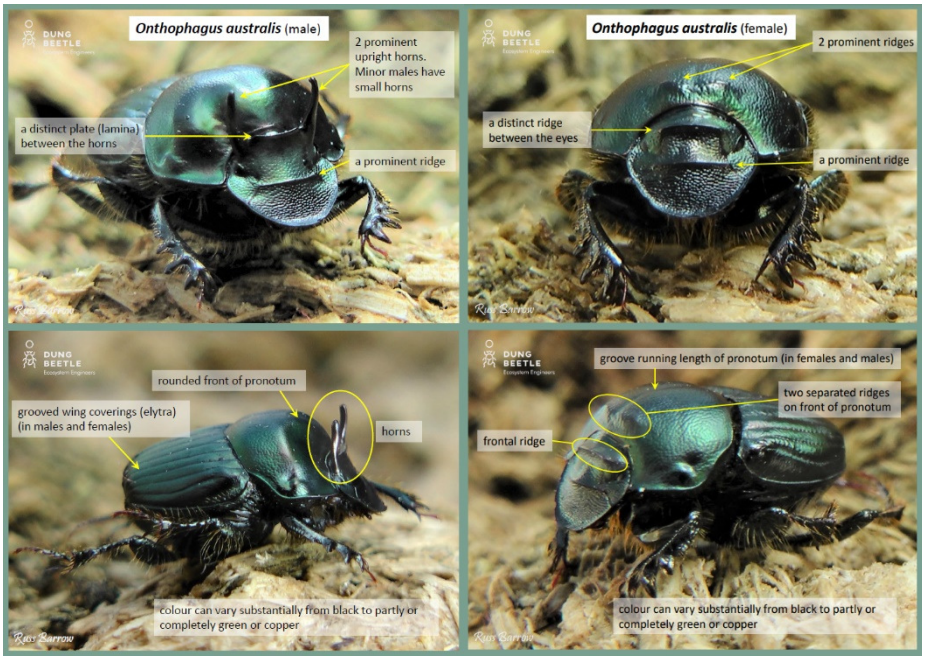
Onthophagus australis (native)



O. australis records (Source: Atlas of Living Australia)

Size: 11–13 mm

Colour: Black with a green or coppery sheen

Horns: Two upright horns on major males. Minor males have smaller horns and females have none.

Active seasons: Peaks of activity in spring (when eggs are laid) and autumn when the new generation emerges, however they can be found all year.

Distribution in Australia: Found over most of south eastern Australia, from southern Queensland to Tasmania and South Australia.

Similar species: *O. australis* is easily confused with the introduced species *Onthophagus taurus* (photo below). However, *O. australis* has a green or coppery sheen whilst *O. taurus* are black. Other distinguishing features include segmented antennae that forms a club containing three to seven lobes. Major male *O. taurus* have long, curved horns, which differ from the short, upright horns of O. australis.

Onthophagus taurus (photos by Russ Barrow)

South West Prime Lamb Group (SWPLG) demonstrations: *O. australis* have been trapped on each of the participating SWPLG properties in good numbers, often with *O. taurus.*

Lifecycle: *O. australis* mainly lay eggs in spring, emerging during late summer into autumn. For the first several weeks they are in a "maturation feeding stage". Most beetles are in the adult stage during the winter. Eggs are occasionally laid in autumn, which then emerge in spring. Populations tend to decline during summer droughts.

Dung burial: *O. australis* will shred dung pats and also bury dung food balls throughout its life cycle. Laboratory experiments showed that *O. australis* has the capacity to significantly reduce bush fly populations if in large enough populations; however their population size per dung pad is generally in low numbers.

Acknowledgements & references:

Photos by Russ Barrow- Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineer (DBEE) Project www.dungbeetles.com.au

Atlas of Living Australia www.ala.org.au