

10 (CRAZY BUT TRUE) Bug Facts

1. The largest (at least in terms of weight) insect is the Giant weta (*Deinacrida heteracantha*). Found in New Zealand, the Giant weta can grow to 4 inches in length (10 cm) – and that’s not including its legs or antennae. Most weigh an ounce or more (30 g), or about the same as a sparrow.
2. Ten quadrillion ants live on the planet at any given moment. At least that’s what biologists Bert Hölldobler and E. O. Wilson estimated in their book *The Ants* (Belknap Press, 1990).
3. Insects do not breathe through their mouths. They inhale and exhale through holes called spiracles in their exoskeletons.
4. Based on an insect fossil, scientists believe insects have been on earth for around 400 million years – that’s 170 million years before dinosaurs!
5. Insects have ears but they’re hardly ever on their heads. For example, crickets have sound-sensitive membranes on their legs. Grasshoppers’ ears are located on their abdomens. Lacewigs have ears on the tips of their wings.
6. All bugs are insects, but not all insects are bugs. A bug is a type of insect. Bugs have mouths shaped like straws that allow them to suck liquid from plants or blood from other insects or people. Bugs also have thick front wings that are colored near their bodies and clear at the tips. If they have rear wings, they’re clear. Of the millions of insect species on earth, about 80,000 are “true bugs.”
7. It takes about 1,800 gallons (6,820 l) of water to produce one pound (0.45 kg) of beef. There are about 1,000 crickets in a pound, and it takes just 1 gallon (3.8 l) of water to produce them.
8. The *Colobopsis cylindrica* may look like any other ant, but they have a superpower. When one of these insects senses danger, it can explode. When its body bursts open, its attacker gets splattered with poisonous yellow goo and the colony is protected. The ants’ nickname? The Exploding Ant!



9. When a ladybug is scared, it often emits a stinky liquid from its knees.
10. Fruit flies were the first insects sent into space. They made the trip in February 1947 as part of an experiment to see what effect space would have on a living creature. The flies survived and led to experiments with hamsters, mice, and monkeys before the first human went to space in 1961.