

Nic, the American Burying Beetle

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Save the whales! Free Willy! Sure, the big guys get all of the attention, but what about us bugs? We don't have a big Hollywood contract. They'll never make a movie about us, so I need to speak up because we're in trouble, too. My name is Nicrophorous Americanus but my friends call me Nic, the American Burying Beetle. I am an endangered species in most of the United States, including New Jersey, and the first invertebrate to be endangered. I may not be a movie star, but I do an important job cleaning up the environment. I am the one who cleans up at the dead animals. Sometimes our females lay eggs in the dead carcass because when the eggs hatch the babies have something to eat. Before we eat our food we bury it. Then we plow through the dirt and make a hole that the animal's body can fit into. The animal falls in and then we cover it with several inches of soil, and that's how I got my name the burying beetle. Our work helps to keep disease from spreading into your world. You could help me by not doing things that take my food away. If there are not enough small rodents or birds, I can't survive. You can also help by not tearing down my habitat. Really people, what did I ever do to you to make you want to tear down my home? How would you like it if you went out to get a snack, and then came back and your house was gone? Why can't you worship me like the Egyptians did for my "cousin" the scarab beetle? Remember, we're all connected, even the smallest bug! Save Willy, but save Nic, too.