



# International Cave Animal of the Year Portugal

“Explore, understand and protect“ is the main goal of the  
**International Year of Caves and Karst.**

The **International Cave Animal of the Year** was created to raise the awareness about the importance and protection of cave animals, and to encourage people to learn more about them. This year the selected group are **cave beetles.**

About **a quarter of all the animals inhabiting our planet are beetles,** represented by more than 400,000 species.

Beetles can be found in a wide range of habitats including caves.

In continental Portugal there are **nine species of cave-adapted beetles,** plus three in Madeira and eight in the Azores.

Cave-adapted **beetles are the most diverse insects** in caves of Portugal.



*Ibcroporus pluto*

Cave animals are rare, difficult to observe, and very threatened by human activities at surface. Cave beetles are adapted to the underground life in total darkness, and they lost their eyes, wings, pigment and have very low metabolism.



Beetles are arthropods and have a strong exoskeleton, which gives them protection against predators. As insects they have six legs and two antennae.

Beetles in caves of Portugal are all terrestrial, except one species that evolved to live in groundwater: the Portuguese predaceous cave-diving beetle, *Iberoporus pluto*. It was described in 2019 by researchers Ignacio Ribera and Ana Sofia Reboleira, and belongs to the family Dytiscidae. It inhabits a single cave in the Sicó karst area located in central Portugal. These beetles breathe air, therefore they must access the water surface every 30 to 60 minutes.

To learn more about cave beetles of the world see [www.iyck2021.org](http://www.iyck2021.org)

Explore



Understand



Protect

