



Arthropods
are all Around!

by Aline Hunziker

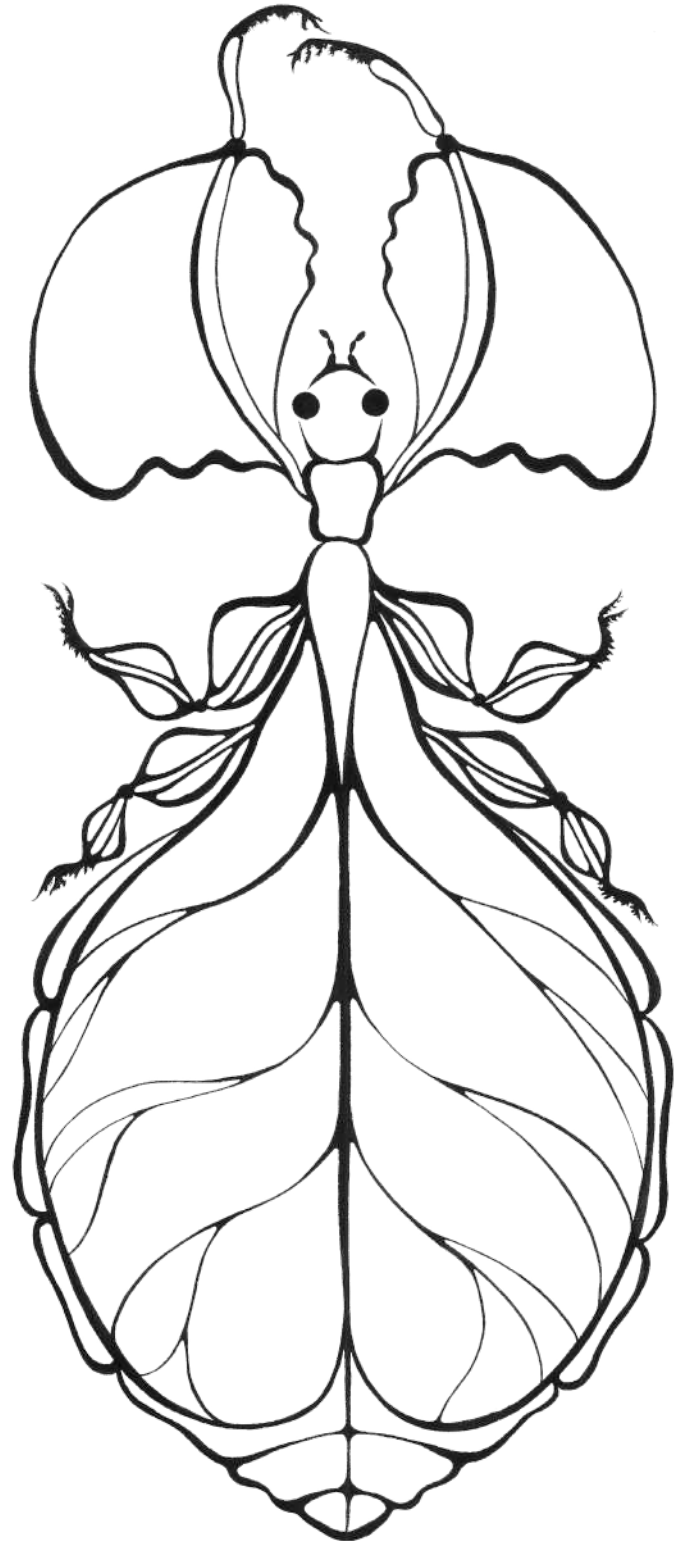
For my grandmother Dorothy,
a small gal with a tough shell.



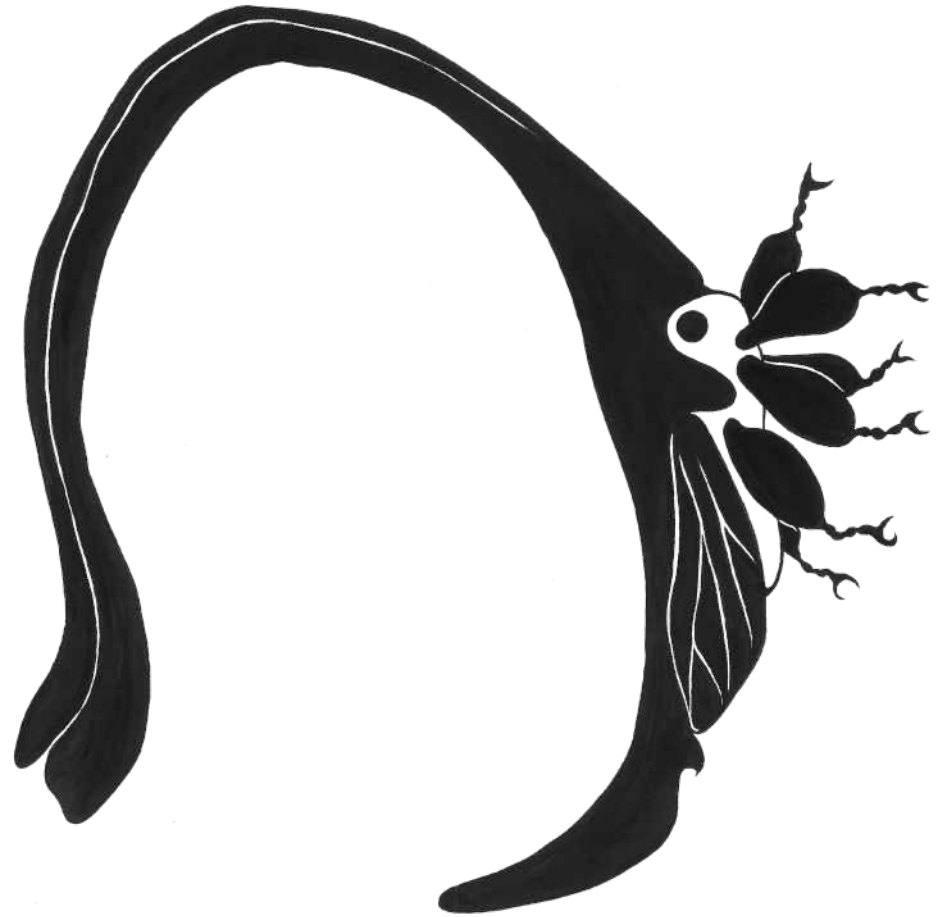
Arthropods are all around! They scramble on land, wriggle in the sea, and soar through the air. Some are so small we can't even see them, and others are bigger than a car. There are more arthropods on Earth than any other kind of animal. All of the crustaceans, insects, and arachnids form part of this group. Let's meet a few!



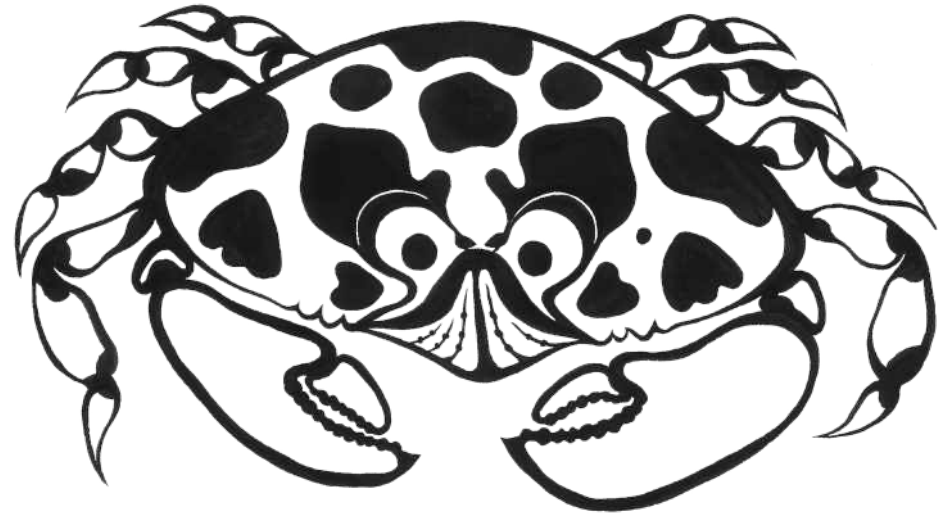
This one here is a WALKING LEAF INSECT. Her fancy outfit helps protect her from predators who might want to eat her. When she feels threatened, she stays very still and looks just like a dead leaf. Hungry animals looking for a snack ignore her and walk on by!



Many TREEHOPPERS mimic the plants and animals in their environments. Some hoppers look like ants or thorns, which may fool other animals so they don't attack. Do you have any idea what this one is trying to look like?



This CALICO CRAB is a member of the crustacean family. Like all arthropods, he has no bones. Instead, he has a hard shell, called an exoskeleton, which helps protect his insides. And maybe his fancy spots make him seem handsome to other crabs. What do you think?



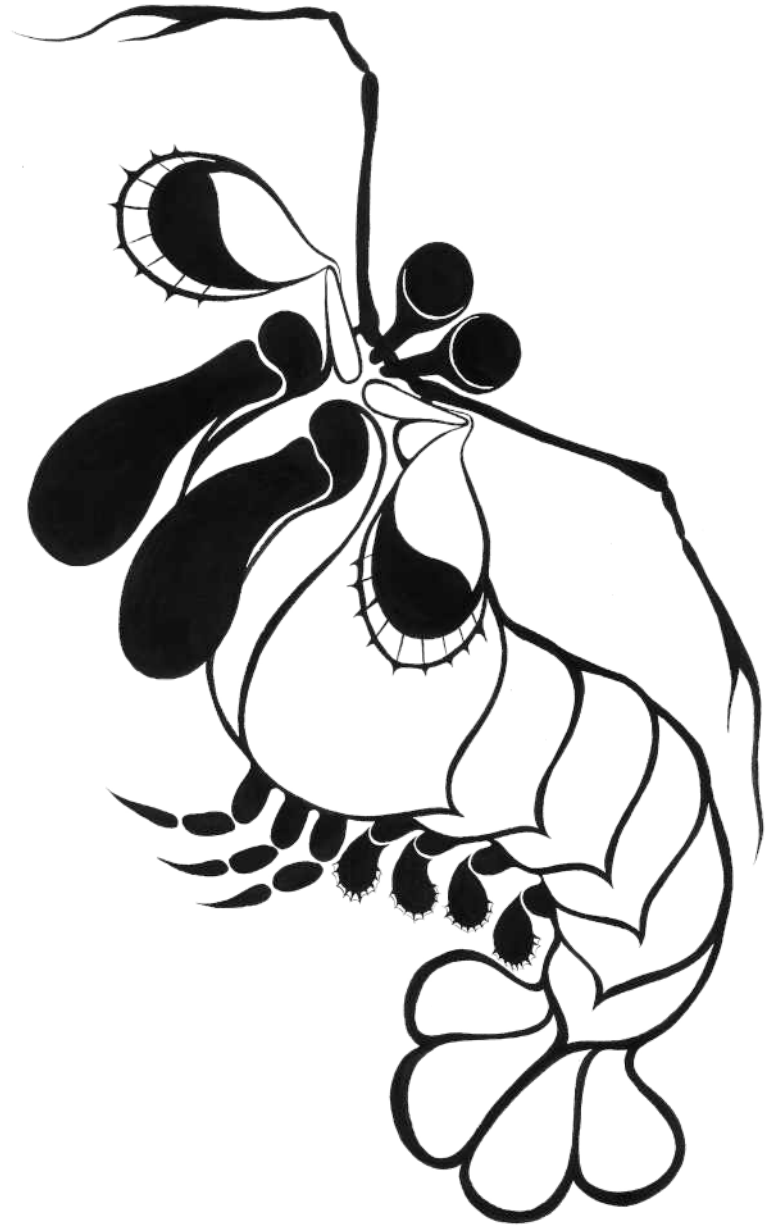
Most arthropods hatch from eggs, and the mother GIRAFFE WEEVIL lays hers inside a tube rolled from a leaf. She cuts the leaf from its tree and it falls to the forest floor, where the egg stays safe until her baby is ready to come out.



This TAILLESS WHIP SCORPION is a member of the arachnid family. Like many of her spider and scorpion cousins, she looks tough but is harmless to people. When her babies hatch, she carries them on her back until they are old enough to strike out on their own.



Don't be fooled by the sweet look of this MANTIS SHRIMP! She uses her front legs to attack prey and punches so hard that she can break the glass of an aquarium! She also has special eyes that help her to see many more colors than human beings do. Can you imagine a rainbow with five times the colors of the rainbow we can see?



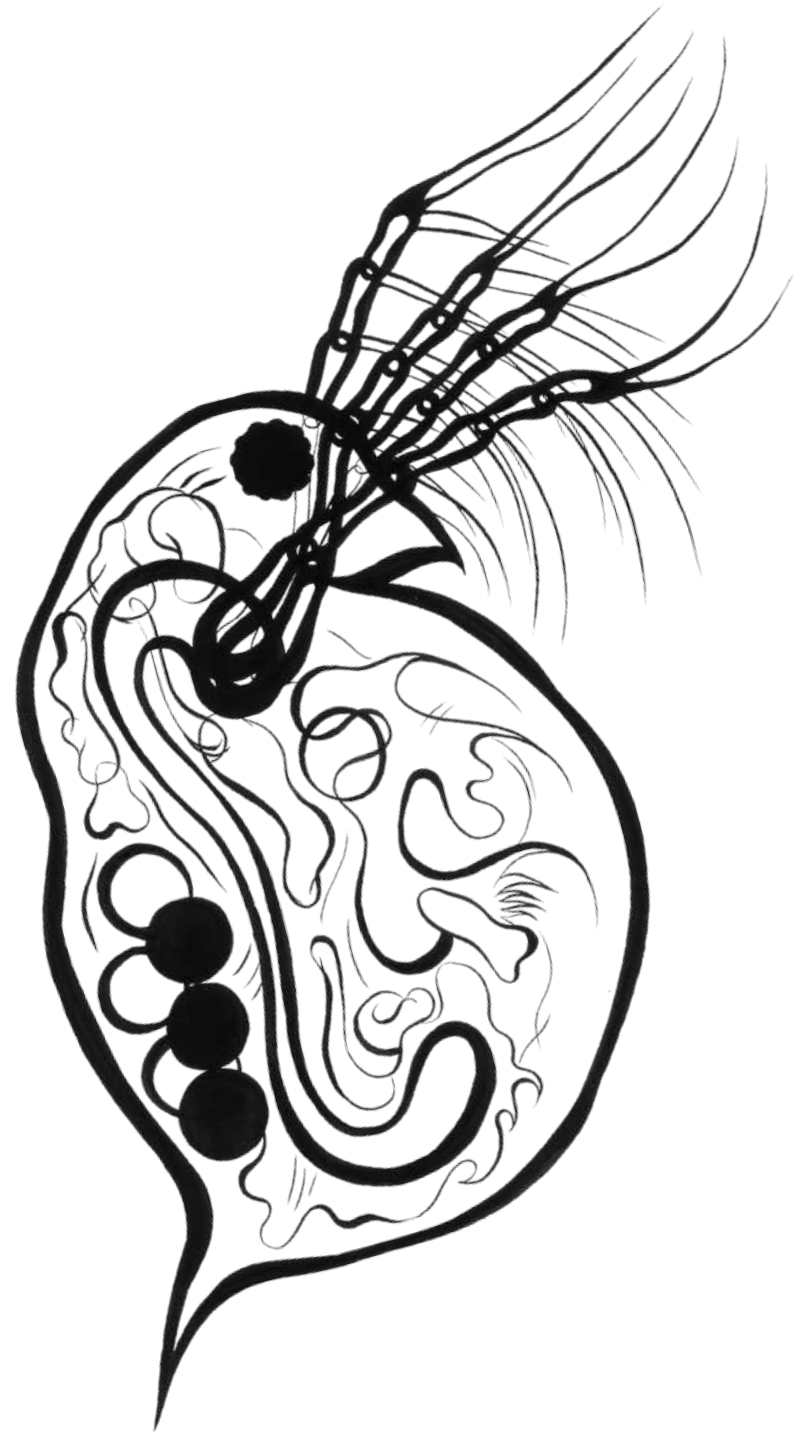
Don't worry! This WAX-TAILED FULGORID is not on fire. The white plumes on his rear end help him to escape trouble. If another animal grabs them, they break off so he can get away. His delicate wings also allow him to fly around looking for friends to play with.



A DUST MITE is so small you need a microscope to see him, even though he lives everywhere that people do. Right now there may be thousands of these little fellows right where you sleep! They help to keep the place clean by eating up any dirty stuff that comes off your skin.



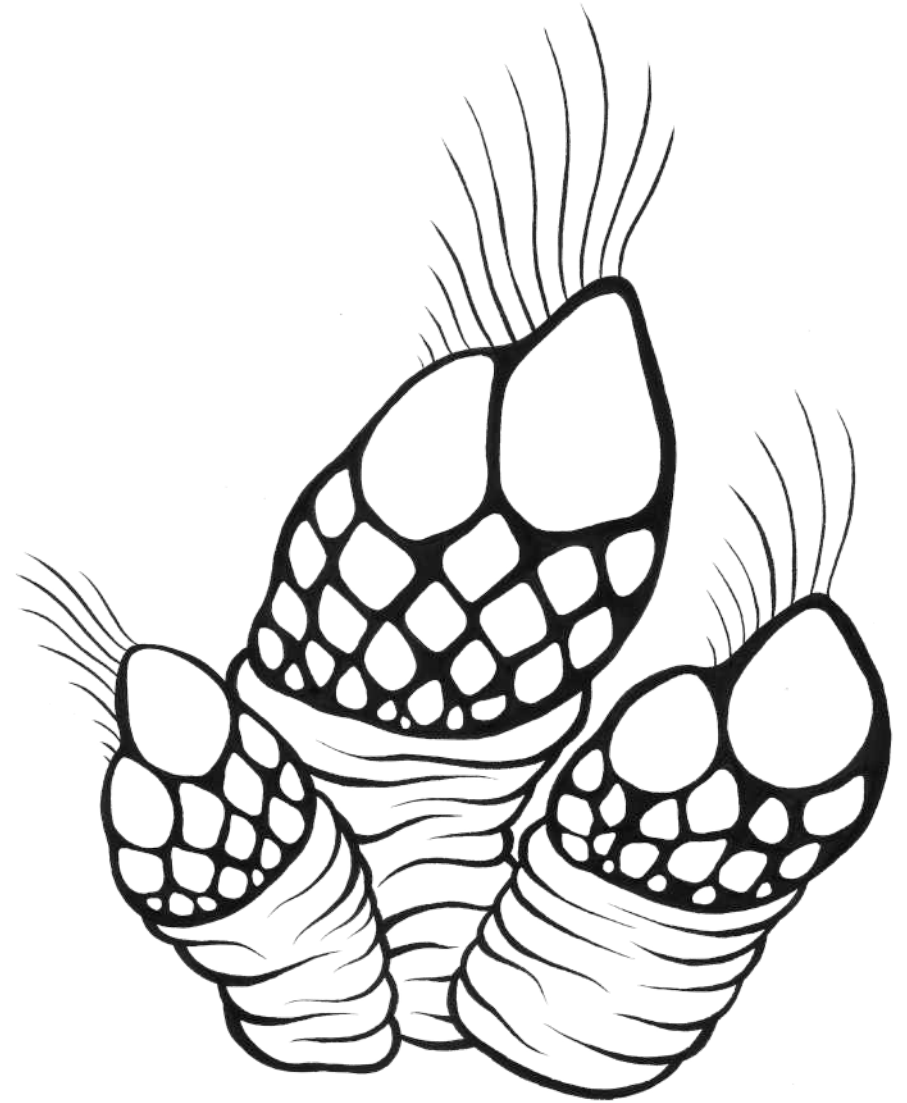
The tiny DAPHNIA is also fun to look at under a microscope, because her exoskeleton is completely transparent. You can see right through her and watch her heart beating! This one is going to have babies soon. Can you see her eggs?



This fierce looking fellow is a DEVIL'S FLOWER MANTIS. When he senses danger, he stands up tall and raises his front legs to scare off predators or intimidate other animals. His patterns and colors help him to hide inside his flower home. When an unwary insect comes close, the mantis can grab it with his powerful claws.



Arthropods go through many changes as they grow up. GOOSENECK BARNACLE babies swim around the ocean looking for a home. When they find a good spot, they grab on and hold tight. Their swimming legs change into feathery cirri they use to catch other animals. Yum, yum, dinnertime!



You may not have seen any of these animals yourself, but if you look nearby you are sure to find many fascinating arthropods right in your neighborhood. It can be fun to look at them, draw them, and learn about their habits. And that will be easy for you, because arthropods are all around!