Have you ever wondered which animal ranks the strongest in the world? Your first guess may be an elephant because it can lug hundreds of pounds on his back. Or perhaps it would be a grizzly bear with its massive bulk weighing up to 1500 pounds?

No. It’s the rhinoceros beetle. True, this bug couldn’t carry hundreds of pounds on his back. He’d be chocolate bug pudding in seconds. But proportionally to his size, he’d win the iron man contest any day.

How come, you ask? Look at the elephant. It can hold 20% of its body weight. The ant, known for its strength, hefts up to 30 times its body mass. But the rhinoceros beetle can carry 850 times his weight! That would be like a 10-year-old kid carrying 38 cars on her back!

Entomologist Kirk Tonkle works with bugs. He currently lives in Seoul, South Korea, with his pet, Pete, a Japanese rhinoceros beetle. Pete’s Latin name is Trypoxylus dichotomus, but in Japan, they call him Kabutomushi. Kirk explains these beetles can be found in Korea and Japan.
Like all insects, Pete has wings, antennae, and six legs. This large black beetle measures about two inches, so he could crawl snugly into an egg shell.

But what makes Pete special are his two horns. One horn rests on top of his head and the other under his chin. These horns, Tonkle explains, are wielded like swords to fight other beetles. What do they fight about? Usually a female. In Japan, spectators watch rhinoceros beetles fight in contests. Two male beetles joust on a stick until one flips his opponent over with his horn.

Pete just celebrated his four-month birthday. He’s considered an old beetle since beetles have a lifespan of about four months. Recently, Tonkle introduced Pete to a cute female named Muffin. They hit it off right away. Babies are expected soon! But Tonkle is sad because Pete will die shortly after mating.

Yet he will always have those memories of Pete flying around the living room and clamping with incredible strength onto his hand. And he won’t forget Pete’s irresistible charm when he falls asleep with his face planted in his food.

Elephants and grizzlies may be strong, but their muscle power can’t touch Pete’s brawn. Wouldn’t you want the world’s strongest animal for a pet?