

Survey Guide

Heath Tiger Beetle – *Cicindela sylvatica*

Description of adults:

- The largest of the tiger beetles, it can reach 19mm in length. It has large eyes, long legs and large, powerful jaws
- It is charcoal-black to dark brown in colour with pale yellow markings on the wing cases.
- It can be distinguished from other tiger beetle species by its black labrum (the plate over the base of the jaws). Other tiger beetle species have a pale labrum.
- Males have thickened fore tarsi (the end segments of their legs), with white hairy undersides.



Confusable species:

- It can be confused with the Dune Tiger Beetle (1). Dune Tiger Beetles are largely found on coastal dunes and so the best way to distinguish them from Heath Tiger Beetles is by the habitat. However, Dune Tiger Beetles can also be distinguished by their pale labrum.
- It has occasionally been confused with the Green Tiger Beetle (2), but they are very different in colour if seen close. Beetles in flight should be followed until they land to ensure they are identified correctly.
- It can also be confused with the Two-banded Longhorn (3), but this is usually seen on flowers or in woodland.



Larval burrows:

- Tiger beetle larval burrows are small, round, vertical burrows.
- The burrows have no spoil heap.
- The burrows have a distinctive haul out lip.
- They are often found clustered together.
- It's not possible to distinguish between a Heath Tiger Beetle and a Green Tiger Beetle larval burrow, but it is still worth recording the number of tiger beetle burrows that have been seen, as well as the location.
- We do not recommend disturbing the burrows or trying to get the larvae to come out, as this can damage them. But if you sit and watch a burrow for long enough, you may see the head of a larva appear at the surface.



Habitat:

- It is found on sandy heathland with patches of bare ground.
- Usually found on tracks or in scrapes.
- Associated with dry, compact, sandy soils
- Also associated with a high percentage of heather cover in the surrounding vegetation – a mosaic of heather age classes may be important.
- May be more abundant on tracks with a south facing aspect
- It is currently found in Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey.



Survey methods:

- The best time of year to survey is between May and September.
- Surveys should be undertaken on relatively still, warm, dry days.
- Some cloud cover can be beneficial, as the beetles will be less likely to fly away when disturbed.
- Walk slowly along compact, sandy tracks, scanning the track and the heather border carefully for any signs of beetles.
- They are easily disturbed, particularly in hot weather, but will only fly a short distance. They can usually be followed, allowing for identification when they land.
- Care should be taken to avoid double counting individuals that fly forwards along the path when disturbed.
- Sitting very still on the edge of a suitable path or scrape and watching for any beetles can also be an effective survey method.



What to record:

- Numbers of beetles
- Numbers of larval burrows
- Location (8 figure grid reference or GPS if possible)
- Availability of suitable habitat (i.e. percentage of bare ground cover)



Please record on [Living Record](#) if possible. See [here](#) for a step by step guide on how to do this.