

How to help stag beetles

BEST TIME OF YEAR TO SPOT: May to July (especially sultry evenings before dusk)

PREFERRED HABITAT: woodlands, parks and gardens with laying dead wood

CONSERVATION STATUS: globally threatened

COMMON PREDATORS: cat, fox, crow and magpie

If you're lucky enough to find a magnificent stag beetle in your garden – congratulations! Stag beetles are a sign of a really wildlife friendly plot. What's more, you've just had the privilege of seeing a globally threatened species in your own garden.

In fact, London is a 'hotspot' for stag beetles and is nationally significant for the population it supports. Despite being Britain's largest ground living beetle, the capital's stag beetles are vulnerable and need your help. You can do this by creating your very own log pile in your garden – they can be made to look impressive and stag beetles and other wildlife will love them too.

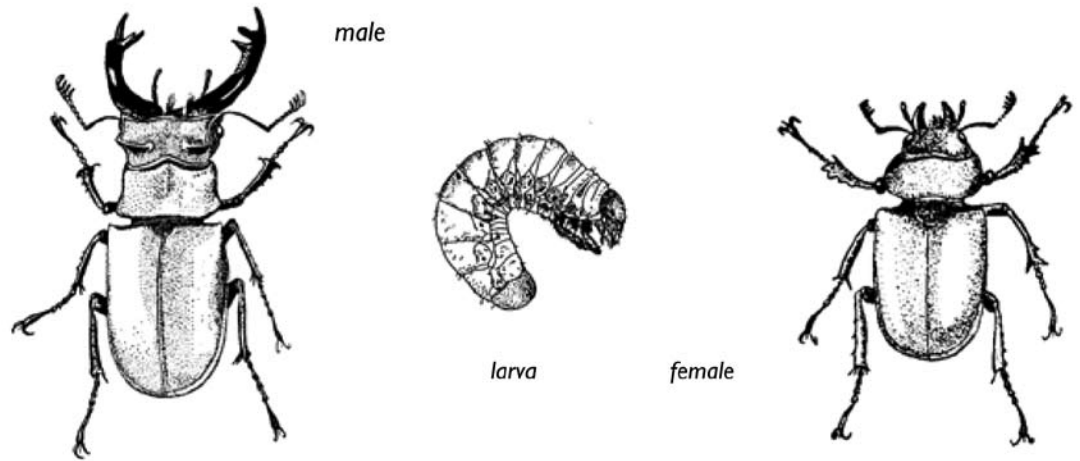
How to spot a stag beetle:

- You are most likely to find a stag beetle in parks, woodland edges, and suburban gardens, near or on dead wood
- It's between 5cm and 8cm long, and black with a distinctive chestnut-brown sheen
- The male's got large antler-shaped jaws which are used for fighting
- The female's jaws are smaller but more powerful
- Adults emerge from the soil beneath logs or tree stumps from mid-May until late July
- Males emerge and are often seen flying on sultry summer evenings an hour or two before dusk



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Why stag beetles need your help

Stag beetles are rapidly declining across Europe, mainly as a result of the tidying-up of woods, parks and greenspaces and the destruction of dead wood. The larvae live in dead wood for up to seven years while they are maturing, and may also be inadvertently destroyed in the belief that they are pests. In urban areas traffic, feet, cats and other predators also have a detrimental impact.

Are stag beetles dangerous?

The beetles are entirely harmless to people, and their pets and garden plants. In earlier times, they were thought to be harbingers of thunder-storms and carriers of burning coals. However, stag beetles are important detritivores - decomposers of dead wood, helping to create new soils.

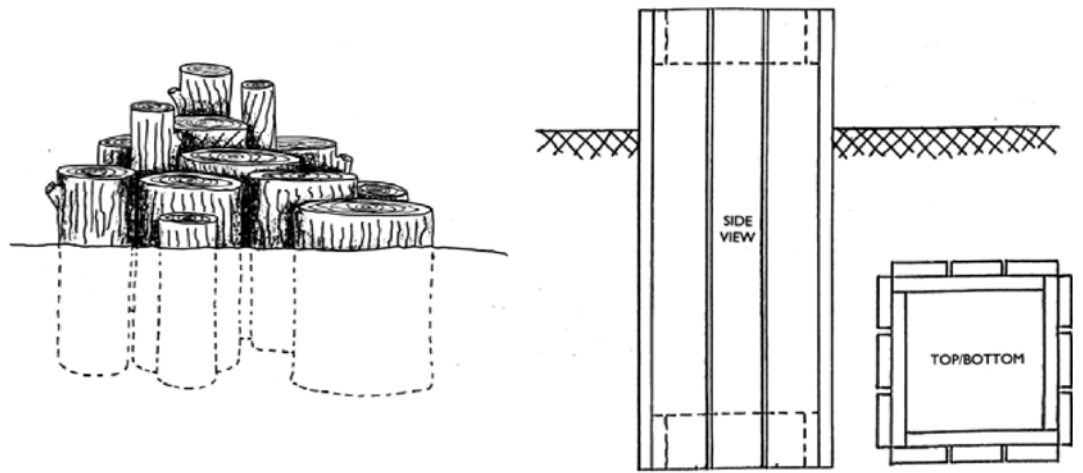
How to create a stag beetle log pile in your garden:

- A stag beetle needs dead wood to complete its lifecycle. Stag beetles lay eggs underground by logs or stumps of dead trees and the larva (or grub) will spend up to seven years inside slowly growing in size. The larvae don't eat the wood of live trees and shrubs and so are not a pest.
- By creating a log pile in your garden, you are providing just the right habitat to help stag beetles. They like all sorts of hard woods, especially oak but also ash, sycamore, lime, hornbeam, apple, cherry and even some garden tree varieties. They will not use coniferous woods.
- Large logs (10-50cm diameter) with bark still attached should be sunk vertically about 60cm into the ground, in partially shaded areas.



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Tell us if you see a stag beetle

Remember if you do see a stag beetle we want to know about it. Go to www.wildlondon.org.uk to report your stag beetle sighting in our *Staggering Gains* survey. With this information, we can help improve conservation measures across London and help protect this fascinating beetle for the future.

An uneven distribution in London

The stag beetle has been recorded in most London boroughs in the last 10 years, but appears to be more common in south and west London where it is found in areas like Beckenham, Dulwich, Wandsworth, Sutton and Richmond. While it is rarely spotted in central London, because there are few appropriate habitats, researchers are puzzled as to why sightings have been so few in north-west and north-east London.

Other things you can do to help

- Don't use insecticides
- Keep cats away from your log pile
- Keep water butt lids on to stop stag beetles drowning

Get inspired

Visit the stag beetle log pile at the London Wildlife Trust's

Centre for Wildlife Gardening www.wildlondon.org.uk

Visit the stag beetle log pile at Kew Gardens www.kew.org

Discover the mythology of stag beetles in *Lucanus cervus depictus*: maria.fremlin.de/stagbeetles/lcdepictus.html

Extra advice

Go to the People's Trust for Endangered Species www.ptes.org.uk to record your log pile and find out how to bury a bucket to help stag beetles.



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