

Guides to British Beetles

7. *Brachinus*, *Omophron*, *Loricera*, *Broscus* and *Miscodera* Ground Beetles (Coleoptera; Carabidae)



These genera of ground beetles are distantly related but covered together as they contain one or two species only. This guide will enable identification of the two *Brachinus*, and single *Omophron*, *Loricera*, *Broscus* and *Miscodera* species found in Britain.

Omophron limbatum Spangled Button-beetle

A very distinctive ground beetle which is unlikely to be confused with other species. It resembles a water beetle more than a typical ground beetle. The elytra have 15 striae and the scutellum is not visible as it is hidden under the pronotum.



5 - 6.5 mm

Inhabits sandy shores of lakes and pools, especially recently worked sand pits. Most often found on areas of very fine silty sand and on quicksand. Mainly nocturnal but may be found during the day by splashing water over damp sand, the beetles will emerge from the sand and run on the surface. Rare and confined to a few sites in Kent, East Sussex, Norfolk and Suffolk.



Omophron limbatum Spangled Button-beetle

Brachinus crepitans The Bombardier Beetle

Bombardier beetles have a characteristic appearance with a very narrow pronotum and head. They are named after their ability to spray a hot, caustic fluid from the tip of the abdomen in defence. The entire upper surface is covered in very short hairs (visible under x10 magnification).



6 - 10 mm

Brachinus crepitans has completely dark elytra and the antennae are darkened. The adults are very variable in size because the larvae parasitise the pupae of other ground beetles including *Amara* and probably *Harpalus* and *Ophonus*. The size of the adult is determined by the size of the host pupa.



Adults are very variable in size.



Brachinus crepitans The Bombardier Beetle

A scarce species found in scattered localities in southern England and south Wales. It is most frequently found on the coast where it occurs on sea-walls, drier areas of grazing marshes and other open habitats. Inland colonies occur in open habitats such as quarries and grasslands in chalk and limestone areas.

Brachinus sclopeta Streaked Bombardier Beetle

Distinguished from *Brachinus crepitans* by the red markings on the elytra and completely red antennae.



4.5 - 7.5 mm

There are old records from Devon, Kent and Essex. It was thought to be extinct in Britain before being rediscovered in London in 2005.

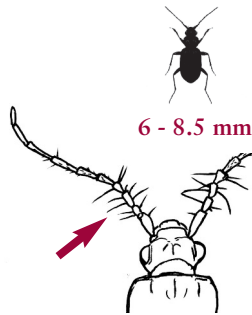


Brachinus sclopeta Streaked Bombardier Beetle

Loricera pilicornis Hair-trap Ground Beetle

Superficially similar to other small ground beetles eg. *Agonum* but distinguished by the **long bristles on the antennae**. These are used to trap springtails. Each elytron has **12 striae** (most ground beetles have 9 plus the scutellar stria). There are **3 deep punctures on the 4th elytral interval**.

A very common species which flies readily and is found in a variety of habitats.



Showing long bristles on the antennae.



Loricera pilicornis Hair-trap Ground Beetle

Broscus cephalotes Strand-line Burrower

A very distinctive ground beetle. **Matt black** above with **very faint striae on elytra**. **Head nearly as wide as pronotum** with **large jaws**.

A widespread and locally common species found on sandy shores and occasionally inland in sandy habitats eg. The Brecks in East Anglia. Burrows into sand during the day. Most frequently found under driftwood along the strandline. It is nocturnal and may be found walking on the sand after dark.



16 - 23 mm



Newly-excavated burrow in sand.

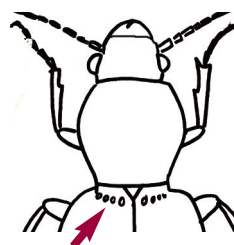


Broscus cephalotes Strand-line Burrower

Miscodera arctica Moraine Burrower

Similar in appearance to *Broscus cephalotes* but much smaller in size. **Shiny upperparts** with rows of small pits along striae. **Eight pits across the base of the elytra**. **Legs reddish brown**.

A scarce species found on well-drained heather moorland in north Wales, northern England and Scotland. There is one record from Exmoor, Devon.

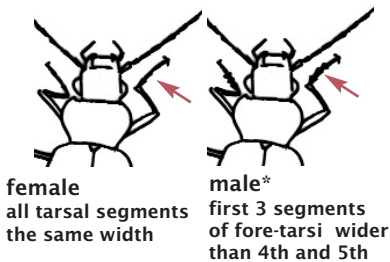


4.5 - 7.5 mm

Eight pits across base of elytra. Scutellum on peduncle.



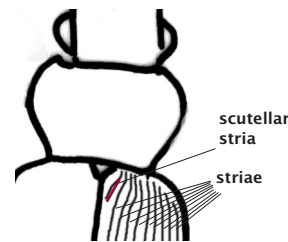
Miscodera arctica Moraine Burrower



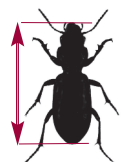
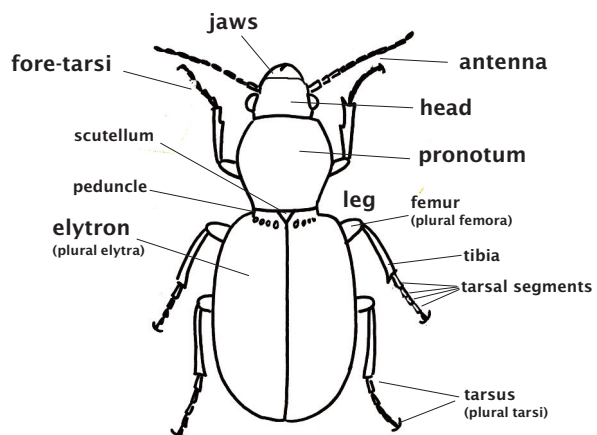
female
all tarsal segments the same width

male*
first 3 segments of fore-tarsi wider than 4th and 5th

* except *Omophron* which has first 2 segments of fore-tarsi wider than 3rd, 4th and 5th.



Elytra showing striae. Scutellar stria highlighted.



length (mm)

Thanks to Mark Telfer for comments, providing the English names and the photo of a *Broscus* burrow.