

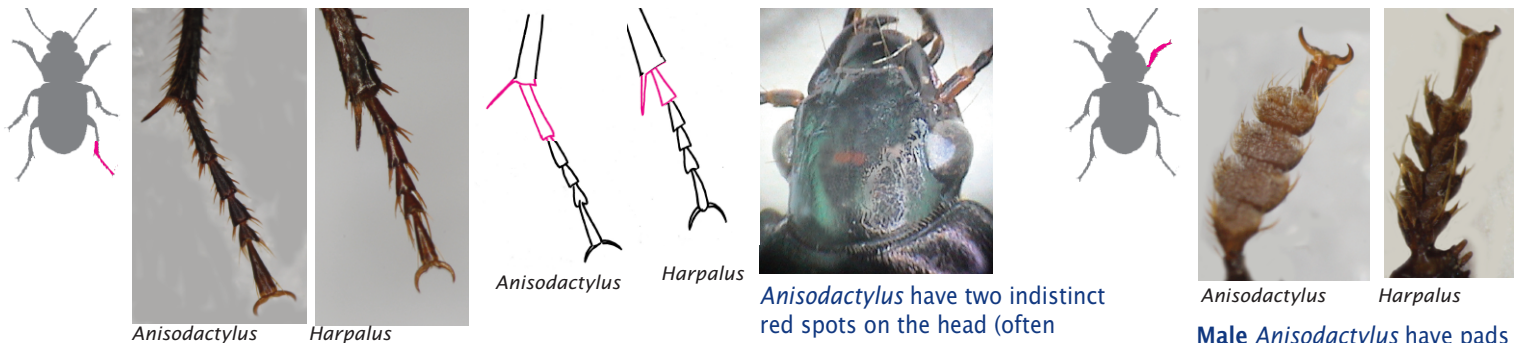
Guides to British Beetles

14. *Anisodactylus* Shortspurs Ground Beetles (Coleoptera; Carabidae)



Anisodactylus are closely related and similar in appearance to *Harpalus*. The key features of this genus are the length of the apical spur on the hind tibia and the red spots on the head. The base of the pronotum is pitted in all species. They are medium sized ground beetles which feed mainly on seeds. They are winged and able to fly.

This guide will enable identification of the 3 *Anisodactylus* species found in Britain.



Anisodactylus *Harpalus*

Anisodactylus can be separated from *Harpalus* by the spur on the hind-tibia which is shorter than the first tarsal segment.

Anisodactylus have two indistinct red spots on the head (often merged into a single transverse spot). NB it is important to view the beetle in strong light at the correct angle to see this feature.

Anisodactylus *Harpalus*

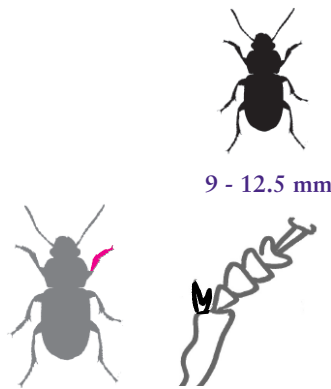
Male *Anisodactylus* have pads of pale hairs on the underside of the fore tarsi. These are absent in male *Harpalus*.

Anisodactylus poeciloides Saltmarsh Shortspur

Separated from the other species by its usually metallic copper or green upperside (but black individuals are not uncommon), the **three-pronged apical spur on the front tibia**, and **rounded pronotal hind-angles**. The outer elytra intervals (8th interval and beyond) are pitted and covered with short pale hairs.

Confusion is possible with metallic *Harpalus* species, e.g. *Harpalus affinis* and also *Poecilus cupreus* and allies. Separated from *Harpalus* by the length of the spur on hind-tibia and red spots on head. *Poecilus* species have keels on the basal 3 segments of the antenna (see Guides to British Beetles No.10 - *Poecilus*).

A rare species found in upper saltmarsh habitats, e.g. edges of saline lagoons and ditches. Inhabits partly-vegetated ground amongst pioneer saltmarsh plants, e.g. glasswort *Salicornia*, sea aster *Aster* and sea-spurrey *Spergularia*. Found on the coast between Suffolk and Hampshire. The main populations occur around the Thames Estuary.



9 - 12.5 mm

Three-pronged apical spur on front tibia. NB only 2 prongs are visible from above.



Anisodactylus poeciloides Saltmarsh Shortspur



Harpalus affinis
Sunshining Seed-eater



Poecilus cupreus
Copper Greenlock

Anisodactylus binotatus Common Shortspur

This and the following species are black above, have **single-pronged apical spurs on the front tibia**, and the **pronotal hind-angles are distinct**, with a small protruding tooth. In *binotatus*, the **outer elytra intervals (8th interval and beyond) are pitted and covered with short pale hairs and this extends over all intervals in the apical quarter**. One or two basal segments of the antenna are reddish. Legs usually black to dark brown but a red-legged form occurs.



9 - 13 mm

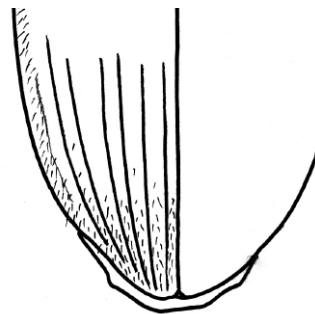


Anisodactylus binotatus Common Shortspur

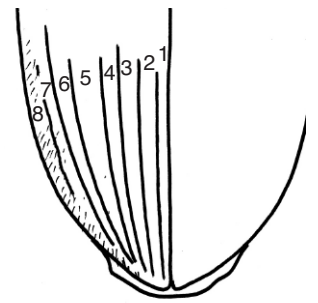
A fairly common beetle in England and Wales though rarer in northern England and Scotland. Found in damp habitats, e.g. grassland near water, dune slacks and marshes. It flies readily and is sometimes found away from these habitats.



Anisodactylus binotatus showing short pale hairs on outer intervals and apex of elytra. **NB it is important to view the beetle in strong oblique light to see the hairs.**



binotatus



nemorivagus

Elytral intervals numbered.

Anisodactylus nemorivagus Heath Shortspur

Smaller than *Anisodactylus binotatus*. The **covering of pits and short pale hairs on the elytra is less extensive**, covering the 8th interval and beyond but **not extending to other intervals at the apex**; sometimes there may be a few hairs on the 7th and 5th intervals (see illustration). One or two basal segments of the antenna are reddish. Legs black, more slender than *binotatus*; male with narrower front tarsi.

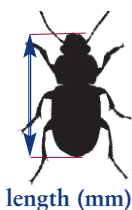


8 - 10 mm



Anisodactylus nemorivagus Heath Shortspur

Rare; found in a few sites in southern England. Currently known from Dorset, The New Forest (Hampshire and South Wiltshire), Surrey and East Sussex. There are older records from a Suffolk Breckland heath and from Swansea. It inhabits dry, sparsely vegetated heathland on warm south-facing slopes.



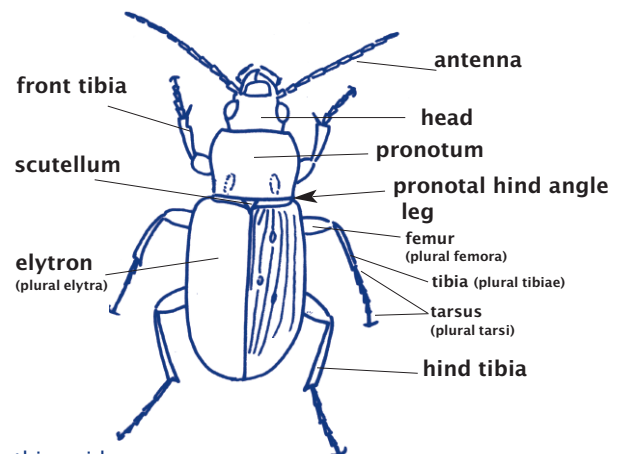
length (mm)



male
2nd to 4th
segments of
tarsi wider
than 5th



female
all tarsal
segments the
same width



Thanks to Bob Heckford for the use of his microscope for taking the close-up photos in this guide.