

STAG BEETLE

Lucanus cervus

SIZE: Adult males are 3.5-7.5cm long, with large antler-like jaws; females grow 3-5cm long, with normal sized jaws

HABITAT: Woodland edges, hedgerows, parks and gardens

FOOD: Larvae feed on decaying wood. Adults drink moisture from ripe fruits



FAST FACTS

- Male stag beetles display their massive jaws to attract females and duel with their rivals.
- Stag beetles can live up to 7 years, but they spend most of that time underground in their larval stage. Even the larvae of male stag beetles have large jaws!
- When ready to mature, stag beetles build an ovoid-shaped cocoon in the soil, up to 20cm below ground. It can be as large as an orange and take up to 3 weeks to construct. Within the cocoon, the larva pupates and turns into its adult form.
- After spending winter and spring in the soil, adult beetles emerge above ground from mid May onwards to mate. By the end of August most of them will be dead.
- Look out for females on the ground searching for a place near rotting wood to lay their eggs, whereas males tend to be seen flying on the hunt for a mate.
- Stag beetles look scary, but pose no threat to humans!

ENDANGERED IN WANSTEAD

Stag beetles have declined in Europe and are red listed in many countries. They are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and are a Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. Stag beetles are suffering from loss of habitat. The UK has lost much of its native broad-leaved woodland and the decaying wood they need is often removed to make things look tidy. Stag beetles are found in areas of southern England, but fewer are recorded in East London than other parts of the capital, particularly in the South and West. In Wanstead they are rarely seen, and are less frequently encountered than their not-quite-so impressive cousins, the lesser stag beetle. The City of London is aware of the need to leave decaying wood, a key habitat for so many species including the stag beetle. As such, stag beetle sightings are probably a good indicator of the health of many other species locally.

HELP PREVENT THEIR EXTINCTION

- When out and about, leave old stumps and deadwood alone. Female stags lay their eggs in rotting log piles, old fence posts and the roots of various rotten trees, including oak, apple, ash and cherry.
- Build a log pyramid for stags in your garden.
- If you're mulching any of your flowerbeds, use untreated woodchip which can also provide ideal habitat for females to lay their eggs in and a food supply for the larvae.
- Create an area of wild lawn. Mow once a year in late summer and remove the cuttings (this will help wildflowers naturalise).
- Email your local councillors and ask them to make 20% of urban parks a wild area for nature, with features including long grass Grow Zones and woodpiles. These areas could easily be located around the unused edges of parks like Christchurch Green and would make these spaces much better for wildlife.



More information: <https://bit.ly/3bhnBlk>

Help scientists track stag beetle populations.

Report sightings at

www.wildlondon.org.uk/stag-beetle-campaign

