

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

Species: Devil's Coach-horse

Scientific Name: *Ocypus olens*

Irish Name: Deargadaoil

Group

There are over 2,000 beetles (Coleoptera) native to Ireland. This species is just 1 of over 600 in the rove beetle family (Staphylinidae) in Ireland.

Rove beetles are one of the most diverse family of animals on the planet.

How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Devil's Coach-horse was present on some of the 40 farms.



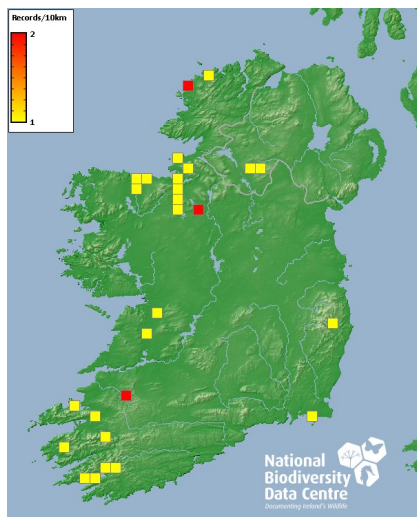
Devil's Coach-horse beetle. Note: Black abdomen of 8 segments, they raise their tail when threatened.

Identification Tips

- A large black rove beetle, 28mm long, covered in black hairs.
- Extended exposed abdomen, 8 segments covered by hardened plates.
- Moves quickly, when threatened they raise their tail and may release a foul-smelling secretion.
- Shortened wing case, covers the thorax.

Distribution

Widespread, probably under recorded.



Source: Devil's Coach-horse records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023.

Biodiversity Tip No. 32

Reduce the intensity of soil cultivation.

Beneficial ground and rove beetles can be killed with intensive soil tillage.



Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status.

The status of the Devils' Coach-horse beetle *Ocypus olens* has not been assessed.

Management Tips

Ways to encourage ground and drove beetles like the Devil's Coach-horse:

- Retain or create field margins with tussock-forming grass.
- Divide large fields (greater than 15ha) with beetle banks to ensure more even coverage.
- Reducing the intensity of soil cultivations.
- Using spray thresholds to reduce pesticide applications, as they are considered sensitive to pesticides.
- Allow uncompetitive weeds to survive in the crop: low levels of weeds within the crops also help to support ground beetles by providing cover and alternative food (insects and seeds).

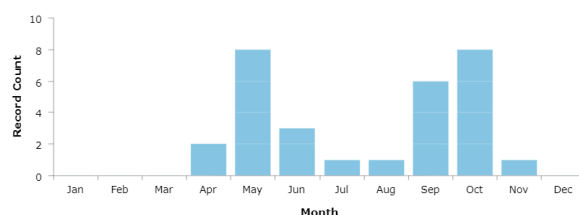


Devil's Coach-horse beetle (right and left), moves quickly when disturbed.

When?

Can be seen between April to November. The earliest it has been recorded in Ireland is 17 April (2013).

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Devil's Coach-horse *Ocypus olens* image, accessed October 2023, [Devil's Coach-horse \(Ocypus \(Ocypus\) olens\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](#)

Where on the farm?

They hide under stones and debris by the day, found in damp places, including hedgerows and field margins, crops, grassland woodland and gardens.

Value

- An important biological control agent against pest species.
- As a voracious predator of insects and invertebrates including: worms, caterpillars, slugs, spiders and woodlice, they can help farmers to control crop pests.
- Provide a food supply for other wildlife, such as birds and mammals.



Further Info

They hunt invertebrates after dark have a reputation as a furious and fast predator.

They mate in the autumn and the female lays a single egg in damp moss, leaf litter and tussocky grass outside the crop in a sheltered place. The larvae hatch and feed underground on other invertebrates. The larvae will pupae after several months and emerge as an adult, about 1 month later.

The beetle in myth dating back as far as the middle ages is associated with the devil. It was said it has the ability to curse a person by pointing its upraised body/tail in their direction. Some also believe that the beetle had magic powers and that in Ireland reapers improved their skill by putting a Devil's Coach-horse in the handle of their scythe.

Similar species

Take care to identify this species, there are several similar species.

Affected by a change in climate?

They may be affected by changing weather patterns, including flooding and prolonged dry periods.

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:

pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

Useful Links

UK Beetles

[Ocyrops olens](#) | [uk beetles](#)

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your identification, you can submit your record.

- On the National Biodiversity Data Centre website:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016>



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Bia agus Mara
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