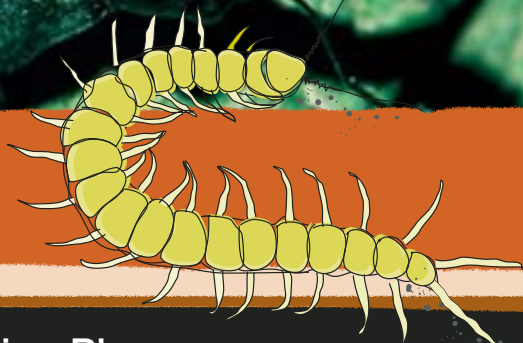




The Stag Beetle



Aims of the Stag Beetle Action Plan

- To protect, conserve and enhance populations of the stag beetle in Lambeth.
- To help investigate reasons for uneven distributions of stag beetle populations across London and Lambeth, and identify opportunities to address the main causes.
- To maintain the stag beetle as a valued species in Lambeth and London by increasing public awareness of their importance and that of dead wood as a wildlife habitat.

A) What is the stag beetle?

The stag beetle is Britain's largest terrestrial or ground beetle, occasionally reaching up to 8cm in length. As well as shiny chestnut-violet wing cases, the male stag beetle possesses large antler-shaped mandibles or jaws. These 'antlers' are used by male stag beetles for fighting other males, whereas the female's mandibles are smaller but more powerful.

Stag beetles require dead wood to complete their lifecycle, with eggs laid underground in soil next to dead logs or tree stumps. The stag beetle larva (grub) spends up to seven years in the dead wood; timber is also used, especially sunken fenceposts.

Adults emerge from mid-May until late July. Males emerge earlier to actively search for females to mate with, and are often seen flying on sultry summer evenings an hour or two before dusk. As adults they are short-lived and generally die after mating, although occasionally some may overwinter in places such as compost heaps.

B) Stag beetles in Lambeth

London is nationally significant for the UK stag beetle population. Over 3,000 adult beetles were recorded in London during 1998 national survey records –approximately 30% of the total recorded British population.

Stag beetles have been recorded across London, but key boroughs are Croydon, Lewisham, Bromley, Greenwich, Southwark, Lambeth, Bexley, Ealing, Hounslow, Richmond, Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth. The beetle is far more common in the South and West of London in areas like Beckenham, Dulwich, Wandsworth, and Richmond.

Gardens seem to be the most important habitat for stag beetles in London and the same applies to Lambeth. The role of members of the general public and their gardens is probably crucial to its conservation in Boroughs like Lambeth.

Lambeth Council regularly communicates with the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), the lead partner for the UK Stag Beetle Action Plan and the Stag Beetle Focus Group host organisation. Council officers liaise with PTES over implementing the national and London SAP, seeking advice on stag beetle conservation activities and obtaining opinion on issues in Lambeth that could affect Borough stag beetle populations or distribution.

C) Why do we need an Action Plan for the stag beetle?

The reduction of dead wood habitat is a major threat to future stag beetle populations. Dead wood was once reduced through intensive management or loss of woodlands. Although some 'tidying up' still continues, site managers are now more aware of the need to retain dead wood as part of woodland ecosystems - this will certainly benefit stag beetles. Changes in parks management in London has also led to retention of dead wood for landscape and nature conservation purposes.

Habitat suitable for stag beetles has been steadily lost in London through suburban expansion in the inter-war years. Although the introduction of the Green Belt led to restrictions on suburban expansion, development will continue to result in the loss of stag beetle habitat, especially as there is a lack of awareness of the beetle's presence on sites.

Stag beetles are very vulnerable to direct human impacts. Adult stag beetles are attracted to the warm surfaces of tarmac and pavements, making them vulnerable to being crushed by traffic or human feet. Many beetles are on the ground at dusk making it hard for people to see and avoid them. The clumsy low-level flying of adults makes them prone to being knocked to the ground.

Public fear and misunderstanding of stag beetles also leads to intentional killing of beetles and their larvae, the latter often seen as a garden pest. The male beetle's antlers, though they look ferocious, are perfectly harmless to humans and other animals.

Predators like crows, magpies, and foxes may have an adverse impact at the most vulnerable stage in the beetle's life cycle, when adults are seeking to mate and lay eggs. Badgers are also known to dig up stag beetle larvae, which should enjoy relative safety from predators underground.

D) What is the legal status of the stag beetle?

The stag beetle is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, but only to prevent trade in the species - the legislation is to stop the species from being collected for sale. The stag beetle is also listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, 1979 and Appendix 2 of the Habitats Directive. This requires us to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) specifically to protect stag beetles: Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park and Epping Forest are candidate SACs because of the stag beetle.

E) What will the Stag Beetle Action Plan do?

Objective 1. We will maintain and increase the population of stag beetles in Lambeth. This will involve increasing the provision of habitat within its known current range in Lambeth by 2010.

Objective 2. We will monitor existing stag beetle populations in Lambeth, including research on reasons for their uneven distribution across London, and conduct repeat surveys by 2008.

Objective 3. We will raise awareness of the stag beetle, its importance and its needs to all residents and groups in Lambeth, including incorporating information into a 2005-2008 Borough survey.

E) Who is involved in the Stag Beetle Action Plan?

1. Partnerships

The Lead Partner for the Lambeth Stag Beetle Action Plan is Lambeth Council's Parks and Greenspaces Business Unit (Lambeth Parks). Other Lead Partner associates would include Lambeth Planning and the Council's Grounds and Tree Maintenance Contractors.

The Lead Community Partner would be the London Wildlife Trust, and its local groups or associates in Lambeth.

Other Partners include the Greater London Authority, London Natural History Society, English Nature and the London Tree Officers Association.

2. Contact for information

For more information on the Lambeth Stag Beetle Action Plan, including copies of this plan in paper or electronic format, please contact:

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3. Further information and advice

Further advice on the stag beetle, its ecology and conservation, and the management of habitats to protect and promote stag beetles, can be found on the following websites.

- DEFRA (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/>)
- London Wildlife Trust (<http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/>)
- Greater London Authority (<http://www.london.gov.uk/>)
- English Nature (<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/default.asp>)
- Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES)
(http://www.ptes.org/stagbeetle/Stag_beetle_website/index.htm)