

Insect Fact Sheet

The Oil Beetle



The Oil Beetle is one of our most impressive beetles. Oil Beetles are sluggish movers and their large size (up to 40mm for some females) means that they are usually obvious, even when seen at distance. However, and despite their large size, many Oil Beetles are often killed by careless walkers or motor vehicles.

The UK has four species of Oil Beetle and all are currently in decline, yet a new colony was found in Nottinghamshire as recently as 2011. The beetles were found in an area of lowland heath within Sherwood Forest. What surprised everybody about this sudden find, is how they could have gone completely unnoticed for years, at a well studied site like Sherwood Forest?

Oil Beetles have one of the most unique life histories. After mating, the female digs a burrow near colonies of ground nesting solitary bees. Over 1,000 eggs can be laid at a time and these hatch in about 14 days. The 1.5mm long larvae are called Triangulins which climb out of the burrow and wait on flowers for the bees.

The Triangulins attach themselves to the bee and are unknowingly taken back to the nest by the bee. Once safely in the bee's nest, the Triangulin begins to feed on the bee's brood. This stage takes around a year to complete and the Oil Beetle emerges the following Spring.

Oil Beetles are long lived beetles that graze on grasses. They tend to favour sunny sites with sandy soils, often near the coast.



Eggs

Larva
or Triangulin

