

Working Environment Action.

Endangered species in Surrey.

Stag beetles need your help.

Are you a gardener or tree surgeon / arboricultural contractor?



Male + female stag beetle - Photo by Ross Bower.

The stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) is Britain's largest beetle and is now threatened by habitat loss, having become extinct in several parts of Europe. These giant insects can cause alarm as large flying insects, to people unaware that they are harmless. Stag beetles spend nearly all their lives, up to five years underground as larvae. The stag beetle is one of the most distinctive insects in the British Isles and gets its name from the male's spectacularly oversized mandibles which are used in courtship displays and to battle with rival males.

We believe **tree surgeons and gardeners** have a key role in preserving the stag beetle – this magical insect has a range that is **only in Southern England** including parts of London, Surrey, Berkshire and the New Forest. Tree surgeons could be influential as they can advise their customers on the conservation value of decaying wood for its associated insect life and fauna.

Just the fact that people tend to keep their gardens tidier than they used to, with bigger patios and well groomed flower beds, is having an effect. There is just not enough wood or roots for stag beetle larvae to eat. Stag beetle larvae thrive on a diet of rotting tree stumps and decaying roots which it consumes for several years before pupating and turning into a fully fledged beetle which can be up to 7.5 cm (3 inches) in length.

We think every garden should have a log pile! Alternatively wood chips buried in your garden could provide a breeding site. Females can lay their eggs there and the resulting larvae will develop into adult beetles.



Stag beetle larva - Photo by Andrew Halstead



Male Lesser Stag beetle - Photo Andrew Halstead

Once a larva is fully grown, it pupates and the stag beetle then emerges from its underground lair, in May and June, and begins to look for mates, a process that lasts for five or six weeks. Males can be seen in flight on warm summer evenings in their search for mates, while females are often seen at ground level, looking for suitable places to lay eggs. It is this last part of the insect's lifecycle that we are asking householders to aid.

How to help

- Make a log pile or pyramid as part of your garden design. These piles should be partially buried. Please anticipate or plan that these could be left for 10 to 15 years without disturbance.
- To provide the best habitat, if a hardwood tree is being removed from your garden, please consider leaving the stump; unless the removal is due to honey fungus. The stump / wood needs to be left undisturbed until it is totally rotten.
- Fill a bucket with one part soil and three parts woodchip from deciduous trees - for instance trees such as Beech, Oak, Apple, Ash. Please dig a hole in a quiet part of your garden and bury the bucket contents, with some showing at ground level.
- Please consider joining the summer Great Stag Hunt – a survey to monitor how stag beetles are doing, organised by the People's Trust for Endangered Species – See details at: <https://ptes.org/stagbeetle>

Please feel free to photocopy this leaflet, we hope that you will help the Woking area to be an example of back garden wildlife habitat improvement and conservation.

This leaflet is produced by **Woking Environment Action – WE Act**, a group of local volunteers engaged in addressing environment issues, and who work on and with local conservation initiatives. <https://wokingla21.wordpress.com/>

Natural Woking is a programme run by **Woking Borough Council** to adapt and increase biodiversity and green space in our urban centres and surrounds, villages and countryside. www.woking.gov.uk/naturalwoking