



Euheptaulacus sus (Dung Beetle)

STATUS & ECOLOGY

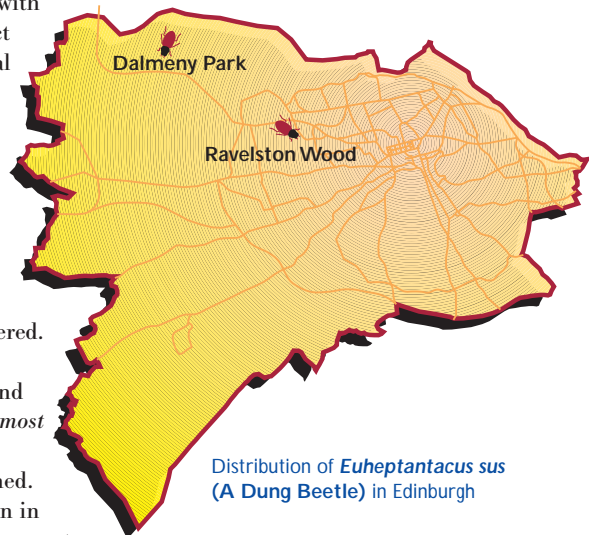
This dung beetle is only 4-5mm in length and is distinguished from other dung beetles by having 7-9 stripes on each of the wing cases (elytral striae) rather than the usual ten. Most dung beetles eat and lay their eggs in dung where they find it, but some species bury dung for themselves or to provide food for their offspring, whose eggs will be laid in the buried dung. Most species of dung beetle abandon their burrows when the eggs have been laid, the larvae over-wintering in the dung and emerging as a beetle the following year. Several species of dung beetles, found in Southern Europe, roll up dung into a large ball and roll it to a suitable burial sight. Many dung beetles can eat almost their own body weight of dung in a day.

Dung beetles belong to the *Scarabaeidae* family of insects, which with some 200,000 species world wide, make it one of the largest insect families. The contribution of species from this family in the removal of decaying organic matter is indispensable to the health of the natural environment.

Euheptaulacus sus requires a continuous supply of dung in open, well-grazed conditions. This dung beetle can commonly be found in dry, sandy pasture on coastal or river plains, although it is not restricted to one type of habitat or type of dung it is hard to find.

It occurs sporadically in Europe and is considered rare and endangered. It is very local in southern England and north to Cheshire but is declining in Britain with very few recent records. As far as Scotland is concerned, there is an old record from 1853 that states “*taken most abundantly by J.Rawlins, Esq. in a field by Ravelston Wood, near Edinburgh*”, although this record has subsequently been questioned. More recently, a single specimen was collected from low vegetation in an open sandy glade in Dalmeny Park, Edinburgh, in 1985. This seems to be the only reliable Scottish record.

The dung beetle has no legal protective status but has a provisional status in the Red Data Book under category 1: ‘in danger of extinction’.



Distribution of *Euheptaulacus sus*
(A Dung Beetle) in Edinburgh

FACTORS CAUSING LOSS OR DECLINE

Impacts

The principal impact on *Euheptaulacus sus* has been the loss of unimproved grassland and the conversion of grazing fields to arable agriculture. Three quarters of Edinburgh’s farmland is now managed for arable and vegetable crops, the remainder being predominantly improved and semi-improved grassland supporting dairy, beef and sheep production.

“These sturdy and cumbersome beetles are often seen during the summer in grass fields near, or on, the droppings of cattle”

George Hyde

Threats

The further loss of pasture may threaten any remaining local *Euheptaulacus sus* populations, as could any changes in grazing regimes. The shift to housed beef and silage cropping may cause a decrease in the number of grazing cattle. The use of certain vermicides (worm-killers) in farm animals poses a threat to dung dependent invertebrates in general, and might be the ‘final straw’ for an endangered species like *Euheptaulacus sus*.

CURRENT ACTION

There is no current action aimed at conserving dung beetles in Edinburgh.



ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

Objectives

To determine the status of the dung beetle *Euheptaulacus sus* in Edinburgh and protect and enhance any populations found.

Targets

To establish whether *Euheptaulacus sus* still exists in Edinburgh by undertaking dung beetle surveys on appropriate sites. To introduce, where necessary, appropriate conservation and management for the species and its habitat.

Actions

Carry out a dung beetle survey on appropriate pasture from Summer 2002.

(Actioned by: Lothian Wildlife Information Centre, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership Invertebrate Group & Pentland Hills Regional Park)

Encourage relevant farmers and landowners to carry out appropriate management, from Spring 2003, where the dung beetle *Euheptaulacus sus* is found.

(Actioned by: Lothian Wildlife Information Centre, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group & Pentland Hills Regional Park)

Key Contacts

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CHAMPIONS

Lothian Wildlife
Information Centre



pentland hills
regional park

