**Guides to British Beetles**

**10. *Poecilus* Greenclocks**

**Ground Beetles (Coleoptera; Carabidae)**

*Poecilus* is a genus of 4 medium-sized (9 – 15 mm) diurnal ground beetles with metallic upperparts. Until the 1990s, *Poecilus* was treated by British coleopterists as a subgenus of *Pterostichus* but has now been raised to generic rank.

They differ from *Pterostichus* by their metallic upperparts and by having keels on top of the three basal antennal segments. *Pterostichus* are never metallic (though a few species are iridescent) and don't have keels on their antennae. Colour is very variable in *Poecilus* and it is possible to find unmetallic individuals; the antennal keels help to separate these from *Pterostichus*. This guide will enable identification of the 4 *Poecilus* species found in Britain.

**Quick guide to identification - check colour of antennae:**
- Basal two segments of antennae clear red-brown = *cupreus* and *versicolor*
- Basal two segments of antennae dark brown above, clear red-brown below = *kugelanni*
- All segments of antennae black = *lepidus*

**Poecilus kugelanni**  
*Kugelann’s Greenclock*

Similar to *cupreus* and *versicolor* but **two basal segments of antennae dark-brown above and clear red-brown below**. Variable in colour, typical individuals are bi-coloured with metallic green elytra and copper coloured pronotum. Uniform brown and black individuals occur. Larger than *cupreus* and *versicolor* with **foveae on pronotum more deeply impressed**. The elytral striae are finely but **evidently punctate**. Hind-wings fully developed.

Rare, found on a few warm heathlands in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Norfolk. There are old records from Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Middlesex and Nottinghamshire.

**Poecilus lepidus**  
*Heath Greenclock*

Separated from all other *Poecilus* by the **completely black antennae**. Variable in colour from metallic green to pink-brown. Black individuals occur. Larger than *cupreus* and *versicolor* with **foveae on pronotum more deeply impressed**. More elongate in appearance than *kugelanni*. The elytral striae impunctate or almost so. Hind-wings usually quite reduced.

Scarce, occurs on heathlands and most frequently found on the heaths of Hampshire (The New Forest), Dorset and the North York Moors.
**Poecilus cupreus** Copper Greenclock

Similar to *versicolor*. **Head distinctly pitted.** The 8 - 11 bristles on inside of hind-tibiae are **pale** and **hair-like**. Very variable in colour from metallic green, blue to pink-brown, occasionally all black. Usually uniform in colour but bi-coloured individuals which resemble *kugelanni* occur. **Larger** than *versicolor*. The elytral striae have very few pits along them. Hind-wings fully-developed, flies readily.

Common in open habitats such as fields and gardens in southern England and Wales, scarce in northern areas.

**Poecilus leg bristles.** It is possible and safer to count the bristle-bearing pits rather than the bristles themselves (which are easily broken off or glued flat) but they are more difficult to see.

Note: if there are 8 bristles on the inside of the hind-tarsi, check the basal setae (arrowed in illustrations) on both legs. If they are very short (less than half the length of the others) this will be *versicolor*.

**Poecilus versicolor** Rainbow Greenclock

Similar to *cupreus*. **Head almost smooth with much finer pits** than on *cupreus*. The 5 - 8 bristles on inside of hind-tibiae are black and **stouter** than in *cupreus* (see photos). Very variable in colour from metallic green, blue to pink-brown, occasionally all black. Often has rainbow colours on upperparts which resemble the colours in oily puddles (see photos). **Smaller** than *cupreus*. The elytral striae are finely punctured. Hind-wings fully developed.

Common on heathland, moorland and damp grasslands throughout Britain.