Anisodactylus are closely related and similar in appearance to Harpalus. The key features of this genus are the length of the apical spur on the hind tibia and the red spots on the head. The base of the pronotum is pitted in all species. They are medium sized ground beetles which feed mainly on seeds. They are winged and able to fly.

This guide will enable identification of the 3 Anisodactylus species found in Britain.

**Anisodactylus poeciloides** Saltmarsh Shortspur

Separated from the other species by its usually metallic copper or green upperside (but black individuals are not uncommon), the **three-pronged apical spur on the front tibia**, and **rounded pronotal hind-angles**. The outer elytra intervals (8th interval and beyond) are pitted and covered with short pale hairs.

Confusion is possible with metallic Harpalus species, e.g. *Harpalus affinis* and also *Poecilus cupreus* and allies. Separated from *Harpalus* by the length of the spur on hind-tibia and red spots on head. *Poecilus* species have keels on the basal 3 segments of the antenna (see Guides to British Beetles No.10 - *Poecilus*).

A rare species found in upper saltmarsh habitats, e.g. edges of saline lagoons and ditches. Inhabits partly-vegetated ground amongst pioneer saltmarsh plants, e.g. glasswort *Salicornia*, sea aster *Aster* and sea-spurrey *Spergularia*. Found on the coast between Suffolk and Hampshire. The main populations occur around the Thames Estuary.
**Anisodactylus binotatus** Common Shortspur

This and the following species are black above, have **single-pronged apical spurs on the front tibia**, and the **pronotal hind-angles are distinct**, with a small protruding tooth. In *binotatus*, the outer elytra **intervals** (8th interval and beyond) are pitted and covered with short pale hairs and this extends over all intervals in the apical quarter. One or two basal segments of the antenna are reddish. Legs usually black to dark brown but a red-legged form occurs.

A fairly common beetle in England and Wales though rarer in northern England and Scotland. Found in damp habitats, e.g. grassland near water, dune slacks and marshes. It flies readily and is sometimes found away from these habitats.

**Anisodactylus nemorivagus** Heath Shortspur

Smaller than *Anisodactylus binotatus*. The covering of pits and short pale hairs on the elytra is less extensive, covering the 8th interval and beyond but **not extending to other intervals at the apex**; sometimes there may be a few hairs on the 7th and 5th intervals (see illustration). One or two basal segments of the antenna are reddish. Legs black, more slender than *binotatus*; male with narrower front tarsi.

Rare; found in a few sites in southern England. Currently known from Dorset, The New Forest (Hampshire and South Wiltshire), Surrey and East Sussex. There are older records from a Suffolk Breckland heath and from Swansea. It inhabits dry, sparsely vegetated heathland on warm south-facing slopes.

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Thanks to Bob Heckford for the use of his microscope for taking the close-up photos in this guide.