

Guides to British Beetles

17. *Chlaenius* Nightrunners Ground Beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae)



The 4 British species of *Chlaenius* are medium sized (8.5 - 13 mm) beetles. The whole of the pronotum and elytra are covered with fine punctures and a coat of short pale hairs (pubescence). Three of the species have metallic upperparts but in the Black Nightrunner *Chlaenius tristis*, only the head is metallic. All are wetland species, active mostly at night and often deeply hidden by day. They are capable of flight but probably only fly when moving to or from hibernation sites in drier habitats, occasionally coming to light traps. They range from uncommon to extremely rare.

This guide will enable identification of the 4 *Chlaenius* species found in Britain.

Chlaenius vestitus Yellow-bordered Nightrunner

Easily distinguished from all other *Chlaenius* species by the **yellow borders to the elytra**. Legs and antennae all pale. **Hind-angles of pronotum right-angled or slightly acute**, and sharply defined.



8.5 - 11 mm



Chlaenius vestitus Yellow-bordered Nightrunner

Resembles *Agonum marginatum* (a much commoner wetland ground beetle with which it often occurs) in having yellow borders on the elytra, but *Agonum marginatum* is not punctate and pubescent on the pronotum and elytra.



Right-angled hind-angles on pronotum

Widespread in southern England and South Wales. Found on bare, open margins of waterbodies, on sand, shingle, chalk, clay and mud. Uncommon, though can be numerous where it occurs. The commonest British nightrunner.



Agonum marginatum

Chlaenius tristis Black Nightrunner

Black upperparts with metallic reflections confined to the head. Golden-red hairs on elytra. **Legs and antennae all black.** Hind-angles of pronotum slightly obtuse and rounded. Beware of rare unmetallic individuals of the Green Nightrunner *Chlaenius nigricornis*.



8.5 - 13 mm



Chlaenius tristis Black Nightrunner

Very rare. Known only from the Llŷn (Llwyn) Peninsula, north Wales. Locality is Cors Geirch National Nature Reserve. Also in Kerry and Westmeath, Ireland. Formerly occurred in the East Anglian Fens. Last recorded in the 1860s. Occurs in very wet calcareous fen with moderately open vegetation and patches of bare peat and brown moss hummocks.

Chlaenius nigricornis Green Nightrunner

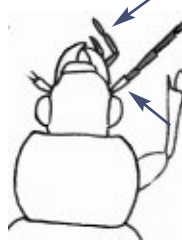
Variable in colour from bicoloured individuals with **copper head and pronotum contrasting with green elytra to all copper or black.**

Only **1st segment of antennae usually pale**, sometimes more or less darkened. Hind-angles of pronotum slightly obtuse and rounded. **Palps wholly or mostly dark.** **Legs variable in colour**, usually dark with with paler reddish tarsi. Completely red-legged individuals are frequently found.

Widespread in England and Wales, appears to be commoner in the west. Occurs in damp grasslands, marshes, mires, moorland and damp coastal habitats eg soft rock cliffs.



10 - 12.5 mm



One pale basal segment on antennae. Palps dark.



Chlaenius nigricornis Green Nightrunner

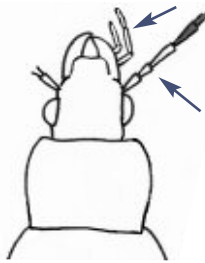
Chlaenius nitidulus Lost Nightrunner

Similar to *nigricornis* but distinguished by the **2 - 3 pale basal segments of the antennae**. Hind-angles of pronotum right-angled or slightly obtuse, more sharply defined. **Palps wholly or mostly pale.**

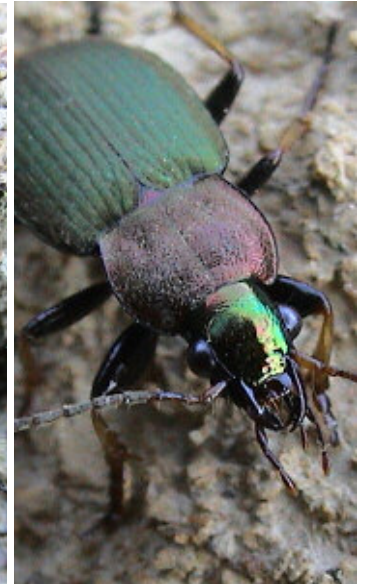
Probably extinct in the UK. Known only from a few sites on coastal soft rock cliffs on the Isle of Wight, East Sussex and Dorset. Last seen at Charmouth, Dorset in 1933. Found around seepages on soft rock cliffs.



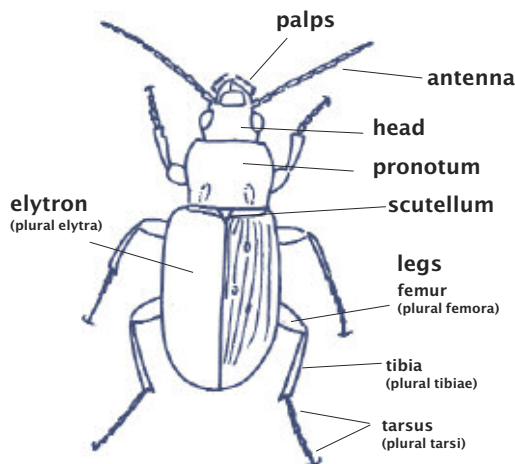
10.5 - 12.5 mm



Two or three pale basal segments on antennae. Palps pale.



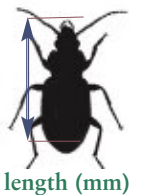
Chlaenius nitidulus Lost Nightrunner



female
all tarsal segments
the same width



male
first 3 segments
of tarsi wider
than 4th and 5th



length (mm)

Thanks to Dave Boyce for his help with this guide.