

Guides to British Beetles

5. Heart-shield Beetles *Nebria*, *Eurynebria* and *Pelophila* Ground Beetles (Coleoptera; Carabidae)



These genera of ground beetles are recognised by their roughly heart-shaped pronotum which is wider than it is long. This guide should enable identification of the seven British species. *Nebria*, *Eurynebria* and *Pelophila* belong to the tribe *Nebriini*, the other genus in this tribe is *Leistus*.



Head and pronotum of *Nebria brevicollis*

Eurynebria complanata The Beachcomber

A very distinctive beetle which is distinguished by its large size, **pale cream ground colour** and the **black markings** on the elytra.

A scarce species which is found under seaweed and driftwood along the strandline of beaches. It occurs in south Wales, Somerset, north Devon and south-east Ireland. There are old records from north Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.



Eurynebria complanata The Beachcomber

Nebria livida The Cliffcomber

Another very distinctive beetle which has a mainly **pale reddish pronotum, pale outer margins to elytra** and **pale legs**.

A scarce species of bare, damp, eroding clay sea-cliffs. Nocturnal, shelters in cracks by day. Found at a few sites between Yorkshire and Norfolk. Very occasionally recorded from inland sand pits.



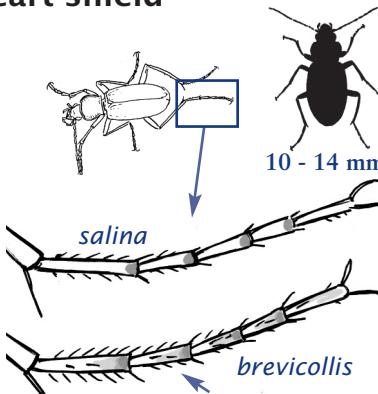
Nebria livida The Cliffcomber

Nebria brevicollis Common Heart-shield

This and the following species are separated from *Nebria rufescens* and *Nebria ruficollis* by their larger size, the **shape of the shoulder-angle on the elytra** and their **pale reddish brown antennae**. (NB the red-legged form of *Nebria rufescens* can have pale antennae)

Nebria brevicollis has a few **fine pale hairs** on the **upper surface of the hind tarsi**, these are absent in *Nebria salina*. This feature can be seen with a good hand lens in the field. It is more difficult to be sure that the hairs are absent so examination under a microscope is usually necessary.

One of Britain's commonest ground beetles found in a variety of habitats including woodlands and gardens.



Look carefully for the sparse, pale hairs on upper side of the hind tarsi in *Nebria brevicollis*. The tarsal segments in *Nebria salina* usually have distinct dark tips as the rest of the segments are paler than in *Nebria brevicollis*.

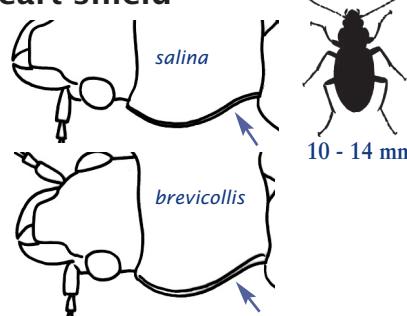


Nebria brevicollis Common Heart-shield

Nebria salina Bare-footed Heart-shield

Very similar to *Nebria brevicollis*. Another feature which can be used to separate these species is the **beaded edge of the pronotum** which is **much thinner** in this species. It is also slightly flatter in general appearance than *Nebria brevicollis*.

A common species usually found on heathlands, dunes, coastal cliffs and moorlands. Both species may be found together.



The beaded edge of the pronotum of *Nebria salina* is thinner than in *Nebria brevicollis*. This is a comparative feature best learnt with both species side by side.



Nebria salina Bare-footed Heart-shield

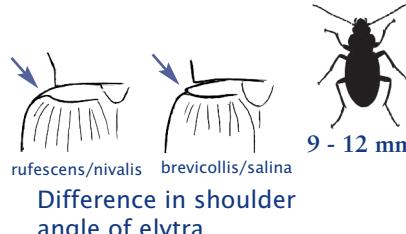
Nebria rufescens Upland Heart-shield

This and the following species are distinguished from *Nebria brevicollis/salina* by their smaller size, the **shape of the shoulder angle on the elytra** and darkened segments of the **antennae** (NB there is a red-legged form of this species which can have red antennae but is distinguished from *Nebria brevicollis/salina* by its red legs).

This species can sometimes have reddish coloured elytra.

The **apex of the 2nd antennal segment** has **one or no setae** (stiff hairs).

No ridge inside seta on outer edge of pronotum. Locally common on moors and upland heaths, descending to lower altitudes along stony riverbanks in northern and western Britain.



No ridge inside seta on outer edge of pronotum.



One or no setae at tip of 2nd antennal segment.

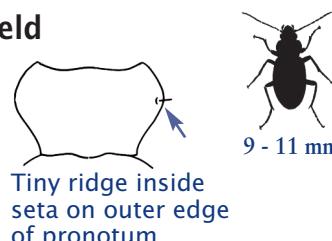


Nebria rufescens Upland Heart-shield
Red-legged (left) and black legged forms

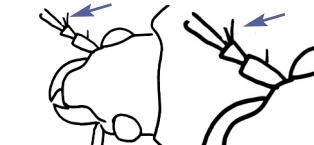
Nebria nivalis Snow-patch Heart-shield

Distinguished from *Nebria rufescens* by the **tiny ridge inside the seta** on the outer edge of pronotum. **Two setae at apex of 2nd antennal segment**. Femora pale at base with dark apex.

Very scarce. Found at the edges of snow-patches on the highest mountains of Snowdonia, northern England and Scotland, usually amongst much greater numbers of *Nebria rufescens*. Threatened by climate warming



Tiny ridge inside seta on outer edge of pronotum.



Two setae at tip of 2nd antennal segment.

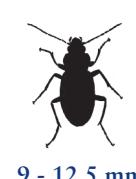


Nebria nivalis Snow-patch Heart-shield

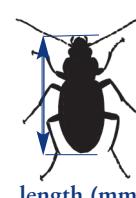
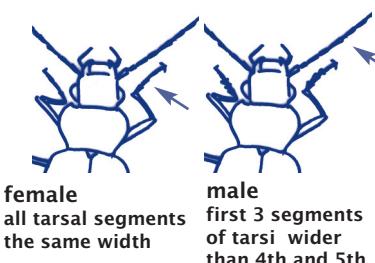
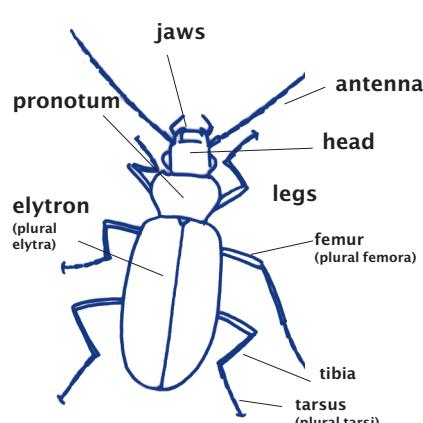
Pelophila borealis Ten-lined Dimple-back

Similar to *Nebria* but with **bronze upperparts** and **deep pits on elytra**. Could be confused with *Blethisa multipunctata* but is distinguished by the shape of the pronotum.

A scarce species found in Orkney, Shetland, northern Ireland and one site in the Scottish Highlands. Found near water usually along margins of lakes.



Pelophila borealis Ten-lined Dimple-back



Blethisa multipunctata
The Many-dimpled

Thanks to Mark Telfer for his comments, suggestions and providing the English names.