

Antlion (*Euroleon nostras*)

1 Definition

Antlions are insect members of the order Neuroptera. In Great Britain they are found only in the Sandlings of Suffolk, where the larvae makes a pits in sand to trap ants, woodlice and other invertebrates which are killed and the nutrients sucked from their body. The adult emerges in late summer and within about a month the female mates and lays eggs.

2 Current Status

The status of the Antlion in Suffolk is not clear. The first confirmed record was in 1931 and since then there have been occasional reports of single adults. In 1997, 1998 and 2000 studies showed that there is a sizeable population present in the Suffolk Sandlings. These data may be interpreted to show that the insect has been present in the district for 70 years or more but because it needs experience to find and identify the Antlion pits and the concealed larvae it has largely gone unnoticed. Alternatively the region may have been colonised a number of times by mated females blown across the North Sea from the populations in mainland Europe.

2.1 National

It is thought to be confined to the Sandlings region of east Suffolk. However adults were found on the South coast in 1998 and it was suggested that they had bred locally.

2.2 Local

Antlion larvae and imagos have been recorded from Gorleston southwards to Bawdsey and eastwards approximately to the line of the A12. Larvae occur in areas where Norfolk crag, Red crag and other sands outcrop and where quarrying, forestry operations or other factors have destroyed the surface vegetation, exposing fine, loose sand.

2.3 Natural Areas

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

3 Current factors affecting the Antlion in Suffolk

The continued presence of Antlions depends on suitable habitat and climatic trends but little is known of their autoecology at present.

4 Current action

4.1 Legal status

The Antlion is not protected.

4.2 Management, research and guidance

The distribution, status and ecology of Antlions was studied in the Sandlings in 1997. Monitoring takes place at a number of sites to assess the status of the species and to observe changes in current sites due to colonisation by vegetation or destruction by the activity of animals or man. Pit counts have been published in the Sandlings Walks project annual report and new sites have been discovered since the 1997 report. More co-ordinated monitoring in the future would be useful. Awareness of the species has been raised by publications such as 'The Sandlings Walk' pack, the Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists Society and the new Sandlings web site.

5 Action plan objectives and targets

- 1. Monitor the status of the Antlion both in distribution, and population size on all currently known sites.*
- 2. Monitor and characterise the origin of new sites created by routine forestry operations, road verge management and conservation management.*
- 3. Undertake further research to establish autoecology of the Antlion.*
- 4. Continue to raise awareness about the species and its habitat requirements.*

1 Antlion: Proposed action with key local partners

Action	Date	Partners
SITE SAFEGUARD AND MANAGEMENT		
Ensure all known Antlion sites have management plans that make reference to the species and its habitat requirements.	2005	NT, EN, RSPB
RESEARCH AND MONITORING		
Co-ordinate monitoring of the populations on an annual basis throughout the year to establish population dynamics of the species via the Sandlings Group.	2004 2005 2006 2007	EN, RSPB, SWT, NT
Monitor colonisation of new sites.	2005 2007	RSPB, EN, NT, Sandlings Group
Investigate Antlion ecology in more detail.	2005	SNS
ADVISORY		
Ensure landowners and site managers know about suitable management for the species.	2005	Sandlings Group
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY		
Encourage interest in Antlion life history and conservation through articles and publications and through demonstration boards in visitor centres.	2005 2007	Sandlings Group
Ensure findings of research are circulated to relevant landowners and site managers.	2005	Sandlings Group