

Devil's Coach Horse

Ocypus olens

Insects · Active Apr–Oct



Photo by Quartl, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A long, narrow, matt-black beetle with very short wing cases that leave most of the flexible abdomen exposed, giving it an earwig-like look. Devil's coach horses are common under stones, logs and leaf litter in gardens, hedgerows and woodland around Dumfries, and are usually found by turning something over or meeting one crossing a path after dark.

BEHAVIOUR

Threatened, it raises its abdomen vertically over its back in a scorpion posture, opens its jaws and releases a foul smell from glands at the tail — the olens of its name means 'smelling'. It has no sting, but it can and will bite. It hunts at night, taking slugs, worms and other invertebrates with powerful jaws, which makes it a useful garden ally. Folklore long associated it with the devil.

WHEN TO SEE IT

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Rove beetles (Staphylinidae)
SIZE	20–32 mm
STATUS	Native; common and widespread

Photo by Quartl, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Natureville