

INSECTS

PURITAN TIGER BEETLE

ABOUT

The Puritan Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela puritana*) is found in only two places in the world – the Connecticut River in New England and a small part of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. It lives on sandy shores beside fresh and brackish waterways. With a two-year life span, the Puritan Tiger Beetle spends 23 months of its 24-month life underground as a larva. This insect is a medium-sized terrestrial beetle. It has long legs and dark bronze-brown to green wing covers with cream-colored markings on its back. The beetles emerge from the pupal stage as adults in late June. They begin to mate in mid-July through to mid-August, when the adults begin to die off. The females place their eggs singly, just below the surface of the sand among scattered plants. After about a week, the eggs hatch into larvae one-third of an inch long. The larvae dig a burrow an inch or two deep in the sand. They sit on top of the burrow and prey upon small insects, which they capture with their sickle-like mandibles (principal jaws). As adults they hunt by running along the sand and capturing their prey in their sharp-toothed jaws.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Puritan Tiger Beetle was listed as a threatened species in 1990. Populations of Puritan Tiger Beetles are limited by the availability of sandy beach habitat along rivers, which tends to happen below large river bends. Some sites where the beetle occurred historically have been lost to bank stabilization around cities and by habitat loss due to flooding behind dams. Currently, they are found at a single cluster of three small sites and the total population in New England is less than 1,000. More than 99% of the New England population is found in Connecticut. At one site, it is thought that adult beetles may be having difficulty finding one another to reproduce because of the length of the beach, which is regularly crowded with beachgoers. In 2000, to try and increase the population in Massachusetts, 38 larvae were relocated from Connecticut to Massachusetts, and supplemented in 2001 with 60 more, and another 65 in 2002. This program seems to be helping population numbers and in 2002 a record 112 individual beetles were counted.

For more detailed information visit: www.ct.gov

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

How many Puritan Tiger Beetle larvae were relocated to Massachusetts between 2000-2002?

- a) 163
- b) 1,000
- c) 99
- d) 38

Answer is A.

