

Whirligig Beetle

Gyrinus substriatus

Insects · Active Mar-Oct



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A small, shining blue-black oval beetle that lives on the surface film of ponds, canals and slow water, usually in groups that whirl and circle at speed. Whirligigs are common on still and slow waters around Dumfries. Their most remarkable feature is invisible at a glance: each compound eye is divided in two, giving simultaneous vision above and below the waterline.

BEHAVIOUR

The middle and hind legs are flattened into short, fast paddles, and a group can spin at speed without collisions — they detect one another through surface ripples picked up by their antennae, a form of natural echolocation on water. They scavenge and hunt small insects trapped in the surface film, and dive carrying an air bubble when alarmed.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Whirligig beetles (Gyrinidae)
SIZE	5–7 mm
STATUS	Native; common on still and slow waters

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