

White-lipped Snail

Cepaea hortensis

Insects · Active Mar–Nov



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A medium-sized snail with a strikingly variable shell: yellow, cream, pink or brown, with anything from no bands to five dark spirals. The reliable feature is the lip of the shell opening in a mature snail, which is white — the very similar brown-lipped snail has a dark brown lip. White-lipped snails are common in gardens, hedgerows, dunes and woodland around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

This snail is a classic study species in evolutionary genetics: the shell colour and banding are inherited in well-understood ways, and the frequency of each form varies with habitat and with predation by song thrushes, which smash them on stone anvils. Counting broken shells around a thrush anvil is a genuine field experiment in natural selection, and generations of students have done exactly that.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Typical land snails (Helicidae)
SIZE	Shell 14–22 mm across
STATUS	Native; common and highly variable

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