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You're sharing the Connecticut River with a Tiger!

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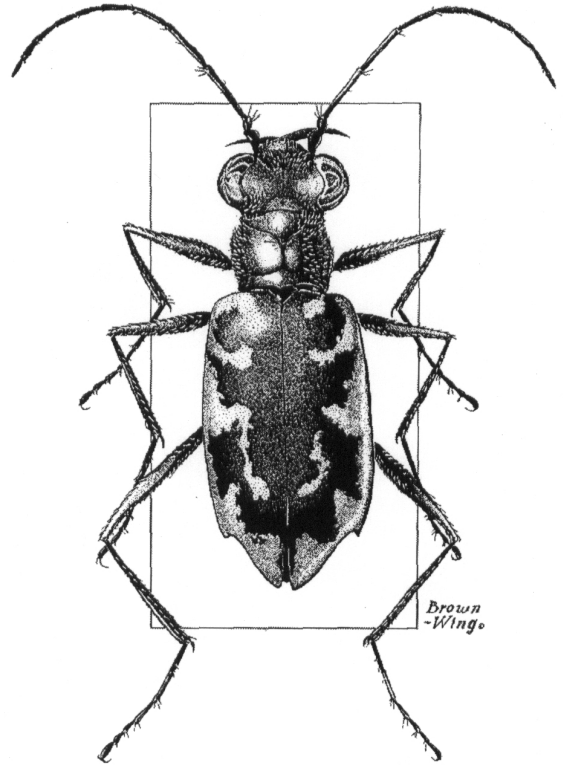
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PURITAN TIGER BEETLE
(*Cicindela puritana*)

What Is The Puritan Tiger Beetle?

The puritan tiger beetle is an insect that lives much of its life underground. Just as a butterfly spends most of its life as a caterpillar, a tiger beetle spends most of its life as a larva. Larvae live for 22 months in long, narrow burrows in the sand, emerging as adults for only one month. After they mate and lay eggs, the adults die. Tiger beetles are so named due to their “tiger like” hunting strategy of chasing down prey and capturing victims. Pound for pound, the adult Puritan tiger beetle is the fastest animal on earth.

Where Do They Live?

Puritan tiger beetles are found in only two places in the world the Chesapeake Bay and the Connecticut River. Of the eleven known historic populations along the Connecticut River, only two remain. The Puritan tiger beetle is so rare that it is legally protected by state and federal endangered species laws.

The remaining populations of Puritan tiger beetles inhabit selected sandy beaches along the river. The beaches, often located at bends in the river, are generally dry, wide, and free of vegetation. The larval burrows are located at the upper margin of the beach. Historically they also occurred on beaches formed by high water scouring islands.

Suitable habitat for the beetles was reduced by riverbank stabilization projects and development along the River. Today, habitat degradation and trampling of larval burrows are the result of recreation use, vehicular traffic and camping. Larvae are most vulnerable to these activities, as their burrows are not very deep. Adults are most at risk during their mating period. When courting, a male will ride upon the back of a female for up to 6 hours. This “guarding” behavior is a critical part of reproduction. A person walking up to a coupled pair can frighten the beetles, causing them to fly away from each other.

What You Can Do

Puritan tiger beetles are most active on the beach at the same time people are. Here are just a few things that you can do to help this globally rare species:

If you see symbolic fencing and other indications of research, please respect it. It helps protect the larvae when they are most vulnerable.

If you use beaches along the Connecticut River, know and follow regulations. This will help protect rare species.