

First Sighting – Date: _____ **Location** _____



Kevin Munroe

Six-spotted Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela sexguttata*)

One out of every five animal species is a beetle – so it makes sense to get to know them! And WOW, this is a hard one to beat. Tiger Beetles are believed to be the fastest running animals alive for their body size, they're highly beneficial and voracious predators, harmless to people and beautiful to watch. Think of them as brilliantly-jeweled guardians of your backyard landscape, ever on the look out for snails, aphids, caterpillars, ants, grubs and other small insects. Only ½" long, they spend their lives constantly on the hunt. After hatching from eggs, the larvae create vertical, subterranean burrows. Larvae hold their flat heads flush to the surface, pouncing on approaching insects. As adults, they're excellent fliers as well as runners, and one of the few tiger beetle species that routinely alight on vegetation, making them a multi-layered predator, able to patrol both earth and leaf for insect prey. Their iridescent coloring is believed to confuse their many predators, most of which are beneficial creatures themselves, such as salamanders, lizards, toads, dragonflies and robberflies. So even if your tiger beetle gets eaten, it's filling the tummy of other beneficial wildlife. They are primarily visual predators, so prefer semi-open, sunlit habitats like forest edges, clearings, stream/river banks, gardens and pathways. Pesticides, removal of fallen logs and branches and habitat destruction are all threats to this beetle.

What Tiger Beetles Need

Food: Small invertebrates, such as slugs, snails, caterpillars, ants, grubs, aphids, gall midges, grasshoppers, termites, maggots, fruit flies, weevils and other insects.



Photo by
David Cappaert

Breeding: Loose soils for the larvae's burrows - logs, branches and rocks to provide the small insect prey on which the larvae feed.

How You Can Help

- Insect gardening – create a small wildflower garden, pocket meadow or flowering shrub planting in a *sunny clearing* and fill it with native plants like goldenrods, mountain mints, asters, milkweeds, elderberry and silky dogwood.
- Scatter a few flat rocks and rotting logs around to provide shelter for the Tiger Beetle's prey
- Pick a sunny, well-drained spot and loosen the soil – then mix several shovels of *builders sand* or *very fine gravel* into the spot – if you already have loose, sandy/gritty soil, then no need to do anything! Just place a few flat rocks, pavers or logs around the sandy spot.



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Shelter: Logs, standing dead trees with loose bark, fallen branches, rocks, shrubs and meadows

Other: Pesticides, habitat destruction and over-collecting, are the primary threats to tiger beetles - several species are currently threatened or endangered species. Our Six-spotted Tiger Beetle is still relatively common - please help Audubon Society keep it that way!



Photo by
David
Cappaert

- Place a few old boards, stone pavers or rocky borders in the sunny parts of your landscape, allow dead trees to stay as long as they are not a hazard, build wildlife brush shelters, create a small wildflower patch or pocket-sized meadow.
- Remember that Tiger Beetles love the sun, so try to make space for them in the sunny corners of your yard. Also remember that they are nature's natural insecticide! Don't chase them away by using chemical pesticides in your landscape.



B. Newton-FCPS

Resources:

Native plants—available at Debaggio Herbs, Nature by Design, Merrifield Garden Centers and other nurseries

Fairfax County Public School-Ecology Study - http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/six-spotted_tiger_beetle.htm

Model Habitat and Observation Sites:

Riverbend Park - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend/

Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve - www.bansheereeks.org/

Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge - <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51610>

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