

# Wildlife in Compost

*A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife*

Many invertebrates feed on dead organic matter – they are nature's essential recyclers, converting dead plants into soil. A compost heap is therefore food heaven for these animals, which then also attracts their predators. Other animals also take advantage of the warmth and cover that compost heaps provide. Most of us compost by regularly adding small quantities of organic matter – this relies mainly on fungi and invertebrates to break it down, incidentally creating a wonderful wildlife habitat.

*When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.*



**Brandling Worm – *Eisenia fetida***

**ID:** c10cm. Striped with red-brown and pink-yellow. The saddle (clitellum) is red-brown.

**Where:** Compost heaps. Soil rich in organic matter.

**Similar:** [\*Dendrobaena veneta\*](#) (yellow-pink clitellum).



**Brown Centipede – *Lithobius forficatus***

**ID:** 30mm. Stocky, large head, chestnut brown. A voracious predator with large fangs.

**Where:** Under logs, stones, compost heaps.

**Similar:** None of this size in compost.



**Common Shiny Woodlouse – *Oniscus asellus***

**ID:** 15mm. Brown with light patches. Glossy.

**Where:** Moist places. Under logs, leaf litter, compost.

**Similar:** No other woodlice are large and glossy.



**Common Rough Woodlouse – *Porcellio scaber***

**ID:** 15mm. Dark grey/brown with tiny rough pimples.

**Where:** Under stones/logs. Can tolerate drier places.

**Similar:** None.

**Become a citizen scientist!** If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at [www.naturespot.org.uk](http://www.naturespot.org.uk) and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page.

**Other Leicestershire wildlife in compost to check out:**

[Fever fly](#), fruit flies and many beetles – particularly Rove Beetles (many species and difficult to identify).





**Irish Yellow Slug – *Limacus maculatus***

**ID:** 10cm. Green-yellow with dark mottling.

**Where:** Damp places. Compost bins. Not a garden pest.

**Similar:** Yellow Slug (believed extinct in Leicestershire).



**Greenhouse Slug – *Ambigolimax valentianus***

**ID:** To 7cm. Pale brown with two dark lines (occasionally with a pale central third line).

**Where:** Greenhouses, allotments, compost bins.

**Similar:** Balkan Three-banded Slug (3 strong line).



**Wood Mouse – *Apodemus sylvaticus***

**ID:** Sandy brown with pale belly. Large eyes, ears and tail.

**Where:** Woods, hedges. Enters houses and compost bins. Nests and burrows may be found in compost.

**Similar:** Voles (rounded face, short ears, short tail).



**Large Black Slug – *Arion ater agg.***

**ID:** To 18cm. Can be black, brown, red, orange. Black head and tentacles. Stripy foot fringe.

**Where:** Anywhere. Nocturnal, active after rain.

**Similar:** None (this is an aggregate of similar species).



**Hedgehog – *Erinaceus europaeus***

**ID:** Grey-brown, covered in spines.

**Where:** Will hibernate in compost bins. Also hunts for slugs in compost.

**Similar:** None.



**Grass Snake – *Natrix natrix***

**ID:** To 80cm. Green to black with a yellow collar.

**Where:** Close to water but will lay eggs in compost heaps nearby. 16cm hatchlings emerge June-July.

**Similar:** None.

Find more Leicestershire  
Wildlife ID Guides at:  
[www.naturespot.org.uk/IDguides](http://www.naturespot.org.uk/IDguides)



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