

# *Oniscus asellus*

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***Oniscus asellus***, the **common woodlouse**, is one of the largest and most common species of woodlouse in the British Isles and Western and Northern Europe, growing to lengths of 16 mm and widths of 6 mm.

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## Distribution

The common woodlouse is the most widespread species of woodlouse in the British Isles, both geographically and ecologically.<sup>[2]</sup> It is not known from the Mediterranean Basin, but is widespread in Northern and Western Europe, as far east as Ukraine, as well as in the Azores and Madeira; it has also been widely introduced in the Americas.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Ecology

The Common Woodlouse occurs in a wide range of habitats, including some with little available calcium. It is chiefly found under stones, and on rotting wood.<sup>[2]</sup> It is the only woodlouse regularly found on heather moors and blanket bogs, where it lives around items such as rotting fenceposts.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Description

The common woodlouse is one of the largest native woodlice in Britain, at up to 16 mm (0.63 in) long.<sup>[3]</sup> It is relatively flat, and is a shiny brown/grey in colour,<sup>[2]</sup> although juveniles are rougher.<sup>[3]</sup>

Pale patches are often visible on the back of *Oniscus asellus*; these are areas that store calcium, which is then used to reinforce the exoskeleton after a moult.<sup>[3]</sup> Moulting occurs in two halves, with the rear half moulting before the front half. The exuvia is often consumed by the animal after moulting.<sup>[3]</sup>

## See also

- List of woodlice of the British Isles

### *Oniscus asellus*



#### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Arthropoda
Subphylum:	Crustacea
Class:	Malacostraca
Order:	Isopoda
Family:	Oniscidae
Genus:	<i>Oniscus</i>
Species:	<i><b>O. asellus</b></i>

#### Binomial name

#### *Oniscus asellus*

Linnaeus, 1758

#### Synonyms <sup>[1]</sup>

- Oniscus affinis*
- Oniscus fossor*
- Oniscus lamperti*
- Oniscus languidus*
- Oniscus lineatus*
- Oniscus murarius*
- Oniscus nodulosus*
- Oniscus taeniola*
- Oniscus vicarius*
- Porcellio lineatus*
- Porcellio taeniola*

## References

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2. Paul T. Harding & Stephen L. Sutton (1985). *Woodlice in Britain and Ireland: distribution and habitat* (<http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/5276/1/Woodlice.pdf>) (PDF). Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. p. 151. ISBN 0-904282-85-6. accessed through the NERC Open Access Research Archive (NORA)
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Categories: Woodlice | Animals described in 1758 | Woodlice of Europe

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