

Citizen science: a slug success story

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Terrestrial slugs and snails are widely detested by gardeners and are frequently the most common pest mentioned in enquiries to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Gardening Advice Service. However, many species of slug and snail play important roles in breaking down decaying material and recycling nutrients into the soil. In domestic gardens the presence of slugs is usually recognized by feeding damage. Despite the impact slugs have on gardens and gardeners, slug species are surprisingly under recorded within this habitat. This talk will explore how the general public were engaged with and empowered to identify species of slug found in their garden following structured survey approaches to create detailed evidence of how the slug fauna is changing within British gardens. More than 794 volunteers have contributed in surveys including the species-specific Cellar Slug survey, and "Slugs Count" which is the first in depth study of the complete British garden slug fauna since the 1940s. Over 22,000 new slug records made by people from across the UK have contributed to our understanding of the slug fauna in Britain and will provide evidence to assess large-scale changes in the distribution of these important invertebrates.