

# Pill bug

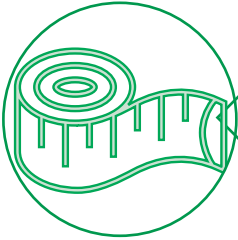
## Habitat Hero



**Common Name:** Pill bug (woodlouse)  
**Irish Name:** Míol críon  
**Scientific Name:** Armadillidium vulgare

### Seen in Ireland:

Year-round



The Pill Bug has an overall body length between .9-18 mm, body width 4-8.5 mm, and body height 3-6.5 mm.



Pill bugs and many other woodlice are widespread throughout Ireland. They are found underneath things in large numbers such as rotten logs, piles of leaves and flowerpots in gardens, parks, woodlands and even school grounds! They are also often found in crevices or gaps such as between bricks or under windowsills. They are attracted to damp, dark places as they can easily dry out if out in the open or exposed to sunlight.



Despite their name woodlice do not only feed on wood. It is a part of their diet, but they eat lots of different dead or decaying plant matter including logs, twigs and branches, leaves which have fallen onto the ground, rotting fruit, fungi and even animal poo!



They can live between 2-4 years but have a high number of predators so rarely make it to that age.

# Pill bug Life Cycle



\* Moulting is the process of shedding skin or an outer covering. This is necessary when animals with a fixed or inflexible outer layer are growing.

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## Some more Facts:

- Pill bugs are one species of woodlouse. There are about 32 different species of woodlouse in Ireland!
- They are not an insect but actually a member of the Crustacean family (which also includes lobsters and crabs!).
- They have 14 legs and a tough outer covering (exoskeleton). The pill bug is dark in colour with a ridged back. They have a pair of antennae.
- Other species of woodlice found in Ireland can be different shades of grey but otherwise look very similar to a pill bug.
- Woodlice have many predators. When a pill bug is threatened or scared it will roll into a ball to protect itself (similar to a hedgehog).
- This gives the pill bug its nickname "roly poly". Other species of woodlice can not do this.
- A wide variety of birds, small mammals, frogs etc. will feed on woodlice. Some birds may eat huge numbers in a single day if they come across a large group under a log or stone.
- There is also a few spiders that feed almost exclusively on woodlice with specially adapted features to penetrate the defences of the woodlice.
- Woodlice can lose water vapour through their exoskeleton (outer covering).
- This makes them vulnerable to drying out. This is why they are attracted to damp, shaded places and why you will not see them out in the open (especially on a sunny day!)
- Did you know....Woodlice are a crucial part of the ecosystem.
- As they are feeding on dead plant material, they are helping to recycle nutrients and return them to the soil whilst at the same time ensuring that plant matter does not build up.

