

## HIGHLANDS TIGER BEETLE

*Cicindela highlandensis*

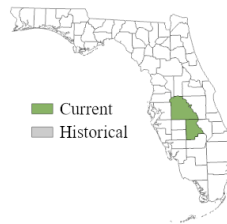
**Order:** Coleoptera

**Family:** Carabidae

**FNAI Ranks:** G2G3/S2S3

**U.S. Status:** none

**FL Status:** none



**Description:** Typical tiger beetle form: large head, eyes, and jaws, followed by a narrower neck and elongate, parallel-sided outer wings (elytra). Like most tiger beetles, a fast-running, readily observed predator that flies weakly for only short distances. This species is one of smallest tiger beetles (0.4 - 0.5 in. = 10.5 - 12 mm) and an extremely weak flier, usually flying only 15 - 30 ft. (ca. 5 - 10 m). Head, legs, and elytra black with green, blue, and purple reflections; elytra lack coarse punctures. Abdomen reddish below and with orange-red spot above that shows during flight.

**Similar Species:** Two similar tiger beetles, *Cicindela abdominalis* and *C. scabrosa*, have conspicuous white flattened hairs on both sides of thorax and below abdomen; these are absent in *C. highlandensis*. *C. scabrosa* also has coarse punctures on elytra. *C. hirtilabris*, another scrub tiger beetle, is larger and white. Distinctive body shape of tiger beetles distinguishes them from most ground beetles (Carabidae).

**Habitat:** Open, sandy, well-drained scrub, with or without sand pine; requires interconnected patches of bare sand, though adults prefer partial shade. Larval burrows tend to be near vegetation in partial shade. Absent from dense scrub and areas of low shrubs. Uses off-road vehicle trails and other areas where the ground has been disturbed.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Adults present late May - early August; larvae and pupae develop underground for most of year.

**Florida Distribution:** This species is known from about 40 small sites in Highlands and Polk counties on the Lake Wales Ridge; does not extend to south end of ridge.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Same as Florida distribution.

## Highlands Tiger Beetle

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**Conservation Status:** Most of former habitat destroyed for citrus, mining, and development. Several remaining populations are on conservation lands managed by state and federal governments as well as The Nature Conservancy; most of these need to be enlarged.

**Protection and Management:** Maintain, through prescribed fire or mechanical means, interconnected patches of relatively open sand that comprise 50 percent or more of total habitat.

**References:** Choate 1984, Deyrup and Franz (eds.)1994, Knisley and Hill 1994, 1996, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2000.



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C. highlandensis



C. scabrosa



C. abdominalis

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