

Butterfly Conservation Upper Thames Branch

Priority Moth Species Report 2021

By Peter Cuss, Priority Moth Species Champion

The following report is a brief summary of some of the survey work carried out in 2021 for our priority moths.

Sloe Carpet

Searches were once again carried out in Berkshire in April, mainly in the Mortimer area (the last place it was recorded in the UTB area, in 1983). Hosehill Lake and a couple of areas near Moor Copse Nature Reserve that had potentially suitable blackthorn were also surveyed. The moth was not recorded.

Drab Looper

A very extensive survey took place this year that has given us an excellent picture of how this species is fairing in West Berks. 63 Drab Looper were recorded including a second generation sighting in August. We have followed this up by talking to some of the big landowners in the area, to let them know about the moth and its requirements. It is hoped we can build a good relationship with these estates that will lead to conservation work to help this species. A copy of the full report is available on request.

Heart Moth

A successful survey at Windsor Great Park produced ten Heart Moth. The previous two years had only produced a single moth in each year, although we were hampered by poor weather on those occasions.

Goat Moth

We were delighted to get twelve Goat Moth while trapping for Heart Moth. Kat Dahl also recorded this priority species as both a larvae and a moth and has recorded four 'Goat Moth trees' in the Crowthorne area.

Silvery Arches

A great result this year when a search on Crown Estate land produced two Silvery Arches, the first UTB sightings since 2013 and the only 2021 record of this species in the South East of England.

Striped Lychnis

Each year we monitor this species by counting the brightly coloured larvae, and the amount of available food plant (dark mullein), at various sites in the UTB region. In 2021 our survey teams counted 7300 flower spikes and 460 larvae in 7 different 10k squares. Some searches were also carried out on the Berkshire Downs to see if this species could be found in this area. It was not recorded here but more searches will take place next year. A couple of projects are in the pipeline for habitat creation.

***Grapholita pallifrontana* (Liquorice Piercer)**

Permission was granted to annually monitor the population at the Earth Trust site in Oxfordshire. The moth was recorded on each visit but we are currently still trying to work out the best method of obtaining meaningful data.

Barberry Carpet

A RDB and protected species. There is a single colony of this moth in our region that is monitored by larval searches by a small team (licensed by Natural England). After several years of small and declining numbers 2021 proved to be a very good year for it.

***Agonopterix atomella* (Greenweed Flat-body)**

This scarce micro moth has been monitored by George Tordoff at a MOD site near Otmoor. It is hoped a future project will search other UTB sites that have the food plant, Dyers Greenweed, in the hope of finding other colonies.