



Drab Looper *Minoa murinata* DRAFT Species Action Plan

1. Introduction

The drab looper moth was included as a priority species within the UK BAP and subsequently listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

2. Current Status

2.1 Ecology and habitat requirements

The drab looper is most frequent in ancient woodland in open, sheltered, sunny situations and along ride edges where its larval foodplant wood spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*) is abundant and present in large stands. The moth can also be found in other non-ancient woods with coppice plots or areas of clear-fell but here regular active management will be needed to retain the species in the long term, especially in woods where wood spurge has only a scattered distribution.

2.2 Population and distribution

Drab looper is recorded in central and southern Europe (Waring *et al*, 1999). The moth has a restricted distribution in Britain with two main centres of population still remaining: a) central southern England (e.g. Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire) and b) the borders of England and Wales from Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire to Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Some colonies are also found in Kent. The species used to be more widespread and recorded in a number of other English counties.

In Worcestershire the drab looper has been described as a local fairly common resident in open woodland containing wood spurge (Harper & Simpson, 2002) whereas Grundy (2006a) described it as rare in the Wyre Forest.

2.3 Legislation

The drab looper is listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

2.4 Summary of important sites

The **Wyre Forest** is one of the largest ancient semi-natural woodlands in Britain extending to over 2,400 hectares. Approximately half of the forest is in Shropshire and half in Worcestershire. Large areas are managed by Forestry Commission and Natural England with the remainder being privately owned. The Wyre Forest has one of the largest Lepidoptera species lists for any site in Britain with just short of 1,200 species recorded. This represents nearly half of the total number of species recorded in Britain (Grundy, 2006b).

The Wyre Forest is a well-known national stronghold for a significant number of nationally and regionally important butterflies and moths such as pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria Euphrosyne*), small pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*), silver-

washed fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*), common fan-foot (*Pechipogo strigilata*), great oak beauty (*Hypomecis roboraria*), orange moth (*Angerona prunaria*) and the dead wood specialist moths *Schiffermuellerina grandis* and *Oecophora bractella*. The reason for this incredible diversity is the historical management of the forest and the subsequent mosaic of habitats present.

Monkwood is jointly owned and managed by Butterfly Conservation and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Part of the wood is managed as coppice with standards with wide rides maintained in many areas. It contains a number of nationally and regionally important butterflies and moths such as wood white (*Leptidea sinapis*), white-letter hairstreak (*Satyrrium w-album*), silver cloud (*Egira conspicularis*) and lead-coloured pug (*Eupithecia plumbeolata*).

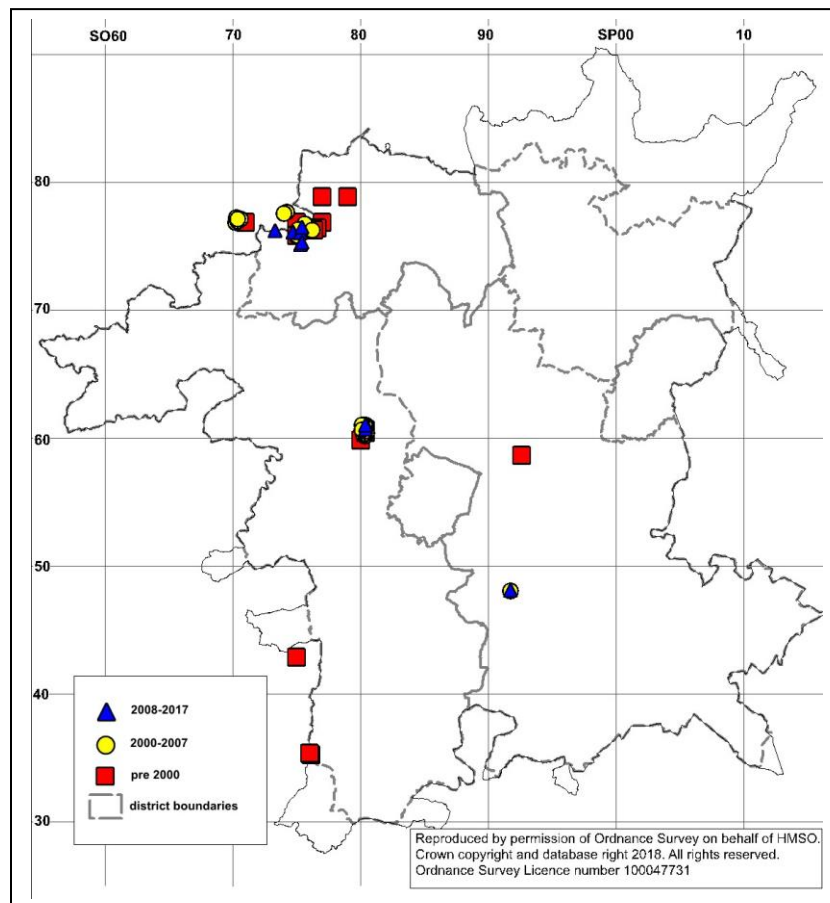


Figure 1. Records for drab looper in Worcestershire. Data provided and maps produced by Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

3. Current Factors Affecting the Species

- Cessation of woodland coppice management.
- Replacement of small-scale rotational felling by management of large-scale plantations of even-aged tree crops, particularly conifers.

- Shading of ride edges.

4. Current Action

4.1 Local protection

A large part (over 1700 hectares) of the Wyre Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and just over 500 hectares is a National Nature Reserve (NNR). Other parts of the forest have Local Wildlife Site (LWS) status. Monkwood is a SSSI.

4.2 Site management and programmes of action

- Ride-side coppicing carried out at Monkwood by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust promotes the growth of wood spurge for the benefit of drab looper.
- Butterfly Conservation has worked with local partners on a series of funded projects within the Wyre Forest from 2003 to the present, including the 3-year SITA Trust-funded project 'Back to Orange' from 2007-2010. One of the main aims of all of this work is to improve and increase habitat for the various priority Lepidoptera species found within the forest.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

- Targeted surveys of the Wyre Forest for drab looper adults were carried out in 2003, 2004 and 2006 (Grundy, 2003, 2005, 2006b, 2007).
- A survey for drab looper was carried out at Monkwood in 2004 to establish a baseline for any future monitoring. There is now a standardised butterfly monitoring transect carried out in Monkwood which records all lepidoptera species of interest.

5. Associated Plans

Scrub, Woodland.

6. Conservation Aim

TBC

7. Conservation Objectives

TBC

References and further information

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