

Barred Tooth-striped Moth in Yorkshire

Trichoptera polycommata

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National status

Nationally Scarce category A 16-30 (hectads)

Biodiversity Action Plan BAP

Found widely on the Morcambe Bay Limestones where it feeds on Ash

Yorkshire status and distribution

In Yorkshire first discovered at Grass Wood in 1959, under-recorded as it flies so early in the year. This was its only Yorkshire location until one came to a pheromone lure in 1998 Scoska Wood in Littondale (Millard and Fearnley) This colony was confirmed as present in 2019

Life cycle

In Grass Wood it flies from mid April until late May, It comes to moth traps quite late at about 11pm onwards. It lays its eggs on both Ash and Wild Privet. Larvae can be found by searching low lying plants up to 1 metre in height in June. For Ash this means seedlings up to about 3 years old which sadly is when the plants most susceptible to Ash Die back (ADB)

Pupation is in loose leaf litter. There is only one generation in a year.

Survey Methods 1

Larval search



BTS larva on Ash, note typical geometer larval resting position. It is easier to seek the feeding damage and then search for the well camouflaged stick like larva



This larva is feeding on wild privet, its presence is revealed by the black droppings (frass)

Survey methods 2

Actinic moth trap

Portable battery powered moth trap with photo sensitive switch, runs all night and is emptied in the morning.

Alternatively use a bigger Mercury Vapour light trap which is not left unattended. This requires 240 volt ac supply either from the mains or via a generator.



Survey methods 3

Pheromone trap

This new lightweight method is ideal for hard to reach locations.

Only males are attracted to the lure.

The close relative of the BTS is the Early Tooth-striped it is also attracted to the pheromone lure, it is likely to be the commonest moth in the pheromone trap.





This female BTS moth is calling for a mate, note the fluffed up abdominal scales, she is producing a pheromone which will draw in males from a wide area. This pheromone is utilised to locate the moth in hard to reach areas as it is portable.



Typical open woodland habitat for the BTS. Limestone pavement with thin soils.

Threats and Conservation Strategies

The moth is found in Yorkshire in ancient undisturbed woodland. Until the recent threat of ADB its most important location in Yorkshire in Grass Wood was thought to be secure because it is in the hands of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and is managed sympathetically. Grass Wood may prove to be even more important in the future as there is a lot of Wild Privet on site, In the extensive Morecambe Bay colonies there is not much in the way of Privet present. With ADB killing 95% or more of Ash in affected woodlands the disease poses an existential threat. Scoska wood does not appear to have wild privet present.

The objective is to find other Yorkshire colonies and then to attempt to offer resilience by introducing wild privet.