

I-B3 Drab Looper *Minoa murinata* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. Current status

- 1.1 The larva of the drab looper feeds on wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, preferring the flowers and floral leaves of plants growing in full sun. Both the moth and the foodplant are associated with areas of recent felling and coppicing in woodland. Males fly in sunshine in the middle of the day to late afternoon. Adults may occasionally come to light.
- 1.2 In the UK this species has two centres of distribution, one extending from Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire northwards through Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and the other centred on Hampshire and including south Wiltshire, Berkshire and West Sussex. There are outlying colonies in Somerset and Kent. It has been lost from many woods in these areas. It formerly occurred in Oxfordshire and eastwards to Bedfordshire and Essex, where it has been lost since the 1940s. The moth has been reported from most countries in central and southern Europe, from the Mediterranean north to Poland, but does not reach Scandinavia or Ireland.
- 1.3 In Monmouthshire recent surveys (2004-2006) have found drab looper at Hendre Great Woods near Monmouth, St Pierre Great Woods near Chepstow, Lower Hale Wood in the Angiddy Valley and Reddings Inclosure. Earlier records exist for Dixton Embankment (1988), Pont-y-saeson (Angiddy Valley) and Slade Wood (both 1981), Prescoed (1969) and Tintern, Tredean Woods and Lady Hill Wood (Usk) (all 1968). Some of these sites, such as Slade Wood, still contain suitable stands of wood spurge, and since the abundance of drab looper can fluctuate with the degree of shading of the plants, the moth may still occur at some of these sites. It is easily overlooked because of its small size and unspectacular colour.
- 1.4 The drab looper is a UK Priority and is considered to be a *Nationally Scarce Species*. It is also recognised as a species of principal importance in Wales by its inclusion on the NERC Section 42 list.

2. Current factors likely to affect drab looper (In rank order of importance)

- 2.1 Cessation of woodland coppice management leading to a reduction in suitable habitat for the foodplant wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*.
- 2.2 Dramatic fluctuations in the abundance of wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* over short periods of time and the degree of shading.
- 2.3 Foodplants growing on ride edges in commercial conifer plantations are extremely vulnerable to destruction during forestry operations, particularly

when vegetation is cut back during the breeding season (June, July and August).

3. Current local action

- 3.1 Butterfly Conservation Wales has carried out a survey for the drab looper in the Wye Valley each year since 2004 with funding from the CCW Species Challenge Fund. Three annual reports of this survey have been published.
- 3.2 Butterfly Conservation Wales have carried out three training days covering survey and management techniques for drab looper and argent and sable at Hendre Great Woods, Monmouth during 2005 and 2006. This was attended by Butterfly Conservation staff, volunteers and Forestry Commission Staff.
- 3.3 The Monmouthshire Moth and Butterfly Group have surveyed some areas.

4. Proposed targets

- 4.1 Maintain the range of drab looper in Monmouthshire.
- 4.2 Seek to extend the range of drab looper in Monmouthshire.

5. Proposed actions and key partners for drab looper

Action	Key Partners		Timescale
	Lead	Partners	
1. Policy and legislation			
1.1 Ensure policies and strategies do not adversely affect breeding populations of drab looper.	MCC	CCW	Ongoing
1.2 Ensure drab looper is fully considered when assessing any development, which may impact upon breeding or foraging habitat.	MCC	CCW, GWT, MCS, MDC	Ongoing
1.3 When there is no alternative, ensure that appropriate mitigation measures for drab looper are used during development.	MCC	CCW, MCS, MDC	Ongoing
1.4 Ensure opportunities for enhancing habitat for drab looper are used during the planning process.	MCC	MCS, MDC	Ongoing
2. Funding and Incentives			
2.1 Where appropriate provide LA21 Biodiversity Grants to implement projects for butterflies and moths in woodlands.	MCC	CCW	Ongoing

3. Site Protection and Designation			
3.1 Designate sites supporting drab looper as SINC.	MCC	SINC panel, GWT	By 2009
4. Habitat and Site Management			
4.1 Implement management recommendations set out in the 2006 survey report by Butterfly Conservation and the 2006 fact sheet, particularly short rotation coppicing, rotational clearance of ride margins (Sept to April) and linking stands of the foodplant by appropriate rides.	FCW	BCW	Ongoing
4.2 Ensure Forest Design Plans fully consider and accommodate drab looper.	FCW	BCW, MCC	Ongoing
5. Species management			
5.1 Safeguard known drab looper habitat within forestry during operations.	FCW	BCW	Ongoing
6. Survey and monitoring			
6.1 Continue to collect records of drab looper in Monmouthshire (6-figure grid references).	MMBG	MCC, SEWBRcC	Ongoing
6.2 Monitor populations of drab looper at known sites.	MMBG	BCW, FCW	Ongoing
6.3 Through the Recorders Newsletter, encourage reporting of moth records in Monmouthshire.	MCC, SEWBRcC	MMBG	2005-09
7. Communication - Publicity			
7.1 Distribute copies of the BC fact sheet.	BCW	MMBG	Ongoing

6. Abbreviations

BCW	Butterfly Conservation Wales
FCW	Forestry Commission Wales
GWT	Gwent Wildlife Trust
MCC	Monmouthshire County Council
MCS	Monmouthshire Countryside Service
MDC	Monmouthshire Development Control
MMBG	Monmouthshire Moth and Butterfly Group
SEWBRcC	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre

7. References

David G Green, (2006) Drab Looper *Minoa murinata*, Butterfly Conservation report No. S06-43 Wye Valley Survey Update 2006
Butterfly Conservation Wales

Mark Parsons and Kelly Thomas, (2006), Drab Looper Factsheet, Action for Threatened Moths Project, Butterfly Conservation.