

Information for land managers in South Cumbria & North Lancashire

Helping the Argent & Sable Moth

(*Rheumaptera hastata*)

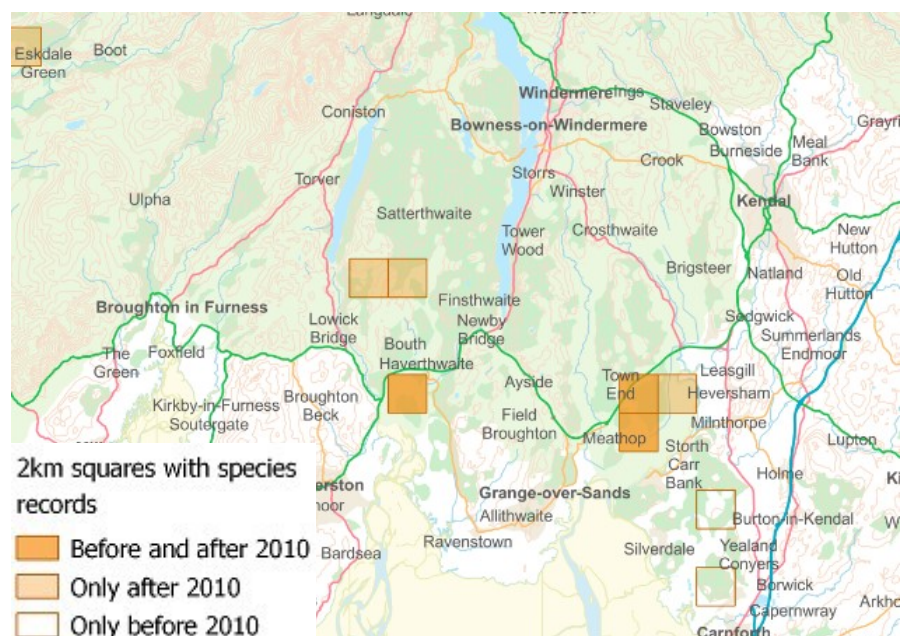
The Argent & Sable is a striking black and white moth, which, unlike most moths, flies during the day, especially when it's warm or sunny. In our region you're most likely to see it in specific areas of Roudsea, Meathrop and Foulshaw Mosses.

Locally caterpillars have been found on Bog Myrtle under open woodland or within 10m of it; it likes sheltered scrub at the edge of bogs where both its food plants – birch and Bog Myrtle – can be found. It's also known to live in sheltered places on upland wet mires with Bog Myrtle.

The females lay single eggs on the underside of Silver Birch, Downy Birch and Bog Myrtle.



The caterpillars feed without moving, by spinning together leaves and then feeding on them from within their chamber! Finding these tells us that the moth is present. They then pupate in leaf litter through the winter.



How you can help*

✓ Take photos to help with monitoring! They are slow fliers.

If you have mire or bog habitat with a woodland edge:

Aim to have some small (less than 3m) birch trees in sunny conditions, in open canopy, and Bog Myrtle plants in sheltered and sunny glades.



✓ Cut patches of birch, and birch next to paths (rides), on a short rotation of 5 to 10 years.

✓ Allow some natural regeneration and seedling growth at the edge of the bogs.

✓ Ensure that young coppice growth and areas of Bog Myrtle have open

edges and are not shaded, as the Agent & Sable seems to prefer breeding on plants in full sunlight.

✓ Avoid heavy grazing by cattle and sheep as their trampling can rapidly destroy Bog Myrtle stands.

If you have upland with Bog Myrtle:

Aim for lots of Bog Myrtle plants of different ages, so there is always young growth coming through.

✓ Use scrub to develop shelter belts and so protect Bog Myrtle from wind.

✓ Use light cattle grazing if scrub is encroaching and shading-out the Bog Myrtle.

✓ If light grazing is not possible then cut woodland scrub each year between October and March, but keep some to provide shelter and breeding sites for other insects and birds.

✓ Avoid high stocking of sheep and cattle as their grazing and trampling can rapidly destroy large stands of Bog Myrtle.

✓ If burning heather avoid burning stands of Bog Myrtle where the moth is known to be.



* If you are in an agri-environment scheme or have a designated site (SSSI) on your land, please contact your local Natural England team before planning changes to your land management.



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Funded by Natural England's Species Recovery Programme Fund, as part of the Section 41 Lepidoptera in the South Cumbria Low Fells and Morecambe Bay Limestones Species Recovery Strategy.