

Records of the Pale Shining Brown *Polia bombycina* (Hufn.) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire in the 1970s and 1980s.

I thought it may be useful to record here my records of the Pale Shining Brown *Polia bombycina* from Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire in the late 1970s and 1980s, in case they may help others to find this UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species in that area or elsewhere in the next couple of seasons.

From 1976-1986 I operated a Robinson trap with a 125W MB/U mercury-vapour bulb several times a week at Park Farm, Kidlington, (O. S. grid reference SP 486144), except for large gaps from January 1981 to March 1983 when I was working in Africa. My records show that I recorded the moth at Park Farm in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982 and 1984. The full details are:

1978: 26/27 June (1) (voucher specimen retained)

1979: 12/13 July (3), 18/19 July (1) (see below)

1980: 25/26 June (2), 1/2 July (3), 2/3 July (4)
(but no trapping 6 July 6 September)

1982: 8/9 July (1)
(but trapping only possible from 3 July to 4 September)

1984: 28/29 June (2)

A new housing estate was built on the open fields of cattle pasture immediately around our house and garden in the mid-1980s, in a series of phases. The fields had completely gone by the summer of 1986, although parts of the old hedgerows were retained in some places and are still there in 2002, as are many small fragments of grassland and scrub by the nearby canal and the railway line.

In 1983, I recorded the Pale Shining Brown on the night of 30 June/1 July (1) at Bentley Wood, at a trap-site in the Hampshire part (SU 263294). There were additional individuals at Bentley Wood on the nights of 4/5 July (1), 6/7 July (2), 10/11 July (3), 11/12 July (1), 13/14 July (1), 14-15 July (1) & 19/20 July (1), on the west side, in Wiltshire (SU 232280), on July 13/14 (1-3) and in nearby Farley village (SU 220294) on 15/16 July (1) (see also *Ent. Gaz.* **50**: 261-279). Recent records of the moth from Winterslow, including one trapped by Barry Fox on 21 June 2001 (see *British Wildlife* **12**: 435-437), indicate that the Pale Shining Brown is still present in the area at the time of writing. The building work immediately around our house at Park Farm may explain the lack of records of the moth there in 1985 and 1986 in spite of trapping several times per week and in 1987 I moved out of the area permanently. The Rushy Meadows SSSI (SP 482142), which was part of Park Farm, with its damp pasture and old hedgerows, is still intact by the canal and is currently being explored for moths by a series of field meetings of the British Entomological & Natural History Society. For a description of the site, and this project, see Waring & Townsend (2001. *Br. J. ent. nat. Hist.* **14**: 59-64). Thus far there has not

been a field meeting at the best time to record the moth; One is planned for 15 June 2002, meeting on site at 20.30 hours, to which all readers are welcome, though this will be at least a week too early for the Pale Shining Brown.

In 1979, I had the opportunity to run light-traps on a regular basis at five sites in Oxfordshire, namely Park Farm, Wytham Wood (SP 457084), Sydlings Copse nature reserve (SP 556094), Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (SU 735976) and Bix Bottom nature reserve (SU 721878). I recorded the Pale Shining Brown at all but Bix Bottom. The full details are tabulated below:

Site	Date	No.	Trap type	Trapping frequency at site
Sydlings Copse	3/4 July 1979	1	Actinic	Weekly in July
Wytham Wood	5/6 July 1979	1	Robinson	3-4 times per week
Park Farm	12/13 July 1979	3	Robinson	Nightly
Park Farm	18/19 July 1979	1	Robinson	Nightly
Aston Rowant	13/14 July 1979	1	Robinson	5 and 13 July only

Table 1. Records of Pale Shining Brown from Oxfordshire.

Clearly, at that time the moth was widespread in the Oxford area, though probably local. The first half of July was the best time to trap it. The moth has undoubtedly declined nationally since the 1970s (see, *British Wildlife* 8:188-190), but has it been lost completely from Oxfordshire?

The moth recording work at Wytham Wood was conducted with permission from the University of Oxford while I was an undergraduate there and was published in Waring (1980. *Ent. Rec.* 92: 283-289) which includes descriptions of the trap-sites. The recording at Sydlings Copse and Bix Bottom was carried out with permission from the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, and at Aston Rowant with permission from the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC). The NCC reserve staff kindly allowed me to sleep in their tool shed, which had hot and cold running water and a cooker! Full lists of all the moths I recorded were supplied to all the above and to the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre at Woodstock Museum at the time.— PAUL WARING, 1366 Lincoln Road, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6LS (E-mail: paul_waring@btinternet.com).



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