

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Heath Beefly

BftB project: IP01 Dorset's Heathland Heart

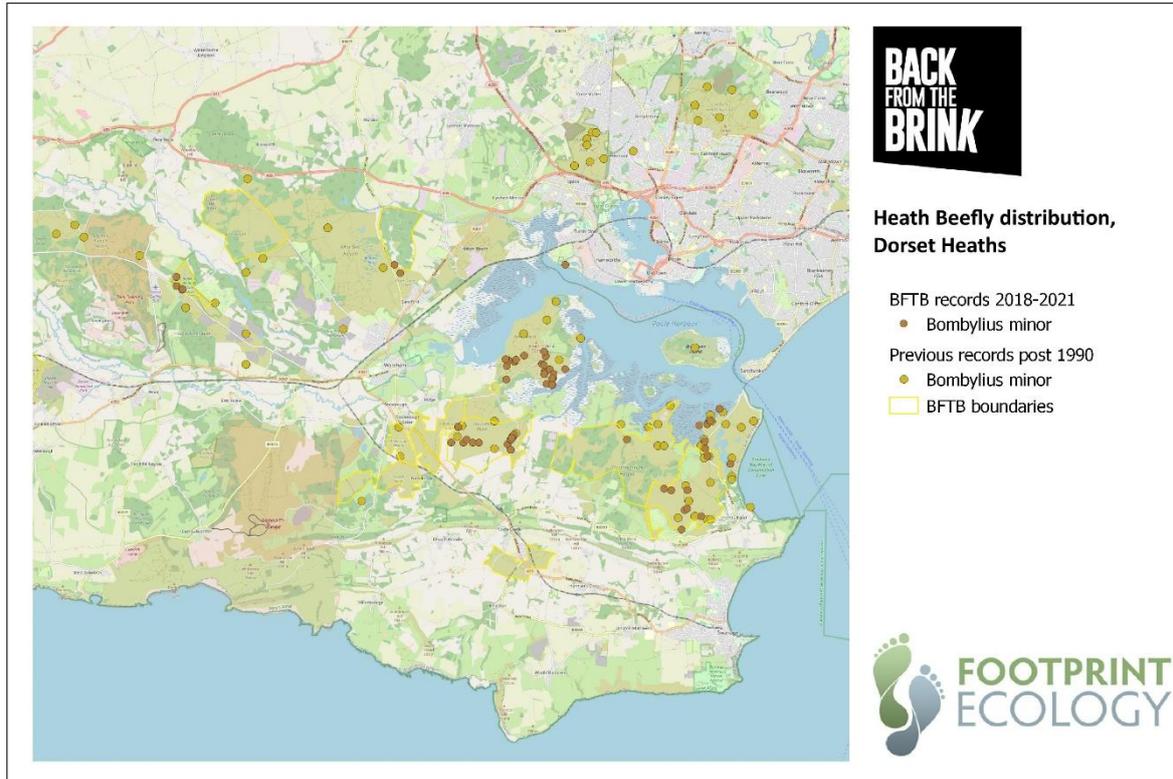
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Species name – common & scientific	Heath Beefly – <i>Bombylus minor</i>
Photograph	 <p>© Paul Swann / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Insect - Diptera
Conservation status	NERC S.41, GB Red listed - IUCN Vulnerable, Nationally Rare.
UK distribution	Confined to the heaths of East Dorset. Previously recorded in the New Forest, the Isle of Wight, the Isle of Man and the coast of West Wales.
Habitat associations	<p>Heath Bee-fly is generally seen along sandy paths, south-facing banks and slopes, often where dense aggregations of the host bee <i>Colletes succinctus</i> are found.</p> <p>Adults visit Bell Heather <i>Erica cinerea</i> and have also been observed nectaring on other flowering plants such as the yellow flowers of the daisy family Asteraceae and Wild Thyme <i>Thymus polytrichus</i> associated with trackways. It has also been seen nectaring on Sea-lavender <i>Limonium</i> spp. on the edge of saltmarsh adjacent to heathland.</p>
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	Following training on Studland Heath, self-led volunteer surveys were carried out at 7 sites (Arne, Hartland Moor, Godlingston, Slepe, Hydes, Upton and Canford heaths) between 2018 and 2019 and volunteers also made numerous incidental records during surveys for other species.

	An MSc project was set up to monitor this species response to the provision of sandy scrapes, but was unfortunately curtailed due to Covid. The scrape locations are held by Bournemouth University (Prof. Anita Diaz) on behalf of the Purbeck NNR partnership and may be used for future monitoring and research.
Sites habitat management works	Over 300 dry sandy scrapes were created across 7 heathland sites (Stoborough, Grange, Winfrith, Godlingston and Barnsfield heaths, Hartland Moor, Rempstone and Wareham Forests). The scrapes varied in size from 5m x 5m to 5m x 20m with a mineral soil covered bank on north side (i.e. facing south) and an overall south-facing aspect if on sloping ground. Small cliff faces were created along the sides of the scrapes, particularly on sloping ground.
Technical advice provision	Advice on provision of bare ground microhabitats was given to site managers through presentations to the Wild Purbeck partnership. Information on the scrapes created as well as methods and recommendations for future management were provided to site managers as handover packs.
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	This habitat management was carried out to benefit a suite of invertebrates associated with bare, sandy ground within a heathland context (including BFTB species such as Heath Tiger Beetle and Tormentil Mining Bee and other species such as the Nationally Scarce <i>Ammophila pubescens</i> plus BFTB species Sand Lizard)
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	Information about the species, its requirements and the microhabitat creation work carried out as part of the project was disseminated through a BFTB workshop and the local National Trust volunteer conference plus an Important Invertebrate Areas workshop run by Buglife and talks to Dorset Recorders and the Bournemouth Natural Science Society. A factsheet was created for this species.
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	Between 2018-2021, the species was recorded from 8 sites (Studland, Slepe, Stoborough, Higher Hyde and Godlingston heaths, Hartland Moor, Wareham and Rempston Forests). Canford Heath and Upton heaths were also surveyed but no data received by the project, however it is considered that the species is still likely to be present on these sites. Heath Beefly has also previously been recorded from quarry sites on the Puddletown Road and the Bovington Ranges, which were not surveyed due to access constraints.
Recorded Abundance of species populations	A total of 63 positive records were made, totalling 187 individuals, with Studland, Arne, Hartland and Godlingston supporting the largest populations. An apparent increase on Hartland and Arne is probably due to increased recording effort but does suggest that the population is secure at the moment.
Species Recovery Curve progress made	2 – 7 (<i>partially</i>). Best approach adopted. Recovery action has been trialled in the past (e.g. in Wareham Forest), so the start point estimate was higher than previously estimated, although a more rigorous data set is required to complete step 6. Through BFTB, awareness about the importance of bare ground and tracks has been raised with partners, who are mainstreaming bare ground creation and taking into account the need for sensitive track management. A monitoring programme has been started and should be consolidated through the new Purbeck Naturalist Forum that is being developed by the Purbeck Heaths NNR partners.

	Monitoring data from a sample of scrapes (including for the host bee) is required to complete step 6.
Recommendations for future work:-	Ongoing bare ground creation and sensitive track management will support Heath Beefly populations going forwards. A regular monitoring programme is recommended and should be instigated through the Purbeck Natural History Forum.



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Map 1: Distribution of Heath Beefly in the Dorset Heaths. The lack of recent records in Rempstone Forest, Canford Heath and Upton Heath are thought to be due to under-recording in these areas.