

The Drab Looper is a small unmarked, but rather dainty moth that gets its species name from murinus meaning 'mousecoloured', referring to the light brown to buff colour of the wings. The English name also reflects this colouring. This species has a restricted distribution in Britain with two main centres of occurrence, being found in central southern England and on the borders of England and Wales, from Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire to Herefordshire and Worcestershire, with colonies also found in Kent. Formerly, this moth was also found in Somerset, Oxfordshire, **Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Essex.** 

### Life cycle

The Drab Looper is primarily single-brooded, but can occasionally have a partial second generation. Eggs are laid from May to June, with the larvae feeding from late June to early September. Pupation takes place in a silken cocoon on the ground, overwintering in the pupal stage. Adults fly from May to June, and sometimes from late April, with occasional second generation individuals being found in August. The moth flies naturally on sunny days, but has also been recorded at light-traps at night. The moth can also be disturbed from its foodplant during dull weather.

# **Foodplants**

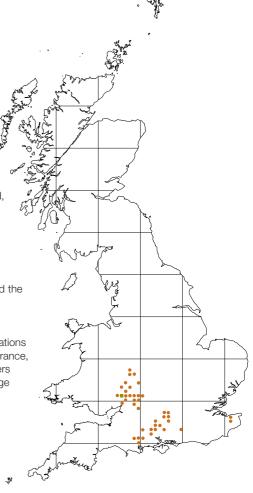
The larvae feed on Wood Spurge Euphorbia amygdaloides, preferring the flowers and the floral leaves. Adults have been seen feeding at thistle flowers.

### Habitat

The Drab Looper is usually found in ancient woodland in open, sheltered, sunny situations and along ride edges, where its larval foodplant abounds. The foodplant follows clearance, coppicing or other disturbance. Although the foodplant can be found in small numbers where there has been disturbance, the moth is most often found associated with large stands of Wood Spurge.

Egg Larva **Pupa Adult** 

Adult record 1999 to 2005.



# **Habitat management for the Drab Looper**

The Drab Looper requires a plentiful supply of its foodplant in sheltered, open and sunny situations. Wood Spurge numbers will decline shortly after coppicing or other disturbance and regular and active management is required.

- ◆ The main aim of management should be to encourage a plentiful and continual supply of the larval foodplant, Wood Spurge, in sunny but sheltered situations.
- ◆ Where the larval foodplant has a scattered distribution within sites, effort should be made to link up stands of the foodplant through appropriate management, for example through a network of open rides.
- ◆ Rotational clearance of ride margins should be undertaken, ensuring some disturbance of the ground. Scalloping of ride edges, for example through removing trees, can create additional suitable habitat.
- ◆ The creation of box junctions where rides intersect should be considered so that these create open, sheltered situations.
- Where coppicing is not currently undertaken, this should be introduced and undertaken on a short rotation.

### How to survey/monitor

The adult moth can readily be seen flying on sunny days in May and June in open situations or along ride sides within woodland habitats, usually where there are good stands of its foodplant, Wood Spurge. During dull weather the moth can also be disturbed from its foodplant or surrounding ride side vegetation. Potential monitoring techniques could include incorporating the species on butterfly transects or undertaking timed counts.







top left Wood Spurge, the larval foodplant right and top right

Ideal habitat for the Drab Looper



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