

Currant Shoot Borer Survey Results 2024



Background

The Currant Shoot Borer (*Lampronia capitella*) is a very scarce moth in Britain with less than ten known active colonies. Prior to the 2024 surveys there was just one currently known site in Scotland, located in the Scottish Borders, however the adult moth can be hard to find and it was thought there was a very high probability that more colonies awaited discovery.

The moth's larvae are known to feed on bushes of Red Currant, Black Currant (*Ribes* spp) and Wild Gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*). At the Scottish site both Red Currant and Black Currant bushes are favoured. Many of the known British sites are beside rivers under a woodland canopy and this is also true of the Scottish site.



A wilted shoot caused by the moth's larva (David Hill)

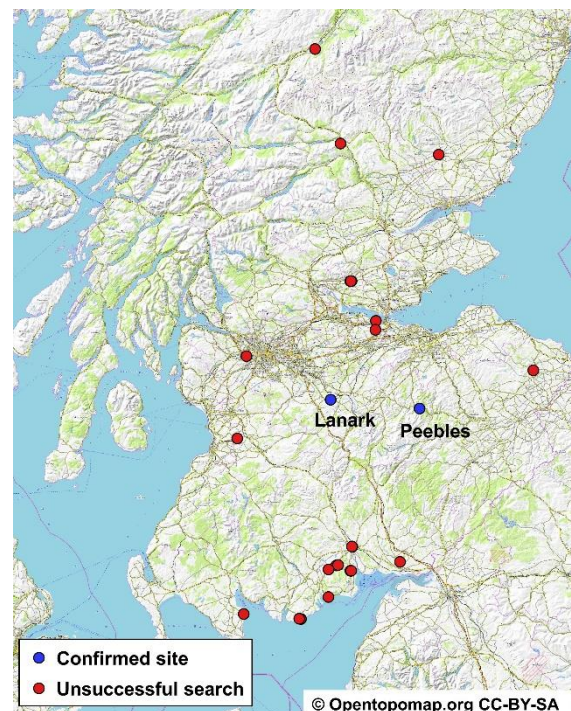
Given these specific habitat requirements, Butterfly Conservation encouraged recorders to seek out currant bushes at potentially suitable sites to see if this under-recorded species could be found elsewhere in Scotland. A map of potential target sites with historic currant records was produced and circulated. Additionally, an online workshop led by Reuben Singleton was held in March 2024 to encourage surveys for the moth.

Due to the retiring nature of the adult moth, the easiest method of detecting it is generally to search for the larval feeding signs which are easy to spot early in the spring, as soon as leaves emerge on currant bushes. The larval feeding in the shoot causes individual leaves to wilt and droop and these leaves look much greyer than the fresh green of the other leaves. With experience, they can be detected from some distance away.

Survey results

The exciting news was the discovery of a second site for the moth in Scotland! Jo Davis from Lanark had been searching currants for larvae in the local area in the spring, but in late May noticed that his own garden Red Currants were struggling and defoliated. Nearby in the Black Currant patch Jo spotted an adult Currant Shoot Borer lurking in the foliage and thus discovered the second known Scottish site!

Subsequently Jo has discovered several more adults flying around his currant patch indicating a colony is present. More information on the discovery is available [here](#).



Currant Shoot Borer Survey Sites 2024

0 25 50 km



The Clyde Valley has a long history of fruit production and it's possible that Jo's moths (and others that are surely waiting to be discovered locally) are a legacy of that. Jo's find raises hopes that the moth is found more widely in Scotland than is currently known, it's just a case of finding them!



Currant Shoot Borer (*Lampronia capitella*) in Lanark (Jo Davis)

Details of efforts of larval surveys at 24 sites across Scotland were received via email, facebook messages and a [dedicated online form](#). Surveyors were asked to report if currant bushes were

found, which types of currant and if there were any signs of Currant Shoot Borer presence.

Unfortunately, all of the larval searches conducted in April proved unsuccessful with no larval signs of the moth found except at the original known site. Currant bushes of one type or another were found at all sites except one, although they were infrequent or rare at some sites.

Monitoring of the Peeblesshire colony

Reuben Singleton and John Woolliams repeated larval monitoring of the existing colony in Peeblesshire in 2024 assisted by Malcolm Lindsay. A total of 38 currant bushes were identified with feeding activity (28 in 2023, 23 in 2022, 30 in 2021, 20 in 2020) and a total of 410 shoots were displaying signs of wilting (285 in 2023, 269 in 2022, 398 in 2021, 114 in 2020). These numbers indicate the moth has had a successful year at the known site and continues to survive well. Notable extensions were made to the known range at the site with larval wiltings found at two new locations including one over 1.5km upstream of the main site.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who took part in surveys in 2024. Special thanks to Reuben Singleton, John Woolliams, Anna Aitken, Stuart Bence and Jo Davis for their work on Currant Shoot Borer and help with encouraging this survey effort and subsequent report.

Details of any searches (positive or negative) that have been carried out in 2024 for Currant Shoot Borer that are not included in this summary would be gratefully received.

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