



Butterfly Conservation

factsheet

Double Line

Mythimna turca

Conservation status

Priority Species in UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The English name of this medium-sized moth refers to the two dark lines on each of the forewings. The species name *turca* means 'Turkey red', a natural red dye, referring to the wing and body coloration. The species is currently locally common in south-west England, southern and central Wales and is known from two sites in London.

Foodplants

The larvae feed at night on grasses such as Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Wood Meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*. Larvae have also been found feeding on Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*.

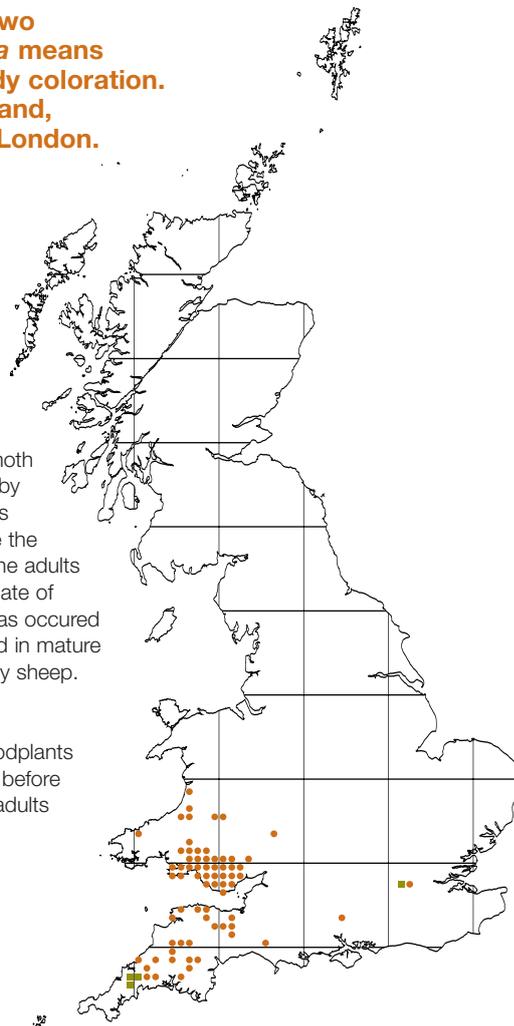
Habitat

The moth breeds in both open woodland and damp grassland habitats, including stream-sides. In the east of its range it breeds mainly in woodland, including open bracken habitats in woodland clearings and parkland. In south-west England the moth is associated with 'culm' grasslands: damp, herb-rich meadows, usually bordered by thick old hedgerows and often adjacent to mature copses and woods. In Wales it is associated with 'Rhôs' pastures. It is not yet clear if there are preferences to where the moth breeds in these meadows. This species may breed mainly in the edges but the adults certainly fly over the central open ground. It is possible that the milder, moister climate of the south-west enables the species to extend out of woodland. The Double Line has occurred in grassy sites covered by bracken. In Cardiganshire, the moth has also been found in mature broad-leaved woodland where the ground vegetation has not been grazed down by sheep.

Life cycle

The species is single-brooded. The eggs are laid in rows in folded blades of the foodplants in July. The small larvae overwinter low down amongst grasses, feeding until May, before pupating in a cocoon formed in the soil. This stage lasts 4-6 weeks, and then the adults emerge, flying at night from mid June to mid July or later.

■ Larval record 1999 to 2004
● Adult record 1999 to 2004



	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Egg							■					
Larva	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■	■
Pupa						■						
Adult						■	■	■				

Habitat management for the Double Line

The main aim is to maintain a variable sward with patches of short and long grassy vegetation bordered by thick hedgerows or woodland. In open woodland, aim to maintain grassy, permanently open areas (as distinct from coppiced plots and other areas of temporary clearance).

- ◆ Low intensity grazing by cattle or ponies in spring and summer is ideal on wetter sites, although autumn/winter grazing or all-year grazing may also be suitable.
- ◆ In parkland and wood pasture sheep must be excluded or at least have limited access so that the vegetation is not overgrazed. Light grazing by deer and cattle can be useful in maintaining open conditions and providing occasional ground disturbance.
- ◆ Some scrub cutting may be necessary. It is best to cut a little each year, between October and February. Avoid clearing all the scrub as other insects and birds use it for shelter and breeding.
- ◆ Hay cutting or mowing should be avoided because these practices are likely to remove eggs and larvae.

The type of damp meadows in which this species occurs are also known to support a number of scarce insects including the Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth *Hemaris tityus* and the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*, both of which are dependent on a diverse and well structured sward. This moth should be considered alongside these species.

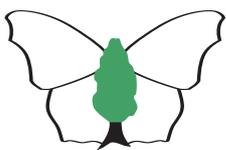
How to survey/monitor

Adults will come readily to light-traps and are attracted to artificial baits such as sugar. Larvae can sometimes be found at night in spring amongst grasses, though this can be labour intensive.



above Ideal open woodland habitat

below Ideal damp grassland habitat



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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Registered Office: Manor Yard East Lulworth Wareham Dorset BH20 5QP.

Registered in England No. 2206468 - Registered Charity No. 254937

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