



Butterfly Conservation



Four-spotted

Tyta luctuosa

Conservation status

Priority Species in UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

As the name suggests, this species has four patches of white with a pinkish tinge on its otherwise dark coloured wings. The species was formerly widely recorded in the southern half of England, East Anglia and East Midlands. The largest known current populations are found on Portland in south Dorset and in Northamptonshire, though smaller, thinly scattered, populations are found in other parts of southern England.

Foodplants

The larvae feed on Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis* at night and hide by day. They eat the foliage when nearly fully grown, but prefer the flowers and seeds in their early stages. Adults can be seen on sunny days when they often nectar on Ox-eye Daisies *Leucanthemum vulgare* and Field Bindweed.

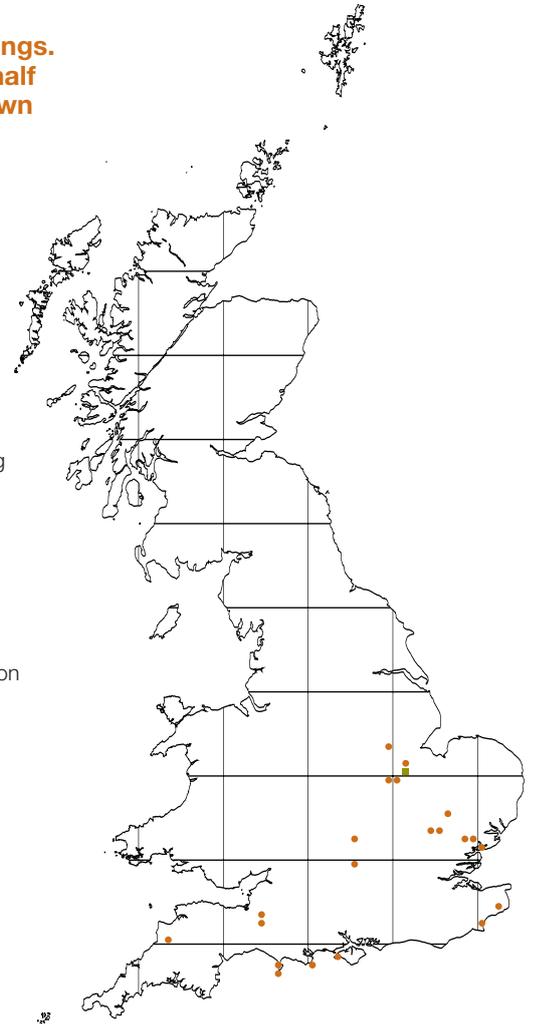
Habitat

The species requires warm open conditions with areas of bare ground. Colonies are found on chalk and limestone grassland, field margins, and on the south-facing banks of railways, roads, ditches, quarries, and other disturbed ground with thin soils and sparse vegetation.

Life cycle

The species is generally single-brooded, with a partial second brood. However, on Portland the species has two generations, the second generation generally being more numerous. The eggs are laid between May and September, with the larvae developing from June to September. The species overwinters as a pupa in a cocoon beneath the ground. Adults fly by day and night from mid May to mid September.

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



	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Egg					I / II GENERATIONS							
Larva												
Pupa												
Adult					I / II GENERATIONS							

Habitat management for the Four-spotted

The overall aim is to encourage abundant growth of the foodplant, Field Bindweed, and ensure a regular and annual supply of nectar sources in open, sunny situations.

- ◆ The foodplant seems to thrive best in areas with regular ground disturbance, such as the edges of fields or disused quarries. Rotational scraping, possibly on an annual basis, may be necessary to maintain suitable open conditions, particularly if other forms of regular disturbance cease.
- ◆ Most sites are either ungrazed or only lightly grazed so that livestock do not eat marginal or field edge vegetation with Field Bindweed.
- ◆ Leaving unploughed field margins on arable farmland could provide suitable habitat. However, these unploughed areas would require short rotational cutting and occasional ground disturbance to maintain the presence of the foodplant.

Please contact Butterfly Conservation if the species is suspected to be present on a site.

How to survey/monitor

Adults fly in sunshine, and can be found at nectar sources such as Field Bindweed, and will come readily to light-traps after dark. Larvae can also be found after dark, feeding on leaves of Field Bindweed.

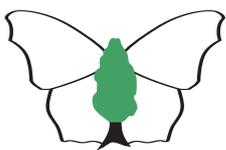


above Field margin habitat on Portland, Dorset

middle left Four-spotted moth resting in field bindweed flower

middle right Field bindweed

below Suitable habitat along a drainage ditch



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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The scheme includes Higher Level Stewardship, which supports management for targeted butterflies, moths and other biodiversity.