

1 mm



Southern Oyster Mushroom Beetle

Species Status Report - 2018

The Species Recovery Trust

37 Albany Road

Salisbury

SP1 3YQ

01722 322539

enquiries@speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk

www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk

Registered in England and Wales Charity 1146387

the
species
recovery
trust



Introduction

The Southern Oyster Mushroom Beetle (*Triplax lacordairii*) is an extremely rare beetle. Historically, it has been found at several sites across southern England, but more recent records have been focussed in the New Forest, Kent and East Sussex.

The beetle is a saproxylic beetle associated with the fungus *Pleurotus* (oyster mushrooms) on beech, ash, elm, holly, gorse, elder and birch. It is thought to require large old trees to produce suitable decaying wood for the host fungi and is known to be restricted to sites with a long historical continuity of ancient trees.

In 2014, the Species Recovery Trust undertook surveys across the known sites in Kent, East Sussex and the New Forest to look for the beetle. Five Southern Oyster Mushroom Beetles were found in the New Forest along with a lot of oyster mushrooms, but none were found at any of the other sites.

Hothfield Heathland in Kent was identified as a key site for further work. There appeared to be a lot of suitable habitat but no oyster mushrooms were found. This site had historically been a stronghold for the species.

In 2018, the Species Recovery Trust undertook a full survey of the habitat at Hothfield Heathland. The survey aimed to identify:

- Areas of the site that are still suitable for the beetle
- Areas where habitat work may be needed or management practices changed
- Lessons that could be applied to other sites in Kent and East Sussex where the species appears to be in decline

Survey Results

The survey was undertaken by Kent Wildlife Trust, accompanied by seven volunteers. The area that was surveyed is shown in Figure 1 below. The team managed to cover much of the ground within this area and collected a lot of information on the type and age of trees that were present. Unfortunately, no oyster mushrooms were found. However, the team did record some other bracket fungi and a good range of mature and veteran trees, suggesting that areas of the site should still be suitable for the species.

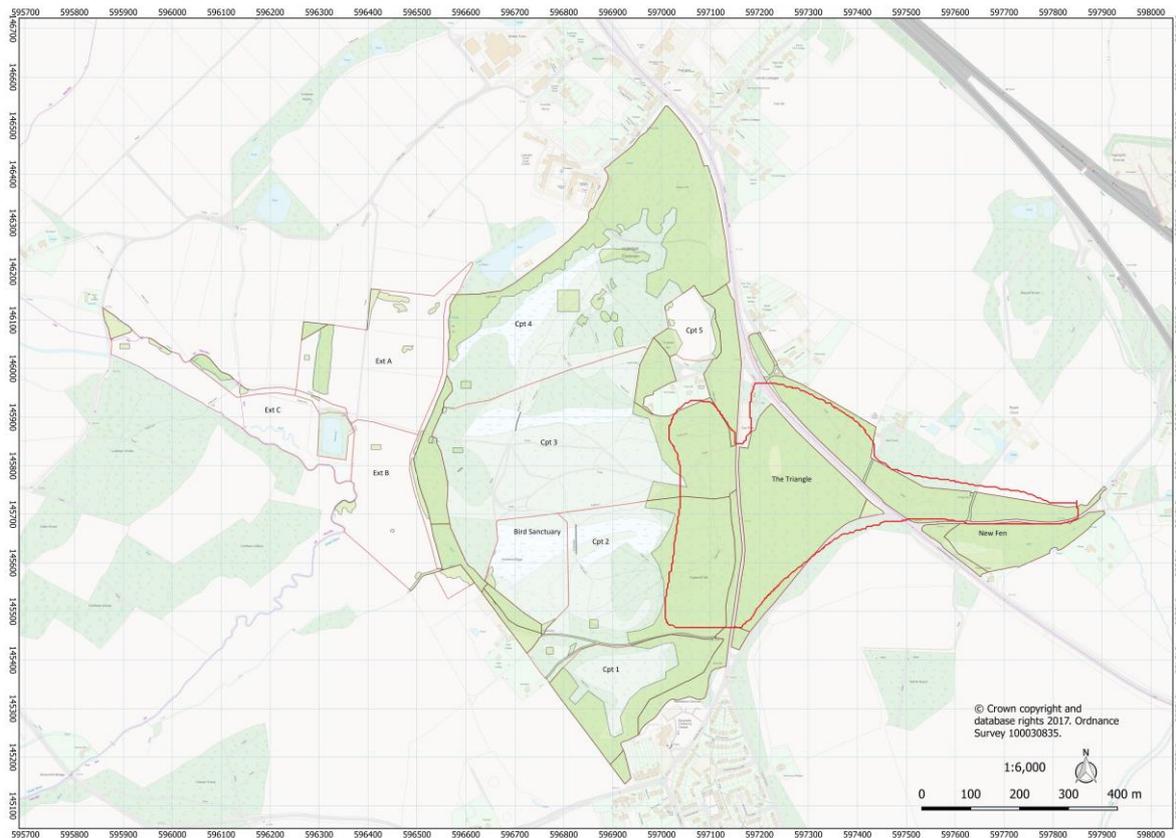


Figure 1: Survey area at Hothfield Heathland – marked in red

Next steps

The survey has provided us with a detailed spreadsheet listing the number and location of the trees on the site, as well as the bracket fungi and dead wood that was found. Analysis of these data will allow us to identify the areas where the beetle is most likely to survive and the extent of the remaining suitable habitat.

It is disappointing that no oyster mushrooms were found, despite there being a lot of veteran trees. The analysis should help us to understand why this may be the case and hopefully identify actions that we can take to improve this, both at this site and others in the region. It will also highlight areas where we may need to make management recommendations to improve the habitat, for example, by ensuring that dead wood is not cleared away.

The data will be analysed in full over the winter and a further report produced summarising the results.

Next year, once we have identified the priority areas for the beetle within Hothfield Heathland (based on the results of our analysis), we need to undertake a survey for the beetle itself. Searching for this beetle is time consuming and so it is not very efficient to search an entire site, but once we know the particular areas of the site that look the most promising, we will be able to undertake a much more effective search.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the Cleary Foundation who generously funded this work. We are also grateful to Kent Wildlife Trust and the seven volunteers who helped us to collect the data.

The data will be invaluable in helping us to provide clear recommendations for the management of Southern Oyster Mushroom Beetle sites, as well as plan our future conservation work for this incredibly rare species.

About Us

The Species Recovery Trust is a charity set up to tackle the loss of some of the rarest species in the UK.

There are over nine hundred native species in the UK that are classed as under threat, with several hundreds more currently widespread but known to be in significant decline. The countryside is now bereft of many species that were a familiar sight a mere generation ago.

A small number of these species are on the absolute brink of existence, poised to become extinct in our lifetimes; our goal is to stop them vanishing.

Our aim is to remove 50 species from the edge of extinction in the UK by the year 2050. In addition we are reconnecting people with wildlife and the natural world through training programmes and awareness raising.

The Species Recovery Trust
37 Albany Road
Salisbury
SP1 3YQ
01722 322539
enquiries@speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk
www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk

Registered in England and Wales Charity 1146387

the
species
recovery
trust