



Heath Tiger Beetles in England

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



Contents

Summary	2
Background	3
Sites	5
<i>Site – Thursley Common</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Site – Hankley Common</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Site – Frensham Pond</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Site – Ockley Common</i>	<i>7</i>
Conclusion	8
About Us	9

Summary

The Heath Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela sylvatica*) is one of the rarest beetles in England and is now found in only Dorset, Surrey, Hampshire and Sussex. It is thought to have declined with the loss, fragmentation and degradation of lowland heathland habitat in England.

One of the key problems facing the conservation of this species is that we do not have up to date information on its distribution. The Species Recovery Trust have been working to train volunteers over the last 3 years to identify and survey for the beetles. We have set up a database on which we are collecting the records submitted by volunteers, and sharing these with all other interested conservation organisations.

In 2018, three historic locations for Heath Tiger Beetles and one known site were surveyed in the south of England. Heath Tiger Beetles were only found at the known site. No Heath Tiger Beetles were found on any of the historic sites. We were not able to survey as many sites this summer as planned due to a key member of staff going on maternity leave, however, these sites will all be surveyed next summer.

We are indebted to the Hamamelis Trust for generously funding the work.

Background

A database of past records was collated for the Heath Tiger Beetle. This shows the variation in the number of Heath Tiger Beetle records over time (Figure 1). The number of records collected over a period of 20 years remained relatively constant between 1880 and 2000, but then dramatically increased after 2000. This may be because in the past, records would largely be collected by amateur entomologists, but increasingly conservation organisations also record the presence of Heath Tiger Beetles at their sites. It may also relate to the greater ease of collating records collected by others, due to the increased use of electronic forms of record keeping.

Interestingly, although the absolute number of Heath Tiger Beetle records has increased in the last 20 years, the distribution has clearly declined (Figure 2). Most of the more recent records are clustered around only a few sites in Surrey and Dorset, in contrast to the much wider distribution including Hampshire, Sussex and eastern parts of Surrey where the beetles were found in the past. It is possible that this is because the actual distribution of the Heath Tiger Beetle has declined. Alternatively, it may be that fewer people are now looking beyond the main known sites for Heath Tiger Beetles. Without negative records (records of surveys undertaken when Heath Tiger Beetles were not found), it is impossible to distinguish between these two possibilities and therefore form a conclusion about the true distribution of the Heath Tiger Beetle.

This project aims to address this problem by surveying all of the relatively recent historic sites in Surrey and Hampshire for the Heath Tiger Beetle to try to determine if it still survives there.

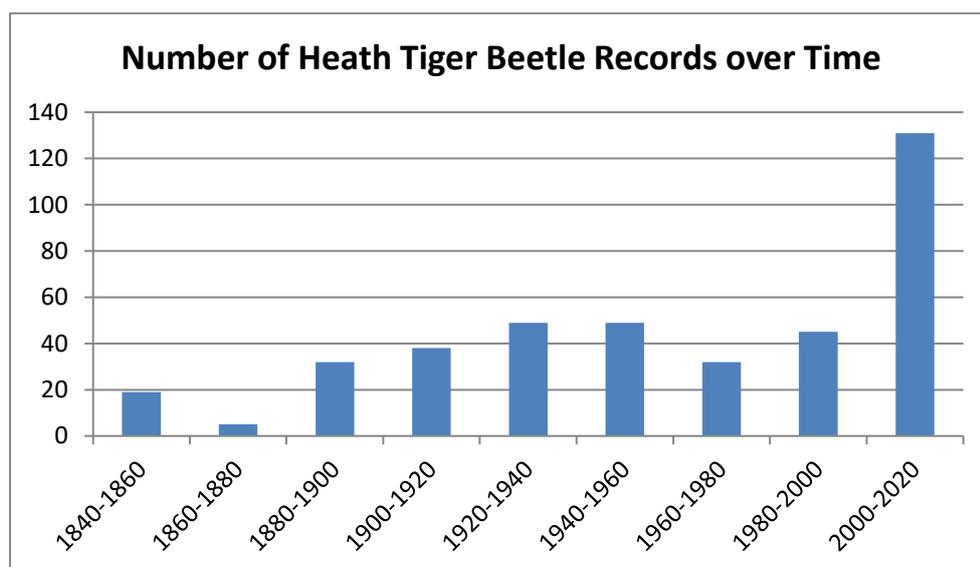


Figure 1: The number of records of Heath Tiger Beetles from 1840-2017

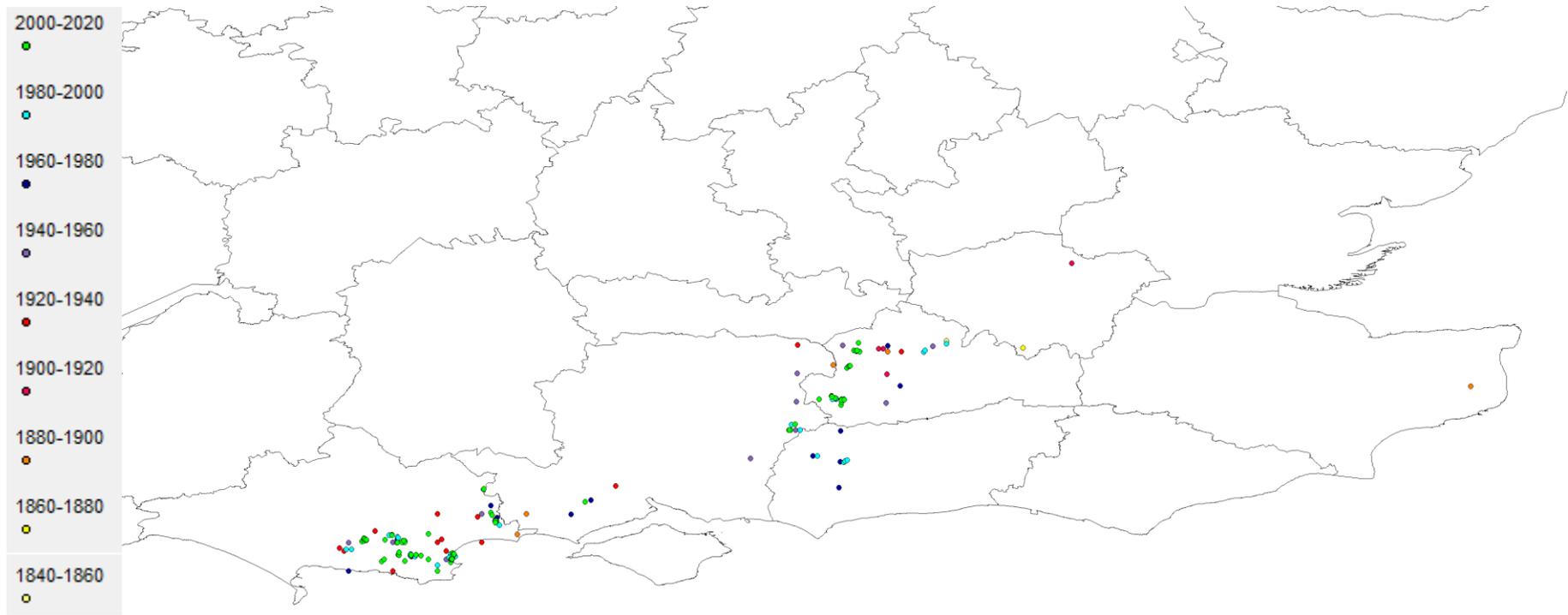


Figure 2: Map of the distribution of the Heath Tiger Beetle over time

Sites

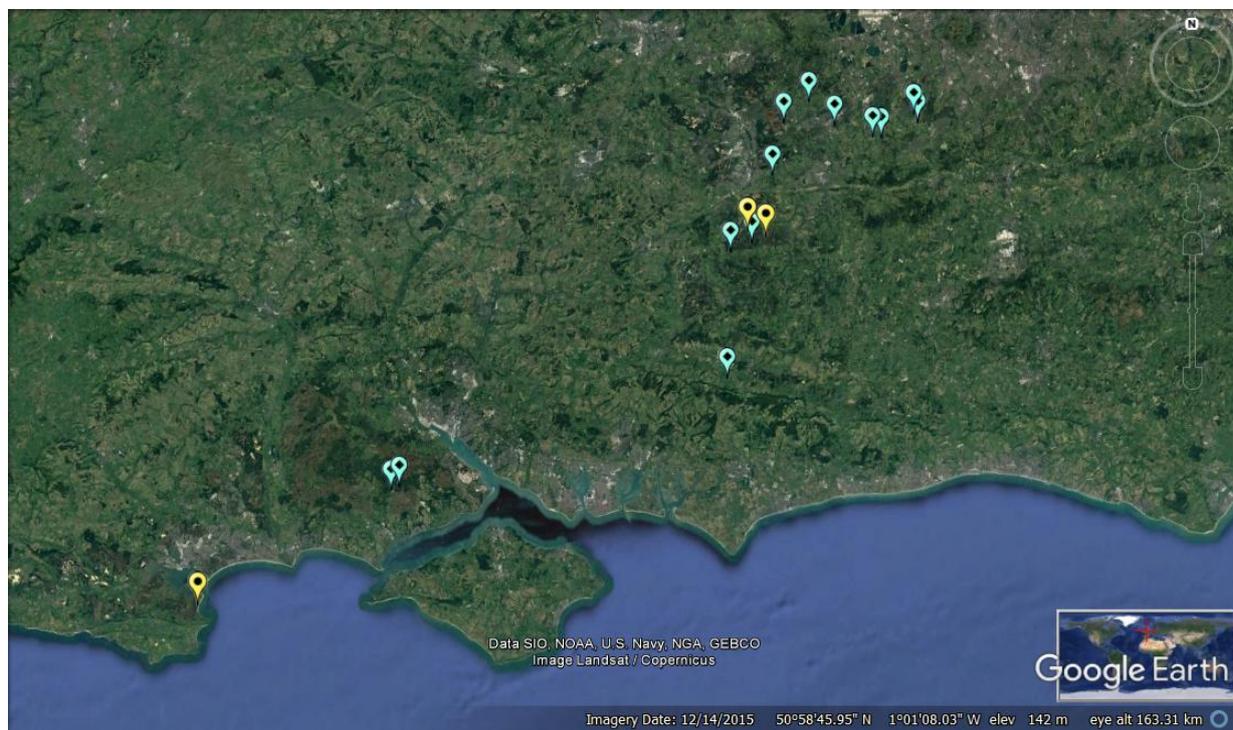


Figure 3: Heath Tiger Beetle sites in the south of England (yellow are extant sites, blue are historic sites)

Site – Thursley Common

Description

Thursley Common (SU9141) is a key site for the Heath Tiger Beetle and one of the few sites where the population seems to be relatively robust. This site was visited and Heath Tiger Beetles were recorded in the area where the main population is known to occur. In addition, a Heath Tiger Beetle was found on an area of the site where they have not previously been recorded, which could indicate that the beetle population is expanding its geographic range. However, it could also have been a single dispersing adult (they can often get caught in the wind and get blown away from the main population). Further surveys next year will help to identify which of these potential explanations is more likely.

Site – Hankley Common

Description

A thorough search was made of Hankley Common (SU8942), including all of the bare ground on the bridleways between Grange Road at the west end and Lion's Mouth at the east end. There was no sign of any tiger beetles. Historically, Hankley Common has produced sporadic records. There is a good population of beetles at Hankley Golf Club and so it is possible that the records on the common are dispersing adults rather than indicative of an established population.

Images



Site – Frensham Pond

Description

Frensham Pond (SU8541) was visited early in the season. Much of the heathland did not look very favorable for Heath Tiger Beetles. There was a lot of scrub and birch amongst the heather.

There was a small area that looked more suitable for tiger beetles, with more patches of compact bare soil and a greater density of heather. However, no tiger beetles or larval burrows were found.

Images



Site – Ockley Common

Description

Ockley Common (SU9142) is adjacent to Thursley Common and has some suitable habitat for tiger beetles. Larval burrows have been found in the past but no Heath Tiger Beetles and so these could be Green Tiger Beetle burrows. This year, no tiger beetles or larval burrows were found on the site.

Conclusion

Overall, three historic locations for Heath Tiger Beetles and one known site were surveyed in the south of England. Unfortunately, although the Heath Tiger Beetle appears to continue to survive at the known site, no Heath Tiger Beetles were found at any of the historic sites, despite a lot of apparently suitable habitat. Further surveys will be undertaken next year, to include more of the historic sites. The sites planned for survey are:

- Ash ranges
- Brentmoor
- Chobham Common
- Esher Common
- Frensham Pond
- Horsell Common
- Ockham Common
- Oxshott Common
- Wisley

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