



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

tel: (508) 389-6360, fax: (508) 389-7891

www.nhesp.org

Spartina Borer

Photodes inops

NOTE: Formerly *Spartiniphaga inops*

State Status: **Special Concern**

Federal Status: **None**

Description: The Spartina Borer (*Photodes inops*) is a noctuid moth with a wingspan of 26-30 mm. The forewing is tan in color, with the reniform and orbicular spots consisting of dark brown rings, the reniform spot with a black dot in the lower portion. Dark brown antemedial, postmedial, and subterminal lines are all present; the antemedial line is jagged, the postmedial line relatively smoothly curved, and the subterminal line smoothly curved, wider, and more diffuse than the postmedial and antemedial lines. The hind wings are a uniform light tan, occasionally with a hint of a brown postmedial line. The head and thorax are concolorous with the forewings, and the abdomen is concolorous with the hind wings.

Habitat: In Massachusetts, the Spartina Borer inhabits fresh or brackish coastal marshes, and margins of coastal salt ponds.

Life History: In Massachusetts, the Spartina Borer flies from the last week of August through the month of September. Eggs hatch in the autumn, and first instar larvae overwinter, resuming feeding in the spring (NatureServe 2012). The larvae bore into and feed on Prairie Cord-grass (*Spartina pectinata*), becoming fully grown and pupating by early summer.

Geographic Range: The Spartina Borer is found in coastal habitat along the Atlantic Coast from Nova Scotia south to Connecticut; and in prairie habitat in the Midwest (Michigan and Ohio west to North Dakota and Iowa) and southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (MPG 2012, NatureServe 2012). In Massachusetts, the Spartina Borer occurs primarily along the coast south of Boston.



Photodes inops ▪ Specimen from MA: Nantucket Co., Nantucket, collected 5 Sep 2005 by M. Mello

Adult Flight Period in Massachusetts

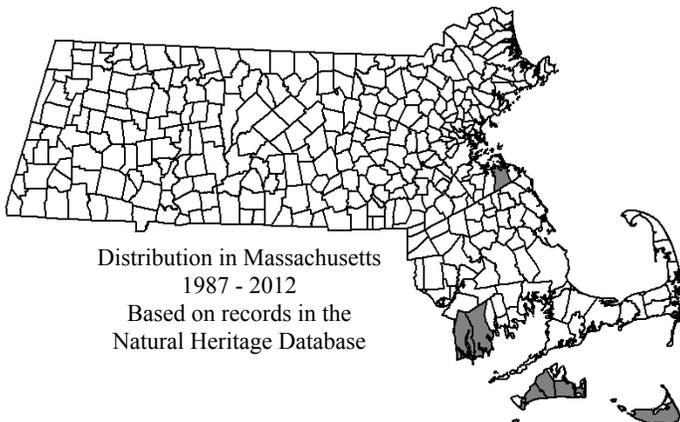
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Status and Threats: The Spartina Borer is threatened by habitat loss and hydrologic alteration that disrupts the natural tidal flooding of its habitat. Other potential threats include invasion by exotic plants, insecticide spraying, and light pollution.

Literature Cited

- MPG. 2012. Moth Photographers Group. Mississippi Entomological Museum, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi. <http://mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/MainMenu.shtml>.
- NatureServe. 2012. NatureServe Explorer: an online encyclopedia of life. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/>.

Acknowledgements: Massachusetts observation data provided by local lepidopterists, with multiple contributions by P.Z. Goldstein and M. Mello. Fact sheet authored by M.W. Nelson, NHESP Invertebrate Zoologist, December 2012.



Updated December 2012

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