Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

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MASSACHUSETTS SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

COASTAL HEATHLAND CUTWORM

Abagrotis crumbi benjamini

Family - Noctuidae
Order - Lepidoptera
Class - Insecta

DESCRIPTION: The Coastal Heathland Cutworm adult is a reddish to gray brown nocturnal moth. The striking white or bluish white terminal area on the forewing will distinguish this species from the larger, otherwise very similar Abagrotis alternata. The hind wings are a solid dark gray.

RANGE: This subspecies is endemic to the northeastern U.S., in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Long Island, New York.

DISTRIBUTION IN MASSACHUSETTS: This moth occurs in Southeastern Massachusetts. It has been collected in Dartmouth, Plymouth, and on Cape Cod where it occurs in the towns of Barnstable, Brewster, Harwich, Wellfleet, Truro,and Provincetown. It also can be found on the Elizabeth Islands, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

HABITAT: The Coastal Heathland Cutworm has been found on coastal dunes, grasslands with dry sand, and in oak and pine forests.

LIFE HISTORY AND ECOLOGY: Eggs are laid in late summer and hatch in the fall. Larvae overwinter and emerge in spring to feed on new growth of various shrubs and herbs. Pupation occurs ion June and adult moths emerge in July and persist well through September.

POPULATION STATUS: The Coastal Heathland Cutworm is listed as a Species of Special Concern in Massachusetts due to its extremely limited range and threats to its coastal habitat by development.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Current populations should be maintained and monitored and searches made for new populations. Protection of habitats is also suggested.

REFERENCES: SCHWEITZER, D. 1982. Abagrotis crumbi benjamini, Element Abstract. Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program. 7 pp.