



# RARE SPECIES OF MASSACHUSETTS

## Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth

*Hemaris gracilis*

Massachusetts Status: Special Concern

Federal Status: None

### DESCRIPTION

The Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth (*Hemaris gracilis*) is a day-flying sphingid moth with a wingspan of 40-45 mm (Covell 1984). Both the forewing and the hind wing are unscaled and transparent except for reddish-brown margins and narrow lines of the same color along the wing veins. Dorsally, the head and thorax are olive green in color when fresh, fading to yellowish-green; the abdomen is banded with green concolorous with the head and thorax, reddish-brown concolorous with the wings, black, and white. The tip of the abdomen has a brush of hair-like scales that are orange medially, flanked with black. Of the three day-flying sphinx moths (*Hemaris* spp.) in Massachusetts, the Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth is most easily confused with the Hummingbird Clearwing (*Hemaris thysbe*). However, the Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth has a lateral reddish-brown stripe on the thorax, extending from the eye to the abdomen, that is absent on the Hummingbird Clearwing.

### POPULATION STATUS

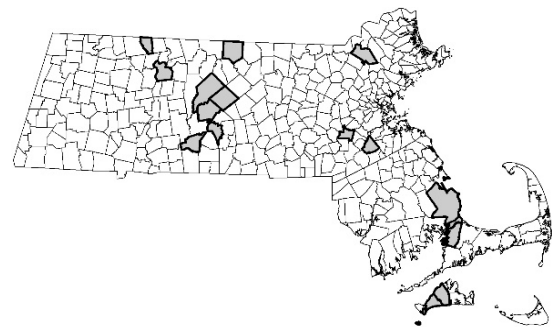
The Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth is threatened by habitat loss and fire suppression. Other potential threats include introduced generalist parasitoids, aerial insecticide spraying, non-target herbiciding, and off-road vehicles.

### RANGE

The Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth is found from Labrador south to New Jersey, and west to Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Illinois; it also occurs along the Atlantic coastal plain from New Jersey south to Florida (Tuttle 2007). It is rare and locally distributed throughout its range. In Massachusetts, the Slender Clearwing



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Distribution in Massachusetts 1995-2020  
based on records in NHESP database

Sphinx Moth is known to occur in Franklin County and adjacent northern and western Worcester County, as well as in Plymouth and on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard.

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## HABITAT

The Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth inhabits pitch pine-scrub oak barrens and heathlands on sandplains or rocky summits and ridges, as well as acidic bogs and swamps.

## LIFE CYCLE AND BEHAVIOR

In Massachusetts, the Slender Clearwing Sphinx Moth flies in May and June. Adults are diurnal and hover to nectar at flowers, especially blueberry (*Vaccinium*). Larvae feed on lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*), and probably other blueberry species, from June until pupation in July. Pupae overwinter.

## ADULT FLIGHT PERIOD IN MASSACHUSETTS

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

## REFERENCES

- Covell, C.V. 1984. A Field Guide to Moths of Eastern North America. Peterson Field Guide Series. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Massachusetts. 496 pp.
- Tuttle, J.P. 2007. The Hawk Moths of North America: A Natural History Study of the Sphingidae of the United States and Canada. Allen Press, Lawrence, Kansas. 253 pp.

*Updated 2020*  
*M.W. Nelson*