

Sun Moths

Description

Exciting results in Sun Moth monitoring program

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is monitoring one of Victoria's few known populations of a rare sun moth species, at Shelley in the Upper Murray. A project officer with DSE's Environment and Water Group, Catherine Nield-Fest said the DSE has been monitoring the population of the Striated Sun Moth since 2006.



“Monitoring aims to determine the health and extent of the population, and this year’s results are really exciting,” Ms Nield-Fest said. “Overall, numbers are down at previously known sites, but we’ve just recently identified several new sites up to five kilometres away. It significantly increases security of the species in the Upper Murray.”

Sun moths are day-flying moths. Their sun-based flying habits are so strong that if passing clouds block the sun, they immediately settle. Unless disturbed, they won’t take flight again until sunlight

returns.

Adult Striated Sun Moths are about the size of a 20 cent coin and are recognizable by striations on the wings and reddish-orange upper sides to its hind wings. Adult Striated Sun Moths emerge from the ground over a three to four week period, in late December to early January, Ms Nield-Fest says.



Individuals only live from between four to 10 days, and are strongly associated with native grassland habitats. The females lay their eggs at the roots of the grass and larvae feed on the grass roots for about two years before emerging as adults. Although it's approaching the tail end of the moths' breeding season, the DSE is urging land holders around the Shelley district to report any sightings of the Striated Sun Moth on their properties.

A Striated Sun Moth Fact Sheet and identification guide is available by contacting DSE Wodonga 02 6043 7900.

DSE and Hancock Victorian Plantations are working together to protect and manage the Striated Sun Moths's open grassland habitat along the Murray Valley Highway and around the pine plantations.

The Victorian Government has a responsibility under the Wildlife Act 1975 and the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998 to protect threatened species. These animals and plants contribute significantly to the biodiversity of their ecosystems. The knowledge we acquire about these species helps us to then take the on-ground steps needed to ensure their survival.

Category

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Author

tony

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