



## *Lhemeen y Vooiragh* Scarce Crimson and Gold *Pyrausta sanguinalis*



### CummeY Yannoo Beiyen-Feie Biodiversity Action Plan

#### Description



This is a small distinctively marked moth, dark yellow with crimson bands across the forewings merging with crimson edging with a wingspan of 16 – 18mm.

#### Habitat

Areas with a high abundance of the food plant wild thyme *Thymus polytrichus* typically disturbed sandy places including historic sand pits and footpaths as the plant is outcompeted by more vigorous species.



Habitat of the Scarce Crimson and Gold



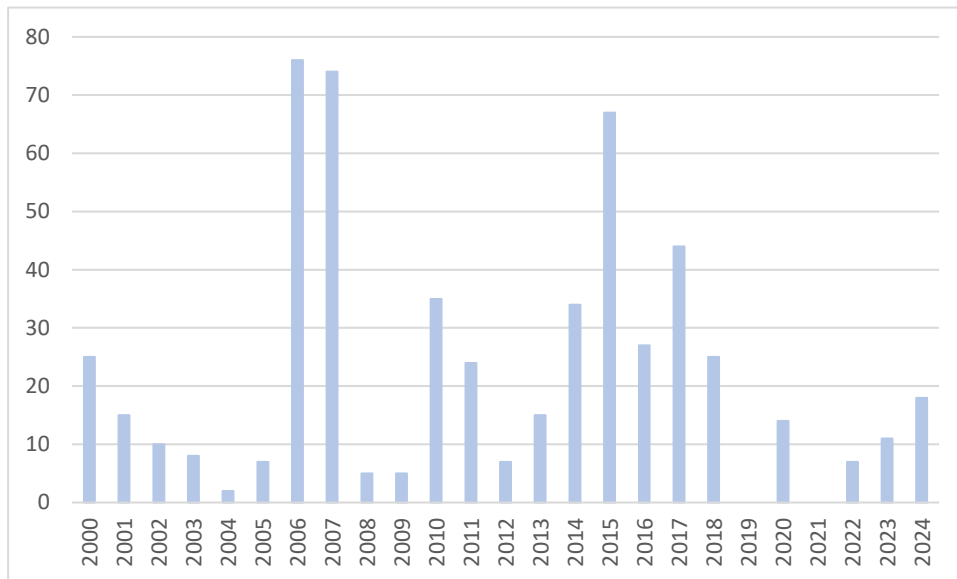
Wild thyme

#### Distribution and Status

Listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Act 1990, giving the moth and its places of shelter special protection. Also a UK Species of Principal Importance ([Habitats and species of principal importance in England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england)) and a red data book species, noted as endangered.

Records since 2000 show fluctuations in numbers and locations where the moth has been recorded. The highest numbers were recorded in 2006/2007. In 2024, the first Scarce Crimson and Gold was seen on 29<sup>th</sup> May on the Ayres NNR and the last on 7<sup>th</sup> July, extending the previously recorded flight season by a week, possibly thanks to an exceptional prolonged period of suitable weather. However, the moth was only seen at two sites over that period. Other former locations were searched in suitable weather but none were found.

## Distribution and Status continued .....



Annual counts of Scarce Crimson and Gold moth at The Ayres NNR. (data provided by Louise Samson, DEFA)



This moth is scarce and local in the British Isles and appears to be confined to areas of Northern Ireland, the Burren in the Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man. Here, it is only found along the northern coast at The Ayres National Nature Reserve, where its larvae live in silken tubes and feed on the flowers of wild thyme growing in the former sand pits. At The Ayres adults fly during the day mostly in June but have been recorded in July and into early August.<sup>1</sup> The species was once more widespread in Britain but has declined in recent years and is thought to be extinct in its former range in north-west England and Scotland.<sup>2</sup> There are records from across western Europe as far east as southern Finland.<sup>3</sup>

## Legal protection

Listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Act 1990. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take *Pyrausta sanguinalis*. It is also an offence to possess a live or dead *Pyrausta sanguinalis*. Furthermore, offences include damaging, destroying or obstructing their place of shelter or disturbing them while they sheltering.

## Threats

Change/loss of habitat: the preferred habitat is sparsely vegetated dune and former sand pits which are susceptible to vegetation encroachment, loss of plant diversity or degradation by natural erosion, use of unauthorised vehicles or recreational pressures. However, a certain amount of disturbance is required to create the right conditions for re-colonizing low-growing plants at the density the moth seems to prefer.

<sup>1</sup> Sterling, Phil and Parsons, Mark (2012) Field Guide to the Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. Illustrated by Richard Lewington, p379 & 257. British Wildlife Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> [Pyrausta sanguinalis - UKMoths](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Pyrausta sanguinalis : Scarce Crimson & Gold | NBN Atlas](#)

## Threats continued ....

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Change/loss of management: loss of current management could lead to lack of monitoring of successional stages of dune formation and degradation of habitat for the moth.

Climate change and sea level rise: leading to flooding of *Pyrausta* habitat. Possibly fire during exceptionally dry periods.

Illegal collecting of specimens: low probability these days, but not impossible.

## Knowledge and Constraints

DEFA wardens and volunteers have monitored the Scarce Crimson and Gold annually by counting and recording individuals where they are found. A standardised monitoring methodology is desirable, however the moth's unwillingness to fly on breezy/windy days and the requirement to spend time searching for individuals makes this challenging.

Suitable habitat exists for this species off the NNR between Rue Point and Cronk y Scotty and the NNR boundary and the Point of Ayre. Areas off the NNR are not consistently checked for the scarce crimson and gold.

This species often features in presentations and guided walks about the Ayres. It can be useful as a 'flagship species', promoting awareness of the ecology of the dune system and its specialised invertebrate inhabitants.

## Linked BAPS

### Habitats

- Sand dunes

## Conservation Objectives

### Objective 1: Maintain and enhance suitable habitat for *Pyrausta sanguinalis*

Actions:

1. A continuous supply of bare sand habitat for wild thyme to colonise.
2. Control vegetation encroachment, dominant grasses in and around known or potential sites for *Pyrausta* breeding.
3. Consider creating additional or extending existing suitable habitat at The Ayres to attract new colonies.

### Objective 2: Continue monitoring populations and behaviour of adult moths and larvae

Actions:

1. With experienced staff and volunteers, consistently carry out annual counts and observations of *P.sanguinalis* on the NNR and wider north-west coast and include data in Ayres NNR annual reports.
2. Map colonies, using GPS where possible.

## Conservation Objectives continued ....

### **Objective 3: Search for possible *P.sanguinalis* colonisation elsewhere along coastal dunes**

#### Action:

1. Encourage trained volunteers and/or commissioned entomologists to systematically survey possible areas for the moth and report back to DEFA.

### **Objective 4: Promote the conservation of *P.sanguinalis* amongst the wider public**

1. Walks and talks by DEFA warden and informed volunteers
2. Displays in Ayres Nature Discovery Centre and MWT shop area in Peel etc

### **Objective 5: Introduction Project**

1. The moth only disperses short distances but suitable habitat exists to the north and west of its core areas. The moth could be introduced to areas of suitable habitat to increase resilience to local habitat changes. Any introduction projects would require a detailed and robust project proposal to obtain a licence from DEFA.

### **Objective 6: Review and update this BAP**

1. Review December 2025