



# Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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## Barrens Buckmoth

*Hemileuca maia*

State Status: **Special Concern**

Federal Status: None

**Description:** The Barrens Buckmoth is a day-flying saturniid moth with wings that are black proximally and distally, the median area with a white, semi-translucent band; the reniform and discal spots are yellow and elongate. The male has bright orange on the thorax and the anterior of the abdomen. Wingspan is 50-75 mm, with females larger than males. The larvae are black with a yellow spiracular stripe and/or yellow speckling, and long, branching dorsal spines that can inflict a painful sting. The larva reaches a length of 45-60 mm in the final instar.

**Habitat:** In Massachusetts the Buckmoth inhabits xeric, open habitats with extensive scrub oak thickets, especially sandplain pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, as well as maritime shrublands.

**Life History:** Adult moths fly on sunny days from late September through October. Females lay eggs in clustered rings around twigs of scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), occasionally on other species of shrubby oaks. Eggs overwinter and hatch in May. Larvae feed in gregarious clusters through June into July, when late-instar larvae disperse and become more solitary; they may be found on plants other than oak at this stage. Pupation occurs in late July or early August, and pupae diapause until the fall.

**Range:** The Buckmoth (*Hemileuca maia*) occurs from southern New England west through New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan to southeast Wisconsin in scattered, localized populations; it is more widespread from southern New Jersey south to Florida and west to Illinois and Texas. In Massachusetts the Buckmoth is restricted to the southeast coastal plain, with one inland population in the Connecticut River Valley.



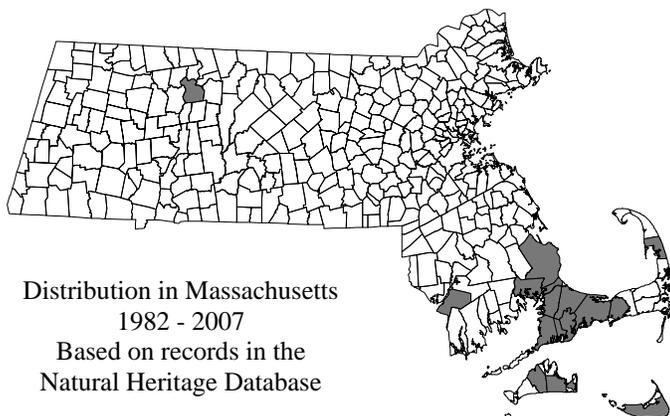
Photo by M.W. Nelson

### Adult Flight Period in Massachusetts

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

### Threats

- Habitat loss
- Fire suppression
- Invasion by exotic plants
- Introduced generalist parasitoids
- Insecticide spraying
- Off-road vehicles



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M.W. Nelson