Fighting for Survival

The Sand Verbena Moth

Photo: Nick Page

A Moth on the Edge

The Sand Verbena Moth (*Copablepharon fuscum*) is a rare moth occurring at only ten known sites within a limited area in the Strait of Georgia/Puget Sound area of British Columbia in Canada and Washington State in the U.S. Protected under the Canadian Species At Risk Act in 2005, it's time for the U.S. to catch up with its northern neighbor by extending protections to the Sand Verbena Moth under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Protecting the Moth's Habitat

The moth's fate is intimately intertwined with the Yellow Sand Verbena (*Abronia latifolia*), a narrowly distributed wildflower that only grows among sand dunes on the Pacific Coast. The moth depends on this plant in almost all life stages. Adults lay eggs on its flowers; larvae feed on its leaves; and adults consume the flowers' nectar. Threats to the Yellow Sand Verbena are endangering the Sand Verbena Moth and include loss of habitat, invasion of exotic plants, coastal erosion, and climate change. Other dangers to the moth include insecticide spraying and non-native insects.

Know Your Moth

- Good Looks: the Sand Verbena Moth has dark brown wings, with distinct pale yellow and black lines running to the margins of its wings. It has a wingspan of approximately 1.5 inches.
- Taking Flight: Adults live between 7-21 days, during which time the females must lay their eggs in the Verbena's flowers to ensure the next generation of moths. Flight season is mid-May to early July.
- Small but Important: Scientists consider the moth an important focal species for conservation of sand dune communities. Bats, small mammals, and birds likely rely on the Sand Verbena Moth for food.
- Living on the Edge: All of the moth's locations in Canada are less than 5 meters (16.4 feet) above sea level.

Climate Chaos

The climate crisis may harm the Sand Verbena Moth in multiple ways, including habitat inundation due to sea level rise and severe storms as well as adverse effects on Yellow Sand Verbena from increased drought.

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